

Veteran Scribe Recalls How Noted Swindler Was Tripped Up in Klamath Long Ago

(Continued from Page 17)

poetic license exercised by the reporter?

Pleasant
York passed his time pleasantly while in jail, playing cards and reading the papers and when asked if he wished his hearing to be hurried he said he had nothing to spend but time as everything else had been taken from him and he was in no hurry.

Perhaps everything had NOT been taken from York and the statement that he spent the time pleasantly in playing cards brings up the question as to who shared in these card games. Well, there was a pleasant little rumor that a bar-tender from the "Bucket of Blood," one of Klamath Falls' famous places of entertainment, participated in these card games. It seems that the incumbent in the jailer's position was a big-hearted, sympathetic, person who liked his prisoners to be happy.

Consequently, when the quiet of night had descended upon the little county hotel the jailer allowed this bartender and other comforters access to the prisoner's quarters where they all enjoyed a harmless little game of poker. Mr. York did not prove as expert at this pastime as along other lines and he frequently had to replenish his funds. It was said that when a new supply of the wherewithal was needed he removed this same cork leg and in its hollowed (not halloved) interior funds were to be found.

The black headlines: "Houston May Write a Book" produced an article in the paper fairly bubbling with glee. "Would be interesting reading if he tells all the facts in connection with the deal to buy the Herald." "Would have a considerable demand among the bankers of the county," overlooking the fact that Klamath bankers were not alone in having had an unfortunate experience with our hero. But on the 8th the headlines really screamed: "Houston Gives Up Every Thing." Attorney C. F. Stone hypnotizes smooth swindler. He talked Houston into handing over everything and signing a confession.

With a signed confession and the restoration to the bank of its \$8500 it would seem that the story should end but not so. With trial set for July 28, when that date arrived the community was electrified by York's plea of Not Guilty. Frank Bell, assistant cashier of the First National bank of Lexington, Kentucky, was brought to Klamath Falls and deposed that the time certificate and his signature on it were forged. York, through his attorney, C. M. O'Neill, asked for a continuation until January, 1911, in order to bring witnesses from the east with the intimation that he would blast Mr. Bell's testimony into shreds.

His continuation was granted. He was by this time under two indictments, and two bench warrants were issued. These documents are still on file in the courthouse. One indictment was for obtaining money

under false pretenses, the other for forgery.

Guilty
In January when he appeared for trial he was found guilty on the forgery charge and the other was dismissed. The old records read: "It is therefore considered ordered, Thaddeus E. York be confined to the penitentiary at Salem, Ore., without limitation of time and that the State of Oregon have and recover from this defendant the costs and disbursements in this case."

Some years afterward Sheriff Barnes, who was in Salem on business, visited York at the penitentiary. He found that York had been a model prisoner, had worked in the laundry, and was due for release for good behavior. Asked what he expected to do, York told Sheriff Barnes he believed he would return to Klamath Falls and enter the real estate business as he thought he could make a success here.

There was a rumor, however, that a federal marshal was awaiting him upon his release. If he ever came back he must have found a new alias. Names taken by him at various times were John W. Lee, W. M. Sotherland, George W. Hampton, Frank B. Houston, and J. A. Ross.

Shrewd
He had good judgment in real estate and the property at Chelan which he deeded to the bank, although sold by that institution for sufficient to recover their advances to York, was later worth many times that sum.

Most members of the Hog Combine are in their graves, and in spite of the bitterness which waged over the old local courthouse fight, they did well for their community in holding the center of town and stabilizing real estate values. Their antagonists, too, sleep well after life's fitful fever, but they also accomplished much for our community by widening the horizons of us all and by turning a string town into a spreading community. Old bitterness has been wiped out and former enemies are today bound together with a mellowed fellowship of memories.

Doubt
But a doubt remains—Did Mr. York's contact with the Hog Combine have anything to do with what seemed to be a rather unusual decision to take a bath? Did the need for a bath lead to the need for a new key for the famous cork leg? Had he not forgotten the original key would the sty old fox ever have been found?

Pageant Scheduled At St. Paul's

"The Healing Light" is the title of the pageant to be presented by the church school of St. Paul's Episcopal church on December 23 at the church.

The dress rehearsal for the choir will be Wednesday at 4 p. m., for church school members, and the church school choir will practice at 7 o'clock tonight.

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WASHINGTON, Pa., Dec. 21 (AP)—The government is spending \$780,000,000 a year to harness atomic power for peace according to a number of the U. S. atomic energy commission.

Sumner T. Pike made the statement Monday at a special convocation at Washington and Jefferson college.

"We are now attempting to develop an atom-propelled naval vessel, but the problem is safety from radioactivity in such a confined space," Pike said, adding, "The research is costly to the government but a good many factors are more important to the navy than operating costs."

Pike pointed out many problems remain to be solved before commercial use of atomic energy can actually be put into practice.

"Corporations such as Westinghouse and General Electric are doing costly laboratory and pilot plant work, looking to the future," he said.

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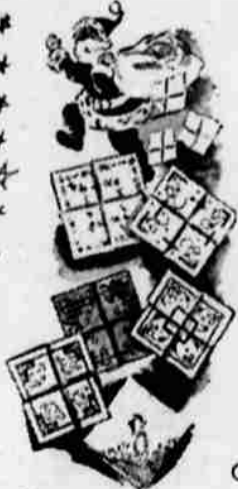
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