

Idaho City

QUEEN OF THE GOLD CAMPS

BY F. ADAMS

Those who came so far in search of Gold were rugged men, possessed of great determination. They were followed by merchants of equal zeal and fortitude. These brave and hardy souls founded the settlements which enabled the establishment of Idaho Territory. We owe to them a debt of gratitude for that which they carved out of a wilderness with sluice box and gold scales.

Preface

Young and gay and golden, the liveliest city between St. Louis and San Francisco. A veritable wilderness metropolis, sprung up overnight, with the closest major supply points weeks away by pack train and wagon in Portland, San Francisco and Salt Lake City. Everything had to be freighted in over lonely trails.

Thousands thronged the streets; miners, dance hall girls, pig tailed Chinese, gamblers and ruffians of every stripe. It must have been a sight! Gold dust was the medium of exchange and it was commonplace for a miner to clean up \$1500 per week on his claim. Easy come, easy go!

In a few short years the big placer told finds were worked out and the activity began to wane. The present day visitor expecting to see those glamorous days is doomed to disappointment, for now they exist only in the memories of old men who sit in the sun on the benches beside the old red brick buildings reliving what they saw and what they heard their elders tell.

Fortunate is the visitor with imagination for he can sit down in a quiet place and in his mind's eye recreate the golden days. All that was the wild and glamorous west of a century ago pass up and down these streets but only those with the inward eye will be able to glimpse it in all its excitement and glory.

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“Gold, gold, gold,” Old Joe began muttering, and I knew he was good for at least an hour or so reminiscing about the 'old days'. So I plunged my hand deep into the dried prune barrel. I could sit and chew and spit almost as far as the men could when old Joe got to talking and now one seemed to notice it was prune juice. Old Joe could hit one of the spittoons in the Miner's Exchange at 10 feet.

“Sure, gold is all anyone wants to talk about, but I 'cleaned up'; many a sluice right up yonder on Elk Creek about 'Idaho'.”

By then, Old Joe had a crowd gathered around him and he looked a little shy and embarrassed in a sly sort of way and continued. “When we first struck it we got about a bit to a pan. That stuff sure looked good after our long trip from Sinker Creek (Owyhee County) where we got skunked. There isn't anything prettier than yellow gold in the sunlight.”

Old Joe stopped for a moment and then said, “I can hear the fellers yet when they stated to whooping and hollering.”

“It had been a long time since we started out with Doc Turner from Auburn (Oregon). He got a map from some travelers who had been using gold nuggets for fish line sinkers. I remember how excited he was when he told us there were even nuggets flattened onto the rims of their wagon wheels. We would be rich! Thirty seven of us gathered up our gear and started out with Doc in the spring of 1862. When we got the place Doc had marked on his map, we didn't find a color in our pans. Some of the fellows were pretty mad and decided to pull out right away. Branstetter said he was going on and seven of us decided to go with him. We hadn't gone far when we came upon another party led by Captain Grimes and joined forces. We had some tough going up into the mountains and the ride across the river (Snake) in willow skiffs would be remembered for a long time. I couldn't swim and the water was up at high water mark. We crossed about eight miles about what is now the Owyhee River. Worked our way up another river and crossed up over the mountains and came down a small creek. I was putting up the horses when the fellows started whooping and yelling. I rushed over to the creek bed where everyone was acting crazy, throwing their hats in the air and batting each other on the back. I squatted down and looked into the pan. Sure enough, there it was, yellow and bright in the sunlight. Gold! My shouts must have been muffled with theirs, because I never heard my own voice! We continued working the creek (Clear Creek) till we ran onto a bunch of Indians drying fish. Bannock Jim had warned us that they might be hostile, so we climbed the hill side and skirted around them, dropping down to the creek several miles above them at a site where the town of Old Boston once stood near Centerville on Grimes Creek.

“We worked all the daylight hours trying to get as much gold as we could, moving up the creek. Branstetter and Grimes rocked out about \$50 to \$75 a day while we packed the dirt 100 yards in sacks. The nuggets got bigger and better as we went toward the Pass; you could just pick 'em up like rocks in the river bed”

Old Joe's voice trailed off. The men joshed him a bit about the size of the nuggets and I remembered mamma has sent me for some coal oil for the lamp, but...

“Were you there when Grimes got killed?” someone asked.

“Sure,” Old Joe's voice came back quick and sharp. “We'd spent a week on that 12 mile stretch to the pass and were in camp late on afternoon when a shot was fired over our heads. In a minute or two it was followed by another. This one cut a furrow through Joe Branstetter's hair just above his ear. Joe was lying in the grass resting and probably was not seen by the Indians who fired the shot. Those varmints were trying to scare off our horses! Branstatter got to his feet and he, Fogus and I rushed down to the creek to bring in the horses. On our way back we saw something in the tall grass. I thought it was a bear, but Fogus said it was an Indian. In a flash it had gone. As we got into camp, Captain Grimes and three others started out to hunt the Indians who had fired the shots. They had gone but a short distance when Grimes yelled, 'I found his tracks!' We all jumped for cover but Grimes. A shot rang out and Grimes fell, shot through the body and mortally wounded.

“The rest of us, fearing more trouble, ran to the spot where Grimes lay. The bullet had entered at the breast bone and blood was rapidly spilling out over his shirt. Two of the men rushed after the Indian who escaped down the Payette side of the mountain. The rest of us couldn't do much for the Captain. He realized his time was running out and said only a few words telling us to write his family in Portland and told hold them all that he possessed.

“When it got dark, we wrapped him in his blanket and laid him to rest in a deep prospect hole as Mose Splawn spoke a few words. That was August 15, 1862, and I am not apt to forget it.

“After that, most of the men wanted to get out of there, even though the Indian was after our horses and probably shot to save his own life. Our provisions were short and that cinched it. We broke camp and headed for Walla Walla as quickly as we could, taking about \$5,000 worth of gold with us.”

It has turned dark and I knew I had to beat it quick if I didn't want to get skinned, so I got the coal oil and ran all the way home.

Old Joe told me one time that he came back with Fogus and Bransletter as soon as they could get a party together. The didn't get here any too soon. October, I think he said, because J. Marion More brought in about 90 men from Walla Walla also and staked out most of the creek which bears his name. The Jeff Standifer party came down from Florence, too, about that time with 60 men. Their 'golden secret' was out! By January, 1863, Old Joe said over 3,000 men were swarming up and down every gulch and stream emptying into Grimes and Mores Creeks. They found nuggets worth five to fifty dollars every day.

One Sunday I ran into Old Joe sitting out on the bench in front of the Miner's Exchange with his usual circle of listeners. This time he wove a pattern of the towns which sprang up over the Basin and the trails which lead up to them.

“One of the first trails which lead into the Basin came up from the Boise River and over the mountains on to Clear Creek and to Grimes,” he began softly. I expect that the hardships and privations he had suffered on his first journey in here flitted across his mind, then he resolutely continued.

“Another came up the Payette River to what is now Horseshoe Bend and over the hill to the Basin.

Many a pack train of horses and mules came winding around the mountains. Felix Harris finally built a road and had a toll gate about 12 miles above Placerville. There was another toll gate on the road which went from Harris Creek up Shafer Creek and still another owned by Tom Healey. It cost five dollars for a four horse team for toll, round trip from Placerville to Boise. The toll gate on the road from Boise to Idaho City was located at Halfway House. John Hailey was one of the first to run a saddle train into Idaho City, or Bannock as it was known then, in the spring of 1863. It took eight days to make the trip from Umatilla Landing on the Columbia River. Later on, he put in a tri-weekly stage line and reduced travel time to four days. Shaw's mountain was named for William Shaw, one of his drivers, who while driving to Idaho City discovered a rich ledge of ore on the top of the mountain which now bears his name. Freight wagons were usually pulled by oxen in those days. After the construction of the toll roads (1864) stage lines were established. One line of four-horse Concord Coaches ran from Umatilla Landing on the Columbia to Placerville; another line of similar coaches connected at Placerville and transferred passengers and treasure to and from Idaho City. These operated daily.

“The Wells Fargo Company put up express offices right away in all towns to provide a means of taking gold dust to steamers on the Columbia River where it could be shipped on to the United States Mint at San Francisco. They carried passengers and letters, too. You had to pay 50 cents to get a special stamped envelope in which to mail your letter. This guaranteed that it would be delivered to the nearest post office on the state line. The cost of the mail was considerable, but the carrying of gold dust was even much greater. Since there were not burglar proof safes in Idaho in those days, gold dust was kept in leather sacks laid in heavily ironed wooden boxes. It was shipped in such a box and was usually carried in the front 'boot' of the stage under the feet of the 'shotgun messenger' who rode by the driver to protect it from road agents.

“Because of the cost of sending out gold, many ingenious methods were used to take the stuff out of the Basin. Gold shipments were often concealed inside the pack saddles of the pack trains, and some of the fellows used to carry their own gold out stashed in water bags swung in full view of all. Others used to fling the boxes into the bottom of freight wagons as though they were just insignificant boxes of cooking utensils and cover them with other freight. With all the conniving the gold didn't always get to its destination. When the road agents stopped a coach they were swift and sure.

“Yes, folks came in here pell mell those first few years, over the trails and toll roads and Bannock City (Idaho City), Buena Vista, Placerville, Centerville, Morestown, Hoggem (Pioneerville), Boston, Quartzburg, to name a few, grew up rapidly.

“Over across Elk Creek is Buena Vista Bar and quite a settlement spring up there. The old Branstetter house can still be seen on the bar and another old time Buena Vista resident, Doc Noble helped lay out the streets of Bannock, as Idaho City was then called. The residents of Bannock and Buena Vista were surprised one day when the Idaho World announced that they no longer lived in their respective towns, but by an act of the Territorial Legislature they could incorporate (February, 1864) and were now called Idaho city. By a strange quirk of fate, at their first election they voted down the Charter by a resounding majority. But that didn't stop them, they just voted in a mayor and proceeded about their business. Idaho City was by far the largest metropolis in the Territory, but it never was the Capitol. It antedated Boise by a year and Idaho City engineers went down and surveyed and laid out the townsite of Boise City, which at that time was in this (Boise) County.”

Old Joe stopped and searched his pockets and finally produced a scrap of paper which he proudly held up to read.

“Got the census report for September '63”, he said. “Idaho Territory had just been created by President Lincoln in the spring and already Shoshone County had a population of 574; Missoula County, 365; Nez Perce County, 1,106; Idaho County, 1,601; Unorganized Districts East of the Rocky Mountains, 11,861; Owyhee County, 640; and Boise County, 16,385 (that's about ten times what it has right now!) In those days, Boise had 725 souls, South Boise, 560, Bannock, 6,275 (Idaho City) not including Buena Vista Bar; Placerville, 3,254; Centerville, 2,638; Pioneerville, 2743. Lewiston, the capitol at the time, only had 414 residents!

“By 1863,” Old Joe mused, “the City of Idaho or just 'Idaho' as it was mostly called, had 20 dry goods and clothing stores, 36 grocery stores, 9 bakeries, 3 tin and stove shops, 5 cigar stands, 3 jewelry stores, 5 drug stores, 1 saddle shop, 23 law offices, 15 restaurants, 5 billiard parlors, 4 hotels, 12 blacksmith shops, 3 tailor shops, 1 newspaper, 2 churches, 1 photograph shop, 2 paint shops, 10 Chinese laundries, 6 barber shops and 41 saloons!”

By this time Joe must have tired of his audience, for he just got up, stretched and started up the street. No amount of cajoling could make him talk more. But I caught up with him later when he sat on our porch and got to talking about the way our house looked when it was propped six feet up in the air.

“In '65, that was,” he said. “All the houses were stilted so that we could mine underneath them. All of those south of Wallula Street weren't hurt by the fire,” he continued. “It was a few minutes before ten o'clock in the evening (May 18, 1865) and we had just retired to our beds, the cry of Fire! Fire! Was heard and out of bed we jumped and ran out into the street and beheld the flames bursting forth from the roof of a house near the upper end of town – and such flames, too! They shot way up in the sky!

“I was convinced that our city was doomed. We rushed back inside the back door and with the help of three or four persons commenced piling out goods – bottles, cans, gold scales, candles, soap, lard, bacon, flour and everything else was heaped together out on the gravel six feet below the threshold of the door.

“In not time at all the fire had spread considerably although there were three streets for it to cross before it could reach us, yet the ocean of flames was bearing toward us and had already crossed two streets. As we were preparing to run with what we could carry, and heard the shouts and screams above the roar of the fire, suddenly a shower sprung up and the flames were checked just short of our house and all of that portion of Idaho City lying south of Wallula Street was saved.

“This, with the exception of a few houses around the edge of town was all that was left when the clock struck twelve midnight – one of the most flourishing mining towns ever built up West of the Rocky Mountains had burned. I'd say that at least four-fifths of the city was destroyed. Out of the 300 business houses of all kinds, only about 20 were saved. The fire broke out in the upper story of a hurdy-gurdy house and is supposed to be the work of an incendiary.

“The large and magnificent Forrest Theater building which had just been completed at a cost of several thousand dollars was among those which sank beneath the flames. Although I didn't have anything burned, I lost over two hundred dollars worth of things which were stolen or damaged.

“In the early morning light 'Idaho' was a dreary smoking mess viewed from East Hill where most everyone had gone for safety. At dawn, Montagues and Capulets, in costumes singed and soaked, were observed on East Hill cooking breakfast in a can. Romeo and Juliet had gone up in smoke with the

Forrest Theater.

“Those who could sleep had flung themselves down on the ground. Women whose faces mirrored tragedy clutched their tiny ones in their arms and men built camp fires and started organizing breakfast and the job of cleaning up the smoldering rubble.

“But 'Idaho' bounced back again,” he chuckled, slapping his knee. “Bigger and better than before. In two months' time you wouldn't have known the place! Everything was done up in grand style. Instead of one theater we had two, which gave nightly entertainments to large audiences. One evening I saw 'Our American Cousin', the play which was given in Washington the night President Lincoln was assassinated. I also saw Mrs. Irwin as Andy Blake and Mrs. Julia Deane Hane before she completed her run here and went on to Salt Lake.”

Mother interrupted us by lighting the lamp which was the signal that small boys belonged in bed. Father cleared his throat and Old Joe rose laboriously to his feet and started to say goodbye to us when a whiff of bread just out of the oven was too much for him. I seized the opportunity to get some bread, too, and expected to get some more stories, but Old Joe just reminisced with mother about the price of food in '64. Coffee was 75¢ a pound; potatoes, 30¢ a pound; Womens boots, \$30.00; Mens boots, \$9.00; butter, \$1.25 a pound and red drawers \$30.00 a dozen. Yellow (not ripe) apples were 50 cents each.

Old Joe went off into the night muttering that there wasn't any sight like it used to be when you could step outside late at night and see hundreds of campfires that shone on every side to light the claims where miners worked the clock around.

It was much later in the week when I came home from school that I found Old Joe arguing with father and a group of men in the Boise Basin Merc. Joe was saying that thousands and thousands of dollars' worth of gold was washed out each day and that men were employed to work both day and night because of the high price of water and the supply was short after the spring run-off. I know that there was a complicated system of water supply because we kids still play hide and seek in some of the old flumes. But many were dug, used and abandoned before my folks even came to Idaho City. Much of the gold was recovered in the early days by shoveling gravel into sluices in which riffles or slats with spaces between were placed. The gold would catch in the bottom back of the riffles and the water washed the gravel down the sluice box. That was lots faster than panning it. I remember hearing old timers from California among whom were Adam Kaltz and Peter Bruno, telling that the gravels in Mores and Elk Creeks were 12 feet deep and over and were very rich, also it took a real man to pitch a heavy shovel full of gravel up 12 feet or more into a sluice box for 12 hours a day or night, and that the thousands of men working on the night shifts had only pitch pine torches all along the creek bottoms for light. Some places were nearly 1000 feet wide, so it must have been a sight.

Among the earliest and maybe the first large ditch was the Buena Vista, dug and owned by the Buena Vista Mining Company. Among the owners were Doc Noble, Dave Alderson and Joe Branstetter. This ditch was taken out of Elk Creek about a half mile above down. It was used for washing the low bars and creek beds lying beneath it.

Old Joe said the Buena Vista Mining Company sold water to other operators at a minimum price of \$1.00 per miner's inch and sometimes higher. A miner's inch of water was the amount or volume of water flowing through a one inch square opening under 4-6 pounds of pressure for 24 hours. A sister ditch taken from the same heading ran along the other side of the creek (Idaho City side) and was used

for washing the Churchill Bar gravels (this bar is now covered by the tailings from the great Gold Hill hydraulic placers) and on toward Idaho City.

I recall the names of some of the ditches as Tar Heel, Lambing, Dunn, K.P. Plowman and the Christy. The Christy ditch was extended from time to time until it ran through a tunnel to Bear Run and for many years furnished the water for Idaho City's fire protection and the homes on East Hill.

The men's argument had now taken turn as to how much gold had been taken out of the Basin and father produced a clipping from the first newspaper here, the Boise News, printed in 1864 which read: "Mining Item: We have been kindly permitted to copy the following statement of one week's run with four sluices, on the claim of some friends of ours on Bannock Bar. The statement is an accurate account of their business for seven days and is not over an average week. The claims are well opened and worked to advantage by men who understand their business. Whole amount taken out of four sluices for the seven days ending May 22, 1864: \$14,777.50. Total expense during this time: \$6,979.86. Net Profit: \$7,797.65, or, to each of the partners: \$1,949.41."

(To substantiate Old Joe's contentions about how rich the Basin was in those days here are some figures from a study by the Engineering firm of Barton, Stoddard and Milhollin entitled, 'A Report of Gold Production on the Nez Perce Indian Reservation, 1860-67' prepared for a suit by the Nez Perce tribe against the Government for gold mined on reservation lands in those years. The study includes some figures on the Boise Basin for reference purposes. Their figures are: 1862 (discovery year and a short season) \$600,000; 1863, \$6,000,000; 1864, \$6,000,000; and for 1865 and 1866, \$5,000,000 each year. This is figured at the old price of gold, \$20.67 per ounce.)

The old Chinese Joss House was a very exciting place, especially to small boys and grown-ups who had not seen it before. I could throw a rock and hit it from our house.

I recall it as a large dim room, quite dark, having not side windows, only some small glass in the front doors which were always closed except during the times of feast days or celebrations. Then the doors were opened wide to those who came there to make offerings and worship and make their obeisance before the picture of their Joss. The interior was very much blackened from the constant smoke from the peanut oil candles, punk and sandalwood.

The Joss man and some attendants resided in a building attached to the Joss house and every now and then would go into the Joss house and strike three blows on the large skin-covered drums hanging on the walls, which a baton provided for that purpose. The eerie sounds after dark would send many a small boy scurrying home in a hurry.

At their feast times or days of worship, each Chinese company or Tong would parade from their place of business to the Joss house, led by the beaters of large noise gongs or cymbals. Other members of the parade would carry banners and large trays covered with choice articles of food, rice, Chinese candies, oranges, salted melon seeds and other delicacies known only to the Chinese. The main offering was a whole barbecued pig resting on a wooden tray to which sling ropes were attached and fastened to a long packing pole which was borne on the shoulders of two husky Chinese.

Each procession marched through the Idaho City streets to the Joss house and on inside. The foods were spread out before the Joss and the leaders, with their Chinese slippers removed, their queues hanging down their backs, would kneel, bow their heads to the floor a certain number of times, arise, place more lighted punks in the bowls of dirt or ashes provided for them, kneel and bow again. At the

completion of the rites, the company performing would parade back to its place of business or residence, led by the gong beaters.

The gong beaters did not beat a pattern for marching as with drums. Sometimes a piper accompanied them with a high wailing sound which was much higher pitched than Scotch bagpipes.

Each Company took its turn going to the Joss house, the rank or precedence of which was determined by the ownership for the year of the supreme Joss or Icon which was won by the contesting Tong or Company at their big meeting at Centerville on the final day of the first moon of the Chinese New Year.

Much rivalry accompanied these occasions always and I remember distinctly that members of the Wing Kee Company, whose men were over to Idaho from Hoggem, hurling insults at the Lee Kee sons during their parade, from which the younger boys would flinch as though struck.

Ceremonies for the dead were also colorful affairs with large processions which wended their way over the long boardwalk with the swinging bridge over Elk Creek and on to the cemetery on Buena Vista Bar. They dropped bits of brightly colored paper and sometimes chanted as they walked along, carrying containers of choice bits of food for offerings to the deceased. Small boys and sometimes adults found these objects too tempting to leave on the graves and ate the food and made off with the dishes after the Chinese had returned to town.

The crowning event of the summer was in the evening after the parades on the 'Big Chinese Mason Day' when each Company carried its fireworks exhibit to the tailing grounds or flats of Elk Creek via Wallula Street. Each company built a huge piece consisting of fire crackers, small bombs, pin wheels and rockets. These masterpieces would be lighted from the bottom and keep going continuously. The action was stupendous! Each creation was topped with a bomb which exploded and threw a bamboo ring high in the air for which the Chinese would scramble. The one catching it would run, be caught by the others and soon there was a surging group of men trying to get possession of the ring. Whoever retained it brought honor to his Tong.

Over in the southwest part of town there were a lot of Chinese gambling houses where they played Fantan and smoked opium. They generally kept to themselves, retaining their ancient customs, their cloths and liking for their own strange foods.

Old Joe's face broke into a wide grin and he said, "I remember the last three chinamen who lived here, Luc Lee, Doc Lee and Yin. Duc and Doc are the only Chinese whose bodies are still buried up in the cemetery. They were inveterate gamblers and never saved any money to have their bodies shipped back to China. When Duc Lee died, the men carrying his body up to the cemetery thought it would be nice of old Doc Lee could see his friend again, so they went past his house with the body and called to Doc Lee. Doc stuck his head out of the window and said, 'Take him away, I no want to see, sun ee'gun still owe me Foty dolla!'

"Folks say that during the peak there must have been over a thousand Chinese here, but those days are past. They were hard and faithful workers, loved to gamble, eat good and have their bones shipped home to be buried in China."

The little kids had a fine place to play in the old cellar on a vacant lot near the Chinese in the south part of town. That was 'til they forgot and left Douglas Miller in the cellar and went home to supper one evening. Everyone in town was out hunting Doug until someone remembered to ask the kids where he

was. They had to pry open the door, because the key was lost. Doug was sound asleep, curled up in the corner, when they found him. I guess he wasn't scared, just hungry, but the men destroyed the old cellar and then the kids started going up on the Bar to the old abandoned territorial prison to play. We sung on the old gates, climbed under and over the remaining walls and used the cells to hold our 'stagecoach robbers'.

Old Joe sat on the foot bridge across Elk Creek just below the Bar and told us many a tale of the old building when it was new.

He said the Territorial Legislature established the prison here on December 15, 1864 and Sumner Pinkham was the first sheriff of the County, having been appointed after President Lincoln signed the bill creating Idaho Territory the spring of 1863.

“Only two hangings were here at the Prison,” Old Joe began. “Although the Grand Juries of the Territory returned many indictments for first degree murder, men did not stay long in the prison. Their cases came up for trial and juries generally found them 'not guilty'.

“One of the hangings was Simeon Walters, accused and convicted of the murder of Joe Bacon, a rancher. The actual crime occurred south of Boise, but on account of bitter feeling, Walters obtained a change of venue and transfer of his case for trial at Idaho City.

“Walters worked for Bacon, who was known to be fairly prosperous and to have large sums of money about his house. One day, Bacon started to Boise with considerable money, but it was Walters who came into Boise alone. Walters had a good time in Boise and when he returned to the ranch, said that Bacon had stayed in town. Inquiries as to the whereabouts of Bacon resulted in the conviction of Walters. Many believed him innocent, but before his execution, he confessed to the murder and told how he had floated Bacon's body down the Snake River. Bacon's glass eye was found on one of the sand bars of the river.”

It was a tale I liked to hear him tell, but more interesting to me was the one about St. Clair's hanging. We lived here then, but mother hustled us all off to a picnic at the Warm Springs on that fateful day. Some of the older boys climbed East Hill. They said they could see the whole thing. It took most of the glamor away to know that men had to help St. Clair up the scaffold. Old Joe said he was convicted of the murder of John Decker at Van Wyck, that he probably was the 'black sheep' of a very wealthy family in the East and that even his name might not have been St. Clair. He was guarded closely but was still able to see his shackles and in an attempt to escape had a fierce battle with James McQuillan. McQuillan recovered and they patched up St. Clair and waited until he was strong enough to get to the gallows, June 24, 1898. The hood he wore was on display in the Miner's Exchange for years, along with bits of the rope which hanged him.

Old Joe got up and started walking down the boardwalk toward Idaho City. We scrambled after him. Before we got to the old brick building which used to be the first post office, I knew we would here again how Thomas Fitzhugh stalked into the building with a pistol and a raw hide whip. Whew! It happened way back in September, 1863, but I could see James Pinney, our first postmaster, drawing a pistol to defend himself, just as plain as day!

He turned and walked toward the old court house on Wall Street. It was at the court house that Patterson had been tried for killing 'Old Pink'.

“I recall both men, Sumner Pinkham and Ferdinand Patterson,” Old Joe said with a faraway look in his

eyes. "Pinkham was a big fellow, six foot two or so; strong as an ox. That one was a leader among men. He was around forty, I guess, and had a pure white beard and white hair. He was appointed as the first sheriff of Boise County and would swoop down on the boys and have them locked in the klink before you could bat an eye. He was born in Maine and was a Union man, so it wasn't any wonder that he finally tangled with Patterson.

"Patterson – Ferd, they called him, was a Southerner with strong Confederate sympathies. He was about the same age as 'Pink' and almost as big and had sort of red hair and florid face. He was an ornery critter. Was a gambler and a flossy dresser; enjoyed his bottle and after his second drink, became a desperate, quarrelsome fighter, thirsting for blood.

"We heard he shot down a steamship captain over in Portland because he didn't like the way he ran his boat and I guess he took a whack at a female with a bowie knife and nearly scalped her.

"Patterson and his party of friends were in the bar room Sunday, waiting for 'Pink' at the Warm Springs. When he arrived, they tried to provoke a fight, but he evaded them and went off to the bath house. Later, when Pinkham started to leave, Patterson called to him and shot him on the large veranda of the resort. Pinkham's one shot went wild into the ceiling; he fell to the floor, dead.

"I heard Patterson's friends commandeered a horse from the stagecoach and set him on it for a wild ride toward Boise City. He was overtaken by Rube Robbins, Pinkham's former deputy and, with the sheriff, made a quick detour back to town and lodged him in the jail while a huge crowd of men gathered and clamored to hang him.

"'Pink' had a big funeral. Elder Kingsley preached the service and the word got around for us to meet in his cellar. That night, we plotted to storm the stockade of the prison on Buena Vista Bar and capture Patterson and hang him. I never fell over so many tombstones in my life when we met there in the dead of night. It was consarn dark! Will McConnell talked us out of this one. He gave a speech about the vigilantes not going into this thing to have 40 or 50 men killed for one criminal who wasn't worth it; and with hopes that he would get his just deserts caused us to feel the only place to go at that time in the early morning, was home. It didn't seem funny at the time, but nearly all the fellows who garrisoned the jail against us were thugs and tinhorn gamblers and probably should have been inmates of that very jail, if the truth were known.

Everyone was edgy and uneasy and it heightened as the trial progressed. However, the jury acquitted Patterson and he left town at once. But he met his Waterloo in a barber shop in Walla Walla, where he himself was shot down and died with his boots on."

By this time, we had gone to Main Street and I could again see Patsy Marley and K.P. Plowman shooting it out with cap and ball six shooters in days of yore. Marley stood at the corner of the court house and took pot shots at Plowman who was sheltered by columns diagonally across the street. When their guns were emptied, neither being wounded, Marley took after Plowman with a Bowie knife. Plowman ducked around the corner, up Wall Street, into the basement of the Frank Miller Saloon and stopped short inside the door and clobbered Marley with his pistol butt as he came through the door.

It was on the corner of Commercial and Main that Edward Holbrook fell on his face after 11 shots were fired. This fight was complete with insults 'by cards' in the Idaho World newspaper. Holbrook, Idaho's second Territorial delegate to Congress, had come to Idaho City to avenge his honor in June, 1870,

when Charles Douglass, who denounced him as a traitor, walked up the street and began shooting. Douglass got the draw on Holbrook; he escaped unhurt and was also acquitted at his trial.

I always jump over the spot where Holbrook's blood ran off in the street. Old Joe said they had a stupendous funeral for him with mourning banners and everything; even the saloons were closed. A very long funeral procession followed him to the cemetery beyond Buena Vista Bar.

As the years sped by, the gold, which helped the North win the Civil War, became harder to find. Gold seekers slowly drifted away and those who got their 'pot 'o gold' took it elsewhere to start up new enterprises, until, at last, even the Chinese faded away, leaving only a handful of persons here.

At the turn of the century, Old Joe slipped from the Idaho City scene, too, and was no longer the director of the dramas I had learned by heart. He never did see the Esterbrook dredge, nor the ones which followed, wallowing up and down the creeks, digorging the mammoth tailing piles as they sifted the sands for gold, nor the railroad trains which came puffing their way up from Boise to haul out logs; nor the modern highways which make light of the distances of horse and wagon days. But his actors have remained stamped on my mind, vividly stalking down the streets of the Queen of the Gold Camps as it was in the golden days of her youth.