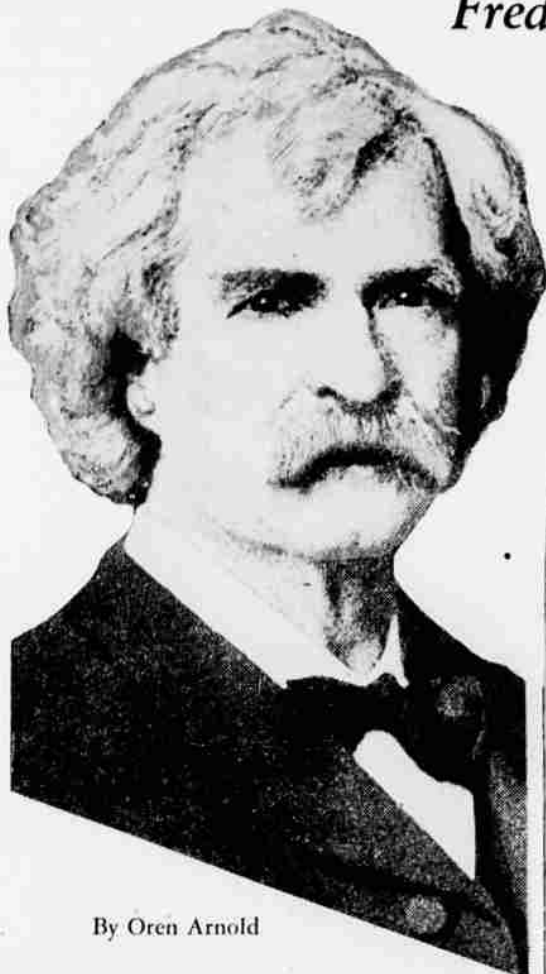


# U.S. Cavalry—"G-Men" Who Saved Him

Fred San Diego Rawson, Pioneer And Humorist, Has His Own Philosophy On How To Be Eighty!

← WHICH IS MARK TWAIN? →



By Oren Arnold

**G**ENEALOGISTS have never explained the close resemblance of two individuals who are not even distantly related.

In several instances two girls, born about the same time in different sections of the country will look so much alike as to be taken for identical twins. Their early background and experiences, scientists say, were probably very similar. Yet this only partially explains their remarkable resemblance. Still other cases have been known of boys—occasionally even bearing the same name!—who have passed as twins in everything except their fingerprints.

One famous example is that of an extraordinary soldier of fortune—Fred San Diego Rawson by name—a western pioneer who was recently voted by some 500 old timers in a reunion at Phoenix, Arizona, the "Mark Twain of the West." This nickname was really acquired many years ago because of Rawson's startling resemblance to the late Samuel L. Clemens—the real Mark Twain. And the group of pioneers, gathered at what for many of them may be a last meeting, agreed that their old compatriot was not only a perfect living replica of America's famous author—but ranked first as "the soul of honor and a fountain of fun, a westerner with a history and a philosophy surpassed by none." He may embellish tales with a fertile imagination occasionally, for the sake of a thrilled audience—but what old timers wouldn't?

But his striking likeness to Mark Twain mystifies scientists: Samuel Clemens was born in 1835, and San Diego Rawson some 22 years later. The early life of the two men was in no period the same—one lived in the Mother Lode country and the other went to Nome.

His 50 years have been packed with adventure, excitement and accomplishment. At present he is more interested in "the Hereafter an' what's comin'" than in glorious deeds of the past. But a story teller cannot refrain from bringing up memories, and San Diego Rawson draws from a vast accumulation of experiences. He worked for circuses, sought gold in Alaska, drove a team from Canada to Mexico, was captured by the Indians when five years old, and rescued by the U. S. Cavalry.

Most of San Diego Rawson's time in recent years has been spent in northern Arizona, but for half a century or so he was equally "at home" in San Diego, Denver, or Nome.

On any sunny sidewalk he can be seen regaling tourists with stories and wisdom of the West. In any group his personality is the dominant one. He usually wears a banded buckskin coat, and he is just as much at ease in a society tea party as in a prospectors' camp. In short, Rawson epitomizes exactly what most people refer to as a "character."

**T**HERE is much to be told about him, but let the bronzed old trailer first present his own "vital statistics."

**NAME:** "Frederick San Diego Rawson, and never been ashamed of it!"

**AGE:** "Jus' startin' on the home stretch of four score years. Ah! the tape ain't goin' to stop me!"

**ADDRESS:** "Where do I live? Where do I live? (He sports in contempt.) Don't you see me? My home is anywhere west of the Mississippi River!"

**BIRTHPLACE:** "Where am I from? (His brow wrinkles and he glares at the questioner.) "I don't take no great stock about where I was born and such. I figger it don't matter. At my age a man begins to ruminate on more important things."

**OCCUPATION:** "Well now, that's difficult to decide. In time, I have been what some men consider rich. Agin I feel richer now than I've ever been; and hav less of what you might call money."

"In time I have been called Indian scout. But I never scouted an Indian in my life! Wouldn't know how. Still, I have had a spell with the Redskins here and there. Prospected for gold some. Clown in a circus for a spell. Published some poetry and such. Odd jobs. Mined. Wagoned from Vancouver, B. C., to Tia Juana. Drove oxen from Colorado to the coast. Spent 60 years in the saddle. Can't lay claim to any husband profession. Never seemed to need any."

"Turn the calendar back—shift the stage setting from a sun-baked Phoenix hotel porch to a little town in Missouri shortly after the Civil War:

Excitement literally hums in the air. People have been astir for hours, and by 8 o'clock Jed Bartle will crack his whip over the lead team. Behind his ox wagon will be half a mile of oxen and mules, horses and dogs, wagons and provisions, sprinkled with 300 men, women and children. A significant chapter in American his-

tory is about to be enacted and, vaguely, the participants can sense it.

Scarcely 30 minutes before the starting hour, the adopted father of the little Rawson boys speaks to his wife. "It might be the thing to do," says he. "En they might strike it rich. Jed 'lowed he'd see to 'em. En turn 'em safe over to the Bishop in Salt Lake. Elf, some day, they should come back rich, we'd be mouty proud." The good gentleman himself had the longing to join the train.

Wherefore, at 8 o'clock exactly, five-year-old Fred Rawson sits astride one ox and his elder brother on its mate, their backs turned to the morning sun, their hearts at once awed over the leaving of foster parents and elated over the indefinite prospects of adventure and fun.

Several months later, an attacking band of Cheyenne warriors massacred the emigrants. Fred and his brother and two women were spared by the Cheyennes that day. Not one other lived to tell of the caravan's destruction, and of the four immediate survivors history now tells only of the little Rawson boy.

A year later the Cheyennes traded Freddie Rawson to the Arapahoes for five horses. Freddie was too small to be of much use, anyway. Shortly after that, U. S. Cavalry troops took the white boy from the Indians.

"Do you believe the Indians were as cruel and savage-like as history paints them, Mr. Rawson?" Some tourist inevitably asks.

"Well, now," he'll answer. "They doubtless was plenty cruel. I never was a Indian fighter, but I have known some."

"All in all I figger the Red Man is a pretty good sort, standing by his rights as he could see 'em."

"Considerin' that I was only seven when I was took from the Indians, I don't recollect every little detail of that particular episode. But I never was treated specially bad, ez I recall. Lookin' back now, I can figger sort of how I was insulted, not being valued at no more'n five little old range hosses."

**T**HE U. S. Cavalry troops who had reached Freddie Rawson had him returned to Missouri, and it is nearly ten years before young Rawson bobs up in the West again, this time as a taxidermist in Colorado Springs, Colorado. In the ensuing 60 years he has been to about every place worth while west of the Mississippi River, not excepting Alaska and Canada or Mexico, meeting with many failures and some successes, acquiring an education that no books could give,

developing a philosophy that now makes him pre-eminent among the old timers of the West.

"Don't think you're the first one to tell me I look exactly like Mark Twain," he'll shout at a new acquaintance. "I been told it before. But I can't figger that Mr. Twain ought to suffer for it."

Yarns he can spin by the hour. "Don't believe everything I tell," he'll say. "I have changed names some times, and taken a few other liberties, but mostly I write and tell of things as I saw them."

"I mind the story of the old hermit in the Klondyke gold rush. I joined it. Where one man out of a thousand struck it lucky and got rich in the California gold rush, one man in 50,000 got rich in Alaska. The sufferin' and the trials up there'll never be known. I'll never git over my part of it."

"You mentioned the story of the old hermit, Mr. Rawson," some listener will prompt him. "What happened to him?"

"Well, as you might say, it ain't much to it. The old man went hongry and worked and fought for years, seeking the gold and worshipin' it, as you might say. He lived alone for years, except for his pack mule, Jack. Then years and years later some other prospectors happened onto his cabin. The old coot had died alone, but before dyin' he had crawled to the fireplace and got a hunk of charcoal. On the inside of his door he had writ his last message: GOLD HID IN THE BUNK."

"And there in the bunk it was. Great bags of wealth he had dreamed and slaved and started and died for, and never got to enjoy."

"Oh, I've seen a deal of interestin' things, one way and another, in this west country."



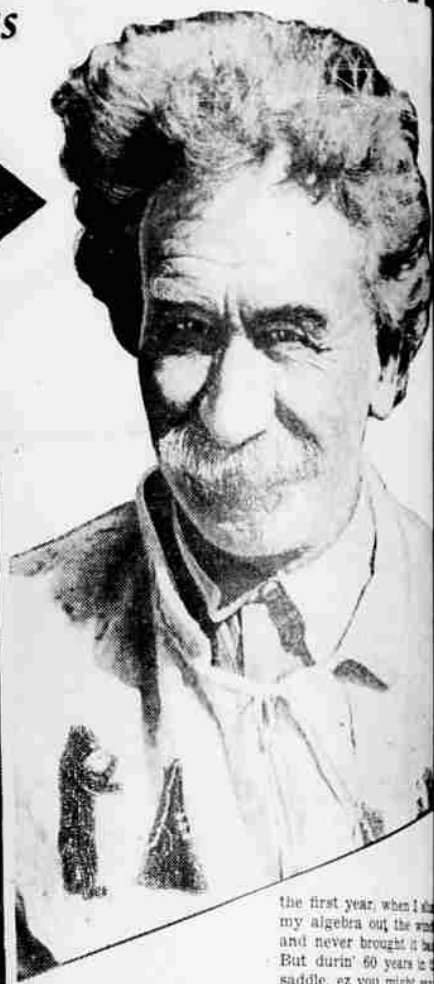
San Diego Rawson Talks Over the "Old Days" With Some Friends in Front of a Reminder of the Past, an Old Indian Trading Post.



Most Any Sunny Sunday Afternoon Will Find Mr. Rawson Sitting in Front of His Cabin Spinning Tales (Legendary and True!)

"We wasn't all for violence in the older days. Men and women and little children lived together in peace and safety. All in all, the old West wasn't no worse, maybe not as bad, as the country is today. Not near as many holdups and robberies as I read about now. The people in them days was just as good as any we have now."

And this last always is spoken with a vehemence that challenges contradiction. "We didn't have the advantages then we have now," he'll continue. "I personally graduated from school after



the first year, when I did my algebra out the window and never brought it back. But durin' 60 years in the saddle, ez you might say,

have never been without one or two good books. On whatever subject I could lay my hand onto.

"We had the same heart back in 1870 that we got now. Hearts don't change, unless the people do. Just the circumstances change, the people don't. They always had and feel and act alike. We was tryin' to solve this mystery of life back there; we're still at it."

"I don't hold to this idea of growin' old. I don't try to git caught at it. People grow old by desertin' their ideals, or never havin' any."

"In all the world there has never been born a type of men who had a broader, higher concept of the rights mankind than that developed in the men who crossed the savage and the great wild ranges between the Mississippi and Pacific."

Perhaps by way of explanation it is necessary to say that Frederick San Diego Rawson is an actor of no mean order. Actually, he is very well educated; writes an easy story with a wide vocabulary and correct grammatical usage. And in the intensity of his informal speeches, he will suddenly lapse from his normal western dialect into a flow of academic oratory, beautiful and effective, ably surprising in a man clad as if he were on a buffalo. Withal, he presents the phenomenon of an up-to-date, keen-witted student who has also experienced and chronicled the pioneers' adventures and hardships.

He has an Indian skull, flat in front and bulging behind, and most any sunny Sunday afternoon will find him sitting in front of his cabin spinning yarns (legendary and true) about that skull with, say, one to a dinner for attentive audience.

"What is your idea of a daily routine?" a lady from New Jersey asked Mr. Rawson.

He answered without hesitation.

"A little nod and a little smile. A little cheer and a little peace. A little 'bull' (as the boys would say) And you've laid out a pretty day."

And this is some of the kind philosophy of San Diego Rawson. "Mark Twain of the West"—a rivaled story teller, adventurer and sage—whose gentle wit is freely and generously offered to friend and stranger alike.

**"I WANT AN ANSWER YES OR NO?"**



"It's yes, of course! You know I go for this Beeman's flavor. I like the neat and nifty airtight package that keeps it absolutely fresh-tasting. And of course everybody knows Beeman's is good for digestion."

**Beeman's AID DIGESTION...**