

Shortly after noon, Sunday, April 10, the body of invaders, minus their wagons and supplies, reached the T. A. Ranch on Crazy Woman Creek and, without an instant's delay, started building fortifications and digging rifle pits.

In a bend of Crazy Woman Creek, some dozen miles from Buffalo, the ranch buildings of the T. A. were situated. These buildings, well and strongly made, were of logs, dressed to about six by eight inches and laid practically flat. Thus, they were almost bullet proof. The house, ice house, and barns were all built in the same manner, so, as I said above, the buildings, to the black powder guns of the day, were really secure fortifications.

But to the invaders, human life (their own) was precious, so from extra logs, of which plenty were available, breastworks of a suitable height were erected without and on the north and east end, where the banks of Crazy Woman Creek allowed a close approach by armed deputies. Rifle pits were dug and all preparations made for a regular siege. The so-called "fort" was erected west of the stables, which together with hay stacks, were almost in the center between house and fort, a little to the north and west of the main dwelling.

Loop holes were cut in the logs, both in the fort and in the breastworks surrounding the cabin. Dirt was also piled against the walls and all together, they formed a strong and well nigh invulnerable defense, so long as food and ammunition should hold out. Of water, there would be no dearth. Crazy Woman Creek was handy and if cut off from this, wells could be easily sunk and at a few feet in depth could be depended upon to supply all demands.

Ammunition was fairly plentiful. Every man had been liberally supplied on leaving the wagons, and of course, plenty would be at the ranch house. Food was a different proposition, as they were compelled to depend on the limited supply

stored at the T. A. This, plentiful enough for ordinary times, would rapidly fail with more than two score additional mouths to feed.

Still they were undisturbed. Full dependence could be placed on their friends outside. The Association was ready to rush additional men to their assistance, and always, they had senators Warren and Carey, and Acting Governor Barber to fall back on. The Association, as subsequent events proved, failed them, but time also proved that their dependence on, and belief in Carey, Warren and Barber, was fully justified.

The evening of April 10 found them in fair spirits. Momentarily, they looked for the appearance of the Association's one hundred and fifty men with loads of supplies, food, ammunition and the dynamite with which they planned on "Blowing Buffalo to Hell," as Canton forcefully expressed it. Thus, secure in faith, which forthcoming events justified, a quiet night was spent by all within the fortifications.

When we say "quiet night," we wish to be understood as referring to "outside attacks." Nightly, while we were with them and doubtlessly every succeeding night, gambling was carried on with a high hand. It took the united efforts of Smith and Canton to keep them from blood-letting. Smith, as I think I have already said, was out in charge of the Texan hirelings while Canton "lorded it" over the Colorado and Wyoming volunteers. But for the iron hand of Smith and Canton, nightly the hired ruffians had been at each other's throats. Too bad this could not have happened and the law of the different states have been saved subsequent legal action.

On the morning of Monday, April 11, the invaders awoke to find themselves surrounded by a force of some two hundred deputies. Before evening, these were increased in number until almost four hundred men, grim, stern and determined, hung out of range, entirely about the fortifications. These men, in the absence

of Sheriff Angus, were commanded by two able and efficient deputies, E. U. Snider and "Arapahoe" Brown.

The crowd of settlers, angry and sullen from the start, was further incensed at the arrival of Sheriff Angus with the report of the shooting of Champion and the burning of Ray's body. Angus had made the remarkable ride, to and from the K. C. Ranch, one hundred and twenty miles, in the space of fourteen hours. When Angus told of conditions at the K. C., loud curses broke from the lips of the maddened and infuriated crowd. Many of the invaders, though sheltered by breast works and rifle pits, shook and trembled as they visioned their future, should outside friends fail them.

Early Monday morning, the invaders opened the fight by firing on a body of the deputies stationed some hundred yards up the hill and over-looking the T. A. From then on things moved briskly. An almost continuous fire was kept up until the surrender to the troops from Ft. McKinney.

Monday night, frequently relieved, the deputies worked digging rifle pits and erecting breast works. These were dug and built on each side of Crazy Woman Creek, in order to entirely surround the invading forces. Five of these pits were on the north and west side of Crazy Woman and the balance of them, five more, on the east and south. In these were stationed, before daylight, a total of almost three hundred and seventy-five men. Three hundred and seventy two, to be exact, posted as follows: Pit #1, 40 men; Pit #2, 97 men; Pit #3, 10 men at the west. Pit #4, 64 men; Pit #5, 23 men on the north. Pit #6, 15 men; Pit #7, 20 men; Pit #8, 42 men on the east. Pit #9, 36 men; Pit #10, 25 men on the south. These men, when daylight broke on the morning of Tuesday, April 12, commanded and held the situation. So close together were they that it would have been impossible for anyone to slip, unseen, between them.

With each party went chosen shots, picked marksmen who were ready and willing to avenge gallant Nick Ray and fearless Nate Champion. All we asked was the chance to look through the double sights at a native moron, or a hired Texan assassin. In the largest of these defenses, some rods north-west of the buildings, in company with 95 other men, Solon and I were stationed.

All day the eleventh, and again all day the twelfth, the shooting continued. We had no cannon. None could be secured outside of Ft. McKinney and these the commandant, presumably under orders from "higher up", refused to lend the sheriff. Therefore, "necessity being the mother of invention", it was decided to build a movable fort or breast work, to load this with dynamite, of which plenty had been found in the captured wagons, push it down against the fortifications and then, once close enough, first lighting the fuses, throw the dynamite over the walls and into the mass of the invaders.

To E. U. Snider and gallant Arapahoe Brown belong, unquestionably, the credit for this invention. They were the first to suggest the thing and, in the main, the ones who did the most toward carrying it out.

For this "movable fort" or "go devil" as we called it, the running gears of the wagons captured from the invaders, were taken. These, three and one quarter Arp & Hammond wagons, were placed, after the boxes had been removed, side by side some dozen feet apart. Thus placed, the running gears were securely fastened together; then, upon and projecting over the rear ends, a strong bulwark of logs were fastened. Of these logs, six to eight inches in diameter, two thicknesses were so laid that the outer layer completely hid and covered the cracks on the inside logs. Thus, as will be readily seen, the rear of the wagons formed the front of the bulwark. The total height was six feet and its extreme width, or length, was more than twice as much. In this was placed several loop-holes and, for added security, baled hay was piled about. This hidden and sheltered, it was planned to roll the "engine of destruction" down upon the entrenched cattlemen and when once

near enough to the fort, toss the dynamite, already prepared with cap and fuse, over the walls.

A half dozen men could, slowly, move this instrument of destruction, or rather, "Go-Devil" as it was affectionately called, over the ground. As it would shelter and protect, easily, from thirty five to forty men, the man-power necessary for its propulsion would be ample and adequate.

Everything was in readiness and we had just started the go-devil along on its road when loud bugle calls brought to our attention the fact that the soldiers were in sight. All efforts now ceased and the go-devil came to a stand-still some one hundred to one hundred and fifty yards from its starting point.\*

The ranchers welcomed the arrival of the soldiers, greeting them with loud and hearty cheers in spite of the fact that, coming as they did, it saved from their just wrath, the entrenched murderers. Had the soldiers delayed a few hours longer, Johnson County would have avenged, promptly and thoroughly, the dastardly murder of Champion and Ray.

The well-armed men, stationed in the rifle pits, were prepared to shoot down like the skulking coyotes they were, such of the bloody assassins as might escape the exploding dynamite and seek refuge in flight.

No one had been seriously injured in the two days' battle. Concealed, protected and sheltered as were both parties, behind log breastworks and in snug rifle pits, the bullets passed whistling overhead, or else imbedded themselves harmlessly within logs and dirt.

Several times men on each side narrowly escaped death or serious injury. Once Canton, recklessly exposing himself, missed by a mere hairsbreadth. Charlie, as I have said, was a vile shot. Had his aim been as good as his intentions, Canton's end would have come some thirty odd years before it did and he would have

died the death he ((at the time at least) so justly deserved, taken hence by an avenging bullet, from the hands of the defenders of law and order. As it was, Charlie's bullet knocked the hat from his head. Before others could do a better job, Canton dropped out of sight and, sensible man that it proved him, in some ways at least, out of sight he remained until the surrender.

It was a little after sun-up on the morning of Wednesday, the thirteenth, when Colonel J. J. VanHorn, Commander of Fort McKinney, with three troops of cavalry, came into camp. Captain Parmalee, Governor Barber's aid-de-camp was along with the soldiers. They were now joined by Sheriff Angus and together, Colonel VanHorn, his staff, Captain Parmalee, and Sheriff Angus, under a flag of truce, approached the fort and demanded its surrender.

Major Wolcott, Commander in Chief of the invaders, replied, "We'll surrender to you, Colonel VanHorn, but not to that man, (pointing to Sheriff Angus), never!" Continuing he said (we repeat his words as related by Angus and as published by the newspaper correspondents with the party, all this was, of course, out of our hearing), "I've never seen him before but from what I've heard of him we will die right here, before we will surrender to him." He further stated, "He has the best of us now, our plans have miscarried, but it will be different. We'll beat him yet."

There can be little question but what these were Major Wolcott's words. They were so repeated by Angus and so reported by the press correspondents. They have never been contradicted. Indeed, for several years, threats were openly made of returning and completing the job begun when Champion and Ray were taken care of.

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