

# JAUNT INTO 'BAD LANDS' OLD NEW MEXICO THRILLS

### Poet Reynolds Takes His Readers on Flyer to Outlaw Land of Lincoln County in Early Days

By J. C. REYNOLDS

I mentioned once before how Bill Rogers and myself took a trip around in Lincoln county, New Mexico, for six weeks, but did not go into details. The spot we called home at that time was in the beautiful Whohatoya valley at the foot of the Spanish peaks. Leaving our horses, saddles and outfits, we started out afoot, intending to beat our way on the railroad. It was considered almost a crime those days to pay railroad fare, when the money could be used so much more profitably in other ways. The railroads were charging from eight to 10 cents per mile, which to us appeared to be plain robbery. Taking \$150 apiece, we beat our way to Raton, N. M. Then we walked a few miles till we encountered a section gang, who told us they were going to Otero with a hand-car and would give us a lift.

Otero was nothing but a section house, part of which served as a depot, and a water tank about 200 yards distant down the track. We bought our supper there and learned a freight train would be along shortly after dark. When it arrived we were hidden behind the tank. The engine took water, but the train did not start and, observing several men talking on the platform by the depot, I became suspicious and, running up there, I sneaked close enough to hear one of the section men telling the conductor there were a couple of hobos waiting to beat his train to Springer. He immediately walked the full length of the train clear to the engine on our side, looking closely everywhere with his lantern, while one of his brakemen did the same on the other side. Going back to the caboose, they stood on the lower step when the train started, flashing their lanterns ahead to be sure they would see us if we tried to get on.

When one-third of the train had gone by and was getting up considerable speed, Bill and I made a quick dash from behind the water tank and climbed in between two gondola cars in such fast time that they failed to see us. We rode there several hours till we reached Springer, which was where we were going. Springer was a typical cattle town of a few hundred people, with a liberal sprinkling of Mexicans. One of the prettiest places imaginable. Several good stores, a hotel or two, bakery, three saloons and many nice residences. Nearly all the buildings along the main street had steel shutters over the windows and when the cowboys started shooting up the town, as they frequently did, the citizens simply retired into their houses or stores, closed the shutters and let 'em shoot. No hard feelings about it. Took it as a matter of course.

Bill and I looked the town over next day and, finding there was no church there as yet, decided it might be a right lively little place. Our previous experience with western towns had convinced us that nothing would so quickly kill the life and pep of one as the introduction of the church element into it. We didn't have to wait long for plenty of excitement. A young cowboy had been arrested for some trivial offense by the city marshal and lodged in the jail, which was a substantial two-story brick building on one of the side streets. Some circumstances connected with the arrest had peeved the cowboy element in that section and Dick Rogers, the best-known cowboy outlaw in that country, had gathered a few friends and started for Springer to secure his release. Joined by others on the way, the bunch numbered about 40 when they hit town that morning.

This Dick Rogers was a top cow-hand, crack bronc-buster, lightning six-gun artist and the only man I ever knew who could plat a lariat with 64 strands in it. He had killed a few men and had a \$2000 reward on his head, though this never seemed to bother him in the least. He was a natural leader and had hundreds of warm personal friends throughout the cattle country. After a few drinks Dick said, "Well, boys, let's go up and get our little pal out of jail." Reaching the jail, everybody lined up on the opposite side of the street and stopped. Raising both hands into the air to show his intentions were peaceable, Dick started across the street to talk to the jailer, whose name was Hixenbaugh and who was standing behind the grated door of the jail with a shotgun in his hands.

Some time before this Dick had killed Hixenbaugh's brother and no doubt the jailer thought this

## Here's 'Hangman'



Howard "Hangman" Cantonwine who meets Bob "Eecoo!" Kruse in Mack Lillard's armory show Thursday night of this week. Cantonwine, ex-football star, gained his nickname by making the tying of adversaries in the ropes a regular habit. Bob Kruse it was who last week downed his former wrestling teacher, Ted Thye, who meant well but mentored too well. The show, starting at 8:30 sharp, will be a double main event, featuring Texas Wright, whirlwind from Dallas, and Chief Little Wolf, in first half of the card.

was an excellent opportunity to get square for, as Dick came close. Hixenbaugh gave him a load of buckshot square in the breast. Dick fell dead and he had been so close to the gun that the discharge had set his clothes on fire.

Red River Tom, another famous character of that region, who also had a reward on his head of \$1200, raised his hands in the air and started across the street to put out the fire in Dick's clothes. Hixenbaugh waited till he got close and gave him the other barrel. Tom fell dead with his clothes on fire also. Another young puncher started across to put out the fire in the clothes of the two dead men and Hixenbaugh, grabbing another shotgun, killed him too. Then pandemonium started. For three days and nights the jail was besieged and everything that was seen to move inside of it was shot at. The grapevine telegraph was working and every hour saw reinforcements of cowboys arriving to take part in the riot. The city marshal, who had arrested the cowboy and started all the trouble, simply vanished. No one ever knew what became of him. Finally troops had to be brought in from Las Vegas to restore order and rescue Hixenbaugh from the vengeance of the mob. After everything had quieted down, I was offered the job of city marshal, which I promptly refused. Bill Rogers was later invited to accept the position, but turned it down just as quickly. However, it was taken by a young cowpuncher who was out of a job and when we got back to Springer six weeks later we found he was holding it down in good shape.

When the boys came to town, he would politely request them to lay aside their artillery. Some did and some did not and he never insisted. When a fight of any kind started, he would make himself convenient-

ly absent till it was over and, as all the boys knew him well and liked him, he got by very nicely and seemed to be standing in well with everybody. So perhaps the job wasn't as dangerous as it appeared to be at first glance.

After everything had quieted down, Bill and I started out on our exploring trip. We had plenty of chances to ride in any direction we wished to go, so we got aboard a light rig that landed us at a big cow spread 40 miles from Springer and, after staying there a couple of nights, began to visit systematically all the cattle ranches and line camps along a certain route we wished to cover. Everywhere we were royally received. We had all the inside dope on the riot at Springer and all kinds of other interesting news from the outside. Also we had provided ourselves before starting with two of the latest model six-guns made, the Smith and Wesson double-action forty-fours, which proved to be subjects of intense interest to these gun-slingers of the cattle range. These side-arms were not only beautifully made and perfectly balanced, but were supposed to be the speediest revolvers produced up to that time. Nothing seemed to be too good for us at the camps we visited. Our worst difficulty was to get away from them after from two to four days visit, without making anybody sore at us. And when we finally insisted on going, they would stop their work, saddle horses for us to ride, or in some cases hitch up a light rig, and take us on to the next camp.

We certainly had a glorious time and though we were never charged a single penny anywhere along the line, yet we stuffed off most of our money in playing poker. You can believe it or not, but it is a fact that we deliberately let these cowboys win our money on many occasions, simply because they had put themselves to such a lot of trouble to contribute to our comfort and happiness that it seemed a dirty shame to take their money also.

Both Bill and myself were pretty darn good poker players, too good for most of those range riders, but if we had won consistently, we might have got the name of a couple of tin-horns out on a trip to pick up a little easy money. So we preferred to be diplomatic about it. And we well knew if we had been made to pay our way, the expense would have amounted to much more than what we stuffed off in the poker games. On the last night of our trip we stayed at the Triangle-Dot ranch, 13 miles from Springer.

This was a bang-up, upper-class cow ranch, but we were made welcome and invited to stay one more day, anyhow, promising to take us to Springer in a buckboard the next morning, if we would stay over. But Bill and I were about fed up on visiting and decided to walk. This was the only walking we did on the entire trip. Reaching town about 2 o'clock and being very hungry, we went to the bakery and started buying knick-knacks. I remember we bought three loaves of bread and a pound of butter, sardines, cake, jelly and several other items which amounted to \$5.90 altogether. Borrowing a gunnysack to put it in, we went out to the platform behind the depot and proceeded to fill up. We soon discovered we couldn't eat a quarter of what we had bought so, not wishing to be

bothered with it, we gave the remainder to a Mexican kid who happened along.

Then we held a consultation and discovered we only had a trifle over \$5 between us with which to negotiate the 250 miles of distance to our happy home at the Spanish peaks. That would never do at all so, telling Bill to wait, I went over to the largest of the three saloons and found it empty, except for a young cowboy who was tending bar. Slipping my new gun from its holster, I laid it on the bar and inquired, "Do you know where a fellow could sell a gun like this for \$5?" He picked it up, looked it over carefully, whirled it on his finger and coolly told me I was a damn fool to sell a gun like that for \$5. I said I knew I was, but had to raise a few dollars some way to get back to Colorado. He told me the town was full of punchers and suggested I leave the gun with him and he would raffle it off that evening for a lot more money than that, to which I agreed.

That afternoon he let the news out that there would be a raffle at his saloon at 7 o'clock that evening and by that time the place was crowded, the prize exhibited and it was decided to throw high-dice for my gun, at a dollar a chance. Twenty-five chances were sold at \$1 a chance. Also the bartender, Bill and I took chances free, thus giving me the opportunity to win back my own gun if I was lucky, but none of us three threw anything worthwhile. The game went on and 43 had been thrown by one rider, when in came the ramrod of a cowspread over on the Cimarron and the boys called to him to get in the game and take a chance. He examined the gun and said "That's sure a fine gun, fellows, but I don't want it, as I have two just like it now."

"Oh, come on and be a sport," they coaxed. So he paid his dollar, picked up the dice and threw 44 and walked off with the gun. He was about the luckiest guy I ever saw. That afternoon, Bill and I watched him break a faro bank. And the bartender told us that the previous evening, to liven things up, he had bet the drinks for the house that nobody could shoot the billiard wire in two the first shot. The billiard wire, you know, hangs high above the tables and is strung with buttons for the accommodation of the players. This same fellow who won my gun looked at it a minute, then took the bet, and at the crack of his gun the buttons flew all over the house. As they were drinking specially imported, high-priced Arkansas whiskey that evening, it cost the bartender about \$15 to treat the crowd. As I had realized \$26 for my gun by the kindness of the bartender, I offered him \$10 for his trouble, but he refused to accept a cent, so I spent several dollars with him, treating the house. The gun had cost me \$22 and I still had my belt

and holster. Along about 10 o'clock Bill and I heard a train come in and, racing down to the depot, found a double-header freight of empty gondola cars going north. Climbing aboard, we beat our way to Raton.

As no more trains were due for 12 hours going in our direction, we waited and had breakfast in Raton, then walked down the mountain as far as Morley, where we stopped to rest and wait for the east-bound passenger into Trinidad. While loafing there an ex-brakeman came along who had lost his arm in a wreck. He put up such a pitiful story of being without funds to get back to his rela-

tives in Albuquerque that, regardless of our own needs, we gave him nearly all the money we both had, which meant we would have to beat our way and hundred and twenty miles to get home. We made it alright, by saving what few dimes we had left to eat on, and arrived at our destination in fine shape, with lots of yarns to tell to friends of our adventures in outlaw-land.

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