

THE HISTORY OF COKEVILLE, WYOMING

by

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	ii
LIST OF FIGURES	iv
ABSTRACT	v
Chapter	
I. INTRODUCTION	1
II. BEFORE SETTLEMENT	8
III. SETTLEMENT AND NINETEENTH CENTURY DEVELOPMENT	20
IV. TWENTIETH CENTURY DEVELOPMENT	34
V. ERA OF IMPROVEMENTS	54
VI. SOCIAL, RECREATIONAL, AND CULTURAL LIFE	69
VII. SCHOOLS AND CHURCHES	85
VIII. AGRICULTURAL AND LIVESTOCK INDUSTRY	102
IX. MINING IN THE COKEVILLE AREA	121
X. LAWLESSNESS IN COKEVILLE	137
SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS	145
BIBLIOGRAPHY	148
APPENDIXES	155
Appendix A. Mayors of Cokeville	156
Appendix B. Cokeville Post Office, Established October 12, 1877	157
Appendix C. Population	158
Appendix D. Cokeville Businesses--April, 1969	159
VITA	160

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure	Page
1. Cokeville and surrounding settlements	vi
2. Cokeville, Wyoming	7
3. Pioneer trails	14
4. Early settlers in the Cokeville area	19
5. Cokeville main street, ca. 1912	38
6. Cokeville during the early 1890's	38
7. Cokeville, Wyoming, additions to the original townsite	40
8. Cokeville, July, 1919	53
9. Main business district, 1919	53
10. Blank check, State Bank of Cokeville	64
11. School building constructed in 1905	89
12. Cokeville area ranches in the First Wyoming Stock Growers Brand Book, 1882	120

ABSTRACT

The History of Cokeville, Wyoming

by

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Cokeville, Wyoming, is situated at the confluence of the Bear River and Smiths Fork valleys in southwestern Wyoming. Settled in 1874, the Cokeville area has experienced much the same political, economic, and social developments typical of other small rural towns in the western United States; but it is unlike neighboring settlements in that it was not dominated by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints during its early growth.

Depending upon an agricultural economic base, Cokeville has been the center of the Lincoln County sheep industry since the early 1900's. Mining has played a minor part in the economy, but never to the extent that it ever seriously threatened the livestock industry. During the last three decades there has been a resurgence of the cattle industry.

Cokeville developed in three principal stages: settlement, the boom period of growth, and finally maturity and subsequent decline. Technological improvements in communication and transportation have widened the field of association of local residents causing decline in community spirit.

(166 pages)

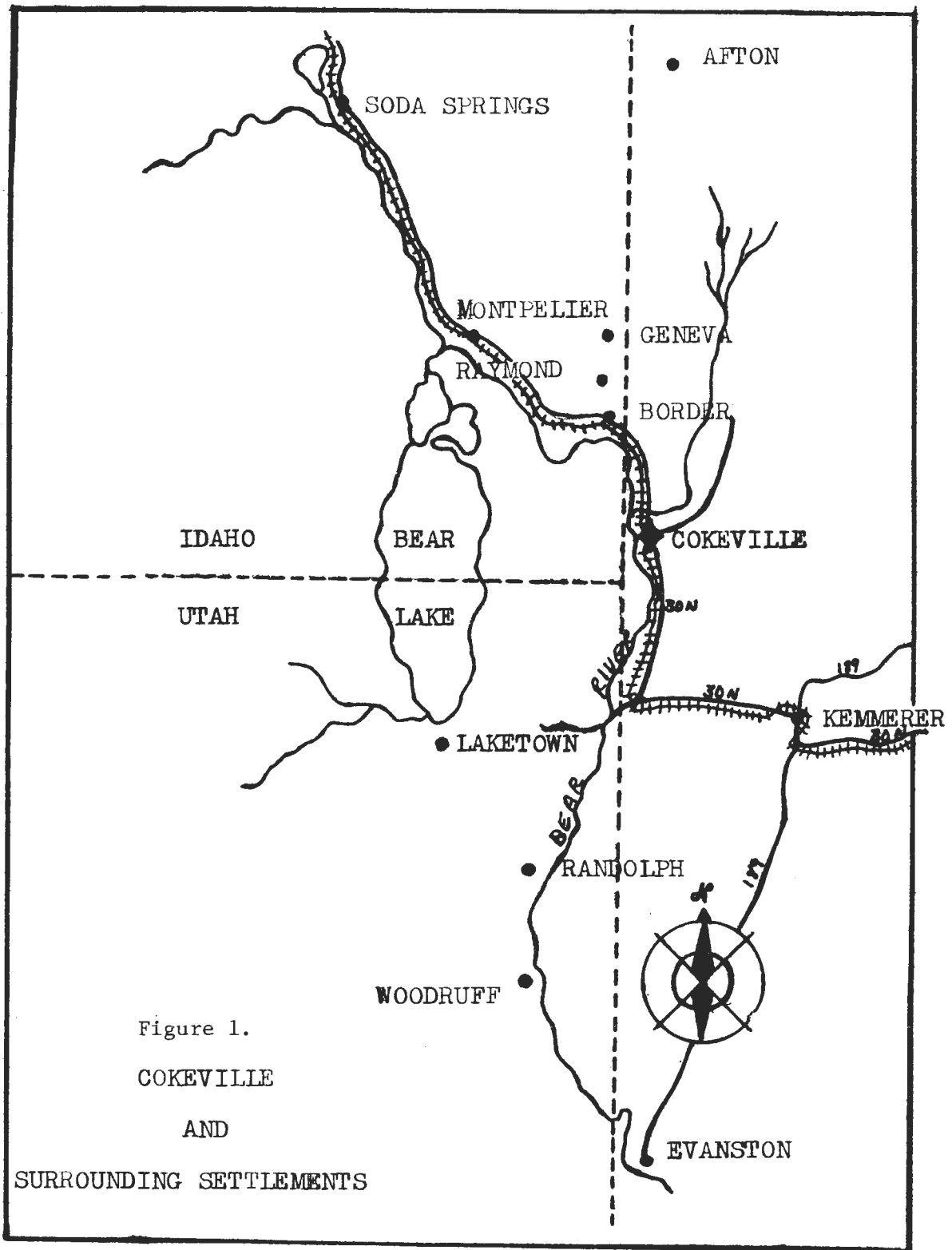


Figure 1.
COKEVILLE
AND
SURROUNDING SETTLEMENTS

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Description

Cokeville, a small community of 550 inhabitants (1960 census), is geographically located at the confluence of the Smiths Fork and Bear rivers in Lincoln County, Wyoming. Broadly speaking, the Cokeville area encompasses the entire Smiths Fork Valley and a thirty-mile stretch of the upper Bear River Valley. The Bear River, with headwaters in the Uinta Mountains of Utah, enters this region from the south and flows north. The Smiths Fork River, with headwaters in the Gannett Mountains and separated from the Bear River by the Sublette Mountains, flows from the north, and abruptly swinging east twenty miles from its beginning it enters the Bear River Valley. John Charles Fremont's graphic description lends a sense of picturesqueness to the convergence of the two valleys:

... in about three miles from our encampment, we reached Smith's Fork, a stream of clear water, about fifty feet in breadth. It is timbered with cottonwood, willow aspen, and makes a beautiful debouchement through a pass about six hundred yards wide, between remarkable mountain hills, rising abruptly on either side, and forming gigantic columns to the gate by which it enters Bear River Valley.¹

The Cokeville area is a region of extremely varied topography. The Bear River Valley is bordered on the west by the Boundary Hills which form the eastern edge of the Bear Lake Plateau. The Tump Range forms the western boundary of both Bear River Valley and Smiths Fork Valley.

¹John C. Fremont, Memoirs of My Life, I (Chicago: Belford, Clarke and Company, 1887), 204-205.

From the town of Cokeville to the Idaho border the Sublette Range separates the two valleys bordering Bear River Valley on the east and Smiths Fork Valley on the west. The valley floors are narrow and range from one to about five miles in width. Bench marks in the valleys all exceed 6,000 feet, and altitudes in excess of 8,000 feet are common in the surrounding mountain ranges. Mt. Isabel, a prominent landmark of the area, has an elevation of 10,155 feet. Cokeville Butte and Station Butte (the two "gigantic columns" referred to by Fremont) have elevations of 6,888 and 6,914 feet, respectively.²

Herman Jaeckel, a United States deputy surveyor in charge of a land resurvey of a portion of the Cokeville area conducted during October, 1907, reported that the "rough rugged Sublet Range of Mountains is almost inaccessible in places."³

The diverse topography exerts a great influence on the climate of the Cokeville area. Having a continental climate, the summers are short, with temperatures reaching 100 degrees; and the winters are long and severe, with temperatures of twenty to forty degrees below zero rather common.

One of the coldest temperature readings in the state of Wyoming was recorded at Border, Wyoming, a small ranching community ten miles northwest of Cokeville, on February 8, 1929. The official reading was sixty degrees below zero. Frost can be expected during any of the summer months: low temperatures of eight, eighteen, twenty-six, twenty-one, and

²Local names for these two buttes are "Rocky Peak" and "Big Hill," respectively.

³Wyoming, Field Notes, Resurvey of Township 25N, R118 West of the Sixth Principal Meridian in Wyoming. Book No. K, 1907. (Photocopy in possession of E. J. Lloyd.) (Hereafter referred to as Wyoming Resurvey, Field Notes, 1907.)

thirteen degrees have been recorded for the months of May, June, July, August, and September, respectively.⁴ Classified as semi-arid, the Cokeville area has an average precipitation of approximately twelve inches per year and an average annual snowfall of about sixty-nine inches per year.⁵

The snow in the higher elevations supplies the major portion of the water necessary for irrigation without which the crops in the valleys could not survive. The melting snow is also a valuable source of water for the livestock that spend the summer months on the mountain slopes. Numerous storage reservoirs, built by individual livestock owners, are filled by the spring runoff, allowing the sheep and cattle to feed in areas that would otherwise be worthless as grazing land.

The Bear River and Smiths Fork valleys' bottoms are covered with wild grasses, cottonwood, willow, and aspen. The wild, native grasses provide a valuable source of winter feed for the livestock in the form of meadow hay. The cottonwood and aspen trees and willows are concentrated in the close proximity of the rivers and small streams, providing shade to the livestock grazing along their banks.

Gradually the flora of the valleys gives way to the sagebrush, bunchgrass, spruce, balsam, cedar, mountain mahogany, and pine on the mountain slopes that rise steadily on either side of the valley lowlands.

During the pre-settlement period the Bear River and Smiths Fork valleys and the surrounding areas were the haunts of the Indian and

⁴All degree readings on Fahrenheit scale.

⁵U.S., Department of Agriculture Weather Bureau, Climatic Summary of the United States, Bulletin W, Section 12 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1931).

later the fur trapper. The area abounded in wild game, providing food for the aboriginal inhabitants and furs for the trappers. Elk, bear, moose, deer, buffalo, antelope, and a great variety of small game animals and birds were prominent parts of the Cokeville area fauna. Although the buffalo and antelope had disappeared from the locality by the time the first settlers arrived, Warren Angus Ferris, an early fur trapper and explorer in the west, reported buffalo on the valley floor in 1830; and the John C. Fremont expedition reported sighting numerous elk and antelope in the area in 1843.⁶ By the time of settlement in the mid-1870's, the Cokeville area's sole inhabitants were nomadic northern Shoshone who used the valleys primarily for hunting grounds. As settlers pushed into the area, they established farms and ranches along the waterways and gradually displaced the earlier inhabitants and forced the game animals to seek the protection of the surrounding mountains.

Cultivated fields of alfalfa, wheat, barley, and oats were established on the slopes and benches of the lower foothills, and a great amount of labor and patience was and still is required to wrest adequate crops from the rocky soil and keep back the encroaching sagebrush which stands along the fence lines as an ever-present menace.

Although mining has played a part in the dreams of the people of the area, the economy of Cokeville is geared directly to the livestock industry. There are several dry farms in operation, but the main agricultural pursuits are the raising of forage crops and cereal grains which are necessary to insure sufficient winter feed for the livestock.

⁶Fremont, 204-205; Warren Angus Ferris, Life in the Rocky Mountains (Salt Lake City: Rocky Mountain Book Shop, 1940), 39.

Early History

The Cokeville area has, at various times, been part of the Oregon Territory, the Washington Territory, and the Idaho Territory. In 1846 and 1848 the United States acquired the major portion of the western territory by means of treaties signed with Britain (Buchanan-Pakenham) and Mexico (Treaty of Guadalupe Hildago). In 1846 the Buchanan-Pakenham Treaty with Britain gave the United States sole possession of that portion of the northwest known as the Oregon Country. After the Oregon Country became part of the United States, it was renamed the Oregon Territory on August 14, 1848; and the Cokeville area was a part of this territory until March 2, 1853, when it became a part of the Washington Territory. On March 3, 1863, the Idaho Territory was created; and the Cokeville area was located in the southeastern corner of this new territory where it remained until July 25, 1868, when portions of Idaho and Utah were brought within the boundaries of the territory of Wyoming.⁷

The Cokeville area then became a part of the tract known as the Unorganized Territory--those portions of the Utah and Idaho Territories included within the Wyoming Territory by the Organic Act of 1868. The first Territorial Legislature created and defined the boundaries of Uinta County on December 1, 1869, to include most of the Unorganized Territory.

⁷Middleton G. Beaman, Index Analysis of the Federal Statutes, 1789-1873 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1911), 1014; Marie H. Erwin, Wyoming Historical Bluebook: A Legal and Political History of Wyoming, 1868-1943 (Denver: Bradford-Robinson Printing Company, 1946), 97, 99; Samuel Flagg Bemis, Diplomatic History of the United States (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1949), 277-280.

The Cokeville area was a part of Uinta County until February 20, 1911, when Lincoln County was separated from Uinta.⁸

Lincoln County at the time of its creation by an act of the Wyoming State Legislature was the largest in the state, embracing 9,180 square miles. The partition of Uinta County was hard fought by some of its residents, but the divisionists were successful by a wide margin. However, the newly created county was first governed by provisional commissioners appointed by the governor. Duly elected county officials did not take their seats until January, 1913.⁹

Being one of several geographical divisions within the country, the Cokeville district was thus described in 1915:

The Bear River Valley is designated on the railroad after you have passed Sage station, and is one of the large fertile valleys, with Cokeville as the principal town. Big sheep and cattle interests have their home in this valley, which is one of the most prosperous in the county as finances would indicate outside of the mining district.¹⁰

⁸Wyoming, Session Laws, House Bill No. 203, Chapter 67, (1911), 93-94. (No publication data available; photocopy obtained from Wyoming State Historical Department, Cheyenne, Wyoming.); Erwin, 408-409.

⁹Kemmerer Camera (Wyoming), December 15, 1915.

¹⁰Ibid.

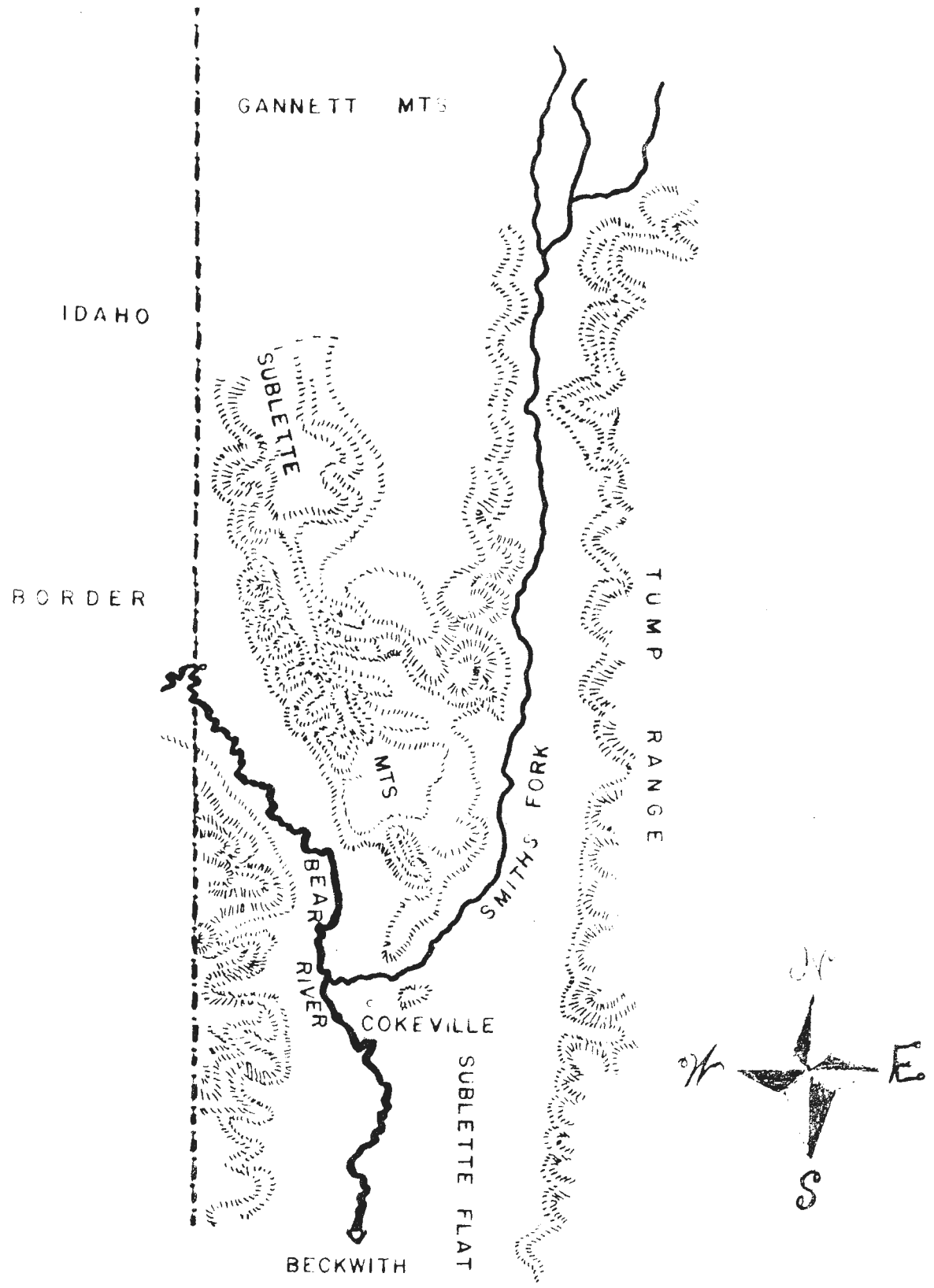


Figure 2. *Cokeville, Wyoming*

CHAPTER II
BEFORE SETTLEMENT

Indians

Prior to the second decade of the 1800's, the sole occupants of the Bear River and Smiths Fork valleys were the Shoshone Indians. The Shoshone used these areas principally for summer hunting and camping grounds and made their winter encampments in the desert regions to the north and east.

Members of the Shoshone sub-family were first known as Snake, so named in the 1740's by Sieur de la Verendrye, a French trapper, who learned of their existence while he was in the Mandan villages of North Dakota. The Shoshone name was first popularized as a result of the Lewis and Clark expedition, the first Americans to enter the lands of these people from the east. Maps prepared by the expedition referred to the Indians of the Northern Great Basin and Middle Rocky Mountains as the Shoshone or Snakes.¹ The name was indiscriminately applied to those Shoshone Indians who were mounted on horseback. The unmounted were referred to as Diggers, Shoshokoes, or Shoshonee.²

¹The Cokeville area is located just east of the northeastern periphery of the Great Basin in the physiographic province known as the Middle Rocky Mountains.

²Jesse D. Jennings, The Native Americans (New York: Harper & Row, 1965), 273; Julian H. Stewart, Basin-Plateau Aboriginal Sociopolitical Groups, Bureau of American Ethnology, Bulletin No. 120 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1938), 7, 199.

The majority of the aboriginal inhabitants of the Middle Rocky Mountains were sub-divisions of the Shoshonean sub-family. These various sub-divisions are classified according to linguistic patterns, all speaking a closely related language. The Northern Paiute, Southern Paiute, Ute, Bannock, and Shoshone proper are all affiliated within the Shoshone nation.³

Before the introduction of domesticated animals from Europe by way of the Spanish conquistador, the Shoshone and their Great Basin neighbors lived the role of foot hunters and gatherers. These aborigines were by necessity relegated to relatively limited areas of travel, and tribal interaction was minimal.

Their livelihood consisted of roots and tubers dug from the ground, edible berries native to the areas, small game animals, and insects. Occasionally large animals such as bear, deer, or buffalo were added to the diet, but these instances depended to a great extent on the weapons available and skill of the hunter. As late as the mid-nineteenth century, the Indians of the southern Great Basin were referred to as "Diggers," owing to their custom of digging for roots and tubers.

The acquisition of the horse in the early eighteenth century drastically changed the living conditions of these people, and the cultural differences between the sub-divisions of the wetter north and the more arid south became more pronounced.⁴ The horse also accentuated differences of wealth and prestige within localized areas. The Shoshone of Idaho and Wyoming obtained the horse quicker and in greater numbers than did their cousins to the south.

³Jennings, 274.

⁴Ibid., 281.

In 1834 Captain Benjamin Bonneville described the differences between the northern and southern tribes. Referring to the "Diggers," he wrote:

These are of that branch of the great Snake tribe called Shoshokoes, or Root Diggers, from their subsisting, in a great measure, on the roots of the earth; though they likewise take fish in great quantities, and hunt, in a small way. They are, in general, very poor; destitute of most of the comforts of life, and extremely indolent; but a mild, inoffensive race. They differ, in many respects, from the other branch of the Snake Tribe, the Shoshonies; who possess horses, are more roving and adventurous, and hunt the buffalo.⁵

The Indians encountered by the first white men in the Bear River and Smiths Fork Valley regions were the northern Shoshone, principally members of the Bannock and Wyoming Shoshone tribes.

The relationship between the white trappers and the Indians of the Great Basin was, although not without conflict, generally friendly and the interaction of the two factions was, relatively speaking, harmonious. Osborne Russell, who was in the area during the 1830's, wrote of these Indians:

They are kind and hospitable to whites thankful for favors indignant at injuries and but little addicted to theft in their large villages I have seldom heard them accused of inhospitality on the contrary I have found it to be a general feature of their character to divide the last morsel of food with the hungary [sic] stranger let their means be what it might for obtaining the next meal.⁶

The well-watered valleys of the Bear and Smiths Fork rivers abounded in fish and game and were one of the main hunting and camping grounds of these Indians. There is no evidence to indicate that any major conflicts

⁵Washington Irving, The Adventures of Captain Bonneville (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1961), 224.

⁶Osborne Russell, Journal of a Trapper, ed. by Aubrey L. Haines (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1955), 143.

took place within this region, other than an occasional disagreement when one or both were under the influence of the white-man's "firewater."

Evidence of the early inhabitants, in the form of stone and obsidian points, chipping grounds, campsites, an occasional rusted firearm, assorted tools and pottery are still to be found in the area.⁷ Recently numerous artifacts (pottery and tools, the remains of an early campsite) were uncovered a short distance from the mouth of Smiths Fork River.

Although the Shoshone were the dominant group in southwestern Wyoming, their more warlike cousins from the north and east, the Crows and Blackfeet, made frequent excursions in this region. A party of Crow Indians effectively postponed the entrance of the white man into the Cokeville area for several years.

Explorers and Fur Trappers

In 1812 Robert Stuart, a member of the famed John Jacob Astor expedition, who was returning to the east with dispatches from Oregon, had reached the Bear River in the approximate vicinity of present-day Soda Springs, Idaho, and proceeded eastward. Following the Bear River he reached the confluence of Thomas Fork, a major tributary located twelve miles north of Cokeville, on September 13. Encountering a group of apparently unfriendly Indians who were recognized as Crows, Stuart altered his course going north up Thomas Fork to the Salt River and on to Snake River and more familiar territory.⁸

⁷Mr. Stanley Thompson of Cokeville has a fine collection of stone and obsidian points collected from the Cokeville area.

⁸Kenneth A. Spaulding, ed., On the Oregon Trail: Robert Stuart's Journey of Discovery (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1953), 79-81.

After his brief sojourn on the Bear River, Stuart returned to the east via the famed South Pass and became the first white man to pass through this natural gateway which led to the Great Basin. Although South Pass was to remain in obscurity for another decade, Stuart and his men told stories of this new route to the west. Slowly other adventurers took heed and began to push into the Great Basin.

The same factors that attracted the Indians--the abundance of streams, waterfowl, and game--also attracted the fur trappers who probed the hidden mysteries of the Great Basin in the opening decades of the nineteenth century.

The first recorded visit of white men to the Smiths Fork and upper Bear River valleys occurred in the winter of 1818-1819 when Donald Mackenzie and his men of the British-controlled Northwest Company of Montreal, Canada, trapped on the Bear River and its tributaries. Mackenzie was responsible for the discovery and naming of numerous geographical landmarks, among which was Bear Lake and the Bear River. Bear River was formerly known as Millers River, so named by Joseph Miller, a member of the earlier Stuart expedition.⁹

The next adventurers who played an important role in the history of the Cokeville area were the members of the Rocky Mountain Fur Company who entered from the east in 1824. Jedediah Strong Smith, a young employee of the company, descended Smiths Fork from its headwaters in 1824.¹⁰ Smith left more than just a passing history; he left his name to remind

⁹Isaac K. Russell, Hidden Heroes of the Rockies (New York: World Book Company, 1923), 79-81.

¹⁰Dale L. Morgan, Jedediah Smith and the Opening of the West (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1953), 177.

future generations of his exploration.

After the initial passage of the trappers in the 1820's, others moved through the region in an endless succession. Other famous trappers and explorers were William Sublette, Jim Beckwourth, Jim Bridger, Thomas Fitzpatrick, Zacharias Ham, Warren Angus Ferris, John C. Fremont, and Captain Benjamin Bonneville.

The Bear River and Smiths Fork valleys were likely visited almost yearly by the fur trapper between 1824 and the advent of the settler; but, except for place names and picturesque descriptions, their influence on final settlement was relatively unimportant. Some of these early figures described a country that is almost beyond the imagination of present-day civilization. Warren Angus Ferris, an early trapper and explorer, described Bear River Valley in what seems almost poetic beauty:

We ... resumed our march, and on the second of July [1830], ascended a steep snow-clad pine-covered mountain, when we came in view of a beautiful valley, watered by a shining serpentine river, and grazed by tranquil herds of buffalo. At evening we halted on the margin of Bear River, after a very fatiguing and toilsome march of thirty miles. This river is from fifty to eighty yards in breadth, clear and deep, with a gentle current, and is bordered by fertile though woodless bottoms.¹¹

The Western Migration

In the 1840's, while the trappers were passing from the scene, and before the coming of the permanent settlers, a different breed of adventurers began moving westward. This was the beginning of the era of the emigrant and the Oregon Trail. Moving through South Pass, pushing on to Ham's Fork of the Green River, and by the utilization of the Sublette

¹¹Ferris, 39.

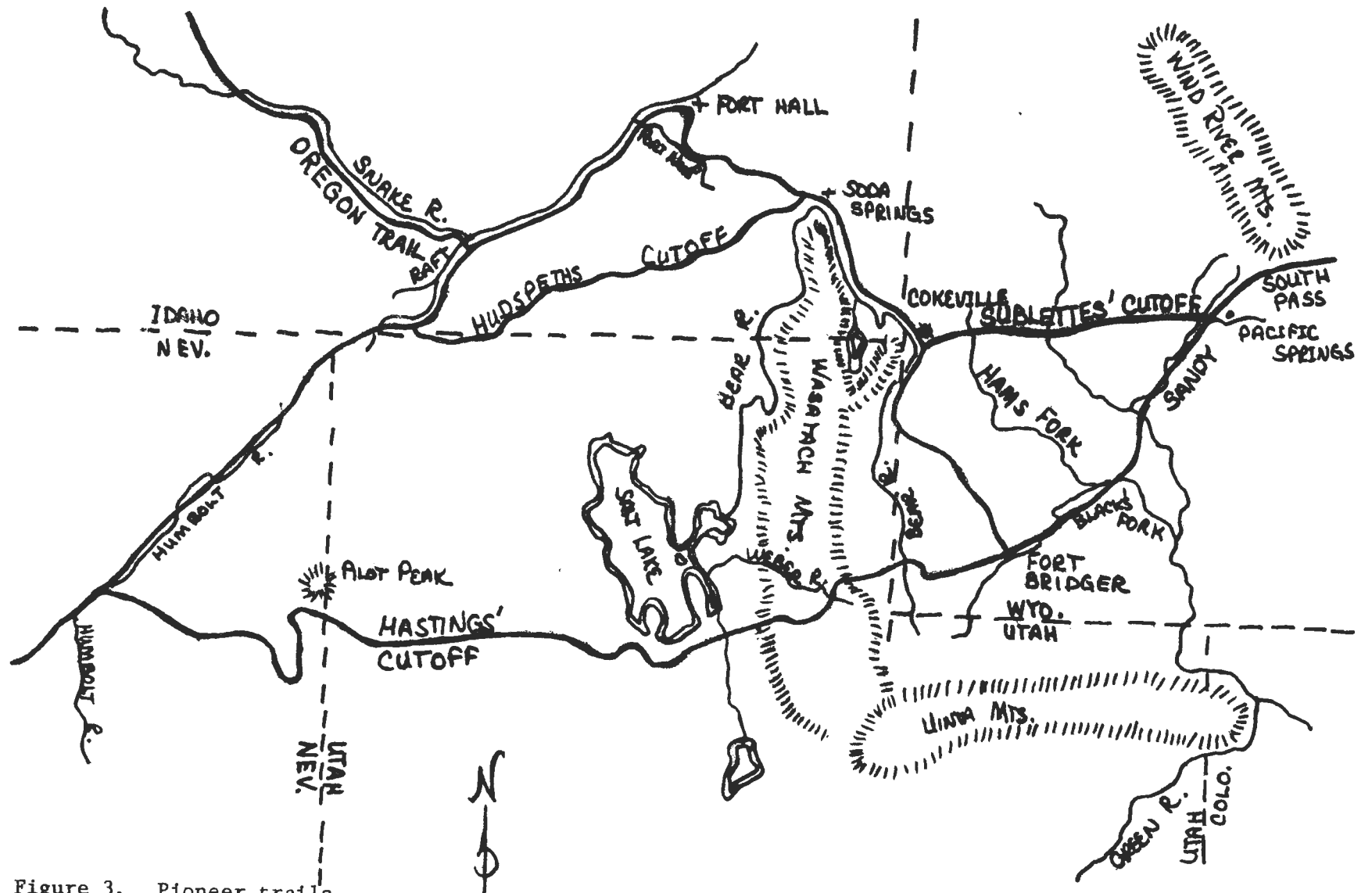


Figure 3. Pioneer trails.

Cutoff, the great trains entered Bear River Valley at the present site of Cokeville. A stone monument was erected in 1909 at Cokeville by Ezra Meeker in commemoration of the role it played in the opening of this grand American drama--the overland trail.

The first sizable emigrant train to utilize the "overland trail" was the Bartleson-Bidwell expedition which left Sapling Grove, Missouri, in June, 1841. The group was supposedly under the leadership of Colonel John Bartleson, but the actual leadership was under the direction of Father Pierre de Smet and former mountain man Thomas Fitzpatrick. The company reached Soda Springs, Idaho, on August 10, which would place its arrival in the Cokeville area around August 6 or 7. The diary of John Bidwell, a member of the company, is the basis for knowledge of the journey.¹²

In 1842 a party of over 100 men, women, and children led by the Reverend Elijah White made the trek over the overland trail. But the year for the "great migrations" was 1843. In that year Marcus Whitman led a party of 200 families in 120 wagons accompanied by 1,467 head of oxen and loose cattle to Oregon.¹³ But the greater trek was made by a group consisting of over 1,000 persons of all ages, and over 5,000 oxen and cattle. This train was organized in May of 1843 with Peter Burnett

¹²John Bidwell, "The First Emigrant Train to California," The Century Magazine, XLI (November, 1890-April, 1891), 114; A. J. Simmonds, "The Big Range: A History of Cornish, Trenton, Clarkston, Newton, and Amalga, Utah," (unpublished master's thesis, Utah State University, Logan, 1967).

¹³A. McKay Rich, "The History of Montpelier from 1864 to 1925," (unpublished master's thesis, Utah State University, Logan, 1957), 7. Marcus Whitman and the Reverend Henry Spaulding and their wives and W. H. Grey made the trip to Oregon by wagon in 1836 as far as Fort Boise and are credited with opening the Oregon Trail.

as captain and J. W. Nesmith as orderly sergeant.¹⁴ Upon reaching Bear River Valley, Burnett wrote:

On the 17th of August we arrived on the banks of Bear River, a clear, beautiful stream with abundance of good fish and plenty of wild ducks and geese. On the 22nd we arrived at the great Soda Springs, Idaho, when we left Bear River for Fort Hall.¹⁵

It was in 1843 that Captain John Charles Fremont also passed through the Cokeville area on his second expedition to the western territories.

Numerous factors combined to bring about the great migration westward: favorable reports sent east by Oregon champions, hard times following the Panic of 1837, declining prices for agricultural products, poor transportation facilities in many parts of the mid-west, and a desire to win the Oregon Country for the United States, coupled with the adventurous, pioneer spirit of many of the participants in the westward migrations.¹⁶

The next three decades saw thousands of settlers following the Oregon Trail to what they visualized as utopia--Oregon Territory. Although the great westward treks have been romanticized in western literature, Mrs. Fannie Hewitt Chamberlain, a long-time resident of Cokeville who crossed the plains by wagon in 1894, describes the trip as "long, hard and dirty."¹⁷

¹⁴Ray Allen Billington, Westward Expansion: A History of the American Frontier (2nd ed.; New York: The Macmillan Company, 1960), 526.

¹⁵Peter H. Burnett, "Recollections of an Old Pioneer," The Quarterly of the Oregon Historical Society, V (1904), 76.

¹⁶Billington, 526.

¹⁷Fannie Chamberlain, interview, Cokeville, Wyoming, March 30, 1968.

The westbound emigrants, like the trappers and traders, were transitory figures who gave the mountainous valleys of Bear River and Smiths Fork only cursory attention as they made their way to the more desirable regions of Oregon and California.

Figure 4. Early settlers in the Cokeville area: left to right, E. W. Holland, Victor Forgeon, John Bourne, E. S. Smith (government scout), Julius Jacobsen, Sylvanus Collett.



CHAPTER III

SETTLEMENT AND NINETEENTH CENTURY DEVELOPMENT

During the years between 1812 and 1868, the upper Bear River and Smiths Fork valleys were the domain of the Indians, fur trappers, and traders; during and after the 1830's and 1840's, it became a well-traveled pathway of the emigrant trains plying their way to Oregon and California. The emigrants used the valleys to pasture their oxen and cattle or replenish their larders with fresh meat as they passed through the area. But the pull of more desirable regions relegated the Cokeville area to a wide place in the trail where members of wagon trains enjoyed a short rest before continuing their trek westward.

In 1868 a new era in the history of Cokeville and southwestern Wyoming began. In that year Asahel C. Beckwith and Antony V. Quinn, with headquarters in Evanston, Wyoming, began settlement of Bear River Valley.¹ Having little to work with other than mule teams and oxen, these hardy pioneers built one of the largest ranches in southern Wyoming. With the initial ground breaking by Beckwith and Quinn, settlement became a reality. However, it was four years later before county records show any settlement in the Cokeville area.²

The first record of permanent settlers in this area was in 1872 when a group of citizens living in the vicinity petitioned the county commissioners of Uinta County to establish a voting precinct at Smiths Fork

¹Kemmerer Gazette (Wyoming), November 9, 1967.

²Hubert H. Bancroft, History of Nevada, Colorado, and Wyoming, 1540-1888 (San Francisco: The History Company, Publishers, 1890), 786.

on Bear River. The request was signed "Many Citizens."³ The names of these many citizens will probably be forever buried in the unrecorded history of Cokeville.

The citizens who signed this petition were probably ranchers living in the Bear River Valley who, although not living on the Smiths Fork River, used the geographical terminology for the purpose of identification. In the year 1873 the first white settler actually settled in the immediate vicinity of Cokeville. Tilford Kutch, a member of a trapping party, became ill and decided to remain in the area.⁴ He married an Indian woman, built a one-room cabin and operated a ferry and a small trading post on Smiths Fork River serving the emigrants moving westward. Numerous lodges of the Bannock and Shoshone Indians often stood around the Kutch dwellings and, undoubtedly, the Indians were his best customers.⁵

In 1874 Sylvanus Collett and Robert Gee, Mormons from Utah, arrived at the Smiths Fork River with their families and a few belongings. They decided to settle along the small streams at the mouth of the river and became the first white settlers to remain in the locality. Kutch and his family remained at the settlement for several years but later moved to LaBarge, Wyoming, where he was killed in a logging accident.⁶

³Uinta County, Wyoming, Minutes of the County Commissioners' Proceedings, Book A, 1. (Manuscript copy located in Uinta County Courthouse, Evanston, Wyoming.) (Hereafter referred to as Uinta Commissioners' Proceedings.)

⁴Various sources refer to this man as Milton Kutch or John Kutch, but Tilford Kutch is most common and appears on early county records.

⁵Kemmerer Camera, December 15, 1915.

⁶Ibid.; Lois Dayton, Collection of notes on the history of Cokeville, Wyoming. (Hereafter cited as Dayton Notes.)

In 1875 two more settlers and their families joined Collett, Gee, and Kutch at Smiths Fork. The first to come in that year was John Bourne, a friend of both Collett and Gee. Later in the year Edward W. Holland and his family added to the growing population at the Smiths Fork settlement.⁷ By 1876 the number of settlers in the area had grown considerably. Tax assessment records for the year 1876 list the following people:⁸ Edward W. Holland, Louis Brasier, Frederick Boyd, John Bourne, James Crosswell, Daniel Carawan, Reuben Collett, Sylvanus Collett, U. P. Davidson, U. Farghau, Robert W. Gee, Jolice Wilson, Christian Holland, Craven Jackson, Tilford Kutch, Joseph Lewares, Oscar Snyder, George G. Snyder, Charles P. Smith, E. S. Smith (government scout), William Wawsley, and J. C. Williams.

Life for these early settlers was difficult. Arriving in the valley with limited material wealth, they had to rely on their own ingenuity for the few necessities that kept body and soul intact. Game from the nearby mountains and small plots of farm land supplied what was eaten, home industry supplied clothing, and tools and implements were manufactured locally.

Early dwellings were constructed from logs cut and transported to the building sites from the timbered slopes of the mountains. The roofs of these homes were covered with dirt which effectively "kept out the cold in winter and with equal effectiveness, let in the rain in summer."⁹

⁷Kemmerer Camera, December 15, 1915.

⁸Uinta County, Wyoming, Tax Assessment Records, Smiths Fork on the Bear River and Cokeville District, 1876. (Manuscript located in County Courthouse, Evanston, Wyoming.) (Hereafter referred to as Uinta County Tax Records.)

⁹Kemmerer Gazette, December 19, 1952.

The packed-dirt floors, after being sprinkled with generous amounts of water, became rock-like. The Collett, Gee, and Bourne families each had comfortable homes near Collett Creek where it crosses the old emigrant trail; others were scattered along the Bear and Smiths Fork rivers.¹⁰

To support growing families, the men would trap beaver from the nearby streams and hunt deer, elk, and bear in the surrounding mountains. Deer and elk were plentiful, and if the hunter was fortunate enough to kill a bear, the hide meant money in his pocket. One hunter received \$75.00 for a brown bear skin.¹¹

The hides, furs, and extra meat were transported to Evanston, Wyoming, the nearest supply center, about seventy miles south of Smiths Fork, and traded for food and clothing to supplement supplies at home. The trip to Evanston was long and difficult, often made on foot when horses and wagons could not be used. Sometimes trips were made in the winter-time by the settlers using the frozen Bear River as a road.¹²

Despite the hardships encountered by the first settlers, other families moved into the area. In 1877, the Eleventh Annual Report of the United States Geological and Geographical Survey of the Territories of Idaho and Wyoming indicates that settlement was taking on the appearance of permanence:

Near the mouth of Smiths Fork, there are several fine ranches, besides two small centers of population Cokeville and

¹⁰Floyd Roberts, interview, Cokeville, Wyoming, March 25, 1968. (Mr. Roberts is the grandson of John Bourne.)

¹¹C. F. Stoffers, letter to a sister in Germany, 1886. (Photocopy in possession of E. J. Lloyd.)

¹²Dayton Notes.

Sublet Creek From this point down to its mouth there are ranches at short intervals all along the Bear.¹³

By 1880 there were thirty-nine males, sixteen adult females, forty-one male children, and twenty-one female children under the age of twenty-one reported on the tax assessment records for this area of Uinta County.¹⁴ In 1880 the census of the Wyoming Territory listed the following heads of families and their occupations for the "two small centers of population" referred to in the geological and geographical survey of 1877:¹⁵

<u>Sublet Creek</u>	<u>Cokeville</u>
Andrew Height (farmer)	Oscar E. Snyder (farmer)
Victor Forgeon (farmer)	Norton Jacobs (laborer)
William Meeks (laborer)	George G. Snyder (farmer)
Samuel Richards (carpenter)	John Bourne (farmer)
Robert W. Gee (farmer)	John W. Tanner (farmer)
Frederick Boyd (clerk in store)	Sylvanus Collett (farmer)
Thomas F. Behl (machinist)	Edward W. Holland (farmer)
Thomas Fowler (laborer)	Peter Ladell (laborer)
Abraham Stoner (farmer)	Abraham Ladell (carpenter)
	John W. Stoner (grocer)
	Orson H. Groo (farmer)
	Isaac Groo (farmer)

¹³R. V. Hayden, Eleventh Annual Report of the United States Geological and Geographical Survey of the Territories Embracing Idaho and Wyoming (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1879), 706-707.

¹⁴Uinta County Tax Records, 1880.

¹⁵Wyoming, 1880 Census of Wyoming Territory, 727-729. (Typescript of census located in Wyoming State Historical Department, Cheyenne, Wyoming.)

All of these early settlers played a role in the settlement of Cokeville, but many were transitory figures who remained only long enough to obtain means to move to greener pastures. Consequently, their passing is marked only by a name on the records. Throughout the nineteenth century many came and left, but some stayed to build, and their names and achievements are inseparable from the history of Cokeville.¹⁶

As the early records indicate, most of the people who made their homes along the banks of the streams and rivers were tied to agriculture; however, the passing emigrants provided opportunities for trading and visiting. The Oregon pioneers' need of fresh vegetables, animal replacements, and repairs on their wagons afforded opportunity for barter or outright sale. Although the years of the great migrations were past, the wagon trains continued to trickle through the area for many years. The Montpelier Examiner reported as late as July 19, 1899, that:

During the week the town Montpelier has been filled with emigrant teams going west. On Tuesday more than a dozen of them were lined up in front of the post office. For the most part these travelers did not seem to have any great surplus of money, though there were some pretty good trains. They were enroute west looking for a suitable place to locate. Most of them were heading for Oregon and Washington.

The Indians also traded with the settlers. During warm weather the Bannocks from Fort Hall and the Shoshone from the Wind River Reservation came to trade furs and buckskin clothing for food and salt. The buckskin gloves, pants, and shirts were worn by many of the white men of the day; and after they had served their time as clothing, they were cut into

¹⁶ Prominent settlers during the nineteenth century were: C. F. Stoffers--1881, Julius Jacobson--1883, Charles Pixley--ca 1880, Fred Roberts--1887, Richard Roberts--1886, W. H. Wyman--1885, P. W. Olson--1885, J. D. Noblett--1893, C. M. (Judge) White--1888, Frank Mau--1886, William H. Embree--1885.

strips and braided into whips and bridles. The Indians who traditionally inhabited the Cokeville area had been sent to the Fort Hall and Wind River reservations by the 1868 Treaty of Fort Bridger. However, many Indians continued to trade with local residents. They were a common sight even during the first decade of the twentieth century.¹⁷

After the coming of the railroad in 1882, Cokeville businessmen were afforded the opportunity of increased trade because of services and equipment needed by the Oregon Short Line.

Cokeville

Known as "Smiths Fork on the Bear River" in the diaries and journals of the early fur trappers and pioneers and early county records, the name was changed to Cokeville in the late 1870's. R. V. Hayden refers to one of the small settlements at the mouth of the Smiths Fork River as "Coketown" as early as 1877. The following year when judges of election were appointed the name of the Smiths Fork precinct was changed to Cokeville.¹⁸ The records show no reason for the change; however, among the precincts of Uinta County there were two designated as Smiths Fork-- "Smiths Fork East" and "Smiths Fork on the Bear River." The answer probably lies in the desire of citizens of the two localities to avoid confusion in occasional mail and the fact that some coal, which had good coking qualities, had been discovered in the vicinity of the latter. Also, in 1878 School District No. 10 included "all that portion of Uinta

¹⁷Chamberlain, interview; Ethel Huckvale Stoner, "Historical Sketch of Cokeville, Wyoming, 1923." (Unpublished typescript in possession of E. J. Lloyd.

¹⁸Uinta Commissioners' Proceedings, Book A.

County known as the Cokeville settlements."¹⁹ The "Cokeville settlements" at this early date consisted mainly of ranches scattered along the valleys, a small settlement at Sublet Creek, and the Cokeville settlement with a small, one-room, log store operated by J. W. Stoner at the junction of the emigrant trail and the Star Valley cutoff.

The growth of a mercantile establishment was of utmost importance to the early citizens of Cokeville. Isolated by distance and difficulty of transportation from other settlements--the nearest railroad was at Evanston, Wyoming, and the nearest town was Montpelier, Idaho--a store was a much needed addition to the community. Sylvanus Collett started a small store in 1875, stocking a small supply of groceries, whiskey, and bacon. By 1876 Robert Gee also had a small store in operation, but both of these early stores were probably more on the order of trading posts rather than the general stores of a later period.²⁰

John W. Stoner was in all respects the pioneer merchant of Cokeville. Coming from Soda Springs, Idaho, to Cokeville in 1877, he saw the advantage of a store and built the first building for that purpose. His stock of merchandise was freighted in from Evanston, Wyoming. Unknown luxuries such as bacon, sorghum molasses, tobacco, coffee, pipes, chewing tobacco, plain bolt goods, thread, needles, shoes, and various other sundry items graced the shelves of the small, one-room store.²¹ Although the citizens of the Cokeville settlements now had a central supply for

¹⁹L. L. Bender, "A Survey of School District Number Five, Lincoln County, Wyoming" (unpublished master's thesis, University of Wyoming, Laramie, 1937), 5.

²⁰Uinta Commissioners' Proceedings, Book A, 164-165.

²¹Dayton Notes.

necessary tools, various farming implements, and desired luxuries, they were still plagued by their isolation from the main railhead at Evanston.

The Coming of the Railroad

The transcontinental railroad was completed May 10, 1869, when the Central Pacific and the Union Pacific were tied together at Promontory Summit, Utah, by the driving of the famed golden spike. The nearest rail station to Cokeville was at Evanston seventy miles south. Consequently, it was of relatively little significance to the people in the Cokeville area as the trip was still long and difficult using team and wagon. However, in 1881 Cokeville was vitally affected by western railroad expansion. On April 11 of that year the Oregon Short Line Railway Company was organized under the laws of the Territory of Wyoming for the purpose of building a railroad from Granger, Wyoming, to Huntington, Oregon, a distance of 541 miles. The Oregon Short Line was a standard gauge, single track, steam railroad connecting the Union Pacific Railroad at Granger with the Oregon-Washington Railroad and Navigation Company at Huntington.²²

On July 1, 1881, the Oregon Short Line entered into an agreement with Chester W. Collins for construction of the railroad from Granger to Baker City, Oregon. Collins received "securities amounting to \$20,000 par value of first mortgage bonds and \$20,000 par value of capital stock per mile of constructed road." The following day Collins and Union

²²Merrill D. Beal, Intermountain Railroads: Standard and Narrow Gauge (Caldwell, Idaho: The Caxton Printers, Ltd., 1962), 143-144.

Pacific Railroad President Sidney Dillion entered into an agreement by which the latter was to provide the funds required to fulfill the terms of the construction agreement.²³

The Oregon Short Line was formally launched on July 11, 1881, in a ceremony held at Granger in which E. E. Calvin, a telegraph operator, drove the first spike. On July 20, 1881, the Deseret News quoted The Bear Lake Democrat to the effect that according to a Mr. Stevens the track-laying was expected to average a mile and a half per day. Grading and track-laying sections were organized, and by the fall of 1881, fifty miles of track had been laid before winter weather forced the crews to halt. Resuming work early in the spring of the next year, the crews pushed the track through Cokeville about June 12, and on June 17, 1882, the Idaho territorial line was crossed. At this time approximately ninety-two miles of track had been completed.²⁴

The new railroad greatly affected the social and economic life of the citizens of Cokeville. Providing a better means of transportation for getting commodities to market, it greatly stimulated trade. More and more farmers turned from subsistence agriculture to the production of goods for sale. Production of sheep and cattle greatly increased, and many of the present-day livestock ranches owe their beginning to the coming of the railroad.

Socially the railroad made travel easier, and the people could begin

²³"Brief Historical Sketch," 417.

²⁴Beal, 143-144.

to increase their extent of movement to more distant areas. The railroad also brought in itinerant laborers from all walks of life and, as a result, the wild life. The Bear Lake Democrat summed up the feelings of many people when it wrote:

With railroad facilities Bear Lake Valley ... will be visited by thousands of tourists who will, of course, increase the circulation of money in our midst.

It will be strange, however, if the completion of the railroad does not bring here what follows it almost everywhere, and that is a season of financial depression. If ... people are wise they will prepare for it. ... evil influence and pernicious customs ... may be introduced through the presence of a rough and reckless element that the railroad may bring²⁵

However, for the residents of Cokeville, the advantages far outweighed the disadvantages as the railroad supplied jobs to many of the local labor force. This development was the first to provide citizens of Cokeville a livelihood other than agriculture. Many worked directly for the railroad, while others established business enterprises that serviced the railroad people.

The firm of Isaac Coe and Levi Carter, one of many subcontractors on the railroad, employed Henry J. Somson and John Bourne to furnish ties from the timbered slopes of Smiths Fork Valley. Cut into eight foot lengths and squared on two sides, the ties were floated down Smiths Fork River to the railroad at Cokeville. The extent of this enterprise is evidenced by the fact that in 1883, Coe and Carter had 65,000 ties in the Cokeville district.²⁶ Employment was also obtained by local residents building and grading the roadbed.

²⁵Rich, 55.

²⁶Uinta County Tax Records, 1883.

In at least one instance the male population garnered an additional advantage. Shortly after completion of the railroad a pumphouse and water tank was constructed to service the thirsty steam engines on the line. In a room adjacent to the pumphouse, early pumpmaster John Bourne installed a galvanized bathtub which became Cokeville's first public bathhouse. Local residents, cowboys, and travelers frequented the bathhouse, paid the 25 cent charge with towel furnished to get slicked up; but it was reported that none of the women folk of the town utilized the facilities of the big tub at the station.²⁷

Perhaps the most important change brought by the coming of the railroad was the fact that it changed the locus of the main settlement. The tracks ran approximately a mile due west of the settlement, and almost immediately the main center of business shifted to the vicinity of the tracks where it remains to the present.

The advent of the railroad was beneficial in many ways to the Cokevilleites, creating employment, ready markets for agricultural produce, and increased population, but it remained for an adequate road system to totally alleviate the isolation of the community.

Early Roads

Not until after 1890 when a system of improved country roads eased hauling difficulties and provided easier access to surrounding settlements did Cokeville residents enjoy increased contact with neighboring towns.

In the spring of 1879 the inhabitants of the "Cokeville settlements" and Evanston joined in petitioning the county commissioners of Uinta

²⁷Kenmerer Gazette, February 9, 1956.

County, asking for an appropriation of \$500 to bridge the streams and repair existing roads between the two. However, for unexplained reasons, action on the petition was postponed indefinitely by the county officials.²⁸ Not until 1887 is there any record that the petition was acted upon. On December 31, John W. Stoner completed the construction of a bridge across Bear River near Cokeville. In February, 1888, L. G. Christie reported that the bridge complied with specifications, and Stoner was paid \$1100 for the project.²⁹ The following September Stoner's bid for the removal of an old bridge across Bear River and the construction of two bridges across ditches on the road between Cokeville and the Idaho line was accepted by the county commissioners.³⁰

Between October 13 and October 25, 1888, the county's roads running from Cokeville to the Utah line and from Cokeville to the Idaho line were surveyed by John M. Sights. At a meeting of the county commissioners on December 28, 1888, Road Supervisor S. H. Wright notified the commissioners that both of these roads were "opened and in condition to be traveled" and on motion both were declared public highways.³¹

During the next two years a county road between Cokeville and the Star Valley settlements completed the chain of improved communications between Cokeville and the surrounding valleys. On November 3, 1888, L. G. Christie presented a reviewers report to the commissioners; and on October 8, 1889, bids filed by John W. Stoner were accepted for work on

²⁸Uinta Commissioners' Proceedings, Book A, 308.

²⁹Ibid., Book B, 211, 220.

³⁰Uinta County, Wyoming, Road Record, Book I, 40. (Manuscript copy located in Uinta County Courthouse, Evanston, Wyoming.)

³¹Ibid., 51, 61.

the Cokeville-Star Valley road. Work was completed during 1890, and on October 29 of that year, the road was declared a county road.³²

Though the coming of the railroad in 1881-1882 and the construction of an improved road system had removed Cokeville from the isolation it experienced during the early years of settlement, it remained in a pioneer or frontier stage during most of the nineteenth century. Perfecting the techniques of agricultural pursuits and expanding a healthy livestock industry consumed the major portion of the energy expended by the residents. Before the 1890's, mercantile development was limited, primarily because of the fact that most of the suitable building locations near the railroad were under private ownership. But in December, 1890, John W. Stoner, with the help of surveyor John M. Sights, surveyed and platted the present township site.³³ Thus Cokeville became the undisputed religious, commercial, and social center of the nearby Bear River and Smiths Fork valleys.

³²Ibid., 40; Uinta Commissioners' Proceedings, Book B, 342.

³³Lincoln County, Wyoming, Plat Book, Cokeville Townsite, 1.
(Located in Lincoln County Clerk's Office, County Courthouse, Kemmerer, Wyoming.)

CHAPTER IV

TWENTIETH CENTURY DEVELOPMENT

Prior to the first decade of the twentieth century the community of Cokeville can hardly be said to have advanced beyond the pioneer stage. Efforts of the local people were primarily directed toward establishing themselves on the land, and most of the problems they encountered were solved by a little ingenuity and a lot of hard work. Unlike their near-by neighbors in the communities of southern Idaho and northern Utah, the inhabitants of the Cokeville area did not utilize the organizational patterns common to the settlements established by the Mormons. Because of the lack of this church influence and the lack of recorded, coordinated community planning it would appear that the individual was the principal factor during the pioneer era. But, the movement into what might be termed the "Modern Era" brought to light issues and problems that required planning and action as a community rather than on an individual basis.

Political life, as it is thought of in the present day, was virtually non-existent during the early days of the Cokeville area. In territorial Wyoming the county court was the basic unit of government, and the county officials established their authority in the small unincorporated towns and rural areas through the creation of precincts.

In 1872 the citizens living in the upper Bear River Valley petitioned the Uinta County Commissioners, requesting that a voting precinct be established in the area. However, the request was not granted until September 16, 1876. On that date the county commissioners

created a new precinct bounded: "On the North by the Montana and Wyoming line and the South by a point two miles South of Sublet Creek and on the East by the Sweetwater County line and the West by the Utah line."¹

In the newly created precinct the constable and justice of the peace were the functioning officials. The justice of the peace maintained a court and provided for the punishment of law violations, and the constable served as the principal peace officer in the precinct. He enforced the decisions of the justice of the peace and county and territorial laws.

The first justice of the peace and constable in the Cokeville area had been appointed almost a year prior to the creation of the precinct. On November 2, 1875, upon making application to the county commissioners, Sylvanus Collett was appointed justice of the peace and John Bourne was appointed constable.²

In addition to these precinct officials, a militia was created shortly after the first settlers moved into the area. Sylvanus Collett was appointed a minuteman by the Wyoming territorial government and received authorization for 100 guns and 5,000 rounds of ammunition to be used for the protection of the settlers in the event they encountered hostile Indians such as were plaguing other sections of the territory. The use of the arms and ammunition proved to be unnecessary, and on September 9, 1879, the Uinta County Sheriff was instructed to collect the allotted weapons and ammunition in the possession of the Cokeville militia.³

¹Uinta Commissioners' Proceedings, Book A, 1, 164.

²Ibid., 125.

³Ibid., 346.

There was no legal provision for a precinct to make laws, and the early residents in the Cokeville precinct, living in a state of semi-isolation from other settlements, followed the pattern of other pioneers on the American frontier--they made their own local law.

As long as expansion was a factor in the lives of the people, the conditions under which they lived were bound to remain in a semi-primitive state. Permanent development was possible only when the energies of the settlers were not expended in the task of establishing their new homes.

The great impetus to the growth of Cokeville was the establishment of the cattle and sheep ranches in the valleys of the Bear and Smiths Fork rivers. As the ranches in the area increased in size, both in land area and number of livestock, the need for a central shipping point became a matter of necessity. The Oregon Short Line Railroad had pushed its way through the Bear River Valley in 1881-1882, and in 1896, for \$1.00, purchased nine acres of land in the township of Cokeville. Shortly after buying the ground, the Oregon Short Line began construction of loading platforms and stockyard complex.⁴

Business

The low price paid for the building site by the Oregon Short Line is believed to have been an effort on the part of J. W. Stoner to make Cokeville more desirable to prospective merchants and businessmen. Stoner, sole owner of the township which he had surveyed and platted in

⁴Lincoln County, Wyoming, Plat Book, Township 24N, R119W. (Located in Lincoln County Courthouse, Kemmerer, Wyoming.)

Figure 5. Cokeville main street, ca. 1912.

Figure 6. Cokeville during the early 1890's.



1890, was being forced to return much of the original townsite to agricultural land to avoid payment of higher taxes. Also, the high cost of the town lots discouraged businessmen and local residents from moving into Cokeville; but from 1897 to 1915 private enterprise was the order of the times. The stockyards, an increasing population in the valleys, and new additions to the townsite combined to increase the desirability of Cokeville as a place where business ventures might prove profitable. The townsite additions--the Stoner-Kinney in 1907, the Quadros in 1908, the Collett in 1910, the Heuett in 1910, the Stoner in 1911, and the Wyman in 1913--acted to lower the cost of lots by putting them on a more competitive basis.⁵

The real business boom did not start until about 1908. Prior to this time Cokeville consisted of two saloons--The Wyoming Saloon and Billy's Dew Drop Inn--the Wyman Hotel, built by William H. Wyman in 1897, a general merchandise store owned by J. W. Stoner, and several buildings that served as boarding houses for transients or unemployed shepherders and cowboys. In 1908 the Cokeville Merchantile Company and Cokeville State Bank opened their doors for business. The first edition of the Cokeville Register was published by H. V. Tennant in 1910, and in that same year Cokeville became an incorporated municipality. By 1915 the business district included a hotel, bank, newspaper office, meat market, harness shop, drug store, several pool halls, three saloons, two general mercantile stores, an implement house, lumber yard, two restaurants, two barber shops, confectionery store, blacksmith shop, garage, livery

⁵Floyd Roberts, interview, Cokeville, Wyoming, June 26, 1968. City map obtained from County Clerk's Office at Kemmerer, Wyoming, is the source of information concerning additions to the original townsite.

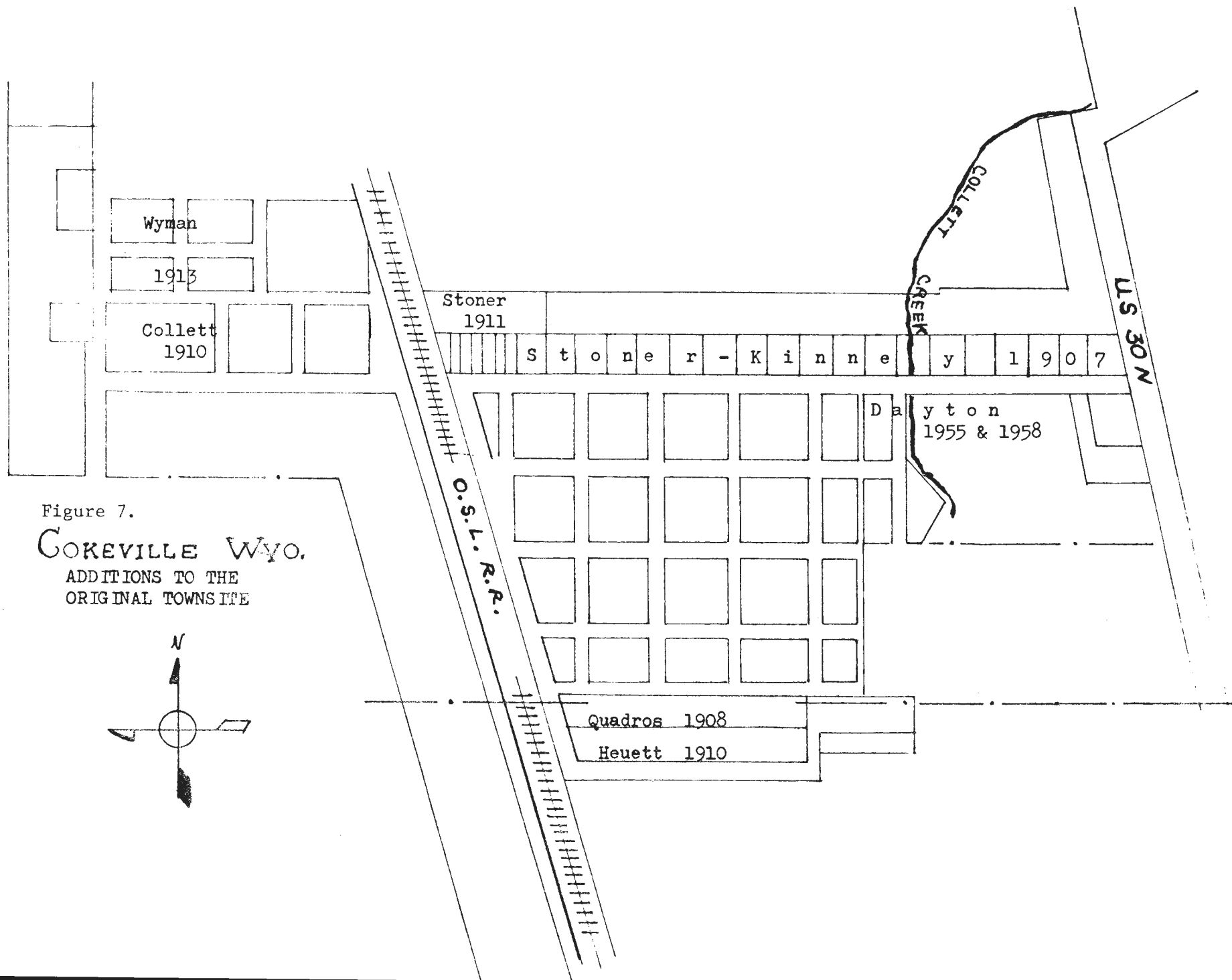
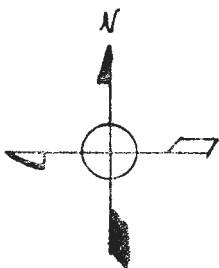


Figure 7.

GOKEVILLE WYO.
 ADDITIONS TO THE
 ORIGINAL TOWNSITE



barn, tailor shop, plumbing shop, and painting contractor. Public buildings included three churches, an opera house, and a large school building. A culinary water system had been installed, several miles of cement sidewalks had been placed, and a fire department with two hose carts and a chemical engine had been organized. The residential district, though scattered, included some excellent homes.⁶

The railroad was also doing a substantial business in the community and surrounding area. During 1914 local industry shipped 586 car loads of sheep, cattle, grain, phosphate, hogs, and hay from the Cokeville station; and in 1915 the Kemmerer Camera gave this glowing description of the local area:

It is probable that no town in the state the size of Cokeville or larger represents the wealth that is here represented. These people are public spirited and progressive, as has been demonstrated in many ways, and their aims and ambitions have been to place Cokeville among the leading and progressive towns of the state. Its location is ideal and scenic, close to the hills with rugged rock palisades and rich range, with five different streams running out nearby to the Bear River, in which abound mountain trout, while the big game fields come to within gun range of the town.⁷

The business world continued to enlarge during the next few years. In the fall of 1915 Earl Haggerty began construction of a twenty-five room hotel, and in 1916 a J. C. Penny store opened its doors for business. By 1920 electrical contractors were also active in the town, and in that year the business of Cokeville reached its zenith. Specialized tradesmen actively pursued their trades in town, and the old

⁶Uinta County, Wyoming, Incorporation Records, Book IX, 394, 411, (Located in Uinta County Courthouse, Evanston, Wyoming); Stoner, 3; Kemmerer Camera, December 15, 1915.

⁷Kemmerer Camera, December 15, 1915.

concept of self-sufficiency was becoming a thing of the past. Plumbing and electrical work required special tools and knowledge which the average citizen did not possess.⁸

Municipal Incorporation

A petition for the incorporation of the town of Cokeville was filed with the Clerk of the Board of the County Commissioners of Uinta County on April 4, 1910. At the next meeting of the board B. M. Ausherman presented the petition, a sworn statement of the census of the town, and an affidavit that the provisions of Section 1525 of the state of Wyoming revised statutes of 1899 had been compiled with according to the law. The commissioners then appointed B. H. Smalley, A. D. Noblitt, and C. F. Stoffer as inspectors as required by Section 1524 of the revised statutes. On May 31, 1910, the county commissioners granted the request and incorporated the town of Cokeville. The city government consisted of a mayor and four councilmen; the mayor to be elected for a two-year term and the councilmen for staggered, two-year terms, whereas two members were elected at each election. The election of city officials was to be held every two years during the odd years.⁹

The newly-elected city officials held their first regular meeting on June 3, 1910, with Frank A. Mau assuming the duties of mayor and B. H. Smalley, C. F. Stoner, Fred Roberts, and E. B. Perry as councilmen. E. B. Perry was appointed temporary clerk, but the appointment lasted

⁸Cokeville Register (Wyoming), November 20, 1915, April 8, 1916, January 3, 1920.

⁹Uinta County, Wyoming, Incorporation Record, Book XXXI, 329. (Located in Uinta County Courthouse, Evanston, Wyoming.)

only long enough to swear in George R. Symes as the official town clerk. By a draw for length of terms as councilmen, Perry and Smalley were to act in the capacity for one year and Stoner and Roberts for two years. In order to conform to the election pattern Mau served as mayor for only a one-year period. Other appointments at the first meeting included Angus McLean as town marshall and Judge James P. Rosenberg as justice of the peace. At the next meeting held on June 6, Marshall S. Reynolds was appointed town attorney.¹⁰

Most of the time during the first meetings of the new town government was devoted to the introduction and passage of ordinances governing the town. The first ordinances pertained primarily to the fixing of salaries for elected and appointed officers of the town of Cokeville, the duties of town officials, issuing and regulating the fees for licensing of businesses, prohibiting the carrying of firearms and lethal weapons, prohibiting disorderly conduct, setting up the nature of misdemeanors and offenses against public morals and order, and establishing by ordinance the penalties for violating any of the said ordinances.¹¹

At this point the town government assumed the basic functions of maintaining law and order, caring for the public welfare, and holding elections. The town could now enforce its provisions more effectively than could the previously-appointed precinct officials, but the greatest advantage of incorporation was in the area of finances. The town

¹⁰Cokeville, Wyoming, Town Council Minute Book, 1910-1918, 9, 10, 14. (Located in Cokeville City Hall.)

¹¹Cokeville, Wyoming, Ordinance Record Book, 1910-1918, 21-47. (Located in Cokeville City Hall.)

administration could levy and collect taxes on all real and personal property in Cokeville for the general fund, for utilities, and to pay off any debts incurred in the process of bonding the town to obtain finances to establish better services.

The first undertakings of the new administration in the way of civic improvements were the building of a town jail and improving the conditions of the town streets. On August 6, 1910, a committee comprised of Councilmen Stoner, Smalley, and Perry was appointed to purchase a lot for a jail site. The local jail would eliminate the transporting of prisoners to the county seat at Evanston. On September 17, 1910, it was decided that the town should purchase 140 yards of dirt at 25 cents per yard from the Cokeville Merchantile Company and have it placed on the streets. Records of the September meeting also indicate that the new jail was nearing completion. Bills of \$1.00, presented by Tanner's Livery for hauling the jail, and \$28.30, presented by J. C. Jackson for labor on the jail, were ordered paid. A final payment of \$140.00 for the jail lot was made January 24, 1912.¹²

The early town government was also active in providing the rudiments of fire protection to the townspeople by the establishment of a municipal fire department. On December 4, 1911, the city council voted to purchase a thirty-five gallon chemical fire engine from the Eureka Fire Hose Manufacturing Company of New York for the sum of \$530. As the town grew, it demanded an expanded fire department, and the town council made every attempt to maintain adequate fire protection by the purchase of more and better equipment. In an attempt to improve the efficiency of the fire

¹²Cokeville, Town Council Minute Book, 1910-1918, 22, 26, 29, 70.

fighters, the local officials agreed to pay a bonus of \$20 to the first person arriving at the fire department headquarters with a team to haul hose carts and equipment to the scene of the fire. This bonus was to be in effect during the months of December, January, February, March, and April.¹³

The most important undertakings of the early town government, ones which clearly showed its advantage over the old, unincorporated precinct, were the procuring of electricity and the installation of a culinary water system. On June 8, 1912, the town clerk was instructed to contact E. M. Fuller, state engineer, in regard to filing water rights for the town and locating a power site. On June 12, 1912, the council was informed that a power site had been located on Pine Creek, a tributary of Smiths Fork, and that the site could be transferred to the town of Cokeville, or the town could be given a quit claim deed, but no mention was made of any appropriation of water. At a special meeting of the town council held November 23, 1912, Mayor William H. Wyman suggested that the town procure water rights from the waters of Smiths Fork River and exchange this water for an equal amount in Spring Creek held by the Cokeville Canal Company. Frank A. Mau, president of the Cokeville Canal Company, also in attendance at the special meeting, stated that the canal company could furnish water to the town at a cost of \$500 per cubic foot of water; but the town council decided that they were not in a position to accept the proposition at that price.¹⁴

¹³Cokeville, Town Council Minute Book, 1910-1918, 66, 390.

¹⁴Ibid., 105.

Still seeking a suitable source of water, the town located several springs, and after surveying the proposed sites determined that the best source included the Kenyon and Wyman springs, tributaries of Spring Creek. On April 21, 1913, the town procured water rights from these two sources in the amount of 1.5 cubic feet per second for municipal use.¹⁵

Having located and secured the necessary water supply, the town sought to obtain the financial backing to construct the municipal water system. On October 6, 1913, an ordinance was passed which allowed for the calling of a special election for the purpose of submitting the proposition of borrowing \$20,000 for the construction of a municipal water system to the voters. On November 18, 1913, a bond issue was placed before the citizens of Cokeville and carried by a vote of fifty-three to two. The bonds were issued at thirty-six for \$500 each and twenty at \$100 each.¹⁶

On September 10, 1913, the bid of Lyman and Samuals of Salt Lake City, Utah, for the construction of the water system had been accepted, and by May, 1914, water was turned into the city water mains. Although a number of leaks had to be repaired, the townspeople were soon enjoying the benefits of the new system. All service boxes had been installed free of charge during the construction, and draw-buckets and pumps gave way to a water tap nearby. Some families were fortunate enough to have the water brought inside their homes almost immediately. Julius Jacobson, the

¹⁵Wyoming, Certificate of Appropriation of Water, Permit No. 16523. (Copy in possession of E. J. Lloyd.) Kenyon Spring and Wyman Spring are located in parts of Tracts 82, 83, 88, 89, and 98. Twp. 24N, Range 119W, Resurvey.

¹⁶Cokeville, Town Council Minute Book, 1910-1918, 184, 206, 210.

local blacksmith, was one of the first, having a plumbing system installed by May 23, 1914, which provided him with hot and cold water and an inside bathroom. With a note of admiration the local newspaper reported that "Julius is always up-to-the-minute in conveniences in the house and shop and is sure a progressive."¹⁷

The new water system was under the regulation of the town council, and the following rates were established for local use: residence--\$1.25 per month or \$3.00 per quarter; lawn hydrant--\$3.00 per year; general stores and saloons--\$3.75 per quarter; hotel--\$12.00 per quarter; livery stable--\$7.50 per quarter; restaurant and lunch counters--\$6.00 per quarter; boarding house--\$3.00 per quarter, with each guest room an additional \$.25 per quarter; barber shop--one chair, \$3.00 per quarter, with each additional chair \$1.50 per quarter; blacksmith shop, pool hall, harness shop, church, butcher shop, printing office, confection store and drug store--\$3.00 per quarter. In addition each user of water could water five head of livestock free of charge, but those watering more than five head were charged an additional \$.25 per head per quarter.¹⁸

On April 17, 1915, a town warrant for \$319.33 as the final payment for the construction of the municipal water system was issued to Lyman and Samuals.¹⁹

In 1916 the Cokeville Canal Company deeded all of its rights in Spring Creek to the town of Cokeville; and on December 21, 1922, the

¹⁷Ibid., 177; Cokeville Register, April 11, May 16, May 23, 1914.

¹⁸Cokeville, Town Council Minute Book, 1910-1918, 251-252.

¹⁹L. A. Woodward, letter to Lyman and Samuals Construction Company, April 17, 1915.

town appropriated an additional 0.5 cubic foot of water per second from the Cokeville Springs to be used as a supplemental supply to the original appropriation of 1.5 cubic feet per second of 1913. However, at no time could these combined appropriations exceed 1.5 cubic feet per second. With the water rights secured and the original bond issue paid, the town government could proceed to improve the existing water system.²⁰

The second major accomplishment of the town government was the procuring of electricity for the town. Their first attempts at electrification came in 1913 when they granted a franchise for the construction and maintenance of a light plant to B. E. Slusser of Salt Lake City, Utah. However, upon checking the references of Slusser it was found that he had a reputation for non-payment for his supplies and frequently made collections from local people which he failed to account for. The Capital Electric Company of Salt Lake City, Utah, recommended that precaution be used "in dealing with Mr. Slusser in case he comes to your town to install an electric plant." Apparently Slusser had ordered approximately \$300 worth of supplies from the company, and they felt it a loss.²¹

In 1914 Mayor William H. Wyman visited the headquarters of the Utah Power and Light Company and tried to interest company officials in the prospect of extending their lines into Cokeville. Mayor Wyman stated that he thought about \$200 per month could be obtained from the town and elsewhere along the line. The power company promised to send a representative to look over the situation, figuring that if the \$200 could be

²⁰Wyoming, Certificate of Appropriation of Water, Permit No. 16523.

²¹R. S. Folland, letter to Mayor W. H. Wyman, April 16, 1913.

obtained it would be a good return on their investment. However, the company did not extend their lines, and the town sought elsewhere for a source of electricity.²²

From 1914 to 1916 Cokeville officials futilely attempted to interest companies from Idaho in supplying electric lights to the town and finally turned to local sources. In 1915 they passed an ordinance authorizing Henry Douglas of Cokeville to erect, maintain, and operate a light system and to furnish electric lights to the town. Like previous attempts, this one also proved unproductive.²³

Despite these early setbacks the town council persisted, and on April 15, 1916, their efforts were duly rewarded. On this date the Cokeville Light and Power Company was formed under the directorship of William E. Pitt, Altess Haggerty, and J. C. Kinney; and on June 5 the local officials passed an ordinance authorizing the newly-formed company to erect and maintain an electric light system in Cokeville. Even before the franchise had been granted the officials of the light company were active in the construction of a source of power. On March 4 it was reported that Pitt had ordered the necessary machinery for the building of a power plant on Pine Creek, and that the light company would open a store which would stock all types of electrical supplies.²⁴

Construction of the light plant and lines was not completed until the fall of 1917. On September 22, 1917, electrical power arrived in

²²Cokeville, Town Council Minute Book, 1910-1918, 121; Cokeville Register, April 18, 1914.

²³Cokeville Register, June 6, 1914, August 29, 1914, March 27, 1915; Cokeville, Town Council Minute Book, 1910-1918, 289.

²⁴Cokeville Register, April 15, March 4, 1916; Cokeville, Town Council Minute Book, 1910-1918, 361.

Cokeville, and on the following Sunday the lights were turned on. Immediately the power company was involved in the wiring of business houses and residences and installing meters. Cokeville residents could now enjoy the luxury of electric lights between the hours of 5:00 p.m. and midnight; however, it was announced that twenty-four hour service was expected in the near future. Under auspices of the ordinance granting the franchise, the Cokeville Light and Power Company was required to grant free power to the town hall and jail and charge the following rates: twenty lights or more not to exceed \$.50 per month per light; more than two and less than twenty--\$.75 per month per light; two or less--\$1.00 per month per light; for saloons, hotel lobbies, and other places where lights were used during the major part of the night--\$1.00 per month per light. Each light was required to be at least forty candle power.²⁵

The town provided the service of lighting the streets. On November 8, 1917, twenty-eight iron lamp posts were purchased from the Pocatello Electric Supply Company, Pocatello, Idaho, at a cost of \$525.00. At an additional cost of \$533.52, these lamp posts were erected on the town streets; and on March 8, 1918, the street lighting system was extended by the addition of twenty goose-neck lamps placed according to the directions of the town officials.²⁶

The town government had proven its worth by providing a culinary water system and electricity for Cokeville residents; but in addition to

²⁵Cokeville Register, September 29, 1917; Cokeville, Town Council Minute Book, 1910-1918, 364.

²⁶Cokeville, Town Council Minute Book, 1910-1918, 412, 415, 426.

these two major accomplishments they also built sidewalks, a city park, provided a cemetery, and in general gave better service to the citizens of the town than was enjoyed under precinct government. Although these early developments would be improved as technology allowed, Cokeville had experienced a remarkable degree of growth between 1910 and 1920. The amount of development during this ten-year period was aptly summarized by an itinerant newspaperman in 1920. He wrote:

It's more than ten years since I last saw Cokeville until today. The spirit is the only thing that hasn't changed, so far as I can discern. A decade ago this town might be characterized as a muddy setting for saloons, the dirty shirt wherein was displayed the brilliant booze. The tasty park before the railroad station was a wallow. Not a light broke the darkness save as it streamed from a gaming joint and drink "palace." That long string of White Way lights across town are a credit worthy a city of ten thousand. The stores and buildings are attractive within and without, and bespeak progress. The south side of the track was then mostly open range development there now is conspicuous. The schools and hotels impress.

You've got a "good little town," all right, and evidence unmistakable of prosperity.²⁷

²⁷Cokeville Register, February 28, 1920.

Figure 8. Cokeville, July, 1919, picture taken from the top of the Union Pacific Railroad water tower.

Figure 9. Main business district, 1919.



CHAPTER V

ERA OF IMPROVEMENTS

The first two decades of the twentieth century were the golden years of development for Cokeville. Community prosperity and spirit were high, and the town served most of the needs of the people. In the nine years between 1913 and 1922, the assessed valuation of the town almost tripled--from \$158,098.63 to \$358,000.00. Between 1910 and 1920 the population almost doubled--from 270 to 430--while during the decades that have followed the population has shown an increase of only 115.¹

Although community improvements have been commensurate with the times, the town has come to play a smaller role in the life of the average resident. Modern communication and transportation facilities have decreased the importance of the available services and community spirit has withered. But regardless of the negative aspects of small town life, Cokeville provides modern services to any who wish to take up residence in the area.

The last four decades have been primarily devoted to the improvement of existing facilities, and the residents of Cokeville today are enjoying unprecedented prosperity; they possess more luxuries and experience less deprivation than any time in the past. Modern machinery has taken the back-breaking labor out of ranching and farming, and modern transportation allows many to work and enjoy recreational activities in surrounding

¹Cokeville, Wyoming, Assessor's Records, 1913 and 1922. (Located in Cokeville City Hall.); U.S., Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, Fourteenth Census of the United States, 1920: Population, I; U.S., Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, Eighteenth Decennial Census of the United States, 1960: Population, I.

cities while living in a country atmosphere.

In the wake of the agricultural depression of the early 1920's, and just as the people were adjusting and recovering from this earlier setback, the national economy collapsed bringing on a general depression that affected all segments of society. The earlier depressions of the 1890's and 1920's, although detrimental to the agricultural interests of the country, did not cause a general, concentrated recovery effort. Overall, the residents of the Cokeville area did not feel the effects of the Great Depression to the same degree as did a majority of the nation's citizenry. Although money was tight and wages averaged about a dollar a day, most people had gardens, poultry, and meat animals; and what could not be paid for with hard cash could change hands through a system of barter. During the depression people generally had something to eat, and although they did not have all they wanted, they could sustain life.

The market value of livestock, principally sheep and wool, was the main criteria of wages in the Cokeville area. Limited employment was available during branding and docking time and also during the summer haying season. Those who took advantage of available odd jobs to earn a few extra dollars could obtain a few added luxuries. For example, the following is a price list of food "specials" for February 13, 1932, at Nelson Brothers Market:

Idaho Russett Potatoes, per 100 lbs.-----	\$1.00
Macaroni, bulk, 3 lbs. for-----	.25
Rice, Blue Rose brand, 4 lbs. for-----	.25
Post Toasties, large 2 packages for-----	.25
School Boy Peanut Butter, 2 lb. can-----	.39
Sauerkraut in bulk, pint-----	.10
American Brand Spaghetti, 2 cans for-----	.25
Heinz Pork and Beans, 2 17-oz. cans-----	.25
2 28-oz. cans-----	.35

Bucket Brand Maple Syrup, large can-----	\$.98
Blue Pine Brand Diced Beets, 2 No. 2 cans for-----	.25
Del Monte Brand Sweet Potatoes, No. 2 1/2 can-----	.25
2 for-----	.45
Del Monte DeLuxe Plums, 2 No. 2 cans-----	.35
Beef Pot Roast, Shoulder Cuts, 1b.-----	.10
Round and Loin Steaks, 1b.-----	.12 1/2
Hamburger, 2 lbs.-----	.25
Fresh Spare Ribs, 1b.-----	.15
Oranges, 2 dozen for-----	.45
Bananas, 3 lbs. for-----	.25
Mince Meat, 2 lbs. for-----	.25 ²

With the coming of the New Deal, the passage of a series of acts designed by the federal government brought both relief and recovery from the depression. Direct relief for Cokeville ranchers came with the passage of the Agricultural Adjustment Act (AAA) in 1933. Under the 1933 AAA the government bought a total of 42,000 sheep and 5,000 cattle in Lincoln County. The animals were usually made into consumable products and distributed to the poor and needy. But the price of animals was so low--averaging \$13.00 for cattle and \$2.00 for sheep--that many small farmers and ranchers chose to kill and eat the animals instead of selling to the government.³

A number of work projects were created in Lincoln County to take people off relief rolls. Projects in Cokeville or involving Cokeville residents were sponsored by the Federal Emergency Relief Administration (FERA), Civil Works Administration (CWA), Public Works Administration (PWA), and the Works Progress Administration (WPA). A large portion of public relief work improved the roads in town and the country, but work

²Cokeville Register, February 11, 1932.

³Cokeville Register, October 25, 1934; Ernest Haderlie, interview, Cokeville, Wyoming, August 18, 1968.

projects also involved improvement in schools, municipal utilities, and municipal buildings.

Looking in retrospect at the long range effects of the depression of the 1930's on Cokeville and area residents, it seems that both the town and the people benefitted more than they suffered.

Government assistance provided jobs at the state fish hatchery in Smiths Fork Valley. In May, 1935, E. L. Hadaman informed the Cokeville officials that a project for improvement of the hatchery would require about twelve men during the month of June. Later in the same year, WPA director George Pryor stated that an additional hatchery project was approved and that funds amounting to \$3,236.50 had been allotted.⁴

On September 5, 1935, Mayor Frank J. Jones informed the town that a PWA project for laying new water mains and oiling the city streets had been approved. Federal funds amounted to \$5,134, and Cokeville had to raise an additional \$5,375 if work was to proceed. The needed funds were raised and on February 2, 1936, under the supervision of Richard Roberts, the water works projects were started. Completed in May, 1939, the project replaced all but about a mile of the original wood main line with steel and iron mains. The remaining mile of wood main line connected the steel and iron mains to the source of the municipal water supply from Spring Creek.⁵

Even before the completion of the 1936 project, water works extension bonds for the sum of \$20,000 were sold to the Rock Springs

⁴Cokeville Register, May 16, 1935, December 12, 1935.

⁵Cokeville Register, February 6, 1936, May 21, 1936, May 11, 1939, September 5, 1935.

National Bank at an interest rate of 4 1/2 percent. The federal government made an outright grant of 45 percent of the cost of the extension project and a majority of the qualified voters in Cokeville voted on September 30, 1938, in favor of an eight mill assessment to finance the remainder of the cost. The bonds, sold on March 30, 1939, included an additional \$8,000 for fire equipment and construction of a building for the use of the fire department.⁶

The latest addition to the municipal water system was completed during the summer of 1967 when the Hartwell Excavating Company of Idaho Falls, Idaho, finished construction of a water storage tank on the south side of Station Butte (Big Hill). The bond issue for the water tank amounted to \$25,000. At the same time bonds in the amount of \$120,000 for the construction of a municipal sewer system were approved by the voters of Cokeville. As early as 1919 the need for an up-to-date sewer system had been recognized, but until the construction of a new system, the citizens of Cokeville relied on septic tanks or cesspools. The Hartwell Excavating Company began construction of the new sewer system August 1, 1967, and completed the project July 15, 1968. Fifty percent of the cost of both the water tank and the sewer system came from federal aid.⁷

Cokeville's electric power system has also been the subject of change during the last four decades. In 1919 George D. Puckett, representative for the Western States Utilities Company of Denver,

⁶Cokeville Register, February 2, 1939; Cokeville, Wyoming, Ordinance Record Book, Ordinance No. 157.

⁷George D. Holden, Cokeville City Clerk, interview, Cokeville, Wyoming, April 14, 1969.

Colorado, took over the management of the Cokeville power plant from the private ownership of Joseph C. Kinney, one of the founders of the original Cokeville Light and Power Company. But because of poor service and high rates the town of Cokeville considered a plan to purchase the power plant in 1935. Shortly afterwards Mat Kimes, district manager for the Denver firm, announced that power rates would be lowered.⁸

In 1939, in an attempt to improve the service, Western States Utilities hired John M. Rutler, a contractor from Hailey, Idaho, to build a new canal and install two Ford V8 engines, coupled to an additional generator. The engines and new generator were to be used as a standby in case the existing water unit malfunctioned. The Ford engines were replaced by a Caterpillar diesel engine in 1941, and at the same time a larger 85KVA generator was installed. In 1944 Western States Utilities sold the Cokeville power plant to the California Pacific Utilities Company of San Francisco, California, who operated it until 1963. At that time the power plant was sold to the Utah Power and Light Company. On November 4, 1963, the Cokeville town council granted the franchise to furnish power to the town to the Utah Power and Light Company. New power lines have been constructed by Utah Power and Light, and the old power plant on Pine Creek is no longer used.⁹

Perhaps the most beneficial development to the citizens of Cokeville and yet the most detrimental to the town itself has been the improvement in communication lines--principally better roads. Throughout the late

⁸Cokeville Register, August 2, 1919, May 2, 1935, August 8, 1935.

⁹Cokeville Register, July, 1939, November 6, 1941, June 15, 1944; Cokeville, Wyoming, Ordinance Record Book, Ordinance No. 261.

1800's and the early 1900's most of the local roads were such that travel was limited to the adventurous and the hardy. Between 1890 and 1930 most of the road building effort was expended on the county road from Cokeville to Star Valley. Built with prison labor the road is still known locally as the "old convict road." On May 1, 1915, County Commissioners C. H. Peterson and O. T. Papworth accompanied a group of prison laborers from Kemmerer to Border where the prisoners left to spend the summer months working on the road. The party consisted of twelve men: ten laborers, a cook, and foreman George S. Meade. In October, 1915, Meade reported that the convict camp would close on November 1. He also reported that the summer had been uneventful except for the escape of Joe Baker, an Indian convict. Baker later turned himself in to the authorities.¹⁰

Between 1931 and 1936 the residents of Cokeville were concerned mainly with the route of highway U.S.-30 North. In August, 1931, a crew of state highway surveyors under the supervision of Frank C. Emerson were operating between Cokeville and Nuggett Canyon, and in June, 1933, it was announced that the highway was to be oiled during the summer. In September, 1933, a contract was awarded to Morrison-Knudsen of Boise, Idaho, for the reconstruction and oil treatment of 42.2 miles of road between Cokeville and Kemmerer. However, actual work on the project was delayed until June 11, 1934. In May, 1934, a petition requesting that the state highway department build U.S.-30 North through Cokeville was being circulated in the Cokeville area. The petitioners held that oiling the present west-side road would take business away from Cokeville.

¹⁰Cokeville Register, May 1, 1915, October 16, 1915.

Their efforts were successful, and in October, 1935, Engineer Henry Jacques was instructed to survey First Street from the Oregon Trail Service Station to the railroad tracks in preparation for oiling. This project, when completed, would give Cokeville a good outlet to the highway that ran through the eastern end of town.¹¹

On August 6, 1935, it was reported that W. W. Clyde and Company of Springville, Utah, had received the contract to construct a portion of U.S.-30 North between Cokeville and Border. On September 3 it was announced that Clyde had also received the contract to reconstruct the Cokeville street. The job included construction of a bridge, grading, straightening Collett Creek, and oiling the street. The accepted bid on this project was \$19,100.75, and work was started around September 17, 1936. By 1937 Cokeville was located permanently on a major national communication line. In June, 1968, LeGrand Johnson Construction of Logan, Utah, was awarded a \$190,908.80 contract by the Wyoming Highway Commission for improvement work on Cokeville's First Street. The project involved grading, draining, surfacing, curb and gutter installation, construction of a reinforced slab span bridge on Collett Creek and miscellaneous work beginning at the intersection of U.S.-30 North and running west for .604 miles. This project will be completed during the summer of 1969.¹²

Cokeville entered the air age in 1920. Action for an airport was started by the United States Forest Service when they announced that an

¹¹Cokeville Register, August 5, 1931, September 21, 1933, May 24, 1934, October 3, 1935.

¹²Cokeville Register, August 6, 1936, September 3, 1936; Kemmerer Gazette, June 20, 1968.

air patrol to increase the efficiency of their fight against forest fires was to be initiated. The Cokeville authorities received a letter from the United States War Department inquiring as to the prospect of a suitable air strip site, and in May, 1920, a telegram from Congressman Frank W. Mondell assured Cokeville residents that an "aerial landing place" would be located in the area.

The first airplane arrived in Cokeville on September 11, 1920, and it was announced that "anyone who had the nerve and could pay a dollar a minute was invited to take a ride."¹³

By 1934 the land set aside in 1920 was inadequate and M. W. Landes of Cheyenne, Wyoming, Mayor J. H. Stoner of Cokeville, and J. A. Larson, chairman of the local Civil Works Administration committee located an air strip three miles south of Cokeville. The new site, 4,000 feet in width and more nearly level than the old air strip, provided enough room for the construction of four runways. The cost of labor and material was estimated as \$8,195.00. Approved by J. Kirk Baldwin, state airport supervisor of Casper, Wyoming, the project was to employ approximately twenty-six men and sixteen teams. But on April 19, 1934, it was reported that only seven men and four teams were working on the airport under the Federal Emergency Relief Administration (FERA). At the present time Cokeville's airport is used mainly by local aircraft and consists of two major runways and several hangers. The hangers are the property of local residents.¹⁴

¹³Cokeville Register, May 15, 1920.

¹⁴Cokeville Register, February 8, 1934, April 19, 1934.

Although the past forty years have brought great improvement to Cokeville, they have not been without loss. At a meeting held February 12, 1932, the directors and stockholders of the State Bank of Cokeville decided that an offer of the First National Bank of Kemmerer to take over the business of the Cokeville bank be accepted. The Cokeville bank remained open until February 16, allowing those who wished to withdraw their deposits. After February 16 all remaining deposits and books were transferred to the Kemmerer bank.¹⁵ The Cokeville State Bank survived the decade of the 1920's when 101 banks, state and national, closed their doors. It was only one of seven that closed in Wyoming during 1932 as a result of the Great Depression.

On July 1, 1922, the J. C. Penny store closed its doors. The store, first known as the Golden Rule, opened its doors in 1916. Also, on October 3, 1941, the Haggerty Hotel, one of two in Cokeville, burned and was never rebuilt. For many years the cement foundation stood as a mute reminder of decline. Likewise, a number of once active business houses remain only as storage sheds.¹⁶

Town Finances

Income from county property tax levies is the major source of revenue for the incorporated town of Cokeville, while occupational taxes, water and sewer funds, police judge fines, county and state sales taxes, gasoline and cigarette apportionment monies constitute a smaller but

¹⁵Cokeville Register, February 11, 1932; T. A. Larson, History of Wyoming (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1965), 413-414.

¹⁶Cokeville Register, October 9, 1941.

COKEVILLE LAND & LIVE STOCK
COMPANY
COKEVILLE, WYO.

STATE BANK OF COKEVILLE

COKEVILLE, WYO. 191 No. 1582

PAY TO THE
ORDER OF

\$

DOLLARS

Cokeville Land & Live Stock Company,

For

Per

Sec'y-Treas.

Figure 10.

important portion of the community budget. In addition the town receives \$2,000.00 annually from liquor sale permits, and also levies a \$7.50 charge per year on each cemetery lot owner to maintain and make improvements on the local cemetery.¹⁷

Most expenditures are made in connection with maintenance and improvement of the culinary water system. Other major expenses center on town streets, maintenance of the sewer system, sidewalks, curbing, and wages. In 1968 sewer bonds amounting to \$120,000.00 and a water extension bond issue of \$50,000.00 were the principal debts of the town. However, the town received aid from the federal government through the Economic Development Administration (EDA) amounting to one-half the cost of both projects. In 1969 Cokeville contracted a debt of \$26,131.15 to finance paving of all city streets.¹⁸

Voting Patterns

Although Cokeville has shown some diversity in national politics, local politics appear to be more a reflection of candidate popularity than of political belief or basic issues. The Peoples Party and the Citizens Party are the standard bearers during municipal elections and show little or no alignment with major national parties.

In the broader picture of national politics, voting patterns in the twentieth century show an almost complete reversal from the years between settlement and the turn of the century. Cokeville residents, as local citizens, first voted in a national general election on November 7, 1876,

¹⁷Floyd Roberts, interview, Cokeville, Wyoming, July 29, 1969.

¹⁸George D. Holden, interview, Cokeville, Wyoming, August 3, 1969.

with the Democrats emerging as the leading party. Cokevilleites cast eleven votes for Republican William W. Corlett and nineteen votes for Democrat W. R. Steele in the contest for territorial representative to Congress. From 1876 to 1884 the Cokeville vote for representative to Congress was solidly Democratic. In 1886 and 1888 Republican Joseph M. Carey received a majority of the Cokeville vote. Carey ran without opposition in the 1886 election, and his statewide popularity accounts for a heavy Republican vote in 1888.¹⁹

However, Cokeville remained in the Democratic camp throughout the 1890's. In the Bryan-McKinley presidential contest of 1896, Uinta County voted Democratic almost two to one and is credited with giving the Democrats victory in Wyoming. Prominent Republican leaders first blamed the Uinta County Mormons, but later conceded that the Mormons were no more Democratic than the county's non-Mormons. In fact Uinta County Mormons gave the Republicans a better vote than those in neighboring Utah and Idaho.²⁰

Additional evidence of the Democratic alignment of Cokeville as well as Uinta County voters can be gleaned from the state elections. Henry J. Somson, a Cokeville resident, received the Republican nomination for the Wyoming Legislative Assembly in 1896, but it was stated that "in common with all others on his party ticket he met with defeat at the polls."²¹

¹⁹Erwin, 371, 374, 376, 379, 382, 386, 392, 399.

²⁰Larson, 294-295.

²¹Progressive Men of the State of Wyoming (Chicago: A. W. Bowen and Company, 1903), 928.

Wyoming has traditionally been a Republican state, and by 1900, Uinta County voters had shifted to the Republican column. Likewise the Republican Party emerged as the leading party in the Cokeville area. The Republican Party benefitted from returning prosperity and the national popularity of the McKinley Administration. In 1898 Republicans gained complete control of the state legislature, state executive positions, and congressional seats in the United States Senate and House of Representatives. Democrats were quite scarce in the state legislatures during the next decade. Between 1900 and 1923 local politicians elected to the Wyoming State Legislature were all Republicans: William H. Wyman, 1901; Sylvester Collett, 1905; Henry J. Somson, 1907; Frank A. Mau, 1910; and J. D. Noblitt, 1919, 1921, and 1923. Noblitt served as Speaker of the House of Representatives during the seventeenth legislature in 1923.²²

Since 1920 Cokeville has split presidential ballots eleven to two in favor of the Republicans. The Democrats won by a five vote margin in 1936 and by a twenty-two vote margin in 1960. Since 1918 gubernatorial races have been decided fourteen to one in favor of the Republicans, and the record for representative to Congress has been solidly Republican since 1920.²³

Probably the main reason for Cokeville's continuing support of the Republican Party is the lack of very little new blood being received into the area. There has been no appreciable group of newcomers to the town

²²Erwin, 741, 749, 753, 758, 784, 789, 793.

²³Wyoming, Official Directories and Election Returns, 1902-1969, compiled and published biennially by the Secretary of State's Office. (Photocopies of election returns obtained from the Wyoming State Library, Cheyenne, Wyoming.)

and surrounding area, while many young men and women have left to take up residence elsewhere. The lack of newcomers, the exodus of younger residents, and the entrenchment of the Republican Party in the older and in some cases the more prominent families has resulted in a Republican foothold that they have not lost.

CHAPTER VI
SOCIAL, RECREATIONAL, AND CULTURAL LIFE

The arduous toiling of the pioneer reflected the Jeffersonian concept of the independent landowner, the principal task being to acquire land which could be called his own. But settling new lands could not be considered a full-time occupation, and the early pioneers took time out from their tasks to enjoy available recreational and social activities. Dancing, sports, singing, horse-racing, theatricals, and various impromptu gatherings provided diversions from the backbreaking labor of pioneer life and became the basis for a tradition of social life which continued into the modern era.

Dancing was a favorite form of recreation and the foundation of social interaction in the pioneer days of Cokeville. Dances celebrated almost every occasion from birthday parties to weddings, and some of the local dances lasted as long as there was energy enough to continue.

Describing one of the early social get-togethers, John Bourne stated:

We used to have good times too. We used to dance at Sil Collett's in the old John Conway cabin all night long till we broke the floor in then we'd go to newer places where we'd dance all night, get breakfast and feed our cows and stuff then go at it again.¹

Music for these local affairs was often furnished by Sylvanus Collett at the organ and Bourne on the violin.

As the settlement took on the appearance of permanence and the town became the center of social activity, larger buildings with more floor

¹Dayton Notes; Jack Noblitt, "The History of Cokeville, Wyoming," 1955, 5. (Typescript in possession of E. J. Lloyd.)

space pre-empted the home as social centers. The local musicians were replaced by organized dance bands, and the Oregon Short Line Railroad ran special trains from neighboring towns bringing patrons who wished to participate in the festivities. The importance of dancing as a major social activity in the area is attested to by early issues of the Cokeville Register which reported that on April 11, 1914:

The dance at the opera house last Saturday evening was fairly well attended and those present report a good time. A special train was run from Montpelier and quite a crowd from there attended.

and on April 18, 1914:

Another big dance is scheduled to take place at the Cokeville Opera House this evening. A special train will convey those who wish to come from Montpelier and intermediate points.

Occasionally dances were held as fund-raising activities, but sometimes the monetary profits did not meet expectations. Concerning a fireman's dance, an annual affair held May 18, 1914, it was reported that although the "evening proved an enjoyable affair ... as a financial enterprise there was nothing to it for the fireboys. A balancing of accounts shows two-bits on the credit side of the ledger."²

During the early 1900's the hotel ballroom or the opera house was the scene of most dances, but any good-sized floor proved to be adequate. On May 23, 1914, the Cokeville Register announced a forthcoming celebration to be held in "the new wool warehouse which has just been completed." It went on to state that "the new building is an immense affair--by far the largest in town"

²Cokeville Register, May 9, 1914.

The Woolgrower's Ball, an annual event, was the social event of the year. It allowed the ladies a chance to show their real finery; some of the gowns were ordered from as far away as New York City and cost as much as \$300. It is reported by a former resident of Cokeville that this gala affair later "degenerated into a community brawl," and on one occasion some of the men in the town arranged for some of the "ladies" at the red brick house in Kemmerer, dressed "in the best of clothes," to attend the ball. One of the wives, upon meeting the bevy of young girls as they "disembarked from the evening PORTLAND ROSE, was heard to comment that she had never known such lovely young ladies." The evening proved to be very successful.³

Dances were oftentimes preceded by other forms of entertainment. Indicative of this was a masked ball given by Dr. J. A. Edwards and Earl D. Haggerty on December 25, 1914. As a preliminary to the dance, a ten-round boxing contest between Teddy Wilks of Kemmerer and Charles Metcaff of Cokeville was held at the opera house.⁴

Throughout the twentieth century dancing has proven to be a favored form of entertainment for Cokevilleites. School and church dances are presently attended by old and young alike; and until several years ago weekly dances at Border, Wyoming; Fish Haven, Idaho; and Lakota, Utah, were well attended by younger individuals from the surrounding areas.⁵

³Mrs. Velma Jarrett, letter to E. J. Lloyd, April 3, 1968.

⁴Cokeville Register, December 26, 1914.

⁵The author was acquainted with these areas during the 1950's. Recently they have been closed or turned into cocktail lounges, thus excluding young people.

Traveling theatrical productions and lyceums also played an important role in the early social and cultural life of Cokeville residents. There is no evidence to indicate that the Cokevilleites ever formed dramatic societies, but during the winter months they could expect to see plays presented by visiting companies or local presentations given by children at the district schools. Plays and operettas were presented by elementary and high school students as regular school functions during the school year. As an example, on December 12, 1931, the senior class presented "The Mystery of the Third Gable" as the first play of the season; and it was reported that the play was "admirably presented" by a cast comprised of John Taylor, Alyce Parslow, Audrey Chamberlain, Aron Zumbrennen, Virgil Poulsen, Florence Nicholls, Gertrude Boehme, Bernice Scott, George Taylor, and Lester Birch. Director of the play was Coach T. Eldon Boyd. The play was followed by a dance, and both were well attended.⁶

In addition to regular plays, annual Christmas operettas were given by the schools. Currently, high school students present annual class plays, and the elementary school children present an annual Christmas operetta. All are well received by the townspeople and residents of the surrounding areas.

Traveling lyceums also added to the variety of entertainment enjoyed by local residents. Lecturers such as L. G. Herbert, a member of Midland Lyceum, covering dramatic topics like "the modern life of man and what is before him" were frequent visitors to the Cokeville area.⁷

⁶Cokeville Register, December 17, 1931.

⁷Cokeville Register, October 31, 1914.

Sports have always been a favorite form of entertainment and provided important recreation in the lives of members of an agrarian society. Horse-racing, baseball, football, basketball, and rodeos have all played important roles in Cokeville history. Horse-racing figured prominently in the closing decades of the nineteenth century. Early reports indicate that the Indians engaged in horse-racing on a track they had staked out on the Frank Mau ranch, about two miles south of the town. Although horse-racing continued as a major event at local rodeos, it has gradually been displaced by cutter racing--a wintertime version of the chariot race. Several Cokeville residents and surrounding area ranchers have trained excellent cutter teams. Local races, drawing teams from Wyoming, Idaho, and Utah, are held on the Cokeville airstrip, and local teams participate in races throughout the intermountain west.

In the twentieth century sports became better organized and better facilities were provided, and the early sports scene in the Cokeville area became dominated by baseball.⁸

Baseball was the first team sport, and almost every town, regardless of its size, had a team. The teams were not organized into any league, and schedules were flexible and in some cases non-existent. Besides recreation, baseball provided opportunities for other social inter-action among neighboring towns. However, the local boys developed into one of the best teams in the area. Local teams could be called together on a moment's notice to play any group that passed through town. On March 28, 1915, the first Cokeville ball team was organized with Frank Mau as manager and Jack Hinkey as captain; and a committee composed of Frank Mau,

⁸Chamberlain, interview.

Ivan Nicholls, C. Kruger, and Ward Preston was selected to contact local merchants in hopes of raising money for uniforms, playing equipment, and the preparation of a playing field. Their efforts were rewarded, and the Cokeville squad prepared to engage opponents from the neighboring towns. Their first game was played with Diamondville, Wyoming, on April 25 when Cokeville was defeated by a score of ten to sixteen.⁹

On August 5, 1916, the Cokeville Register announced a forthcoming match between the local boys and a strong Soda Springs, Idaho, team:

Saturday April 12 will be a big day for the baseball fans of Cokeville and all who enjoy seeing a real live ball game better take a holiday that day and come to Cokeville because there sure will be something doing in the baseball line.

Word was received from Soda Springs yesterday that the ball team, with a number of their rooters, will be here next Saturday and show our team how to play ball. The Cokeville team say they are the ones that are going to do the showing. With this kind of challenge we anticipate a real warm game and all you fans and rooters had better get out and see the hottest game of the season.

The Soda Springs team is one of the best in this part of the country and they have been winning some good games this year. The Cokeville team is in good shape for a game and are anxious to take on a game with a good team like the one that is coming.

Arrangements may be made to charter a special car from Soda Springs that will arrive here at 10:35 in the morning and picking up passengers from the towns between Soda Springs and Cokeville.

A big dance will be given the visiting team in the evening and arrangements will be made for other sports during the afternoon.

Baseball in Cokeville enjoyed its heyday during the 1920's and the depression years of the 1930's. During this period the Cokeville team, the pride of the town, was at one time the only organized, paid ball team in the area. However, with the advent of football and basketball, the importance of baseball as a team sport faded.¹⁰

⁹Cokeville Register, April 3, May 1, 1915.

¹⁰Floyd Roberts, interview, June 20, 1968.

Football entered the Cokeville sports scene in 1934 at the request of a number of high school students. Most of the equipment for the team was purchased from Saratoga, Wyoming, and what could not be obtained there was bought by the Cokeville school. But each player was required to furnish his own shoes. The first prospective schedule included two games with Montpelier, Idaho, two with Kemmerer, Wyoming, and one or two with Bancroft, Idaho.¹¹ Since 1934 football has become the dominant fall sport, and Cokeville has fielded several district championship teams, the latest during the 1967 and 1968 football seasons.

Basketball was initiated as a team sport somewhat earlier than football and is the major winter sport in both the schools as well as the town itself. The high school team plays a full schedule each year, and the local Lions Club holds an annual tournament which is participated in by independent ball clubs from southwestern Wyoming, northeastern Utah, and southeastern Idaho.

Skiing has recently gained in importance, and Cokeville has a ski area consisting of cleared runs, a 900-foot rope tow, 1400-foot J-bar tow, and warming stretch. The ski area, started in 1960, is located in Pine Creek Canyon, seven miles northeast of the town.

Special holiday celebrations are also a part of life in the Cokeville area. The usual national holidays of New Years, Independence Day, Thanksgiving, and Christmas are observed--to which July 24, Mormon Pioneer Day, has been added. In recent years Pioneer Day has become the most popular and offers a full day of festivities. Beginning with a

¹¹The Sage (Cokeville, Wyoming), September 28, 1934. (This publication is the local school newspaper.)

parade in the morning, followed by children's footraces, the day is climaxed by a rodeo and softball game in the afternoon. The rodeo has steadily gained in importance and is attended by participants from as far away as Salt Lake City, Utah, and Pocatello, Idaho; cash prizes are awarded in a full slate of rodeo events.

Cokevilleites have long been interested in the rodeo as a form of entertainment. During the early 1900's organized rodeos were being held in the town. On May 23, 1914, it was announced that "A Real Wild West Show" would be held beginning at one o'clock in the afternoon the following day with "Bucking, Racing, Wild Horse Riding, Roping, and Bull-Doging" as the major events. A call was also issued to the local ranchers to bring in their broncs, and "We'll ride them."¹²

At times members of the community held their own shows, to the delight of all. On May 23, 1914, the Cokeville Register gave the following reports of two such events:

A bucking contest was pulled off on the streets Sunday night. Berna Sawyers rode the little black outlaw formerly owned by Haggerty Bros. and which did such clever bucking two years ago this spring at the ball grounds, for a purse of \$13. After Berna rode him Joe Fuller Jr., rode on a bet of \$5.00. Both riders managed to stick and rode straight up,

However, at the next meeting the score was evened up:

Last Tuesday evening the little black outlaw gave a very fanatical exhibition of a bucking bronc, and if there is any horse which can put fanatic bucking ideas into practice the little black can. He's a variable whirlwind in this line. He stood Joe Fuller, Jr., and Berna Sawyers on their heads with a nearness and dispatch that permits no arguments and one of Joe's eyes looks like it had met the impact of a lamp post.

¹²Cokeville Register, May 23, 1914.

The railroad, the automobile, and technological advances in the field of electronics have exhibited a profound effect on social, recreational, and cultural life during the twentieth century. They eliminated the necessity for reliance upon the local community to provide entertainment.

The railroad was not only important in the economic life, but also in the social life of those persons fortunate enough to be able to enjoy its services. During the winter months, and to a great extent the summer months, the residents of Cokeville could take advantage of weekend and Sunday excursions offered by the Oregon Short Line. Advertisements in the local newspaper informed residents of pending trips; and because of the apparent success of the excursions, it was announced on December 9, 1916, that they would be made a permanent part of the railroad service. Trains also provided the fastest and most convenient method of travel and communication between Cokeville and the larger cities connected by the railroad lines. This fact, undoubtedly, stimulated many to broaden their fields of social contact and at the same time decrease the importance of the community.¹³

The automobile and concomitant improvement of roads increased the ease of travel and, unlike the railroad, allowed Cokeville residents to move around at their pleasure. Frank A. Mau was first in the Cokeville area to acquire the automobile. He brought it to town about 1908. Mau purchased the car in Montpelier, Idaho, and because of a lack of service facilities in Cokeville he had to carry extra gas, oil, and water on the running board. It is unlikely that he considered himself the initiator

¹³Cokeville Register, December 9, 1916.

of a revolution which, within a decade, would have a more profound effect on community life than any preceding disaster, depression, or war.¹⁴

The early car was looked upon as a plaything, primarily for show and fun, and the horse and buggy remained the principal mode of travel. When it rained the horse and high-wheeled buggy or wagon had to be used even by the few who owned cars, and as winter approached the mechanical plaything was put into storage where it remained until road conditions permitted its use in the spring. Even then it might take the owner some time to get the car into operating condition.

During winter storage it was a common practice to remove the rubber tires from the car and store them in the attic of the house or shed to save them from possible damage by rodents; but because of the quality of the rubber, the tires would deteriorate while stored and the early motorist would be plagued by a rash of blowouts each spring.¹⁵

The early automobiles, nevertheless, were objects of admiration and wonder; they scared the horses and mules, became the desire of the younger men, and a source of amazement for the children. Floyd Roberts, long time resident and businessman of Cokeville, recalls spending almost one entire Sunday with other children watching the unloading of three cars at the railroad depot and their servicing by A. L. Thiel of Montpelier, Idaho. The children marveled not only at the automobiles but also at the mechanical ability of the serviceman.¹⁶

¹⁴Mrs. Weldon Dimond, interview, Cokeville, Wyoming, August 10, 1969.

¹⁵Roberts, interview, June 26, 1968.

¹⁶Ibid.

The introduction of the new vehicle was complicated by the lack of adequate repair shops and gasoline stations as well as good roads. Local roads were used primarily to move agricultural products to market, and they were maintained by local residents chiefly for use by wagons. Often these roads were, for the motoring public, the equivalent of an obstacle course. Mud, ruts, and chuckholes plagued the early motorist; and on numerous occasions the horse became man's best friend as driver and vehicle waited to be retrieved from a mudhole or stream. Even short summer trips required the necessity of taking along a well-packed lunchbasket in case of unforeseen road conditions or mechanical breakdown.¹⁷ During the winter months snow and cold weather practically eliminated the use of the automobile. However, it was possible to use automobiles when the frozen ground provided a solid roadbed, and many trips were made in the early morning hours before the ground surface thawed and became muddy. The early cars were open, which also limited their use during cold weather. Later they came equipped with canvas or isinglass side-curtains. The problem of frozen radiators was solved by draining after using the auto and by the use of alcohol as anti-freeze.¹⁸

The first cars were few in number and regarded as luxuries and "rich men's toys"; they had little, if any, importance in the social and recreational life of the town. But, as Henry Ford put the nation on wheels by marketing a less expensive automobile--by 1924 a new Ford car was no more expensive than a good buggy horse--it slowly became more of a necessity than a luxury.

¹⁷Ibid.; Gerald Carson, "Goggles and Side Curtains," American Heritage, XVIII (April, 1967), 32-39.

¹⁸Haderlie, interview.

As early as 1914, Earl and Elmo Haggerty had purchased two new Ford cars which they used in connection with their livery business. On May 16, 1914, the Cokeville Register reported rather optimistically that:

A public auto service is something that has been badly needed in Cokeville and we are glad to chronicle the fact that from now on auto service can be had at any time here and hope the boys find the investment profitable.

By the spring of 1915 there was a total of seventeen car owners in Cokeville: P. W. Olson, John H. Stoner, Frank Stoner, Roscoe Stoner, Joe Kinney, Earl D. Haggerty, J. D. Noblitt, Al Porter, Charles Stersic, F. M. Hoskins, Parley Bennion, Rowland Bennion, Lige Christensen, and Frank A. Mau. In 1916 W. C. Collett was added to the list of automobile owners as well as a new businessman when he purchased a new Buick and started a taxi service.¹⁹

The living patterns in the community were drastically changed by the introduction of the automobile. Social, cultural, and recreational life became more varied when, because of the use of a car, local residents did not need to rely on local forms of entertainment. As more and more people purchased automobiles, there was a corresponding increase in pressure on the local and county authorities for more and better roads. There was also a great change in the economic life of the community. No longer did people need to rely on local merchants for all their needs. By the late 1920's the age of the horse and buggy as a mode of transportation was in decline in the Cokeville area. Automobiles were becoming a way of life. During the 1920's trucks were replacing the wagon. In September, 1926, the first school bus was put into service, thereby

¹⁹Cokeville Register, May 15, 1915, May 13, 1916.

allowing the school district to eliminate several small, rural schools in the area.²⁰

The electronic revolution also brought many changes to Cokeville. The electronic age was ushered in around the turn of the century with the introduction of the telephone. A definite date of the coming of the telephone to the community cannot be ascertained, but existing records indicate that it was prior to 1907. The first telephones--two in number--were located in the homes of P. W. Olsen and a rancher in Smiths Fork Valley. This early telephone service came via a line from the nearby Bear Lake region. In 1907 a telephone line is mentioned in the field notes of a resurvey of Township 24N, Range 119W; and on April 15, 1914, the town council notified O. H. Spencer, manager of the Utah-Wyoming Independent Telephone Company, that the company's telephone poles "within the corporate limits of the Town of Cokeville, Wyoming, [were] unsightly and unsafe." Spencer was instructed to correct the situation as directed by the council. However, there is nothing to indicate whether or not these lines were the same.²¹

Telephone service during its early days was far from perfect, but the problem was more than imperfect lines and instruments. A very real difficulty existed in getting two parties together at the telephones at the same time. The usual procedure was for the calling party to call one of the few persons who had a telephone in their home and request that the intended receiver be notified. Word was usually left for this person to

²⁰Bender, 31.

²¹Cokeville Town Council, letter to O. H. Spencer, Manager of the Utah-Wyoming Independent Telephone Company, April 15, 1914; Wyoming, Field Notes, Resurvey, 1907.

return the call as soon as possible. This sometimes took days for the two parties to contact each other.²²

Although the telephone had little effect on the town in its early stages, it was valuable in obtaining medical help. Later on, as more homes were equipped with telephones, the telephone played an increasing role in the social and business life of the town. In 1915 Lige Christensen extended a telephone line to his ranch six miles west of Cokeville, and the Sublett Creek Telephone Company was organized for the purpose of constructing a telephone line from Cokeville to the Sublett Creek area, about three miles south of the town. At this time the telephone line in Cokeville was known as the Stoner Line.²³

In 1916 the Mountain States Telephone Company was approached as to the prospects of building a toll line between Montpelier, Idaho, and Cokeville; but in July of that year A. H. DeNike, a Mountain States Telephone Company division general manager, informed local residents that construction of such a line would be delayed because the war had caused a lack of materials. Actual construction of the line between Montpelier and Cokeville did not begin until August, 1917, when A. R. Clark, construction foreman, and R. Pierce, gang foreman, of the Mountain States Telephone Company arrived in Cokeville with a crew of twelve men to start building the new line. This action was probably prompted by the incorporation of the Cokeville Telephone Company which provided a much

²²Chamberlain, interview; Roberts, interview, June 26, 1968.

²³Cokeville Register, March 6, 1915, March 13, 1915. The Sublett Telephone Company was organized with John Branson, John Stoffers, Norval Fisher, Charles Monteer, George Stoffers, Mrs. L. Manning, Fred Stoffers, and William Taylor as charter members. Officers were Mrs. Fred Stoffers, president; John Stoffers, vice president; George Stoffers, secretary; and O. R. Stoffers, assistant secretary and treasurer.

needed central exchange station in Cokeville. The new exchange and switchboard were located next to the Fuller Furniture store.²⁴

The Cokeville Telephone Company operated the exchange until 1926 when, because of financial difficulties, it sold its holdings to Floyd and Richard Roberts. Richard Roberts operated the telephone central under the name of the Roberts Telephone Company until his death in 1939. Mrs. Roberts (Retta) continued the telephone business until about 1945 when the company was sold to Paul Hanson. Hanson sold the exchange to Lester Zeirlein in 1953, who was killed in an airplane accident in 1955. Currently the telephone company is owned and managed by Mr. and Mrs. Charles Abernathy, who brought telephone communication up to date by the installation of a direct dial system in 1967.²⁵

Radio and television also had a profound effect on the social life of Cokeville residents. The first radios, operated by a wet-cell battery and screeching with static, were greatly inferior to today's sound equipment; but they did bring news before it was history, as well as providing a new form of entertainment. A person did not need to leave his home to listen to music, plays, or have a ringside seat at the scene of major league sports. At World Series time anyone who owned a radio could expect a host of visitors to share the excitement of hearing Babe Ruth hit home runs.

Television was brought to Cokeville in 1953. In that year Alfred, Glenn, Wayne, and Donald Larson managed to receive sound and a picture

²⁴Cokeville Register, January 22, 1916, July 8, 1916, July 28, 1917, August 11, 1917.

²⁵Cokeville Register, September 21, 1939; Roberts, interview, June 26, 1968; Mrs. Charles Abernathy, interview, Cokeville, Wyoming, January 1, 1969.

on a television set located in a sheepcamp on a mountain top east of the Larson Ranch, located in Smiths Fork Valley. Shortly thereafter Glenn Larson brought television closer to the town of Cokeville by bringing it into his home on the Continental Livestock Company Ranch two miles south of the town.²⁶

On June 7, 1954, the Cokeville Town Council authorized the Cokeville Radio and Electric Company to bring television to the town. A rhombic antenna constructed on top of Big Hill picked up a television signal relayed by a station on Crawford Mountain east of Randolph, Utah. The Crawford Mountain station transmitted signals from Salt Lake City, Utah, television stations. After these signals were amplified at the Cokeville antenna they were brought to the town by means of a cable system. The franchise was to be effective for a period of five years, with options for renewal for additional five-year periods. However, in 1962 a group of men representing the town as well as outlying areas formed the Cokeville Television Corporation, a non-profit organization, in hopes of supplying better television reception to area residents.²⁷

By the mid-1950's the residents of Cokeville had experienced a profound social revolution. The automobile, road improvements, and the railroad had greatly expanded the area of social contact, thus eliminating the need for reliance upon local entertainment. Radio, phonographs, movies, and television displaced local bands and amateur theatrical groups. National league football, basketball, and baseball were closer to most residents in 1968 than the local playing fields or courts were in 1920. An entire way of life has been relegated to history.

²⁶Glenn Larson, interview, Cokeville, Wyoming, December 22, 1968.

²⁷Cokeville Ordinance Record Book, Ordinance 227, June 7, 1954.

CHAPTER VII
SCHOOLS AND CHURCHES

Among the first acts of the territorial legislatures were those providing for the creation of school districts. These districts were established by the county courts and the county commissioners, and usually centered around the settled areas. The first school district established in the Cokeville area was known as "Cokeville District No. 10," and included "that portion of Uinta County known as the Cokeville settlements." Created in 1878, it lasted until 1882 when the number "6" was applied to the Cokeville district.¹

District No. 6 was bounded "3 miles on the Oregon Short Line each way from the Cokeville Post Office and 3 miles east and west." Later it was bounded by township and range lines and extended east to the Sweetwater County boundary and west to the Utah territorial boundary. When Lincoln County was separated from Uinta County and the records were transferred from Evanston to Kemmerer, Cokeville School District No. 5 was created upon renumbering the districts in the newly formed county. The district has remained the same since then and is currently supervised by a board of three trustees and a superintendent of schools who is also the principal of the high school in Cokeville. Until 1923 School District No. 5 consisted of a grade school at Cokeville and from seven to twelve rural schools scattered throughout the district; at present it consists of elementary and secondary schools at Cokeville.²

¹Bender, 5.

²Ibid., 5, 7, 68.

The Cokeville Schools

The first mention of a school in the Cokeville area was in 1877, three years after settlement, when the schoolhouse was designated as a polling place during the election of that year. It was reported by early residents that the first school building was a privately-owned cabin donated for school purposes. The first teacher in Cokeville was a Mrs. Horace, a member of one of the early families to settle in the area. In 1882 a house belonging to Henry J. Somson was used as a school building, and Ike McVay, a purported "quack doctor and horse thief," was the teacher.³

In 1884 a regular schoolhouse was erected and the educational facilities were moved from the Somson house to the new school. This new school was a one-room, frame building located on First Street, which at the time was a county road. The school year was largely determined by the availability of students; for example, in 1899 the school term, under the direction of Eda M. Byrne, ran from May 1 to August 1 and was attended by thirty-eight students.⁴

The one-room school was used until 1904 when it was destroyed by fire. After it burned, the school board purchased a whole city block on the corner of Center and Fifth Streets, and the following year constructed a two-story, brick structure at a cost of approximately \$9,000. At first some opposition toward the new building was expressed by people who contended that Cokeville would never have enough pupils to

³Uinta Commissioners Proceedings, 207; Bender, 5; Stoner, 2.

⁴Bender, 47; Souvenir graduation announcement, 1899. (In possession of Mrs. Fannie Chamberlain.)

warrant a school of that size, and that its construction was "rank extravagance." One prominent member of the community who favored the new school remarked that "we didn't need the damn schoolhouse, two rooms were enough, but he favored anything that would make J. W. Stoner pay more taxes." But, after it had been used a short time, even the greatest pessimists changed their minds and looked upon the school with a sense of pride.⁵

This building, which was being used as a grade school at the time, was described in 1937 by L. L. Bender, superintendent of schools and principal of the high school, in the following manner:

The building, which contains four large rooms, has been well maintained and extensive improvements made about fifteen years ago. Although each room is lighted bilaterally by rather narrow windows spaced at considerable distance, tests with a light meter indicate that the lighting is ample and much more satisfactory than is usually expected in a room lighted from two sides. The stairs to the second story are of the winding type common in buildings constructed more than thirty years ago and are the most unsatisfactory feature of the building. A steel fire escape is provided for the second floor.⁶

The basement, enlarged and remodeled under a WPA project during the later 1930's, was used as a lunch room. The entire building was converted into a band room, lunch room, and industrial shops in 1938 when a new and larger grade building was erected.⁷ These projects again emphasize examples of federal aid during the New Deal.

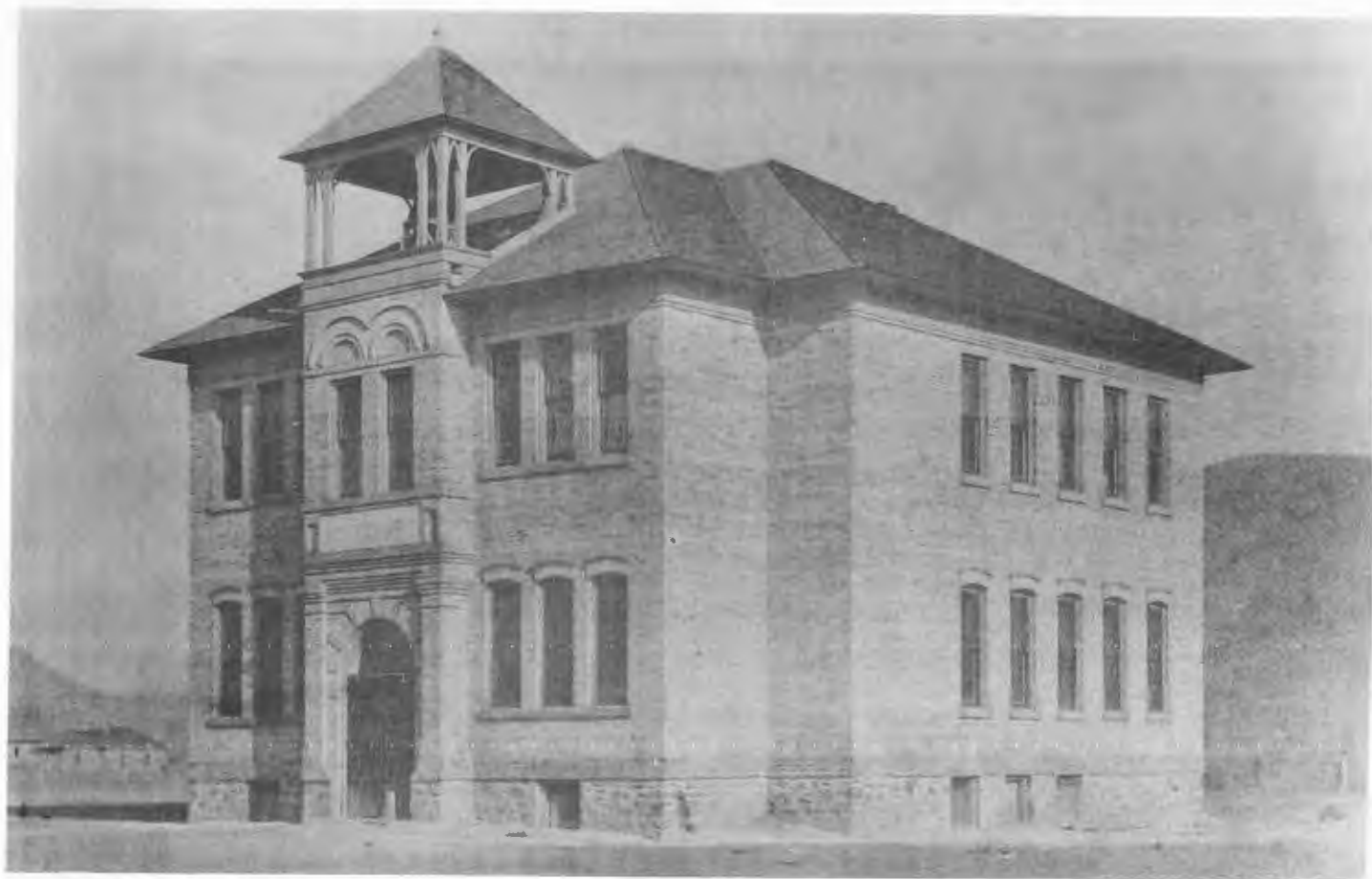
During the first two decades of the twentieth century the number of students attending the Cokeville school greatly increased, requiring an

⁵Bender, 47, 50; Stoner, 2.

⁶Bender, 50.

⁷Ibid.

Figure 11. School building constructed in 1905: Used by the school district as a grade school, band room and lunch room, industrial shops, until 1960 when it was torn down.



expanded program. For the 1914-1915 school term three teachers, in addition to Principal Sam Tunks, were employed--primary grades, Maggie Roberts; intermediate grades, Lucile Collett; preparatory, Bessa Roberts. In 1915 the school opened its doors with an enrollment of 125 students, and Superintendent Tunks requested that another teacher be hired. In 1917 the enrollment dropped to eighty students, probably because of an increase in enrollment in the rural schools, but the teaching staff had been enlarged and included Miss Frances Whiston, Miss Mae Whiston, Mrs. W. G. Morley, and Miss Ike Eackus, with Mr. Winger serving as superintendent of schools.⁸

By the beginning of the 1920's it was evident that Cokeville was in need of a high school. During the 1920-1921 school year there were eight students attending first year high school outside the district and a number of eighth grade students who would be ready to enter high school the following year. The cost of attending school outside the district was approximately \$500 for a ten-month period, and although the 1920-1921 term opened with only four teachers--Miss Eva Furneaux, primary grades; Miss Mae Whiston, third and fourth grades; Miss Mary Mau, fifth and sixth grades; Miss Myrtle Huckvale, seventh and eighth grades; and Mr. L. L. Bender, superintendent--plans for the construction of the high school were underway. In February, 1921, N. Newton Thornton, an architect from Idaho Falls, Idaho, came to Cokeville to take measurements and exhibit preliminary sketches of a prospective school building which would meet the requirements of the proposed high school.⁹

⁸Cokeville Register, August 29, 1914, May 8, 1915, May 15, 1915, September 8, 1917.

⁹Ibid., May 8, 1920, September 18, 1920, February 26, 1921.

On May 15, 1921, the citizens of Cokeville approved a bond issue of \$85,000 for a modern school building, and in July, 1922, the contract for construction of the high school was awarded to Saliah Brothers of Idaho Falls, Idaho, who bid the job in at \$41,300. An additional \$10,000 plumbing and heating contract was given to Johnahson Brothers also of Idaho Falls.¹⁰

The new high school, a one-story brick structure containing six classrooms, a study hall, a shop, library, gymnasium, swimming pool, and the usual shower rooms, offices, and lavatories, was accredited in 1927 by the North Central Accrediting Association. In 1936 the school board purchased twenty-four lots adjoining the school grounds on the north and east. This additional land provided space for proposed buildings, an athletic field, and playgrounds; and in 1938 when a new grade school and gymnasium were erected, the shop classes were moved to the original grade school, and the high school gymnasium was converted into an auditorium.¹¹

The contract for construction for the grade school and gymnasium, built under a PWA project, was awarded to O. H. Grimmett, general contractor from Paris, Idaho, for a bid of \$76,059. Construction of the new buildings began on February 21, 1938, and they were put into use during the 1938-1939 school year. However, the buildings did not provide for special rooms which are desirable in modern school plants, and in 1959-1960 additional rooms, including a kindergarten room, a modern lunch area, a band room, and science room, were added between the grade school and high school buildings. A new agricultural-industrial shop building

¹⁰Ibid., March 19, 1921, July 6, 1922.

¹¹Bender, 48, 50; Cokeville Register, May 7, 1931.

was erected at the same time, and the original school building (1905) was condemned and torn down. In 1967 a new gymnasium was added to the educational facilities at Cokeville.¹²

Rural Schools

During the decade 1908 to 1918, large portions of the valley and bench lands in the Cokeville school district were homesteaded, and the influx of settlers into these rural areas complicated the problem of providing schools. Transportation of students to the Cokeville School was, if not impossible, very difficult during all but the summer months when most prospective pupils were needed on the farm or ranch. Many who had come seeking good farms were disillusioned by crop failures and inadequate water rights and abandoned or sold their claims to stockmen who were eager to enlarge their holdings. This shifting population compounded the already difficult problem of formulating an educational program for pupils of isolated families. One teacher's term report shows an enrollment of twelve students during the school year. The following year it was necessary to transfer the teacher because all of the families had vacated the area. In another case the school board considered building a school on Hanson Meadows as there were ten students of school age in the locality; but before the contract could be let, all of the families had moved elsewhere. In October, 1923, the school at South Border had a daily attendance of twenty-three; in December the enrollment had dwindled to one, and both the teacher and student were moved to Cokeville. At the annual school meeting in 1911, a request for a school

¹²Ibid., July, 1922.

at Johnson's Point was considered (but it has been impossible to locate a place by that name).¹³

It is difficult to determine the exact number of rural schools that were in operation at any one time, but the greatest number seemed to be eight in 1919. In that year the following were in operation:¹⁴

<u>School</u>	<u>Date built</u>	<u>Location</u>
South Border	1887	Nine miles north of Cokeville
North Border	1912	Etcheverry Ranch, fifteen miles north of Cokeville
Lower Sage	1912	One mile east of Sage
Sublet (Bennion)	1913	Six miles south of Cokeville
Beckwith	1915	Two miles east of Beckwith
Smiths Fork	1916	Scott's Ranch
Upper Sage	1916	Three miles north of Sage
Brookside	1917	On Sublette Creek

During 1914 schools were holding classes at South Border, taught by Miss Ruth Vibrans; North Border, taught by Miss Rose Layland; and Sage, taught by Miss Emma Roberts. In 1915 North Border had an enrollment of sixteen, South Border had thirteen, and Sage had twenty-nine; and it was reported that Miss Maggie Roberts would open the Pixley School for a period of six months beginning June 1. In 1916 the Smiths Fork School was opened, eliminating the inconvenience of families with school age children moving to Cokeville during the winter months. During 1917 five rural schools were in operation, and in 1920 there were six. This

¹³Bender, 23.

¹⁴Ibid., 26.

number had dwindled to two in 1939, when only Sage and North Border were in operation. Both of these were closed during the early 1940's.¹⁵ Consolidation was without doubt the product of improved transportation and an effort to cut the expense of maintaining the rural schools.

The forementioned schools were most often the ones in use, but there were others that operated when there was sufficient demand. These included the schools at Huttard, Julian, Lower Sublette, Johnson's Point, Stoffers, Quadrous, Curtis, BQ, Harmony, Gap, Cole, Couper, and Branson. Some of these were undoubtedly conducted in private buildings, or as one-family schools. The last school of the one-family type was discontinued in 1935.¹⁶

Portable schools provided a more satisfactory plan than holding classes in a private home. There were less interruptions, and children from other families were not considered an interference in the family life of the owner. Additionally, the teacher was not called upon to adjust teaching schedules to the immediate desires of the families quite as often. These portable schoolhouses were modeled after the mobile cook-camp, and when mounted on the running-gear of a farm wagon, could be transported to a desired location. They were usually large enough to accommodate about a dozen pupils.¹⁷

Attempts to provide adequate educational opportunities to isolated families often resulted in the frequent moving of schoolhouses to new

¹⁵Cokeville Register, August 29, 1914, May 8, 1915, July 22, 1916, September 8, 1917, September 18, 1920, August 31, 1939.

¹⁶Bender, 27-28.

¹⁷Ibid., 29.

sites. During the summer of 1920 three buildings were moved--one two miles, one twelve miles, and one twenty-one miles from its previous location. In 1937 the only school building on its original foundation was the North Border. This building was later remodeled and is now serving as a private residence on the Etcheverry Ranch. A number of the rural school buildings were sold or converted to other uses:¹⁸

<u>Original site</u>	<u>Moved</u>	<u>Final disposition</u>
Branson	to Beckwith to Border to Sage	Sold
Upper Sage	to Cole to Beckwith to Cokeville	Band room
Brookside	to Hufford's to Cokeville	Superintendent's home
Lower Sage	to Sage	Sold
Bennion		Burned
Border (South)		Sold
Smiths Fork		Abandoned
North Border		Private residence

Transportation

When numerous rural schools were in operation, most of them provided some type of stable to accommodate the horses used by the pupils who furnished their own transportation. The warrant register shows that rent for stables was paid in both Sage and Cokeville. The first indication that public transportation was being provided by the district occurred during the school year 1915-1916 when each month a payment of \$10.00 was

¹⁸Ibid., 28.

made to a seventh grade boy who, using a one-horse outfit, transported himself and three others from a ranch about three miles north of Cokeville. The following year a team and larger vehicle were necessary, and in 1917 a contract for the same route was issued at a monthly rate of \$35.00. In 1920 an additional route was added when the Bennion School burned during the school year. The school board met with parents in the locality, and it was decided to transport both the teacher and pupils to the Cokeville School for the remainder of the year. It was on this route that the most serious accident in the district's transportation history occurred. During the winter months a sheep camp mounted on runners and heated by a stove was used to convey students to Cokeville. On one occasion the camp overturned and several of the pupils were badly burned when the straw in the camp ignited. However, none of the parents, in spite of the accident, expressed a desire to return to the one-room rural school.¹⁹

The first attempt at transportation by motor driven vehicles resulted from an agreement between the driver of a store truck and a local rancher. The truck was to be used as often as possible, and a team when necessary. This service was started to transport students, living on ranches along the Utah state line, to the rural schools at Beckwith and the BQ Ranch. The district paid \$50.00 a month for this improved service, and records indicate that the truck was used slightly more than one-half of the time. In September, 1926, the first district school bus was put into operation, and the original northern route was extended from three miles to nine miles, allowing the South Border School to be closed. The Bennion route

¹⁹Ibid., 30.

was also extended to localities formerly served by the Pixley, Beckwith, and BQ schools, and a new route was started conveying students from the lower Smiths Fork Valley to Cokeville. This route made it possible to eliminate the Curtis School. At the present time these three routes are still in operation; and two, the northern Raymond-Border-Cokeville and the southern Thoman Ranch-Sage-Cokeville, are contracted to local residents who own their buses. They were hired as a result of competitive bids, and the contracts run for a period of five years in order that the bus owners will be protected in securing satisfactory vehicles. The Smiths Fork route is presently operated with a district furnished bus.²⁰

Churches

The Cokeville area only slowly acquired ecclesiastical organization. The first regular religious services were conducted by Reverend F. L. Arnold, a Presbyterian minister from Evanston, Wyoming, during the early 1880's. A Union Sunday School was organized about the same time. These early non-denominational services were participated in by persons of all faiths. If denominational services were held, private homes or the district schoolhouses were used as a meeting place. However, between 1902 and 1919 there were four separate church buildings erected in Cokeville.²¹

The First Presbyterian Church of Cokeville was the first to erect a building for religious services. In 1902 Reverend Charles Mudge of Montpelier, Idaho, was holding weekly evening services in the Cokeville

²⁰Ibid., 31.

²¹Stone, 248.

schoolhouse, and on November 29 the Cokeville Church was incorporated. The Presbyterians erected a frame church on the corner of Third and Pearl Streets the following year. A community Sunday School was formed and regular church services were held until the early 1940's when the building was condemned and torn down. The manse erected next to the church building is now serving as a private residence.²²

Distinguished primarily by size, the Branch or Ward is the basic local organization of the Mormon Church. Key officials are the branch presiding elder or the ward bishop, and over a group of wards or branches is the division of the stake headed by a stake president. Cokeville Ward was organized as a branch about 1900 and was a part of Bear Lake Stake until 1917. In that year Montpelier Stake was formed and included Cokeville, which was organized as Ward 29 in September, 1935. On January 8, 1956, the ward boundary was extended northward to the Etcheverry Ranch. Members of the Mormon Church during the early years of the Cokeville settlement held meetings and Sunday Schools in private homes or the local schoolhouses, but in 1909 a separate church building was erected on Sage Street. The building, dedicated on February 12, served the Mormons until October 8, 1961, when the new Cokeville Ward Chapel was dedicated by President David O. McKay.²³

²²*Ibid.*; Uinta County, Wyoming, Incorporation Record, Mixed Records, Book G, 511. The following were Presbyterian ministers at Cokeville: D. M. Davies, 1919; William Jobush, 1921; Miss Elsie L. Stockton, 1932; Lewis M. Lutz, 1932; Henry E. Stammer, 1937. The first board of trustees were Mrs. H. Nicholls, Mrs. John Sights, J. W. Stoner, William Morgan, Sr., and Mrs. J. R. Richards.

²³Cokeville Ward Historical Record Book (located in the L.D.S. Church Archives, Salt Lake City, Utah). The Mormon Church is synonymous with the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. The following are the names and period of service of the Presiding Elders of the Cokeville

The first Episcopal Church services in Cokeville were held in the opera house, and on the occasion of a visit by Bishop Thomas in August of 1915, services were held in the Mormon Church. In 1915 it was decided that a mission at Cokeville would be possible, and the following year Saint Bartholomew's Mission was formed. The Convocation Journal for 1916 says:

At Cokeville a lot and log cabin have been bought, the partitions within the cabin removed, and the whole ceiled with oak-grained beaver board. The churchly arrangement of the Chancel, and the handsome appearance of the walls have transformed the old log cabin into a sightly, well-appointed chapel.²⁴

The log cabin referred to was one of the first buildings in Cokeville and was used as a bunkhouse, saloon, gambling hall, and private home before it was purchased by the church. In 1938, after an automobile service garage was built in front of it, a number of the communicants raised money to move the church to a lot on Center Street, donated by Mrs. P. W. Olson. But the building almost collapsed during the attempt, and a building fund was started for a new church.²⁵

In 1939 the old building was purchased by Mrs. Myra F. Geer who planned to remodel it into a private residence, and work on the new church was begun. The new church building was dedicated by Bishop

Branch: Joseph W. Cook, 1900-1907; Lars P. Nielsen, 1907-1910; Silas L. Wright, 1910-1912; James W. Sirrine, 1912-1913; Franklin W. Miles, 1913; Wilford W. Clark, 1913-1914; Amasa M. Rich, 1914-1917; Vincent Bennion, 1917-1920; Frank K. Hazen, 1920-1923; Charles W. Porter, 1923-1927; Orson Bennion, 1927-1931; S. Reed Dayton, 1931-1935. S. Reed Dayton was the first bishop serving from 1935-1953. Other bishops are Herman K. Teichert, 1953-1965, and John Russell Thornock, 1965-present.

²⁴Cokeville Register, July 24, August 21, 1915, August 6, 1921; Carol B. Nelson, Secretary to Bishop William Hunter, letter to E. J. Lloyd, April 9, 1968.

²⁵Carol B. Nelson to E. J. Lloyd, April 9, 1968.

Winfred H. Zeigler of Laramie on December 14, 1940, and consecrated August 23, 1942. The community Sunday School, which had been held in the Presbyterian Church until the building was condemned, was transferred to the Episcopal Church shortly after dedication in 1940. In the early 1950's a parish hall was added to the church building.²⁶

On April 17, 1919, Articles of Incorporation of Saint Dominic's Catholic Church were filed in the Lincoln County Courthouse, and later in the year a church building was erected at the south end of Center Street. The first officials of St. Dominic's were Right Reverend P. A. McGovern, president; Right Reverend Hugh Comesky, vicar-general; Reverend T. D. Lynch, pastor; J. C. Kinney, treasurer; and Dominique Etcheverry, secretary. Prior to the construction of a church, Catholics often held services in the Etcheverry home or other local churches. Like the Episcopal Church, the Catholic Church depends upon a resident pastor in Kemmerer to hold weekly services in Cokeville. In 1898 the foundation for a Methodist Church was constructed, but a building was never erected.²⁷

The Mormon, Episcopal, and Catholic churches all maintain active women's auxiliary organizations--Relief Society, Guild, and Altar

²⁶Cokeville Register, November 16, 1939, November 28, 1940, August 20, 1942. Reverend Claude B. N. O. Reader was the first and only resident Episcopal minister to the Cokeville Church. Usually one minister takes care of both Kemmerer and Cokeville. Some of these include: Caleb Cresson, Jr., 1914; Roland F. Philbrook, 1915; Morten Joslin, 1917; M. B. Nash, 1920; Hector Thompson, 1934; W. W. McNeil, 1939-1941; R. W. Fowkes, 1942-1945; T. A. Bessette, 1945-1946; Ralph Stevens, 1947-1948; R. C. Knapp, 1949-1952; W. B. Watson, 1953-1958; Howard Mason, 1959-1961; J. Dean Foley, 1962-1965; George S. Plattenburg, 1965-present.

²⁷Lincoln County, Wyoming, Incorporation Record, Mixed Records, Book II, 185. (Located in Lincoln County Courthouse, Kemmerer, Wyoming); Stoner, 2.

Society--that aid in social welfare as well as assisting in financial maintenance of their churches. Additionally, the L.D.S. Church maintains a seminary which provides religious training to those students who desire it, a Primary Association, and a Mutual Improvement Association whose activities are participated in by young people of all faiths. The Episcopal Church, in addition to a Sunday School, conducts an annual community Bible School during the summer months.

CHAPTER VIII
AGRICULTURAL AND LIVESTOCK INDUSTRY

The genesis of Cokeville is inseparably connected with agriculture, and the climate is perhaps the most important determinant of the agricultural status of the area. A short, cool growing season restricts the variety of crops to those which can withstand the rigorous and diversified local climatic conditions. The major portion of the cultivated areas is devoted to the production of native grass hay in the wet meadow regions along the streams in the valley bottoms. Alfalfa and cereal grains--barley, oats, and wheat--are grown on the periphery of the large meadows and on the surrounding foothills. Experience has shown that the higher, gently sloping lands between the lowland meadows and the mountains are best suited to alfalfa and grains, but because of limited land area and the undependable nature of rainfall, dry-farm agriculture has proven to be marginal to sub-marginal.

Livestock production is Cokeville's most important phase of agriculture. It is the presence of the native grasses--redtop, broadleaf, tufted hairgrass, western wheatgrass, inland saltgrass, and alkali sacaton--that make the Cokeville area natural livestock country. These grasses are drought resistant, they suffer little from extreme temperature changes, they survive heavy trampling and grazing, and provide excellent pastures throughout the fall of the year as well as hay for feed during the long winter months. In most cases the alfalfa and grain grown in the region are used as supplements to the native grass hay.

The livestock industry was well established in Wyoming before a concentrated effort was made to produce commercial livestock in the Cokeville area, and because Cokeville was somewhat isolated from the Great Plains area of the state, the local industry never depended as heavily on cattle production as other sections.

In 1882 the Wyoming Stock Growers Association published Wyoming's first brand book. This small, leather-bound volume contained 156 brands then in use throughout the state of which only two were located in the Cokeville area. Both were cattle ranches at the time, and both were headquartered in Evanston.

The oldest of the two, Beckwith, Quinn and Company, is locally known as the "BQ." In 1868 Asahel C. Beckwith and Antony V. Quinn started the ranch on the Bear River about fifteen miles south of Cokeville. At this early date the tract of land occupied by the BQ contained 15,000 acres. In 1881 it wintered 2,500 head of cattle most of which were Texas longhorn stock, but 137 were purebred Durham breeding stock--97 bulls and 40 cows--apparently used to upgrade the longhorn.¹

The Blyth and Pixley Ranch, owned and operated by Thomas Blyth and Charles Pixley, was established shortly before 1880 and was located about five miles north of the BQ. This ranch, like the BQ, was also headquartered in Evanston and engaged mainly in cattle production. Several other ranches, including the L. G. Christie, Langtree, Victor Foregon, O. E. Synder, J. W. Stoner, H. S. Potter, and George E. Synder outfits, were located in Bear River Valley prior to 1880.²

¹Bancroft, 786.

²Ibid. The size of these ranches was not mentioned.

The BQ and Blyth and Pixley ranches were by far the largest operations in the local area. The BQ at its peak ranged approximately 10,000 head of cattle from northern Utah to Jackson Hole, Wyoming, and Blyth and Pixley ran about 8,000 head in the same general area. The smaller ranchers ranged their cattle in common on the available grazing land in the immediate vicinity of Cokeville.³

While most of these ranchers raised commercial beef cattle, in most respects the sheep industry developed along parallel lines with cattle ranching. The 1883 Uinta County tax rolls indicate that some of the area's principal ranchers were raising both cattle and sheep. In that year Blyth and Pixley were assessed for 400 head of sheep. Within the next decade many others followed their lead. In fact, by 1890 there were several ranches that engaged almost exclusively in sheep husbandry. The Uinta County tax rolls show the extent of this development during the 1880's.

<u>Date</u>	<u>Cattle</u>	<u>Sheep</u>	<u>Major producers</u>	<u>No. of animals</u>
1876	661	80		
1877	457	80		
1878	354	26		
1879	513	230		
1880	1,193	275	BQ	373 cattle
			Blyth & Pixley	210 "
			Victor Foregon	160 "
			O. E. Synder	125 "
			J. W. Stoner	90 "
			H. S. Potter	225 sheep
1883	2,394	592		
1886	5,300	1,372	BQ	2,000 cattle
			Chamber & Whitney	1,108 "
			J. W. Stoner	400 "
			J. B. Hunter	550 "
			Charles Pixley	300 "
			Charles Pixley	520 sheep
			A. J. Berier	500 "

³Bender, 12.

<u>Date</u>	<u>Cattle</u>	<u>Sheep</u>	<u>Major producers</u>	<u>No. of animals</u>
1889	4,569	4,290		
1890	Records incomplete	6,235	BQ	2,003 cattle
			J. W. Stoner	600 "
			John Conley	500 "
			William Crawford	800 "
			Charles Pixley	255 "
			Henry Closner	3,500 sheep
			P. W. Olson	1,010 "
			William Godell	450 "

There is nothing unusual about the infiltration of sheep into the Cokeville area. John Bourne brought the first sheep to Bear River Valley in 1874, and even as early as 1869 a flock of sheep owned by William A. Carter, post trader and sutler at Fort Bridger, had appeared on the Uinta County tax rolls. Moreover, Cokeville was ideal for sheep production for several reasons: (1) The completion of the Oregon Short Line Railroad provided ready transportation for lambs and wool to distant markets. (2) The mountainous grazing lands were better suited to sheep than cattle production. (3) Sheep ranching did not require a large investment--in fact, it is said that at least one sheep ranch in the area got its start picking up so-called "lost" animals from other herds. (4) The sheep producer received a double return on his investment in the form of lambs as well as wool. (5) It was an ideal shipping point for flockmasters, being located approximately midway between the winter leases on the Rock Springs-Green River desert and the summer ranges in the Cokeville-Star Valley district. (6) Open grazing was declining because of settlement.⁴

Until the mid-1880's most of the grazing lands were unfenced and open range was the order of the day. However, as settlers moved into the

⁴Kemmerer Camera, December 15, 1915.

Bear River and Smiths Fork valleys, taking up land under Homestead or Pre-emption claims and building fences, the era of open range passed. With the passing of land into privately owned, fenced tracts and the disastrous effects of the winter of 1886-1887, many local cattle ranchers were forced to limit the size of their herds to meet existing grazing conditions and store sufficient feed to meet the demands of the winter months. The BQ hardly had enough cattle left to round up in the spring of 1887, and John Bourne, a small rancher, lost his entire herd in the mountains between Cokeville and Star Valley.⁵

Although these conditions operated to limit the cattle industry, cattle continued to be a major source of income in the area. A number of ranchers rebuilt their herds. The BQ had 4,206 head in 1892, 5,146 head in 1896, and by 1898 they owned 5,379 head, the most they ran after the disaster of 1886-1887. Also, J. W. Stoner had a herd of 600, William Crawford ran 800, and R. M. Conley owned 500 cattle in 1890. The Pixley Ranch, operated by V. O. Jackson under the name of the Lincoln Livestock Company, ran 1,000 head of cattle during the 1910's. By 1915 it was apparent that both cattlemen and sheepmen were existing and prospering side by side, when it was reported that there were approximately 10,000 cattle and 150,000 sheep located in the Bear River and Smiths Fork valleys. T. A. Larson in his History of Wyoming points out that numerous flockmasters of 1890's and 1910's--including J. D. Noblitt, Tim Kinney,

⁵George W. Rollins, "The Struggle of the Cattleman, Sheepman, and Settler for Control of the Lands of Wyoming, 1867-1910" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Utah, Salt Lake City, 1951), 103; Roberts interview, June 26, 1968; Uinta County Tax Records, 1890; Gerald Robison, "The Cokeville Livestock Industry, Cokeville, Wyoming," 1955, (typescript copy in possession of E. J. Lloyd).

and P. J. Quealy--were prominent citizens of the state, and "socially on par with the cattleman."⁶

Throughout the region cattle and sheep got along well together and several ranchers raised both. In 1916 P. J. Quealy and P. W. Olson, prominent flockmasters in the Cokeville area, imported forty-nine cows and calves and three bulls from eastern Canada. All were registered Shorthorn, and some were said to be worth as much as \$1,000 per head. The BQ had likewise entered the sheep business by 1914 and in 1918 was running approximately 6,000 head.⁷

In fact, a number of the most prominent flockmasters in Cokeville started their ranching careers as herders and range riders for local cattle ranchers. Fred Roberts came to Cokeville in 1887 and was employed as a herder and range rider until 1891 when he entered the sheep business for himself. By 1903 he was running two bands of high-grade sheep--about 3,000 head--and he later increased this number to approximately 8,000 head. Frank Mau worked on the BQ Ranch when he came to Cokeville in 1886 and was later employed by William Vibrans, a local horse rancher. In 1893 he took up a homestead and built up one of the finer sheep ranches in the area--the original Mau Ranch is still a sheep ranch run by William Hutchinson. Other sheepmen who started in the 1890's included Franklin and John Stoner, who formed the Stoner Sheep Company in 1890; J. D. Noblitt, who came to Cokeville as station agent for the Oregon Short Line in 1893; Timothy Kinney, a former cattle

⁶Robison, 17; Uinta County Tax Records, 1890; Kemmerer Camera, December 15, 1915; Larson, 367.

⁷Cokeville Register, June 3, 1916, April 18, 1914; Robison, 25.

rancher from Rock Springs, Wyoming; Covey Brothers--Almon and S. M.; P. J. Quealy and Oscar Peterson, owners of the Quealy-Peterson Sheep Company; and C. F. Stoffers, an early settler in the Cokeville area.⁸

Besides a thriving commercial livestock industry, Cokeville had by 1915 gained a reputation as a major distributing point for purebred livestock. Most of the purebred industry centered around sheep production. Frank Mau, Covey Brothers, and P. W. Olson were the principal breeders of purebred Cotswold bucks; and Joseph C. Kinney, son of Timothy Kinney, and the Quealy-Peterson Sheep Company specialized in breeding Rambouillet bucks. The importance of purebred sheep husbandry in the Cokeville area is exemplified by the fact that during 1915 the Kinney and Quealy-Peterson ranches shipped over 4,500 bucks to surrounding states, and also by the fact that several of the local ranchers made excellent showings in a number of the major livestock shows in the country. Frank Mau received gold medals in the Louisiana Purchase Exposition in St. Louis, Missouri, and at a Portland, Oregon, livestock show. The Quealy-Peterson Sheep Company exhibited their Rambouillets in the 1915 Panama Exposition held in San Francisco, California.⁹

Although most of the ranchers in the area specialized in sheep husbandry, there were a few who engaged in several lines of purebred breeding stock. One of the first was P. W. Olson. The Olson Ranch, encompassing approximately 2,000 acres of the rich Bear River Valley bottoms, in addition to producing high-grade Cotswold sheep, maintained a herd of registered Duroc Jersey hogs, Percheron horses--one of the

⁸Progressive Men of Wyoming, 909.

⁹Kemmerer Camera, December 15, 1915; Cokeville Register, February 27, 1915.

Olson breeding mares was imported from France--and Shorthorn cattle. In the fall of 1915 Olson exhibited a number of his animals in the county fair at Paris, Idaho; and Professor Caine of the Utah Agricultural College, a judge at the Paris livestock show, stated that the Olson breeding stock and show animals were some of the finest in the western states.¹⁰

The period between 1915 and 1919 was the boom era of the Cokeville sheep industry. Prices were high and the sheepmen prospered. In 1915 J. C. Kinney received \$6.75 per head and Fred Roberts received \$6.50 per head for lambs shipped during the fall of the year. Kinney shipped twenty railroad carloads and Roberts shipped ten carloads. In 1919 lambs shipped to Omaha, Nebraska, by P. J. Quealy, brought \$14.75 per head. Wool prices showed a similar upward trend. In 1915 Charles Pruitt, a representative for the Boston based firm of Hallowell, Jones, and McDonald, bought J. C. Kinney's wool clip of 243,000 pounds for 28 1/2 cents per pound. In 1917 Jesse Goodfellow contracted Frank Mau's wool clip for 40 cents per pound in February, and Antone Quadros sold his wool for 48 1/2 cents per pound in May. The price of wool reached its peak in late 1919, and 40 to 50 cent clips were numerous. In June, 1919, Charles Carter bought P. W. Olson's wool clip of 100,000 pounds for 53 1/2 cents per pound.¹¹

¹⁰Kemmerer Camera, December 15, 1915.

¹¹Cokeville Register, October 16, 1915, July 24, 1915, February 17, 1917, May 5, 1917, June 14, 1919. In 1914 the Cokeville Warehouse Company, promoted by J. H. Stoner, P. W. Olson, and J. C. Kinney, built a wool warehouse capable of storing between thirty to thirty-five railroad cars of wool. This warehouse is still being used by local sheepmen.

In 1918, because of the price of sheep and wool, and perhaps showing some egotism, Cokeville laid claim to being the richest town per capita in the United States. But by the end of 1919 and the ending of World War I the bubble had burst and prices started a general decline. Because of deflation and the 1919 drought, the livestock industry suffered greatly. During the summer of 1919, wool prices dropped from 80 to 25 cents per pound in one week, and later to 13 cents per pound. Sheep values dropped from \$18.00 to \$6.00, and lambs fell to \$3.00.¹²

Profits on the local cattle ranches also took a downward plunge. During the last six months of 1916 and all of 1917 the BQ reported profits totaling \$40,915.00, and in 1919 the profits had fallen to only \$6,288.37. While throughout the state total cattle values dropped from \$73,800,000.00 in early 1919, to \$23,000,000.00 in 1925.¹³

The sheep industry has only recently recovered from the effects of the agricultural depression of the 1920's and the general depression of the 1930's, not approaching the pre-World War I armistice prices until the last decade. By 1929 wool had risen to 35 cents per pound, and lambs sold for \$13.35 in Chicago; but it reached another in 1932 when sheepmen were lucky to get 8 cents per pound for wool and 4 cents per pound for lambs. However, this seems to have been the low point. In 1934 Etcheverry Brothers, John Inchaspe, Butch Robinson, Orson Bennion, Mau Brothers, and the P. W. Olson estate contracted wool to the Webb Company of Philadelphia for 17 cents a pound. The Stoner Sheep Company, John

¹²Larson, 412.

¹³Bette Ruth Mau and Gail Olson, "Cokeville," ca. 1940, (typescript in possession of Lewis Roberts, Cokeville, Wyoming); Robison, 19; Larson, 411-412.

Errapouspe, Louis Cerini, and L. W. Roberts consigned wool to S. Silberman and Son of Chicago for 18 1/2 cents. In that same year the national government, in an attempt to aid the livestock producer, purchased 42,000 sheep at a cost of \$84,000 and 5,000 cattle for \$65,000 in Lincoln County.¹⁴

During 1936 wool prices continued to climb. In November, 1936, the Cokeville Land and Livestock Company received 32 cents for their wool, and William Mau contracted his wool for 31 cents. In 1940 Coveys sold 270,000 pounds of wool to Merrion and Wilkins of Ogden, Utah, for 35 cents a pound. Continental Livestock Company sold their wool clip for 50 cents per pound in 1948, \$1.20 per pound in 1951, 53 cents in 1954, and 50 1/4 cents in 1957. In 1968 the price of wool dropped to between 45 and 38 cents per pound, depending on quality; however, lambs were selling from \$18.00 to \$22.00 per head.¹⁵

More significant than the recovery of the sheep industry during the last three decades is the resurgence of cattle production. While Cokeville is still considered a major sheep producing area in Lincoln County, there has been a marked increase in the number of cattle appearing on the county tax rolls. The period from 1946 to 1967 has shown a two-fold increase in cattle production, and at the same time a reciprocal decline in sheep production. In 1946 there were 3,066 cattle and 79,110 sheep recorded on the tax rolls. A further increase in cattle and a similar decline in sheep appeared in 1956 (4,240 cattle and

¹⁴Mau and Olson; Cokeville Register, June 21, 1934, October 25, 1934.

¹⁵Cokeville Register, November 26, 1936, March 14, 1940; MaeJean Julian, letter to E. J. Lloyd, August 30, 1969.

53,359 sheep) and in 1967 (7,829 cattle and 36,611 sheep). Sheep production slipped badly statewide as well as nationally. In 1955 the federal government started a plan of incentive payments to aid the faltering sheep industry.¹⁶

This increase in the number of cattle has been conditioned by changing environment and the difficulty of securing experienced herders by the flockmaster, the process of shifting from the public domain to privately-owned pasture and hay lands as a physical basis of the livestock industry, and because of more stringent administrative policies on the part of the Bureau of Land Management. Sheep grazing allotments have been reduced both in number of days' use and number of animals allowed to graze. Range analysis indicates that where at one time 4,000 sheep grazed in a season, in 1964 carrying capacity of the same region was only 300 head. District administrators maintain that although such limitations seem extreme, they, nevertheless, point out that a more realistic use of grazing lands is necessary. Also, livestock driveways have presented some problem. In 1964 the Smiths Fork driveway was in a highly deteriorated state, and by 1968 most of the sheepmen were being forced to truck rather than drive their herds between the summer and winter ranges. In cases where stock driveways have not caused problems in land management, there is always the problem of trespass when herders allow their animals to stray on private property.¹⁷

¹⁶Lincoln County, Wyoming, Tax Assessment Records, Cokeville District, 1946, 1956, 1967. (Located in Lincoln County Courthouse, Kemmerer, Wyoming.); Larson, 547. Incentive payments are government payments amounting to the difference between the market price and an established incentive price.

¹⁷"Bridger National Forest, Cokeville Ranger District," 1964. (Typescript obtained from Bridger National Forest Headquarters, Kemmerer, Wyoming.)

The livestock industry is established on the basis of the availability of federal grazing lands, and as grazing restrictions have been enforced, many small ranchers, both sheep and cattle, have sold out to the larger ranches in the vicinity. The Seven C Ranch in the Smiths Fork Valley is one of the larger present day ranches formed by the consolidation of several smaller units. Between 1959 and 1966 it expanded to include the A. L. Gardiner, Leon Nate, Cline Curtis, and Everett Dayton ranches. In addition the Seven C leases 16,000 acres of rangeland near Twin Falls, Idaho. The ranch runs approximately 1,500 head of Black Angus breeding stock and 299 yearling steers. The Thompson Land and Livestock Company also grew to its present size by purchasing smaller ranches. Ted Thompson bought the C. F. Stoffer Ranch in 1936, part of the Stoner Sheep Company in 1955, the former P. W. Olson Ranch in 1957, and several homesteads, building the ranch to its present size of 25,390 acres of deeded land, 3.5 shares in the Rock Springs Grazing Association, 1,845 cattle, and 11,000 sheep. Several of the larger sheep companies have changed completely to cattle raising. Continental Livestock Company sold all its sheep in 1959, and the hay and farm land is now leased by John A. Reed, a cattle rancher. The Cokeville Land and Livestock Company, a sheep outfit started in the 1890's by J. D. Noblitt, was converted to a cattle ranch about 1966 by its present owner, J. N. Igo.¹⁸

Second, the problem of adequate hired help has also plagued the sheepmen during the last decade. A good sheepherder is a highly-valued employee. It is up to the herder to care for the herds while they are

¹⁸Roy J. Carter, owner-manager of the Seven C Ranch, letter to E. J. Lloyd, September 16, 1968; Mrs. Lillian Case, interview, Cokeville, Wyoming, June 22, 1968.

on the winter and summer ranges, and a good herder is considered a man who knows more than the sheep. He must keep the herd moving to sufficient feed, keep them from scattering, and keep a fairly accurate account of the animals in his charge. In most cases black sheep are used to aid in getting a quick account. One black sheep is included in each herd for a certain number of white animals. Usually the job of herder has been filled by the Spanish-American, but lately several of the local sheep ranchers have made almost exclusive use of the Basque herder because of the shortage of experienced Spanish-American herders.¹⁹

Cattle raising lends itself to a totally different type of operation wherein the owner is not nearly as dependent on experienced help as the sheep rancher. In most cases the cattlemen in the area range their cattle without constant supervision, and the individual owner can handle many of the common chores himself. Sometimes several ranchers will work together to improve grazing lands and aide each other in supervisory chores while the cattle are on the summer range. An example is the Mill Creek Grazing Association formed in 1968. This association was formed to enable a group of smaller ranchers to obtain and improve grazing land in the Mill Creek area of Cokeville. Proposed improvements include the spraying of sagebrush, construction of stock water dams, and cross-fencing of a portion of state lease lands to permit better grazing control.²⁰

¹⁹The Basque are very adept sheepherders, but most of them move to better employment within two or three years after they have become familiar with the English language.

²⁰Kemmerer Gazette, June 13, 1968.

Although there are still large cattle and sheep ranches in the Cokeville area, smaller ranches, combining winter feeding with partial utilization of summer pasturage, irrigated hay lands, and small dry farms, still remain as the basis of the livestock industry in the Cokeville area.

Dry Farming

Dry farming has never reached the stage of being of major importance in the Cokeville area. In 1920 the Sublette Creek area was the principal dry farming region with approximately six families engaged in the operation of dry farms. But by 1968 there were only two major land-owners who pursued dry farming as such. E. L. (Buck) Lund, whose farm lands are located on Pine Creek, and the Anderson Brothers--Ted and Andrew--located about nine miles north of Cokeville, have extensive acreage devoted to dry farming. A number of the local ranches in the Cokeville area have small dry farms, but most of the crops produced by them are used for feeding purposes.²¹

Most of the land whenever possible is irrigated. Irrigation was practiced almost as soon as the first land was cultivated. Water rights in the Cokeville area date back to the days of settlement. Priorities on some of the earliest water rights in the Smiths Fork River date from 1877, and in Bear River from 1878. A vast system of canals and dams have been constructed in order to deliver water to as much of the land as possible. In 1878 Beckwith, Quinn and Company built an earth and rock diversion dam in the Bear River, one of the first built for the

²¹Cokeville Register, January 3, 1920.

purpose of irrigation. This historic dam was destroyed by heavy flood waters in the spring of 1967 and was replaced by a modern structure of steel and rock under the direction of Arden Pope, president of the Beckwith, Quinn Canal Company; George Thatcher, resident engineer of the Soil Conservation Service at Cokeville; and Lavern Fowler, superintendent for Hartwell Construction Company of Idaho Falls, Idaho, at a cost of over \$60,000. The dam diverts sufficient water to irrigate approximately 10,000 acres of the Bear River Valley.²²

The Cokeville Canal Company, incorporated on July 9, 1909, and the Covey Canal Company, incorporated on April 9, 1910, were constructed for the purpose of building and maintaining canals to deliver water to ranches in the Cokeville area. The Covey Canal, the longer of the two, provides water to ranches from Cokeville to Beckwith. Water is diverted from the Smiths Fork and Bear rivers as soon as the ice melts in the spring; and crop land is flooded from turnouts in the canals, head-ditches, and lateral ditches.²³

The earliest method of irrigation was the flood in which little attempt was made to control the irrigation water, other than by the placement of earth or manure dikes to divert the water from swales, oxbows, and sloughs onto the higher ground. As a more sophisticated network of lateral ditches was laid out, portable dams of canvas or

²²Kemmerer Gazette, November 9, 1967, April 4, 1968, February 1, 1968.

²³Uinta County, Wyoming, Incorporation Records, Book IX, 498, 590. The Cokeville Canal Company was capitalized at \$20,000, divided into 2,000 shares at \$10.00 each; and the first board of directors consisted of Frank Mau, Frank Stoner, and Nannie R. Stoner. The Covey Canal Company was capitalized at \$50,000, divided into 5,000 shares at \$10.00 each; and the first board of directors consisted of O. T. Papworth, S. M. Covey, and P. W. Hendricks.

burlap replaced to a great extent the crude earth or manure dikes, requiring an irrigator to be in the field continually in order to change the water from one set to another.

Although the flood method is still used extensively, sprinkler systems powered by electric or liquid fuel motors have been used more and more during the last decade. The pipeline sprinkler eliminates the need for constant supervision in the watering area and provides irrigation for areas inaccessible by the flood method. In the summer of 1967 Continental Livestock Company put in the first gravity flow sprinkler system in the Cokeville area. The project was completed in the fall and was first used during the summer of 1968. This gravity flow system eliminates the need for motor-driven equipment, consequently reducing irrigation costs.

Regardless of the method of irrigation used by the local landowners, during years when rainfall and winter snows are below normal they suffer from insufficient water. In 1955 representatives of Utah, Idaho, Wyoming, and the federal government, in an effort to assure the holders of water rights that they would at least receive the amount of water accorded them, signed the Bear River Compact. Ratified by the state legislatures and approved by Congress and signed by the President of the United States on March 17, 1958, the compact divides Bear River into three sections. Basically the Bear River Compact defines the total direct flow and storage water rights for each of the three states. It also governs the flow of water in the Bear River whenever a water emergency condition exists:

1. When divertable flow in the upper section, from its source in the Uintah Mountains to and including the Pixley Dam about ten miles south of Cokeville, is less than 1,250 cubic feet per second (cfs).

2. When the divertable flow in the central division, between the Pixley Dam and Stewart Dam about four miles south of Montpelier, Idaho, is less than 870 cfs or less than 350 cfs at the gaging station at Border, Wyoming.

3. When the lower division, between Stewart Dam and the Great Salt Lake, does not have enough water to satisfy the water rights in Utah. The members of the compact also work together to increase the efficiency of methods of storage and use of Bear River water.²⁴

The Dairy Industry

Cokeville's livestock industry has always been built on the production of beef cattle and sheep. A few dairy cattle were kept by early residents, but although limited quantities of butter and cheese were shipped via freight wagons to the mining camps around Lander, Wyoming, dairying in the immediate vicinity has been important only as a source of local family supply. In 1932 D. C. Muckey of Mountain View, Wyoming, converted a former garage and blacksmith shop into a cheese factory, and dairying in Wyoming seemed to be gaining some degree of importance. The new cheese factory, under the management of Dan Jackman, started production on September 16 with an output of 200 pounds. On September 29 the raw milk supply at the new factory was averaging about 4,200 pounds daily with a processed cheese output of over 400 pounds. The cheese factory operated successfully during the winter months but was forced to shut down throughout the summer months when the quantity of available milk was reduced. The attempt at making the factory a

²⁴Lynn Olson, interview, Logan, Utah, August 19, 1968.

profitable venture continued for several years. In 1935 Jackman bought out Muckey; but from July, 1936, to June, 1937, Union Pacific Railroad shipping records indicate that a total of 51,732 gallons of milk was shipped out of the Cokeville area, which would indicate that cheese processing was defunct. At the present time any milk produced in commercial quantities is shipped by rail or truck to processing plants in Cache Valley or Salt Lake City, Utah.²⁵


Cokeville had several other minor industries that lasted for short periods of time. In 1933 John A. Reed, local rancher and president of the First National Bank of Kemmerer, arranged for a trial planting of sugar beets. The seed was furnished by E. D. Lippitt of the Great Western Sugar Company. The climate proved to be too cold, however, and the attempt proved to be unsuccessful. On August 15, 1946, the Cokeville Register reported that a honey extracting plant, under the direction of Herman Christensen and H. L. McDaniel, was running daily. Christensen, owner of the bees, had 1,400 hives scattered from Border to Evanston. The extraction plant was located next to the newspaper office.

Besides beef cattle and sheep production the only industry that can be said to have acquired the status of being a major industry was that of mining.²⁶

²⁵Cokeville Register, August 11, 1932, September 1, 1932, September 29, 1932, May 2, 1935; Bender, 15. Leo Cornia is the only commercial milk producer at the present time. His dairy farm is located about eight miles south of Cokeville.


²⁶Cokeville Register, June 22, 1933, August 15, 1946.


BLYTH & PINLEY.



P. O. Address, Evanston,
Wyoming.
Range, 55 miles north of
Evanston, on Bear River.
Brand, same as cut, on right
side.

BECKWITH, QUINN & CO.



P. O. Address, Evanston, Wyo-
Range, Bear River, 50 miles
north of Evanston, near
Succor Springs Rancho.
Brand, Cattle, same as cut,
left side, 7 inch brand;
also 




Horses  left thigh :  on left thigh; also 

Figure 12. Cokeville area ranches in the first Wyoming Stock Growers Brand Book, 1882.

CHAPTER IX

MINING IN THE COKEVILLE AREA

The principal industry of Cokeville and the surrounding areas is agriculture, as evidenced by the many sheep and cattle ranches scattered along the valley bottoms. Nevertheless, a great amount of labor and capital has been devoted to mining throughout the years. Never blessed with an abundance of minerals or metals, expectation far exceeded the realization of Cokeville looming up as a profitable mining district. Coal, copper, phosphate, and vanadium mines have been operated at various times, but these small mines have always been eclipsed by the more profitable mining regions in the country--particularly coal at Rock Springs, Evanston, and Kemmerer, Wyoming; copper in Utah, Nevada, and Montana; and phosphate at Randolph, Utah. It is evident from the amount of exploration carried on in the area and from early newspaper articles that the residents hoped for the day when the mining industry would prove to be a major stimulus to the growth of Cokeville. However, lack of suitable transportation, difficulty in locating and extracting the minerals, and richer deposits elsewhere relegated these aspirations to the realm of hopes and dreams which to the present day have never materialized. There is still a vague and indefinite hope that someday when other areas have been depleted and it becomes economically feasible to develop local mineral deposits, Cokeville will experience a mining boom.

Coal

The first mining activity in the Cokeville area centered around coal. Discovered in 1866, a coal mine was opened and operated by the Wyoming Coal and Coking Company in the Smiths Fork Valley. However, in 1877 a United States Geological Survey report indicated that although a shaft eighty feet deep and seven feet wide and a tunnel about 100 feet long had been opened into the coal beds, only coal of a poor quality had been mined. This same report states that other claims in the area included two located on the beds on the north side of the valley and several on the south side.¹

Mine operators were required to do a certain amount of work on their claims each year in order to hold them, and though some coal was taken out of the claims, there is no evidence of any successful mining developing out of these early claims. In 1914 Alfred R. Schultz, a government geologist, reported that although persistent attempts had been made to develop the coal beds, there had not been any important commercial shipments. He also indicated that the quality of the coal had improved. It was reported as "high-grade bituminous, with good coking properties," but that the beds discovered to date were thin and did not "justify extensive development."²

¹R. A. Peale, Report on the Geology of the Green River District, Eleventh Annual Report, U.S. Geological and Geographic Survey of the Territories for 1877 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1879), 577.

²Alfred R. Schultz, Geology and Geography of a Portion of Lincoln County, Wyoming, U.S. Geological Survey, Bulletin 543 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1914), 91.

In 1875 coal was discovered at Sage, about twenty miles south of Cokeville. This mine was also owned and operated by the Wyoming Coal and Coking Company. A tunnel 470 feet long with a side shaft 120 feet long was opened into the bed; but as had happened at Cokeville, early attempts at development proved fruitless.³ Further development was attempted in 1881 with the coming of the Oregon Short Line Railroad, and again in 1890 when the old tunnel was deepened about 200 feet and several new openings were driven into the bed. Under the direction of an expert from Pennsylvania, a new coke oven was constructed, and after conducting careful tests on the coal, he pronounced that the coal had "no value as a coking coal." By 1905 about \$130,000 had been spent in an unsuccessful attempt to make the mine pay.⁴ The coke ovens at Sage remained standing for many years and were a noted landmark in the area.

Although coal production on a commercial scale was unsuccessful, some coal was produced which was used locally. However, this local coal was best suited for meral work which required high temperatures. Julius Jacobson, an early blacksmith at Cokeville, used this local coal extensively in his forge, often selecting it personally. Other local residents soon discovered that this local product burned too hot, and after using it a short time the grates in their stoves were burned out and required replacement.

In the 1890's a small mine was operated on Coal Creek, a tributary of the Smiths Fork River, twelve miles north of Cokeville. Operated by

³Peale, 575.

⁴A. C. Veatch, Coal and Oil in Southern Uinta County, Wyoming, U.S. Geological Survey, Bulletin 285 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1906), 336.

the Button family, this venture attained very limited success. Underground faulting made the veins difficult to follow and the mine was abandoned. Future attempts at profitable operation likewise proved fruitless.⁵ In 1921 Ray Roberts and John Dixon reopened the old mine. Several loads of timbers were taken to the mine and extensive efforts made to timber up the old tunnel.⁶ On November 12, 1921, the Cokeville Register reported that "work of opening up the mine is going steadily on and a wagon load of Cokeville coal rolled into town today and the Roberts Hotel is now using the Cokeville product exclusively." Assay reports from the American Smelting and Refining Company of Helena, Montana, indicated that samples of the Cokeville coal contained 5 percent more fixed carbon, 4 percent more inflammable material, 8 percent less water, and .75 percent more ash than the average coal.⁷

Although this report would indicate a fairly good grade of coal, financial difficulties forced the mine to close after a short while in operation. Again in 1932 there was some speculation that work at the mine would be resumed. Emil Grafe, financially backed by Dr. C. D. Stafford of Kemmerer, was working to reopen the old coal mine. However, there is no evidence of any success in this final attempt. Wyoming coal lost its principal market when the Union Pacific Railroad switched to

⁵Noblitt, 10. Guy Button, the youngest son of the Button family, and his brother-in-law, Charles Nordquist, were later killed in the Button mine. Both had come to visit Mrs. Button's grave and the old mine. The tunnel had collapsed, leaving only a small entrance to the mine. Button slid into the mine and was overcome by "blackdamp gas"; Nordquist attempted to rescue him and also perished.

⁶Cokeville Register, November 12, 1921.

⁷Cokeville Register, March 2, 1922.

diesel power units after World War II. With large coal reserves at Rock Springs, Hanna, and Kemmerer, Wyoming, only a miracle could cause coal mining to become a major industry in the Cokeville area.⁸

Phosphate

The most important and the most promising mining activity in the immediate vicinity of Cokeville during the past sixty years is that concerned with the mining of phosphate. The phosphate deposits at Cokeville are located in the southern extremity of the Sublette Mountains about two miles northeast of the town. The mine itself is physically located on the southern face of Rocky Peak (Cokeville Butte).

The Cokeville mine was developed by the Union Phosphate Company, a California firm with headquarters at San Francisco, in the early 1900's. Incorporated under the laws of the state of Wyoming, June 8, 1908, the company was capitalized at \$100,000, and the stock was divided in 1,000 shares at \$100 per share.⁹ The Union Phosphate Company's holdings in the area was under the supervision of August Vogt, who was designated as the agent of the company on December 21, 1908.¹⁰ Vogt served in this

⁸Cokeville Register, September 22, 1932.

⁹Uinta County, Wyoming, Articles of Incorporation of the Union Phosphate Company, 1908. (Filed in the County Clerks Office, Uinta County Courthouse, Evanston, Wyoming.) The board of directors consisted of the following men:

<u>Name</u>	<u>Stock shares</u>	<u>Position</u>
Christian De Grugne	50	President
John Stauffer	50	Vice Pres.
Carl Jantzen	10	Secretary
Roland Becsey	1	
John A. Hoey	1	

¹⁰Uinta County, Incorporation Record, Book IX, 440.

capacity until 1917 when J. P. Sulima assumed the duties of mine superintendent.¹¹

Actual work at the mine was begun in 1906, when by October 12 the surface covering had been removed from the phosphate beds some 400 feet up the ridge face. The phosphate beds were formed in layers, the uppermost being six feet thick separated from a lower layer four to five feet thick by a three foot bed of brown shale and hard, blue limestone. Two tunnels, one thirty-five feet and one fifty feet in length, had been driven into the main bed, and a square box chute with a steel bottom extending to storage bins at the base of the ridge had been constructed.¹²

Early mining operations were performed principally by hand labor. The phosphate rock was hard and required considerable blasting to remove it from the beds. After the rock had been loosened, it was shoveled into wheelbarrows, hauled to a platform at the mouth of the tunnel, dumped into the chute, which conveyed the ore by gravity to the storage bins. From the storage bins the phosphate was loaded into horse-drawn wagons and hauled to the railroad at Cokeville, a distance of about two and a half miles.¹³

Early results apparently warranted more extensive development of the mine, and by 1909 the system of tunnels had been greatly extended and more sophisticated mining practices had replaced early hand labor. The wheelbarrow had been replaced by ore-cars, and although little work had

¹¹Cokeville Register, March 10, 1917.

¹²F. B. Weeks and W. F. Ferrier, Phosphate Deposits in Western United States, U.S. Geological Survey, Bulletin 315 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1907), 456.

¹³Ibid., 456-457.

been done in the upper tunnels, there were three others that were each approximately 1,000 feet in length. Removal of the ore was described as follows:

The mining practice followed involves the breaking of the rock by overhead stoping; stopes are opened above the several tunnels through upraises; the rock is hard, and air drills are used in putting in the holes; the breaking is done with giant powder; the stopes are set with timbers and the rock or ore is allowed to settle between the timbers and drawn off by chutes into cars that in turn dump into the lower stopes, which are used for storage purposes, the ore being finally drawn off into the car on the lower level, which dumps into the outside bins for loading the wagons.¹⁴

By 1909 approximately 6,000 tons had been produced by the mine. The portion of the beds mined at that time was five feet four inches thick containing over 35 percent of phosphoric acid, which is equivalent to seventy-five tricalcium phosphate. This ore was shipped to the American Agricultural Chemical Company at Los Angeles, California, where it was converted into normal super-phosphate. In 1909 the estimated quantity of phosphate in the Cokeville area was considered to be a minimum of about 2,400,000 long tons. This estimate was based on the possible recovery of a bed five feet thick and 2,000 feet long, and excluded the quantity of "ore lying above the water level in and about the mine."¹⁵ The search for phosphate was extended south of the Rocky Peak mine, and several prospects were opened on the southeast side of Signal Butte (Big Hill). However, due to insufficient development an estimate of available

¹⁴ Hoyt S. Cale and Ralph W. Richards, Preliminary Report on the Phosphate Deposits in Southeastern Idaho and Adjacent Parts of Wyoming and Utah, U.S. Geological Survey, Bulletin 519 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1910), 507.

¹⁵ Ibid., 503, 507, 508.

phosphate was impossible.¹⁶ There is no evidence to indicate that the deposits in this area were ever anything but prospects.

On April 3, 1922, the Union Phosphate Company deeded all its holdings in the Cokeville area to the Stauffer Chemical Company for the sum of \$10. In 1926, Stauffer Chemical leased the Cokeville mine to F. M. Bresee, who operated under the name of the Cokeville Phosphate Company.¹⁷

Because of inadequate development of the phosphate field due to lack of transportation facilities, high cost of operation, and high freight rates the mine had been operated sporadically for several years prior to the takeover by the Cokeville Phosphate Company; and Bresee, lacking financial backing, attained limited success in the operation of the mine. Two employees referred to the operation as "a hit or miss proposition operating on a shoestring," and to Bresee as a "wildcat promoter."¹⁸

By 1926 facilities at the mine included storage bins, a ball mill, a pulverizer, superintendent's home, and five smaller homes for employees. Three types of phosphate were produced: mill run, crushed and dried, and pulverized. Most of the mill run or crude ore was shipped to California for further processing; the crushed phosphate was sent to steel mills at Orem, Utah, and used in a steel fluxing process. The pulverized phosphate, filtered by pure silk agitating screens and

¹⁶Ibid., 507, 508.

¹⁷Lincoln County, Wyoming, Warranty Deed Record, Book VI, 542-545. (Located in Lincoln County Clerk's Office, County Courthouse, Kemmerer, Wyoming.); Earl Bailey, interview, Cokeville, Wyoming, June 28, 1968.

¹⁸Bailey, interview; Al Simmons, interview, Logan, Utah, May 29, 1968. (Mr. Simmons was the mill operator in 1926.)

milled to the consistency of flour, was shipped to the Anaconda Copper Company where it was mixed with waste material to form fertilizer.¹⁹

During the later 1920's employment at the mine was limited, the highest being about a dozen men. Wages at the mine ran from 75 cents per hour received by miners, to 50 cents per hour received by general laborers and tram men. Earl Bailey, who hauled the ore and unloaded it into railroad cars, was the only employee on a contract basis. Transporting the ore in steel-lined, horse-drawn wagons, he received \$.75, \$1.00, and \$1.25 per ton for mill-run, crushed and dried, and pulverized ore, respectively. Assisted by two Negro employees, Bailey transported four loads a day, averaging four to six tons per load.²⁰ On return trips the wagons were loaded with coal which was used by the mill.

With the coming of the Great Depression, the Cokeville mine shut down operation, and despite the efforts of Bresee to obtain funds by forming a stock company, in which many Cokeville residents subscribed for stock, the mine remained inoperative until 1932. In 1931 an attempt was made to interest Mrs. P. J. Quealy of Kemmerer in the possibility of taking over the production end of the Cokeville Phosphate Company, but high production costs exceeded possible profits, and the transaction was never consummated.²¹

In 1932 and 1933 the Cokeville mine resumed operation and marketed the only phosphate rock in Wyoming, but by 1934 was again inoperative.²²

¹⁹Simmons, interview.

²⁰Bailey, interview. (The Negroes were Lewis and Albert Williams.)

²¹Ibid.; Cokeville Register, March 5, 1931, November 2, 1933.

²²U.S., Department of the Interior, Minerals Yearbook, 1932-33 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1933), 704; U.S., Department of the Interior, Minerals Yearbook, 1939, (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1939), 1264.

From that time on only token shipments were made. In 1937 Kenneth Brammer and Paul Banks obtained a five-year lease on the Cokeville mining properties from the San Francisco Sulphur Company, a subsidiary of the Stauffer Chemical Company, and in that year a carload of ore was shipped to the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) plant at Wilson Dam, Alabama, for experimental purposes. The final ore shipment from the Cokeville mine occurred in 1939 when Roscoe Zumbrennen, mine foreman, sent another carload to the TVA.²³

In that same year Mr. Zumbrennen began transforming the mine buildings and grounds into a recreational and tourist camp. This action was not completed until 1963 when the Cokeville American Legion Post removed the old mine house, cleaned up the area, and turned it into a public picnic ground.²⁴

Several years later phosphate mining again was a factor in the economy of the Cokeville area. In the 1940's and 1950's the San Francisco Chemical Company (SFCCO) obtained leases on phosphate properties about twenty miles south of Cokeville. The first lease in 1947 took over holdings of the Stauffer Chemical Company in the Beckwith Hills area at Leefe, Wyoming. In 1953 claims held by Peter B. and William Bradley of New York City, New York, and Boston, Massachusetts, were leased, and in 1956 claims held in trust by Alger Chaney of San Francisco, California, completed the holdings of the SFCCO, giving them control of the phosphate deposits in the Crawford Mountains north and east of Randolph, Utah. Including an open-pit mine and processing

²³Minerals Yearbook, 1939, 1264; Cokeville Register, January 21, 1937, June 20, 1939.

²⁴Cokeville Register, July 20, 1939.

plant at Leefe and underground mines in the Crawford Mountains, these deposits had yielded approximately 5,000,000 tons of ore by 1967.²⁵

Providing year around employment for the residents and a marketing outlet for the mercantile establishments of Cokeville, the SFCCO mines are a major source of non-agricultural income to the community.

Copper

The copper mining activity in the Cokeville area was centered in the Hobble Creek and Ferney Gulch district about thirty miles north and east of the town. An attempt at exploitation of the copper deposits was made as early as 1895 when the Collett Mining Company was formed for the purpose of "buying, selling, leasing, and operating of mines of silver, gold, copper, and other minerals." Incorporated on December 16, 1895, the company was capitalized at \$100,000, divided into 100 shares of stock at \$1,000 per share.²⁶ Although some ore was probably taken from the copper deposits by the Collett Mining Company, there is no evidence of a successful mine being developed out of this early attempt, and the initial burst of activity gradually dwindled away.

Activity was resumed once more in the period 1914-1920. In 1914 Ira Dodge of Salt Lake City, Utah, and Ben Griggs, owner of some of the Ferney Gulch claims, were active in forming the Western Wyoming Mining

²⁵Duncan L. King, Sr., San Francisco Chemical Company, Crawford Mountain-Leefe Area, Utah and Wyoming, Intermountain Association of Geologists Fifteenth Annual Field Conference (Casper, Wyoming, 1967), 204-209.

²⁶Uinta County, Wyoming, Incorporation Records, Mixed Records, Book C, 401. (Located in Uinta County Courthouse, Evanston, Wyoming.) The first board of trustees consisted of the following: Sylvanus Collett, Nellie Collett, Peter J. McDermott, and John C. Hamm.

and Milling Company with intents of developing and reopening the old Collett copper mines. Work on the mine and road leading to the mine was started in May of 1914. About six miles of road needed to be rebuilt at a cost of \$1,000. A new tunnel was being opened which, it was hoped, would open a "large body of ore in addition to that already in sight."²⁷

The plans of the Western Mining and Milling Company included the construction of a mill for the reduction of the ore, and as soon as the road was completed, company engineers were to survey the mill site and draw up plans for its construction.²⁸

In July, 1914, a state geologist made an examination of the Western Mining and Milling Company's property, reported that there was between 12,000-14,000 tons more ore than expected, and was very optimistic about the future of the mining venture. He also advised the company to increase the capacity of the proposed mill from 50 tons to 200 tons.²⁹

On December 5, 1914, Ira Dodge reported that a vein of high-grade ore had been struck 532 feet from the mouth of the mine. The vein was reported to be in excess of six feet in width and of a sulphide character which would run in value as high as \$400 per ton.³⁰

Dodge's discovery of the "mother lode" established a fact that had long been in doubt, that is the fact that the deposits in the area were all mineral and that a true fissure vein was responsible for the ore rather than a chance surface covering. This discovery was regarded as

²⁷Cokeville Register, May 23, 30, 1914.

²⁸Ibid., May 30, 1914.

²⁹Ibid., July 4, 11, 1914.

³⁰Ibid., December 5, 1914.

very discouraging to the people in the Cokeville area. It meant to many that other deposits in the vicinity of Hobble Creek most likely had their "mother lodes," and further development could possibly be the means of putting the "district on the map as a defined lode mining territory."³¹

On August 14, 1915, Z. C. Griggs reported that the new road to the mine was completed and that teamsters were being employed to move about 12,000 tons of ore to Cokeville for shipment to smelters at Murray, Utah.³²

The copper ore was hauled from the mines by four-horse teams using wagons in the summer months and bob-sleighs during the winter. The teamsters would partially load at the mine, putting on as much ore as they figured their teams could pull up the steep grade out of Sams Creek. They would finish loading at storage bins located at a point about half-way between the mines and the town of Cokeville. The wagons when fully loaded hauled about 5,500 pounds of ore per load.³³ Today the site of the storage bins is known as the "ore bin." Nothing remains of this area at present, being only a geographical point of reference to the local citizens.

In 1916 W. A. McKinney of Salt Lake City, Utah, took over the control of the Hobble Creek and Ferney Gulch mining property and continued sporadically to operate the mines until 1920. Existing records indicate that copper ore continued to be shipped to the smelters in Utah during this period. In August, 1916, the Cokeville Register reported that ore

³¹Ibid., December 5, 1914.

³²Ibid., August 14, 1915.

³³Ibid., August 19, 1916.

was being shipped from Cokeville, but that "only a small number of men were working." Again in 1918 it reported that G. E. Allen was hauling ore which averaged about \$200 per ton.³⁴

In 1920 the mining property consisted of twenty-five claims, including a millsite in the canyon bottom, and McKinney and his associates were optimistic that they could profitably operate the mines. Assayed samples of the ore showed 0.175 ounces of gold, 79.60 ounces of silver, and 33.60 percent of copper, indicating an assay value of about \$190 per ton.³⁵

After 1920, plagued by transportation difficulties and the high cost of mechanization of the mines, mining activity dwindled and finally halted completely. By the end of the 1920's the excitement had died down considerably, and long-time residents of Cokeville at present remember very little about the copper mines, except their location and almost nothing about their operation.

The results of mining activity can still be observed in the Hobble Creek and Ferney Gulch area; piles of dirt and rock dumped outside the mines are indicative of hopeful labor of years past.

Miscellaneous Mining Activity

Although coal, phosphate, and copper have been the major minerals discovered in the Cokeville area, some exploration for gold, silver, and vanadium have been conducted with very limited results. Most of the gold and silver in the area has been the by-product of the copper industry.

³⁴Ibid., August 19, 1916, November 16, 1918.

³⁵Ibid., November 13, 1920.

During the 1880's and early 1890's, the Amber Onyx Company, owned and operated by J. M. Van Osdel, C. R. Van Osdel, C. B. White, and M. A. White, mined and manufactured paperweights and various other sundry items from onyx in the vicinity of Cokeville. Little is known about the actual operation of the concern due to the lack of records. Longtime residents of Cokeville can attest only to the fact that at one time part of the manufacturing machinery--an old waterwheel used to power polishing equipment and various tools--was located on a branch of the Smiths Fork River. These industrial residues were located about two miles northeast of the town and about a mile below the old phosphate mine along the Kinney-Berrier County Road.³⁶

County records indicate that the company was experiencing financial difficulties in the mid-1890's. In 1895 it was recorded that a number of local citizens had put liens against the company's holdings to obtain payment for wages and services. The most outstanding wage debt at that time was owed to William H. Wyman. Wyman had been superintendent of the mining operation and was trying to collect back wages of \$115.38 for the period of September 16 to October 26, 1895. Others presenting liens against the company included Julius Jacobson, W. B. Brady, Ben H. Lee, Albert T. McLaughlin, Richard Roberts, John W. Machin, W. C. Banks, John Coggin, William J. Bowne, Samuel Farmsworth, Gus Hackbarth, George Ludwig, P. A. Herbold, Charles Larrgelere, J. Morethrop, and John R. Richards.³⁷

³⁶Chamberlain, interview; Mrs. Dorothy Somson, interview, Cokeville, Wyoming, April 20, 1969.

³⁷Uinta County, Wyoming, Lein Record, Book A. (Located in the Uinta County Courthouse, Evanston, Wyoming.)

On January 16, 1936, the Cokeville Register reported that E. J. Ineck, a rancher located about nine miles north of the town, had been notified that three gold nuggets had been found in a turkey he had sold. The turkeys ranged over the entire ranch, and there is no evidence that the find created any excitement among the residents.

Vanadium deposits in the Sublette Range were discovered and extensively explored by the United States government and the Wyodak Coal and Manufacturing Company of Lead, South Dakota, during the early 1940's, but little ore was ever mined. Dr. J. Stewart Williams, a Utah State University geologist, states that the exploration of the vanadium deposits was undertaken by the federal government due to a fear of a vanadium shortage during World War II, and that the deposits were never intended as a major mining operation.³⁸

In the 1960's there was considerable hope that oil would be found in Smiths Fork Valley. Despite several drilling projects, no petroleum or natural gas has been discovered in economic quantities.

While the mining activity in the Cokeville area has never been of major importance in the mining history of Wyoming, the number of mines and the labor expended in their development mark it as a major industry.

³⁸Paul T. Allsman, Investigation of Sublette Ridge Vanadium Deposits, Lincoln County, Wyoming, U.S. Department of the Interior, Bulletin R. I. 4476 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1948); Cokeville Register, December 17, 1942.

CHAPTER X
LAWLESSNESS IN COKEVILLE

No history of any western town, regardless of its size, is complete without a discussion of those elements that existed outside the law. Disorder, violence, fighting, and killing were often the means by which many small western towns gained notoriety in the history of a wild land. Social conditions and the weakness of the laws were contributing factors in the rise of outlawry on the frontier. This was not an era of law-abiding citizens; and, in the main, prevailing law had not been designed to cope with the need of the existing environment. Oftentimes local law enforcement officers were some distance from the source of trouble. Cokeville was no exception. Prior to the creation of Lincoln County in 1911 the principal law officers were located at Evanston, seventy miles away; and after 1911 they were still forty-five miles away in Kemmerer.

The construction of the railroad in 1881-1882 and the concomitant development of sheep and cattle ranches in the Bear River and Smiths Fork valleys brought prosperity of the wild and woolly type. Land fraud under the Homestead, Desert Land and Timber Culture acts was prevalent during the early history of the area, and many ranchers obtained their starts by gathering "slicks."¹

Butch Cassidy

Although land fraud and rustling were common law violations and

¹A "slick animal" is one that has neither the owner's identifying brand or earmark on its body.

participated in by most "honest" residents, Cokeville was also acquainted with hardened outlaws. The most famous outlaw to frequent the area was Robert Leroy Parker, better known in the annals of outlawry as "Butch Cassidy." Born April 6, 1866, in the neighboring state of Utah, Cassidy was well known in southwestern Wyoming. One of the Cassidy gang's principal hideouts was located in Star Valley, about fifty miles north of Cokeville. It is probable that Cassidy worked on cattle ranches in the surrounding area from 1890 to 1892. An expert with the branding iron, lariat, and gun, there are no recorded acts of violence attributed to Cassidy and his cohorts in the area until 1896. On August 13 of that year, Cassidy and two followers, Ellsworth Lay and Bob Meeks, robbed the bank in Montpelier, Idaho, of \$7,160.²

Cassidy used the Star Valley hideout on several later occasions, but the Montpelier bank robbery seems to be the only crime he committed in the area.

Hugh and Charles Whitney

More familiar to the residents of Cokeville were the Whitney brothers. Charlie and Hugh Whitney came to Cokeville as shepherders. The Whitneys were popularly supposed to have been forced into a life of crime by a system of blackmail practiced against them by local sheep ranchers. As the story goes: while working for the Olson sheep ranch, Hugh Whitney was supposed to receive a bonus for all stray animals picked up by the Olson herd and kept permanently by the alteration of

²James D. Horan and Paul Sann, Pictorial History of the Wild West (New York: Crown Publishers, Inc., 1954), 204-207; Salt Lake Herald (Utah), September 9, 1896, tells of the Montpelier, Idaho, robbery.

brands and earmarks. When the inevitable break came, Whitney, with an already bad reputation as a possible suspect in the robbery of a poker game in Pete Fuller's saloon, was no match for Olson. P. W. Olson, described as "shrewd, unscrupulous, with the heart of a coyote and the confident, substantial exterior of respectability," threatened to jail Whitney for sheep stealing if he implicated his employer in any way.³

Another story is somewhat different. According to this version, both of the Whitney brothers acquired the habit of herding sheep with their guns. They would sit in camp and shoot the leader of any straying band. Olson's sheep foreman, Ezra Christiansen, fired them when Hugh shot a prize specimen in the herd. Because of his trouble on the Olson ranch, Hugh, not being able to find work on other ranches in the area and seeking revenge, accused Christiansen of blackballing him and beat the foreman with brass knuckles. Supposedly the wounds received in the brawl caused Christiansen's death. Hugh Whitney was later arrested, but while being held until he could be transported to the county jail, escaped and both brothers left the country.⁴

The next word of the whereabouts of the Whitneys came in the spring of 1910 when they robbed a saloon in Manida, Montana. As a result a reward of \$500 was offered for the capture of Hugh Whitney. In June, 1911, Hugh and a companion attempted to rob an Oregon Short Line train near Blackfoot, Idaho, during which Whitney shot and killed William Kidd, a conductor on the train, and wounded Sheriff Sam Milton who had tried

³Denver Post (Colorado), June 19, 1952; Chamberlain, interview; Glynn Bennion, "The Cokeville Whitneys," 1924. (Typescript copy in possession of E. J. Lloyd.)

⁴Mau and Olson.

to arrest the bandits. Whitney's companion was killed, but Whitney escaped into the Idaho wilderness country. The reward for his capture was subsequently raised to \$1,500. The state of Idaho added \$500, and the Oregon Short Line Railroad tacked on another \$500.⁵

Hugh Whitney eventually reached the Cokeville area where he spent the summer with some of his old sheepherder friends. The Whitney brothers made one last trip to Cokeville in the fall of 1911. In the early afternoon of September 11, they set out to rob the Cokeville State Bank; however, they succeeded in getting only about \$100 from Cashier A. D. Noblitt and \$300 from several local residents who had entered the bank. They were forced to flee before the time lock on the vault was set to open.⁶

Rewards were offered for their capture, and posses scoured the country for the pair without success. The whereabouts of the Whitneys was not known until forty years later. In June, 1952, Frank Taylor, a rancher from Glasgow, Montana, armed with character references, one from Governor John Bonner, surrendered to district court, announcing that he was actually Charles Whitney. Whitney admitted that he and his brother had committed the bank robbery in Cokeville, and he also filled in the story of what had happened since the 1911 robbery.⁷

After leaving Cokeville the Whitneys fled to Texas, Wisconsin, and Minnesota, finally reaching Montana in 1912. Both had served in the army during World War I, returning to Glasgow and ranching after their

⁵Denver Post, June 19, 1952.

⁶Ibid.

⁷Ibid.

discharge in 1919. Hugh Whitney sold his homestead in 1935 and moved to British Columbia, Canada. He died October 25, 1951, in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan. The saga of the Whitney brothers ended when Judge H. R. Christmas commended the surrender of the younger Whitney and declared that "no useful purpose could be served by sending him to the penitentiary."⁸

As is the case in the lives of known outlaws, unsolved crimes are attributed to them regardless of their actual guilt. Hugh and Charles Whitney were no exception. On June 12, 1912, Mrs. P. W. Olson found a blackmail note sticking in a gatepost in the fence around the Olson home. The note read:

Put \$1500 in a can and have Less (a son of Olsons') drive out across the Bear River Bridge, on the west side until he comes to a light. Leave the money by the light. Do as instructed and do not notify the police or we will come down and kill you and your family.

Signed: Hugh and Charlie Whitney⁹

Town Marshall Dan Hansen was notified, and he in turn notified John Ward, the Uinta County Sheriff. However, before the arrival of Sheriff Ward, Marshall Hansen rode out to the west side hoping to meet the sheriff as he came from Evanston. It was the last ride for Marshall Hansen. His body, and the body of his horse, were discovered along the west side road by Sheriff Ward as the sheriff was coming into Cokeville. The circumstances surrounding the death of Hansen are still a mystery. Because of incriminating evidence Bert Dalton, a local sheepherder, was convicted and sentenced to prison for complicity in the crime. There

⁸Ibid.

⁹Mau and Olson.

is no evidence to indicate that the Whitneys were involved in the blackmail attempt or the death of Marshall Hansen.¹⁰

It is believed that the entire affair was engineered by Charles Manning, another local outlaw and friend of the Whitney brothers. Manning was killed near Meacham, Oregon, in July, 1914, during an attempted train robbery. His two accomplices, Clarence Stoner, a son of Abraham Stoner and nephew of J. W. Stoner, and Al Meadows were captured. At the time of Manning's death it was reported that Bert Dalton had signed a confession implicating Manning, among others, in the affairs leading to the murder. Although there are isolated reports of horse stealing and minor robberies after the demise of Manning, his death closed an era of outlawry in southwestern Wyoming.¹¹

Prohibition

Prohibition and the Volstead Act ushered in another period of lawlessness to the Cokeville area. Between 1920 and 1933 a sizable liquor industry was located in the vicinity. Numerous stills were set up in the valleys and nearby hills, and several homes in the town were equipped to store and brew illegal liquor. One such establishment had a complete still beneath the premises. The still stove pipe was attached to the furnace so as not to attract attention during the brewing operation. On June 29, 1932, a complete still (including two 1,200 gallon vats, eight 500 gallon vats, twelve sacks of sugar, two 200 gallon vats of mash, and fifty gallons of whiskey) was seized by Wyoming

¹⁰Ibid.

¹¹Cokeville Register, July 11, 1914.

State Law Enforcement officers in the vicinity of the Oregon Trail Highway and Smiths Fork River.¹²

In 1922 Cokeville made national headlines when the citizens elected a woman mayor, Mrs. Ethel Huckvale Stoner, and two women, Mrs. Retta Roberts and Mrs. Goldie Noblitt, to the town council. Running on a law-enforcement ticket, these women were elected on a platform to "Clean the Town of Bootleggers and other Law Violators."¹³ However, it was not their intention to try to make Cokeville a "blue-law" town. "It will not be our policy, if elected, to enact any 'blue' or stringent laws, believing that we already have good and sufficient laws for the present, but we will endeavor to enforce the laws we now have."¹⁴

The woman-dominated government ran into trouble almost immediately upon assuming office. It was the duty of state and county officials, rather than those of a municipality, to conduct searches for illicit liquor, and in the Cokeville area the county sheriff, the deputy sheriff, and the precinct constable, who could legally acquire search warrants, were not inclined to do so.

Drawing such invectives as "Womensville" and "the bad wild-west town" from surrounding towns with male-controlled governments, the male residents in Cokeville answered with the following article published in the Cokeville Register, June 29, 1922:

The old town is jogging along about the same--no disturbances--no arrests--nobody run out of town, and the same old man marshall is cutting the park grass, looking after the street lights and fussing with the water system troubles. The

¹²Robison, 31; Cokeville Register, June 30, 1932.

¹³New York Times, Rotogravure Section, May 21, 1922.

¹⁴Cheyenne Tribune, May 17, 1922.

same old man treasurer is guarding the shekels of the municipality. The same old man fire chief is listening for the fire alarm to call his department to action. A regular man, an ex mayor, is keeping talley as city clerk, and a new man police judge is waiting for something to bob up to break the perfect balance of his empty scales of justice.

After her term of office had expired, Mayor Stoner stated that:

... not a single arrest for bootlegging has been made by either the state or federal officials. Many were the promises I received in response to my urgent appeals. Nearly always they were coming soon, in a week or two or not more than a month at most, to 'clean up the town.' Some of them did come but only to look over the situation. Occasionally we heard of arrests being made in nearby towns but none were ever made here. Verily Cokeville has led a charmed life this past year and has seemed to be immune to molestation of this kind.¹⁵

The illegal liquor industry continued to thrive, and the local product was shipped to consumers throughout the country. It had a reputation of being relatively safe and of a high quality and was known as "Kemmerer Moon" from Chicago to the West Coast.

Prohibition was repealed in 1933, and today Cokeville has few traces of its wild past. Most of what remains does so in story form.

¹⁵"Ethel Huckvale Stoner, Elected Mayor of Cokeville, Wyoming, May, 1922." (Typescript obtained from Mrs. M. M. Stocker, Everett, Washington.)

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The history of Cokeville, Wyoming, is comparable to that of many small western towns. The settlement and early growth of Cokeville is typical of most settlements on the frontier wherein aridity, distance, and isolation prompted the usual frontier virtues of individualism and self-reliance. Between 1818 and 1874 there was a succession of fur men, explorers, travelers bound for California or Oregon, and cattlemen who can be regarded merely as the advance guard of the permanent settlers.

In 1874 the first permanent settlers arrived in the Cokeville area, and these hardy pioneers--sixty men, women, and children by 1880--existed in a semi-isolated locality until the coming of the railroad in 1881-1882. The railroad provided not only a better system of communication but also stimulated economic diversification. The need for self-sufficiency declined and commercialization entered the economic picture.

Geography and climate fostered an economy based on the livestock industry. The aridity of the land, the abundance of grass meadows along the river bottoms, and natural rangeland excluded the development of farming as a major industry. Although cattle production was the focal point of the livestock industry during the first years of settlement, the Cokeville area soon changed to sheep production.

Under the supervision of capable herders, sheep adapted readily to local grazing conditions. Sheep make better use of the browse type forage, and they winter successfully in the desert areas to the east. Cokeville became one of the more important sheep producing regions in southwestern Wyoming during the 1880's and 1890's, and flockmasters at

the turn of the century were socially and politically on a par with the cattlemen. However, since 1946 the total number of sheep in the Cokeville area has decreased by almost half while there has been a reciprocal rise in the number of cattle located in the region.

The town of Cokeville, as it is located at the present time, had its beginning in 1881-1882 with the coming of the railroad. The name had been applied to the local area since about 1877, but referred to the entire settlement of "Smiths Fork on the Bear River." In 1890 the present townsite was surveyed and platted, and between 1907 and 1913 several additions were made to the town. Cokeville was incorporated in 1910, and it is from this time that actual growth of the town can be easily traced. In 1913 a culinary water system was installed, by 1915 Cokeville had an impressive business district providing a variety of services, and by 1917 electricity made its debut. Improvements in public utilities have been made as technological advances have allowed, and Cokevilleites enjoy most modern conveniences available to larger communities.

Early social life in the Cokeville area was centered on dancing as a favored form of recreation and social interaction. Later, as more settlers entered the area, regular parts of the social festivities included parades, band music, horse races, rodeos, and a variety of athletic contests: baseball, basketball, football, and skiing.

Formal education was begun in the Cokeville area shortly after the arrival of the first settlers. The first school was a privately owned cabin, but in 1884 a regular schoolhouse was erected. In 1905 a new two-story, brick school building was constructed and a high school was built in 1922. A new grade school was built in 1938, and the original

grade school building was converted into a band and lunch room, and industrial shops. Additional educational facilities were constructed in 1959 and again in 1967.

Consolidation of the many rural schools throughout the area was an accomplished fact by the 1940's. The last rural school in use--North Border--was remodeled into a private residence. At the present time Cokeville is the center of School District Number 5, and has 219 students enrolled for the 1969-1970 school term.

The Cokeville area acquired religious organization after the turn of the century. At the present time the religious life of local residents is dominated by the Mormon church with Catholic and Episcopal churches having somewhat smaller followings.

Automobiles, improved roads, and increasing agricultural mechanization have crippled and in some cases dealt fatal blows to small communities throughout the country. Cokeville is no exception. The decline has been slow but steady since the 1930's. Cokeville faces the prospects of a continuing decline. Although there has been an increase in population each decade since settlement, services provided by private business concerns have lost much of their importance. However, the town and surrounding area have experienced almost a century of accomplishment, and a rich heritage is available to those who call it home.

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- Chamberlain, Fannie. Cokeville, Wyoming, March 30, 1968.
- Dimond, Mrs. Weldon. Cokeville, Wyoming, August 10, 1969.
- Haderlie, Ernest. Cokeville, Wyoming, August 18, 1968.
- Holden, George D. Cokeville, Wyoming, April 14, 1969, August 3, 1969.
- Larson, Glenn. Cokeville, Wyoming, December 22, 1968.
- Olson, Lynn. Logan, Utah, August 19, 1968.

Roberts, Floyd. Cokeville, Wyoming, March 25, 1968, June 20, 1968,
June 26, 1968, July 29, 1969.

Simmons, Al. Logan, Utah, May 29, 1968.

Somson, Dorothy. Cokeville, Wyoming, April 20, 1969.

APPENDIXES

Appendix A
Mayors of Cokeville

Frank A. Mau	1910-1911
George Symes	1911-1912
William H. Wyman	1912-1915
John D. Noblitt	1915-1916
Frank A. Mau	1916-1920
Richard Roberts	1920-1921
Joseph Fuller	1921-1922
Ethel Stoner	1922-1924
Joseph Fuller	1924
W. E. Jarrett	1924-1927
A. H. North	1927
Joseph Fuller	1927-1929
Frank J. Jones	1929-1933
John H. Stoner	1933-1935
Frank J. Jones	1935-1941
Asa Jarrett	1941-1948
Floyd Roberts	1948-1951
Eldon Dayton	1951 to the present

Appendix BCokeville Post Office, Established October 12, 1877

<u>Postmasters</u>	<u>Date of Appointment</u>
Sylvanus Collett	October 12, 1877
John W. Stoner	August 5, 1880
Henry J. Somson	December 14, 1885
John W. Stoner	July 15, 1889
Hayes R. Groo	September 29, 1908
Benjamin H. Smalley	April 3, 1909
George E. Bourne	January 25, 1916
Albert J. Schils	December 20, 1916
Mrs. Allie B. Schils--Acting	June 13, 1932
Mrs. Myra E. Geer	July 17, 1933
Vernon L. Green--Acting	February 28, 1942
Vernon L. Green	March 1, 1942
Virginia Bennion	July 31, 1954
Kenneth W. Birch--Acting	August 5, 1959
George D. Holden--Acting	March 8, 1961
George D. Holden	September 23, 1961

Appendix CPopulation

1874	Settlement
1880	60
1890	Unknown
1900	Unknown
1910	150--approximate number taken from Glynn Bennion typescript
1920	430
1930	431
1940	452
1950	440
1960	545

Appendix DCokeville Businesses--April, 1969

Corner Cafe	Lenore Hansen, Manager
Mau's Conoco	Herman Mau, Proprietor
Knouse Super Service and Motel	Grace and Doyle Knouse, Proprietors
Valley Hi Motel	Eldon Dayton, Proprietor
Dayton Service and Repair	Eldon Dayton, Proprietor
Cozzens Market	Don Crozzens, Proprietor
Nelson's AG	C. O. and Forrest Nelson, Proprietors
Cokeville Post Office	George D. Holden, Postmaster
Timmreck Saddlery	Smooth Timmreck, Proprietor
Timmreck Mens Furnishings and Shoe Repair	Archie Timmreck, Proprietor
Stockmans Hotel	Percy Card, Proprietor
Cokeville City Library	Joyce Dayton, Librarian
Nick's Bar	Doretta Goodenbour, Proprietor
Barber Shop	Ed Dayton, Proprietor
Bear River Merchantile Company	Stanley McQuire, Manager
Clark Coal and Oil Company	Vern Walton, Manager
Red Dog Saloon and Cafe	Roy D. Carter, Proprietor
Cokeville Telephone Company, Inc.	Charles and Bernice Abernathy, Owners
Cokeville Television Corporation	George D. Holden, Secretary
Roberts Construction Company	C. R. Roberts and Sons, Owners
Cokeville Beauty Shop	Tina Walton, Operator

VITA

Errol Jack Lloyd

Candidate for the Degree of

Master of Science

Thesis: The History of Cokeville, Wyoming

Major Field: History

Biographical Information:

Personal Data: Born at Montpelier, Idaho, January 19, 1939, son of Gilbert and Florence K. Lloyd; married Betty Jean Larson February 20, 1960; two children--Michael Brian and Kevin Paul.

Education: Attended elementary school in Alton, Idaho; graduated from Montpelier High School in Montpelier, Idaho, in 1955; received the Bachelor of Science degree from Utah State University, in the College of Education with a teaching major in history, in 1967.