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JUDGE LYNCH—THE MUSGROVE KILLING

“I AM TO BE HUNG TO-DAY ON FALSE CHARGES BY A MOB,” WROTE L.H. MUSGROVE TO HIS BROTHER AS HE STOOD ON A BRIDGE OVER CHERRY CREEK. AS DENVER CITY VIGILANTES TIED CORDS AROUND HIS ANKLES AND NECK, HE WROTE A SECOND LETTER TO HIS WIFE MARY, SAYING HE WAS BEING HANGED “BECAUSE I AM ACQUAINTED WITH ED FRANKLIN.”

DENVER CITY CITIZENS SAW MR. MUSGROVE IN AN ENTIRELY DIFFERENT LIGHT. THE LARGE MAN WAS SAID TO HAVE KILLED FOUR MEN AND WAS BELIEVED TO BE THE LEADER OF A GROUP OF LIVESTOCK THIEVES THAT INFESTED SOUTHERN WYOMING AND NORTHERN COLORADO DURING 1867-68.

IN NOVEMBER OF 1868, MUSGROVE WAS ARRESTED IN WYOMING AND TURNED OVER TO COLORADO OFFICIALS WHO PUT HIM IN THE ARAPAHOE COUNTY JAIL. WHILE WAITING IN JAIL, MUSGROVE BRAGGED HIS GANG WOULD SOON FREE HIM.

A FEW DAYS AFTER HIS ARREST, ORSON BROOKS, A DENVER MAGISTRATE, WAS ROBBED BY TWO MEN, ONE OF WHOM HE RECOGNIZED AS SANFORD DUGGAN. DUGGAN, A KNOWN CRIMINAL WHO HAD KILLED A MAN IN BLACK HAWK, REALIZED HE'D BEEN RECOGNIZED AND TOLD HIS PARTNER, “LET'S PLANT THE DAMNED OLD SNOOZER.” THE MAGISTRATE MANAGED TO TALK THEM OUT OF THE ACT, BUT LOST \$135 TO THE THIEVES.

IT TURNED OUT DUGGAN'S PARTNER WAS ED FRANKLIN, A FAITHFUL MEMBER OF MUSGROVE'S GANG, WHO HAD BRAZENLY VISITED MUSGROVE IN JAIL AFTER THE ROBBERY. THE CITIZENS OF DENVER BEGAN TO WORRY OTHER MEMBERS OF THE GANG WERE IN DENVER CITY, INTENT ON FREEING THEIR LEADER.

THE TWO CRIMINALS TOOK THEIR STOLEN MONEY TO GOLDEN CITY WHERE THEY BEGAN A DRINKING BINGE. THEY WERE RECOGNIZED AND “GENERAL” DAVE COOK, THE OWNER OF THE ROCKY MOUNTAIN DETECTION ASSOCIATION, ROUNDED

UP FIVE MEN AND HEADED TO GOLDEN CITY TO RETRIEVE THE CRIMINALS. “GENERAL” COOK ENCOUNTERED DUGGAN FIRST IN DAN HILL'S POPULAR SALOON, BUT AFTER A GUNFIGHT, DUGGAN HAD VANISHED BUT THE BROTHER OF THE PROPRIETOR, MILES HILL, LAY DEAD.

COOK AND HIS MEN THEN TRACKED FRANKLIN DOWN TO THE OVERLAND HOTEL, WHERE THEY FOUND HIM ASLEEP. FRANKLIN WOKE UP AND IN THE ENSUING STRUGGLE, WAS KILLED.

THE DAY AFTER THE GOLDEN CITY SHOOTINGS, A MOB OF THE “BEST” CITIZENS OF DENVER GATHERED IN FRONT OF THE ARAPAHOE COUNTY JAIL. THEY VOTED ON MUSGROVE'S GUILT AND WITH AN ALMOST UNANIMOUS DECISION OF “AYE” THEY DETERMINED MUSGROVE SHOULD BE HANGED. THE GROUP TOOK MUSGROVE FROM THE JAIL, WITH LITTLE RESISTANCE FROM THE JAILERS, AND HAULED HIM IN A WAGON TO LARIMER STREET BRIDGE OVER CHERRY CREEK. ONLY ONE MAN, CAPTAIN SCUDDER, TRIED TO DISSUADE THE MOB.

ON NOVEMBER 23, 1868, THE DAY AFTER MUSGROVE'S HANGING, THE *ROCKY MOUNTAIN NEWS* REPORTED: “HIS HAT HAD ALL THE TIME BEEN PULLED DOWN OVER HIS FACE, BUT AFTER HE HAD HUNG PERHAPS FIVE MINUTES, IT WAS TAKEN OFF, AND HIS COUNTENANCE SHOWN. IT WAS VILLAINOUS.”

SHORTLY THEREAFTER, DUGGAN WAS APPREHENDED AND BROUGHT BACK TO DENVER. VIGILANTES ALSO HUNG HIM.

WHEN THE LAW FAILED TO SERVE JUSTICE, DENVER CITIZENS DELIVERED IT THEMSELVES.

1. *Lynching in Colorado 1859-1919* by Stephen J. Leonard
2. *Jefferson County: Frontier Murder and Mayhem* by Carol Turner
3. *Hands Up: Or, Twenty Years of Detective Life in the Mountains and on the Plains*, General David Cook, 1882.