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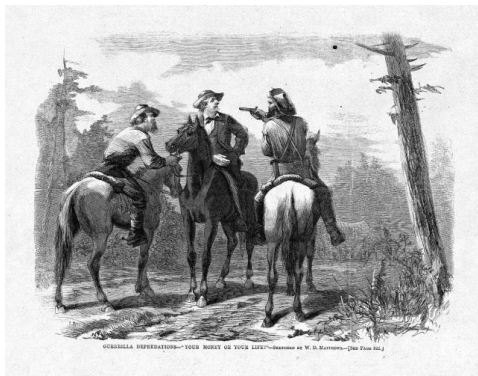
Denver City, 1860

## THE TURKEY WAR

AS WARS GO, IT WAS A MINOR CONFRONTATION, BUT FOR THE CITIES OF DENVER AND AURARIA, IT WAS A DECISIVE BLOW AGAINST CRIME AND LAWLESSNESS. SINCE THE TOWNS' INCEPTION, PETTY THIEVES HAD PLAGUED THE GOOD CITIZENS, STEALING FROM CLOTHES LINES, HELPING THEMSELVES TO LIVESTOCK AND FOOD, AND EVEN MAKING OFF WITH A SAWMILL. AS UNCLE DICK WOOTON ONCE REMARKED, "STEALING IS THE ONLY OCCUPATION OF A CONSIDERABLE PROPORTION OF THE POPULATION." BUT ON WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 1, THAT ALL CHANGED.

THAT WEDNESDAY, A RANCHER FROM THE PICKETWIRE RIVER AREA ARRIVED IN TOWN WITH A WAGONLOAD OF WILD TURKEYS. THE ENTIRE TOWN WELCOMED THIS UNUSUAL TREAT, BUT BEFORE A SINGLE TURKEY COULD BE SOLD, A BRAZEN BAND OF BUMMERS STOLE THE ENTIRE LOAD.

THESE LAWLESS DRIFTERS AND IDLERS WERE IDENTIFIED BY EYE-WITNESS, EX-SHERIFF, WILLIAM MIDDAGH, WHO RAN A BUSINESS NEAR THE THEFT. HE IDENTIFIED THOMAS CLEMO, BUCKSKIN BILL, WILLIAM HARVEY, AND OF COURSE, CHUCK-A-LUCK TODD, AS THE BUMMER RINGLEADERS. WITH THE IDENTITY OF THE THIEVES KNOWN, HONEST CITIZENS DEMANDED JUSTICE BUT THE BUMMERS—AFTER DOWNING SIGNIFICANT LIQUOR—BRAZENLY TOOK TO THE STREETS, HALTING PEACEFUL CITIZENS AND THREATENING THEM WITH COCKED PISTOLS AND GLITTERING KNIVES.



THE KEY WITNESS, MR. MIDDAGH, STEPPING FROM THE VASQUEZ HOUSE, WAS FIRED UPON BY A BUMMER NAMED MCCARTHY, WHO FOLLOWED UP THIS ATTACK BY GOING AFTER THE LAW.

CITY MARSHALL TOM POLLOCK WAS CAUGHT, LITERALLY, WITH HIS GUNS DOWN AND HAD TO RUSH BACK TO HIS BLACKSMITH SHOP TO RETRIEVE HIS HAWKINS RIFLE. ON HIS WAY, NOISY TOM WAS INTERCEPTED BY MCCARTHY, FULL OF BAD WHISKEY, THE SCOUNDREL OFFERED TO CUT OUT NOISY TOM'S GIZZARD. HOW THE GENIAL, RED-HAIRED GIANT, ESCAPED THIS FATE IS UNKNOWN, BUT THE HEAVILY-BEARDED MARSHAL RETRIEVED HIS HAWKINS AND WENT HUNTING FOR THE TURKEY THIEVES.

RETRACING HIS STEPS, HE LOCATED MCCARTHY, BUT THE UNRESENTANT BUMMER SHOUTED CURSES AND THREATS BEFORE LUNGING AT THE MARSHAL WITH HIS BOWIE KNIFE. MARSHALL POLLOCK STRUCK MCCARTHY OVER THE HEAD WITH HIS HEAVY RIFLE, LAYING OPEN HIS SCALP AND EFFECTUALLY RENDERING HIM *HORS DU COMBAT* FOR THE REMAINDER FOR THE CAMPAIGN.

A SECOND ATTACK ON MR. MIDDAGH BY BUMMER WILLIAM HARVEY SEALED THE OUTLAWS' FATE. AT TEN O'CLOCK THE NEXT MORNING, CIBOLA HALL WAS FILLED AND A TRIAL HELD, A VERDICT QUICKLY REACHED. CHUCK-A-LUCK TODD, WILLIAM HARVEY, AND BUCKSKIN BILL, AND SEVERAL OTHER BUMMERS WERE GIVEN FIVE HOURS TO LEAVE TOWN, OR FACE HANGING.

THE SCOUNDRELS HIGHTAILED IT OUT OF TOWN, AND THUS ENDED DENVER CITY'S TURKEY WAR.

1. *The Fifty-Niners: A Denver Diary* by Stanley W Zamonsky and Teddy Keller, 1961, pp 73-75.
2. *Rocky Mountain News*, February 8, 1860, page 2.
3. Image, "Your Money or Your Life," Harpers Weekly, December 24<sup>th</sup>, 1864.