

CHAPTER ~~XXI~~ ~~XXIV~~

JIMMY CAMP: THE FANCIES AND THE FACTS.

Shown in El Paso county, Colorado, on most of the older and many of the later local maps, and well known to many of the old pioneers of the state as well as county, is a locality called "Jimmy Camp", around which — through much forgetting, misunderstanding and fabrication — has sprung up a legendary growth of so protean variation that the truth about it has been hard to find; and one is reminded of the story of the man who had swallowed the feather, which, in the telling about it from one to another, grew to the fair gastronomical allowance of "three black crows".

The notions generally held about Jimmy Camp are a mixture of truth and error.

The one thread of truth that runs through most of the stories is that the place takes its name from a white man named Jimmy, who was an Indian trader, and who was killed or supposed to have been killed there long before this portion of the western country was settled.

A common error is the supposition that this trader had built at that camp a cabin, which he lived in and used as an Indian trading-house.

The locality is about eight and a half miles east by a little north from the business center of Colorado Springs, and about a mile and a half in an east-northeasterly direction from the Colorado Southern Railway station of Manitou Junction. It is on and has given its name to Jimmy Camp creek, a left-hand branch of the Fontaine qui Bouille. Jimmy Camp creek, in its lower part, is a sandy arroyo in a dry and practically treeless plain; but the sands of its bed have their origin in a more picturesque upper part of the creek where the country rock is largely sandstone, with a more rugged topography, several fine springs, a growth of pines, and along spring-fed portions of ~~the~~ its course — formerly more than now ~~some irrigation has introduced~~ ^{permanent} ~~some~~ — some ^{permanent} flowing water and large cottonwood timber.

Lower down the valley, about a mile south by some east of Jimmy Camp, there was in later years a coalmine (or mines) which was also called "Jimmy Camp", near where Jimmy Camp creek is joined by a small left-hand branch up which, later still, at a place called McFerran, a brief distance northeasterly from the first so-called Jimmy Camp mine, a coal mine was worked several years for the Rock Island Railway. Coal was shipped from this place by way of the Denver and Fort Worth (now

Colorado Southern) Railway, over a temporary track from Manitou Junction. The whole group of coal mines on this branch, was in a general way often called "Jimmy Camp". It is so called on the United States Geological Survey Topographical Map, Colorado Springs Sheet, edition of 1891.

It is to the original and real Jimmy Camp, on the northwest side of the main creek, east-northeasterly from Manitou Junction, that attention will here be directed; and in what follows, an attempt will be made to sift out the facts connected with the origin of the locality name.

The locality was on an old wilderness trail (elsewhere herein described) that crossed the divide between the Arkansas and South Platte rivers, connecting the former stream at the mouths of Mountain and Chico creeks with the latter at the mouth of Cherry creek, and was at the point where this Old Divide Trail, coming up the Jimmy Camp creek valley, left the creek, continuing its northerly course, while the ~~of~~ creek itself, as followed up stream, deflects there somewhat to the east. It was a camp in the sense only that it was a good camping place, and not in the sense of being the quarters of a ~~miner~~ resident trader. As a camping place, it was one of the best and best patronized on the trail. It had a copious and never-failing spring of fine water, formerly called "Jimmy's Spring", and later sometimes "Jimmy Camp Spring", in whose vicinity could be found good grass even in drouthy seasons when the grazing was scant; and pine and cottonwood for camp-fires and other purposes were close at hand.

The locality, still picturesque, was even more so before the cutting down of so many of its trees, and seems formerly to have been a favorite resort of wild game. The hunter and traveller, Sage, as we shall see, stopped there ~~at night~~ in 1842 to hunt, and even today a portion of the valley a little above Jimmy Camp is known as "Deer Park".

In her "Tales of the Colorado Pioneers", published in 1884, Mrs. Alice Polk Hill gives the following smooth sounding story of Jimmy Camp:

"We returned to Denver on the Denver and New Orleans R.R.," and

*Now (in 1905) the Colorado Southern. — F.W.C.

Jimmy's Camp was pointed out to me from the window of the cars. It was once a place of great notoriety, and has been brought into prominence again by being near a station on this new southern road.

"This camp enjoyed its palmy days in 1836, when the Hudson Bay Company established here a trading post to sell trinkets to, and buy furs from the Indians and trappers.

"It was named for Jimmy Boyer, who had charge of the wagons that came

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Jimmy Camp, 3.

~~It was named for Jimmy Boyer, who had charge of the wagons that came~~
 to this spot to trade. He built a log house, and advertised his ar-
 rival from the East with a signal fire, which drew the Indians from far
 and near to sell him their furs and buffalo robes. But on one ~~subsequent~~
 occasion his flame was an evil beacon. It allured to his lonely cabin
 a party of guerrillas from Old Mexico, who murdered Jimmy and took
 possession of his goods without leaving a receipt. The Indians com-
 ing as usual to the camp, and finding him dead, pursued the murderers,
 captured them and hung them by their toes to the limbs of a tree.

They returned and buried poor Jimmy, and over his grave placed a
 flat stone, on which they carved in a crude way a frightful picture,
 representing one man with his throat cut, and over him the assassins
 hanging by their toes."

The principal objections to this form of the Jimmy Camp story are
 that:

- (1). The most southeasterly of the posts of the Hudson Bay Company
 was Fort Hall, in the present state of Idaho; it was built by Nathaniel
 J. Wyeth of Cambridge, Mass., and some of his 200 New Englander trappers
 in 1834, and did not become the property of the Hudson Bay Company
 until 1836; the operations of the Hudson Bay Company ~~were~~ in latitudes
 south of Fort Hall in the thirties, were confined to those of its
 itinerant trappers, and confined to country west of the Rocky Mountains.
- (2). That the name of the alleged murdered trader was not Boyer.
- (3). That contemporary history mentions no log house nor other
 house at Jimmy Camp prior to 1863.
- (4). That the earliest published version of the story, (based on a
 journal entry of 1842, and published in 1846), mentions but one man,
 and he Jimmy's servant and fellow-traveller, as concerned in the ^{supposed} ~~alleged~~
 murder.
- (5). That the alleged avenging of such murder of Jimmy by the
 Indians, fails of confirmation by that earliest version of the story,
 and by a reliable old pioneer of 1850, Jacob Beard, who was well ac-
 quainted with Jimmy Camp before the days of Denver, and has often
 heard the story of it from his father-in-law, Mr. George S. Simpson
 (a pioneer of 1840) and from Kit Carson (pioneer of 1826) and others.
- (6). That the supposed murder was only supposed, -- not known.

Another form of the Jimmy Camp story is that in which it appeared
 (1891) in Hall's "History of Colorado". It is an ^{elaborate} ~~interesting~~ and

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interesting counterpart of that in "Tales of the Colorado Pioneers",
and is as follows: *Hall, Vol. 3, p. 341*

"The first white inhabitant in El Paso County was Jimmy Hayes, from whom Jimmy's Camp takes its name. Here in 1833, Jimmy established himself as a trader. A small and lonely cabin was Jimmy's, on the bank of a river of sand. A grove of cottonwood fringed its edges, and in their branches the eagles built nests undisturbed. A spring supplied Jimmy with water, and his grain was ground between two meal-stones — Indian fashion. The Indians would not harm Jimmy, for when they saw from afar his bonfire, they knew it meant beads, axes, arms and fire water! Once a year Jimmy departed with his pelts, collected from Indian customers, and toiled across the plains, returning with fresh supplies. One night eleven wandering Mexicans came to Jimmy's cabin. They saw prospective booty and murdered him, his body falling across the bloodstained threshold. When a party of Indians came to the post their rage and grief knew no bounds. The link binding to civilization and whiskey had been severed. They interred Jimmy within his cabin walls below the earthen floor. Stealthily they dogged the Mexicans' trail, till, as the latter were one night slumbering beneath a cottonwood, the avengers pounced upon them, and the eleven were hung to as many limbs of the big tree. So perished the first white man who had a home in El Paso".

Of the objections that have been found to Mrs. Hill's form of the Jimmy Camp legend, the same or similar ones, except the first, apply to the story by Mr. Hall; for if not Boyer, still less was Hayes the name of the trader in question. In connection with Mr. Hall's statement that Jimmy's grain "was ground between two meal-stones — Indian fashion", it should be noted that Jimmy Camp spring, like the creek in its vicinity, afforded both wood and water, and in aboriginal days was likely to have been a favorite camping ground, not only of the wild tribes, but also of the metate-using Pueblo Indians ^{and Spanish Mexicans} of northern New Mexico, who are known to have roamed these parts in those days on hunting and trading excursions. It is only to be expected, therefore, that metates should be found — and I have myself found them — in that vicinity.

The City Annual of Colorado Springs for 1901-'02, contains the following:

"So far as is known the first white man to make his home in this region was a trapper named James Hayes, after whom the section called 'Jimmie Camp', about twenty-five [sic] miles east of the city, is named. The tradition is that he was killed by Mexicans, and the

Indians in turn killed them out of revenge".

This brief account, which is essentially a curtailment of that by Hall, forms in the said Annual, part of a chapter entitled, "A Brief Historical Sketch Prepared for the City Council by H.S. Rogers", etc.; but this part of the sketch at least was not written by him, but by Mrs. Gilbert McClurg, who informed the present writer that she thought she had obtained her data for the Jimmy Camp tradition, in part at least, from Mr. Joseph Humphrey.

Desiring to get all possible light on the story, the writer subsequently interviewed Mr. Humphrey, who related the following version of it, the source of which he had read, he thought, about 1878 or '79, in some paper published in Denver. He could no longer remember the name of the paper, but had a vivid recollection of the story as he had read it, which he related as follows:

"The story is, that an Irishman called Jimmy — it seems to me it was Jimmy Ryan — used to go back east twice a year and buy a lot of cheap goods — calicoes, beads, etc. — and bring them to Jimmy Camp to trade with the Indians for furs. On arriving at his camp, he would go to a high point in the vicinity and build a signal fire to let the Indians know of his return; and they would then come from all directions and trade with him. On one occasion he returned and made his signal fire, and the Indians came and found only his corpse, and that he had been killed and robbed of his goods. The Indians followed the trail of his murderers, who proved to be Mexicans, and avenged Jimmy's death by killing them".

To still further show the diversity of beliefs about Jimmy and Jimmy Camp, briefer statements concerning them are here introduced ~~from~~ from a few Colorado pioneers. These statements, except the first, were made verbally to the writer, and recorded in writing at the time ~~when they were made.~~

In a footnote on page 453 of the profusely annotated edition of "The Expeditions of Zebulon Montgomery Pike" published by Francis P. Harper in 1895, — which is far and away the best edition of Pike's explorations, and quite too little known to the inhabitants of the Pike's Peak region, — the late Dr. Elliott Coues, its editor, wrote, "I am told by Mr. Maguire* that 'Jimmy Camp' — now the name of a

*William M. Maguire, subsequently governor of Colorado. — W.W.C. creek above said — was a traditionally well-known place where one 'Jimmy' had a small trading outfit, mainly for the Utes; he was killed by the Plains Indians".

The late Mr. Amos H. Terrell, who built a house for Mr. Marmaduke

Green at Jimmy Camp in 1863, told the writer in 1902 that he always understood that Jimmy Camp was named after a "Mexican" who had a trading post there. He did not remember seeing any remains or certain indications of such a trading post, though it almost seemed to him that there was an old log or two there. Mrs. Terrell had understood that the man was not a Mexican.

Mrs. Anna E. France, (who for several years in the seventies lived at the Jimmy Camp place with her husband, the late Mr. Matt France, then owner of it,) said in 1902, that her understanding was that Jimmy had had a trading post there.

In the latter year also, Mr. E. W. Roberts, who came to Colorado City in 1860, said that he thought he had heard that Jimmy Camp was named from a man who camped there and took sick and died.

Mr. David McShane, a Colorado pioneer of 1860, said in 1902, that he had always heard that Jimmy Camp was named after an Irishman, Jimmy, who had a camp there for hunting antelope, only a few years before 1860. He was not aware that Jimmy was killed or had died there.

Mr. O.H.P. Baxter, of Pueblo, related to the writer ~~him~~ in 1903, that in going from Denver to South Park, by way of the "Cherokee" or Old Divide Trail and ^{Ute Pass} ~~in December, 1858~~, he saw at Jimmy Camp a rather recent looking grave, with a board at the head of it, bearing approximately the following inscription: "Jimmy _____ . Wrote to death, May 3, 1858". He stated that he remembered the newness of the grave especially from the fact that some of his party thought that perhaps it had been made as a blind, to throw travellers off from the scent of a "cache" of goods, and they discussed the expediency of digging it up, to see if anything valuable was concealed there, but finally decided not to do so.

Both before and after the writer's interview with Mr. Baxter, Mr. Anthony Bott, another well-known Colorado pioneer of 1858*, independ-

Footnote

*Mr. Bott ~~was~~ camped and hunted on and around what was to be the site of Colorado City, with a small number of companions, ~~in the fall of 1858~~, before that town was located, the party making their headquarters ~~in~~ in a small hunting cabin on Glen Byrie creek, or Camp creek; and he was, in 1859, one of the founders of the town, of which he has ever since been one of the most progressive and public-spirited citizens.

ently recalled seeing the grave at Jimmy Camp in that year, and independently quoted, as part of the inscription on its head-board, the words "Jimmy" and "Prose to death". Mr. Bott stated that he had understood that the person buried there was one of Captain Marcy's men.*

Footnote

*The expedition of Captain Marcy and Colonel Loring had lost one man on the divide and one on the south slope of the latter, on the Old Divide Trail (that goes by Jimmy camp) at the beginning of May, 1858.

From the stories and statements thus collected, we find Jimmy

generally "an Irishman", but sometimes "a Mexican"; we find his name variously given as "Jimmy Boyer", ~~and~~ "Jimmy Hayes", and "Jimmy Ryan"; we learn that he was a Hudson Bay Company trader of 1833, an independent Indian trader from the East, an 1858er of Captain Marcy's command, and an antelope hunter of a few years before 1860; we hear that he built an Indian trading house of logs at Jimmy Camp, and that he had there merely a camp for hunting antelope; we are told that he was killed by the Plains Indians, and again that he was murdered by a party of eleven Mexicans, or by Mexican guerrillas: all of which is, to say the least, a little perplexing, and most of which is not true.

From the testimony of ^{Messrs.} ~~Mr.~~ Bott and Baxter, it is certain that there was a grave, comparatively new, at Jimmy's Spring in 1858. All the known data confirm Mr. Bott's understanding that it was the grave of one of Marcy's men; it was, indeed, probably that of the Mexican herdsman who was frozen to death in following south from Squirrel creek and trying to recover the stock that had broken away ^{in the blizzard,} from the military camps of Marcy and Loring at Black Squirrel and Point of Rocks. The suspicions of the Baxter party, that there was some sort of a hoax connected with the inscription on the head-board of the grave at Jimmy Camp, was probably correct in one respect; namely, that the person buried there, was neither a nor the Jimmy, though he doubtless froze to death and was buried on or about the date given in the inscription. The writing of his name as "Jimmy", was probably a joke of the soldiers or military employees who buried him, perpetrated in view of the fact that the spring and camp already bore the name of some unknown Jimmy.* The name of this Mexican herdsman may not even

*Loring's journal entry of April 28, 1858, (the day before the beginning of the great storm), mentions the place as "Jimmy's Spring"; and the pioneer, Jake Beard, told the writer that it had long borne Jimmy's name. "Jack" Wright, a member of the "Lawrence Party" of ~~the~~ have been known to those who buried ~~him~~ him; or if known, may have been, to tongues American, difficult of pronunciation or spelling; in either of which events, they would have been the more likely to ~~name~~ facetiously label him "Jimmy", for the edification of future passers-by. At all events, it is clear that the Mexican's name was not "Jimmy", as that is not a Spanish name; and the only Jimmy of the expedition, who did perish in that storm, was the quartermaster's teamster, James Fagin, who belonged to Loring's detachment, and died and was buried at Point of Rocks, (a camp subsequently called, on that account, "Fagin's Grave"), 20 miles north of Jimmy Camp, as related in our chapters on Marcy's expedition and the Old Divide Trail.

It was therefore not for a Jimmy of Marcy's expedition, that Jimmy's Spring, or Jimmy Camp, was named.

1858. informed the writer that when that party was returning from Fort Garland and the placers of Sangre de Cristo creek, and camped at this spring, on or about the 5th of September of that year, the Mexicans used the term "Jimmy Camp" as the name of the place.

Footnote