

DEADSHOT

How the Name of a Mining
Town Was Changed

By F. TRACY EDMONDS

Deadshot deserved its name. It was one of those mining camps that existed half a century ago in which was gathered the toughest population on the face of North American soil. One visiting it now would see an attractive town with paved streets and sidewalks, rows of neat dwellings and spires piercing the branches of shade trees.

But fifty years ago—then there was a different picture. There was but one street, and that was a dirt road lined with log cabins and board shanties. The most pretentious of these were drinking and gambling dens. There was no law nor semblance of law. A few respectable women had gone to the place, but at the time this story opens they were preparing to leave.

The citizens of Deadshot had encouraged the coming of the women, hoping that their presence would have a salutary effect on the rougher element, for the most brutal affairs were perpetrated by a few individuals, and now since within a week after their arrival the ladies were about to turn their backs on Sodom a meeting was called with a view to the adoption of measures that might change their resolution.

The meeting took place in the Empire saloon.

Pete Henshaw arose and said that he had heard one of the women say that if the citizens of Deadshot wanted to become civilized the first thing they must do was to build a church. He therefore proposed that a collection be taken up for that purpose.

No objection being made to the proposition, the hat was passed, and when the offering was summed up the value of all the donations of various kinds, including a dirty pack of cards, was found to be a dollar and fifty-six cents. The movement was a failure.

Cy Allen then made a proposition that met with much more favor. He suggested that the first man who shot another should be fined a thousand dollars to build the church and that a committee of three of the quickest and surest shots be appointed to see when the transgression occurred that the transgressor put up the amount at once or suffer the consequences.

It did not occur to any one to ask what the intended consequences were. All understood at once that the delinquent was to be riddled. The motion was put and carried, the committee whose duty it was to see that when the fine needed for the church was due it should be paid was appointed, and the chairman named another to go to the ladies and ask them to defer their departure until it could be determined whether the action taken would be effective. The latter consented to give time for a trial, and Deadshot waited for the man who was to build the church.

Pools were made as to who would be the offender. Arkansas Jack, Pete Skinner and Andy Grimshaw were the favorites. Andy Grimshaw was the winner, shooting his man down in cold blood within two days after the passage of the resolution. The committee appointed for the collection of the funds called on him and asked him to fork over. He laughed them to scorn.

There was a fusillade, and he fell pierced with three bullets. One of the committee was wounded, but not seriously.

The next man to lay himself liable to the fine was Arkansas Jack. But, taking warning by the fate of his predecessor, he "lit out" before the committee had time to pay him a visit. Results thus far were favorable. One of the worst men in the town had been eliminated by the bullet; another had gone of his own accord. The only unfortunate circumstance was that no fine had been collected for the building of the church.

Pete Skinner, one of the pool favorites, still remained in the town and above ground. He had disappointed his backers in not turning out a winner and was therefore disappointed himself. The reason he was inactive and unharmed was that he had not succeeded in picking a quarrel with any one before his colleagues had sinned and sutured. He was disgusted with the working of the "city ordinance," for he had no mind to give up his favorite amusement and had no money with which to pay for indulging in it.

The ladies were only partially satisfied with the results of the effort to reform the town, and so long as Skinner remained there above ground they had no confidence in a reformation. Two left, and the others began packing up. The citizens were hoping that Skinner would kill some one and give them an excuse to eliminate him. But Skinner got wind of their desires and kept the peace.

There were three young men in Deadshot who had been attracted to three young women who were getting ready to move. These men owned property in Deadshot and not only wished to keep the girls, but to reconstruct the town so that they could induce capital to come in and develop what they believed would give them a fortune. Pete Skinner stood not only between them and the girls, but between them and pecuniary success. They met one evening to discuss the situation.

Dave Perkins suggested that they draw lots as to which one of their number should shoot Skinner, the other two to chip in \$500 apiece to pay the slayer's fine. But Pete was dreadfully quick on the trigger and extremely watchful. He might kill the man to whom the lot fell. If so, what next? Would one of the others take up the fight? And, if the second fell, would the other go the same way? This ending of the conspiracy would be barren of results.

It looked as if the only reliable way of getting rid of Skinner was to lay in wait for him and shoot him in the back. But the parties concerned not only shrank from an unfair proceeding even with an incubus on the town like Skinner, but knew that to perpetrate such a scheme would bring upon them the contempt of their fellow citizens.

One of the trio, Gus Harbeson, volunteered to pit himself against Skinner. He was to give Skinner cause to kill him. This looked very unselfish, very noble, on the part of Harbeson, but he said that he was intending to try to get an advantage over his enemy that would put him under ground instead of himself. He didn't say how he proposed to accomplish this desirable result, for it was not necessary that he should do so, and his plans might leak out.

Harbeson had been considered the black sheep of his family. He had run away from home when a boy and entered the service of a telegraph company. From there he had gone to sea. After two years before the mast he drifted west in a prairie schooner and now at twenty-two found himself a miner. Young and strong, he feared

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nothing. Besides, he was in love and had suddenly become sensible of the fact that he should do something to counteract his record, that his sweet-heart might be the more inclined to listen to his suit.

Dave Perkins told the girls that a movement was on foot to eliminate Skinner, begging them to wait awhile, and they consented. A week passed, and Skinner was still alive. The young ladies resumed their packing. The citizens who had hoped for much when they had adopted the plan for building the church were discouraged. Skinner seemed to be gathering courage, for he was heard to say that if he did lay himself liable to the fine he didn't believe the committee would dare in his case to attempt its collection. This indicated that he had prepared for a desperate fight and that some of the committee must be sacrificed in order to get rid of him.

The despondency was at bottom level when one morning Skinner emerged from the Empire saloon and, turning eastward, sauntered down the street. He literally bristled with weapons, for he understood that his fellow townsmen wished to get rid of him, and he was resolved that if they did some of them must first bite the dust. There were a number of persons out. But this morning instead of looking at the walking fortress they were staring in the opposite direction at Gus Harbeson, who a few moments after Skinner's appearance had emerged from his own cabin with a very remarkable hat on his head.

"By gum," exclaimed a citizen, "ef Harbe hain't got one o' them machines the hatters in big cities put on a man's head to take his measure!"

Harbeson walked down the street, receiving the jeers of the citizens. Skinner looked at him with the rest, and the desperado's face broke into a grin. As he and Harbeson drew near together Skinner called out:

"What y' makin' a guy o' y'self that a-way for?"

"Who says I'm makin' a guy o' myself?" retorted Harbeson.

"Y' know y're doin' it y'self," replied Skinner bristling.

"You say that again!" cried Harbeson angrily.

The bystanders began to get out of

the way. There was not a sign of a weapon about Harbeson, but they knew that if he kept up that kind of talk with Skinner a bullet would go through him and might hurt some one else.

"What y' mean sassin' me that way?" snarled Skinner, putting his hand to his hip.

The band of Harbeson's hat was pierced with little round holes. From one of these holes came a puff of smoke. Skinner staggered, put his hand to his hip and got a revolver midway between his waist and his chin when Harbeson inclined his head about five degrees, several simultaneous puffs and reports followed, and Skinner's arm was shattered. Harbeson then turned his head in a horizontal circle. There were more explosions through his miniature portholes, and Skinner fell dead.

By this time every man, woman and child in Deadshot was out of doors to learn what was going on. When those nearest the scene of action saw what had happened they raised a joyful shout, which was taken up by those who were next and borne on down the thoroughfare till it reached the limits of the town. Then all crowded around Harbeson to examine the hat fort he wore on his head. He showed them a battery in the small of his back connected by wires with little guns in his headpiece, while other wires ran down his arms, ending in circuit keys in his hands.

Skinner was buried the same day, and the citizens, after celebrating their relief from gun rule, held a meeting at which they levied a tax on themselves for funds to build the church. The three lovers and their girls were married at a triple wedding, and the name of the town was changed from Deadshot to Harbeson.

Reassured.

"Well, Bess, you needn't worry about that brother of yours in America. The paper says 'our foreign relations continue to be excellent.'"—London Illustrated.

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