

HOW UNCLE DAVE FOUND GOLD AT POWDER RIVER

A Promoter Told Him a False Story, but It Was His Making Nevertheless.

A group of us were sitting in one of the lawyers' offices in what is called "Lawyers Row," in Baker City recently. The subject under discussion was a trial for horsestealing of a notorious stock rafter. "What will the jury do about it, Uncle Dave?" inquired one of the lawyers. "Will they bring in a verdict of guilty, do you think?"

Uncle Dave brought the front legs of his chair down on the floor, he had been leaning back against the wall, gave the floor an emphatic rap with his cane and said: "If it was anybody else they wouldn't convict 'em on that evidence, but it being him, I think the verdict will be guilty. Though the evidence is not conclusive I don't suppose anybody doubts that he took the horse all right. He made a poked brand of it and changed the I C to H O by picking out the hair to make it look like an old brand."

While the rest of the group went over the evidence and discussed the reliability of the testimony I vainly groped in my mind for the association of that name "Uncle Dave." Suddenly the whole thing flashed upon me. This keen-eyed, gray-bearded, white-haired old man who answered to the name of Uncle Dave must be Uncle Dave Littlefield, of whom I had read as the pioneer of Baker County.

OLD UNCLE DAVE. Taking the first opportunity I said to him: "Is your name David Littlefield?" He turned his keen gray eyes on me inquisitively and said: "That's the name I was christened, but I've been Uncle Dave for a good many years past here in Baker." My evident interest in the early history of the discovery of gold was the open sesame to the treasures of his varied experiences. Uncle Dave is as interesting a character as Eben Holden or David Harum, and quite as original and quaint. He deserves to be discovered by some author who wields a pen capable of doing him justice. He is full of old conceits like "Whittaker's" business. He is a perfect storehouse of pioneer anecdotes and reminiscence. He is witty, but his wit has a kindly flavor. He does not scruple to tell a good story merely because the joke is on himself.

His interesting story. "Well, to start at the beginning of the story, I came out to California in 1850. My father, who came in '49, sent back not only good reports but a sack of dust and nuggets, so I went to California. Fifty-eight found me in Fraser River and in 1861 my partner, Henry Griffin, and myself, struck out for the Oro Fino diggings in Washington Territory. We had gotten as far as Portland when we ran across two other 'farheads,' William Stafford and

G. W. Schriver. They had just come from Oro Fino and told us that there was nothing there. We decided to stay in Portland till we could hear of some good camp. "I was walking down the main street one day when I saw a little group of men gathered around a fellow who stood on a drygoods box at the edge of the sidewalk. He seemed to be preaching or selling something, so I walked over and joined the crowd. I listened a few moments and he kept speaking of the Blue Bucket mine. I had never heard of such a place. He said that the party of emigrants that Steve Meek—a brother of Joe Meek—had guided into Oregon in 1845 had, while looking for some lost cattle, picked up some large nuggets on one of the tributaries of the Malheur. He said they claimed they could have filled their blue water buckets full of the stuff if they had known that it was gold."

STORIES OF MINES. "Well, I stood there listening to his talk but not taking much stock in it, as he said he had been there himself and he could have made a stake if the Indians had not chased him out. With that he pulled out some nuggets and began passing them around for the crowd to inspect. He said he had secured the nuggets there and he wanted to go back with a party strong enough to keep the Indians away. The crowd was composed mostly of Web-foot farmers and they did not believe that there was a mine in the crowd. I said I was. He asked me to tell the crowd whether the nuggets were gold or not. I looked at them, hefted them, and said: "They certainly are, and a good quality of gold at that."

CHANCE TO GET RICH. "The fellow's name was Adams. Griffin and I talked it over. We were going to go somewhere and we thought here was a chance of getting into new and rich diggings. Griffin was 'nearly' 'nearly' 'nearly' miners in California. William Stafford and G. W. Schriver went in with us and with about 40 or 50 Web-footers we started for the Blue Bucket mine with Adams as guide. We were well equipped to fight Indians and to mine. Each of us had one riding horse and two packhorses. We took the Barlow wagon road across the Cascade Mountains, crossing the Des Chutes River where the Steve Meek party crossed it in 1845. We kept up the east side of the Des Chutes and followed up one of its tributaries to its headwaters. About this time a rumor spread through the company that Adams had never been to the Blue Bucket mines. We were in a dry and barren country, many of the farmers in our company had left their grain standing, thinking that they could afford to let it go unharvested if they could scoop up pockets full of nuggets. We questioned Adams closely. He maintained that he had been there.

"Through a young fellow named Bill Cranston, who Adams had claimed had been there with him when he had found the nuggets, we got a confession that

Adams had not been there. He said Adams had gotten him to tell that story so they could have a strong party with them to go out and hunt for the lost diggings.

ADAMS UNDER FIRE. "Well, we were all pretty mad at Adams' deception, especially the farmers, who had abandoned their crops to come on such a wild-goose chase. We gave him a week to find the diggings. After a week's hard traveling through a rough country we were still hunting. Some of the party wanted to lynch Adams, but a few of us, who were cooler-headed, persuaded them to give him a day's grace. He spent a pretty strenuous day and that night we set a watch on him as he had tried to escape the night before. We had been working toward the Malheur River country and were now near the headwaters of Burnt River. The night before, when Adams had tried to shoot him at once. We discussed the question till the middle of the forenoon, when we took a vote and decided to try him for his life. Griffin and I and Stafford and Schriver and some of the others wanted him loose. The majority, however, was for killing him.

A JURY SELECTED. "We selected a jury, appointed one of the party to defend him and one to prosecute him, and then began taking testimony. The testimony didn't help his reputation any. Young Cranston and the other two fellows from the valley failed to support any of his statements. On the whole it looked pretty black for him. The trial lasted all day and the jury debated the verdict all night. Well, as they brought in the strongest verdict I ever heard of. The decision was that he was guilty. His horse and all his equipment, including his gun, was to be taken from him. Without any food, firearms or blankets, he was to be escorted out of camp. He was to be allowed 25 minutes to get away and if, after the lapse of that time, he was in range, any one of the party had leave to shoot him. Before he left we had him sign a paper saying he was a liar and had deceived us.

"Well, now that the Blue Bucket mines were settled, most of the party wanted to lose no time getting back to the Willamette Valley to tend their crops and save them, if possible. We divided. One party started direct for the valley and the rest of us struck out to find the old emigrant road that we thought must lie north and east from where we were. The night after we separated I couldn't help thinking of Adams. Nary a gun to kill game with, no chance to defend himself from Indians or varmints. Not a bite to eat. No prospect of getting anything. I spoke to one of our party that night and told him I wished we could cache some grub for Adams. I hated to think of him starving to death. He told me not to mention it to the rest, but after dark he would go back and look for Adams. "He took some grub with him and left. Next morning I woke up and found him in

CALVIN HEILIG, Manager.

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ELSIE ESMOND.



WILLIAM BERNARD.

camp. When he got a chance he told me he had hunted nearly all night. He had finally found Adams, given him the food and arranged to leave grub at every camping place. Adams would follow us up and get it. We broached the subject and found no one was very anxious to kill Adams. We sent out, located Adams and brought him into camp. We let him travel with us.

"Our party wanted to travel slowly and prospect, but it was just the middle of October and the rest of the party was in a hurry to press along. We did not stop the pack train for dinner but always went into camp at 4 o'clock to give the animals a chance to graze and rest.

A COLOR OF GOLD. "We prospected and got colors on a creek afterwards called China Creek. We crossed the divide after leaving Burnt River and dropped down into Powder River. The Hudson Bay Company named that river Powder River because one of their trappers lost his powder in the stream. We crossed Blue Canyon, went over the ridge and, after crossing Elk Creek, went into camp. We took turns at cooking and in tending to the horses. There was four in one mess. I was on duty that week while Griffin, being his off week, put in his time prospecting. He dug a hole on a bar near camp, but didn't

get to bedrock. He told me he thought it was a good prospect and said he would like to stay if the rest of the party were not in such a hurry. Next morning Henry and I got up at daylight and put that hole down to bedrock. We panned the gravel on bedrock and got from 50 cents to a dollar a pan. That settled it. We had struck as good as the Blue Bucket diggings. We spent that day in measuring off claims. We gave Griffin the discovery claim and one more. The rest of us drew lots for the other claims. We gave Adams one also. We sunk holes on our claims, organized a mining district and got plans under way to divert the waters of Elk Creek into this gulch and named it Griffin's Gulch. All but Griffin, Stafford, Schriver and myself struck out for the valley to winter there. We four decided to stay by our claims and work them if possible. We rode to Walla Walla, taking our packhorses to get provisions for the winter. We tried to hire a man there to come in with a few extra packhorses to bring supplies. We couldn't get one for love or money. They told us it was madness for us to go back.

"We returned to Walla Walla after a series of adventures and told our story of the finding of the nuggets. Now, this is the history of the finding of gold in Powder River."

MORE CADETS FOR ANNAPOLIS. While Secretary Moody has not begun the preparation of his annual report, he has determined on the character of the recommendations to be made for an increase in the number of commissioned line officers.

This is regarded by Mr. Moody as the most important matter confronting the naval administration, and it will be treated as such in the report. He believes that an immediate increase in the commissioned personnel is necessary, but is not in favor of making appointments to the line from civil life. The only safe policy, in his opinion, is to pursue the slower, but more satisfactory, course of having all line officers educated at the Naval Academy. He will, therefore, recommend that each Senator and Representative be given the nomination of two midshipmen, instead of one each, as at present, and that the nominations shall be made by each Senator and by the Representative of every congressional district and the delegate in Congress from each territory, every three years.

Last year some measure of relief in the existing conditions of a shortage of line officers was afforded by Congress by providing that each Senator should have one nomination, the President of the United

States should have 15 instead of 10, and that the nominations should be made in each case every four years instead of every six years. Up to that time Senators had not the right to make nominations.

Should Mr. Moody's recommendation be adopted the number of cadetships at the Naval Academy will be almost doubled. Under the law passed at the last session of Congress, the number of cadetships was increased to 48, distributed over four years. The new arrangement contemplates 97 cadetships distributed over three years. These figures apply to the increased representation of the House of Representatives elected on last Tuesday.

It is believed that with these additional cadets there will be enough line officers to care for all the ships in commission four years from now, including those under construction.—Washington Times.

PORTLAND-CHICAGO. Severely hours is the time of the O. R. & N. "Chicago-Portland Special" from Portland to Chicago, leaving every morning at 9 o'clock. Inquiry city ticket office, Third and Washington.

Queen Bee is indeed Queen of all Coast Drops. Sold by druggists and confectioners.