

The Colorado History Gazette

Volume 28

Mount of the Holy Cross, Fall, 1873

THE LEGEND OF THE MOUNT OF THE HOLY CROSS

GEOGRAPHICAL SURVEYOR, F.V. HAYDEN AND PHOTOGRAPHER W.H. JACKSON HAVE SUMMITTED THE MYSTERIOUS MOUNT OF THE HOLY CROSS AND RETURNED WITH AN INTERESTING STORY. THE FOLLOWING IS A REPRODUCTION OF THE LEGEND OF THE MOUNT OF THE HOLY CROSS, AS TOLD TO JACKSON AND HAYDEN BY ALICE POLK HILL. MISS HILL IS TRAVELING THROUGH THE COLORADO FRONTIER, RECORDING STORIES AND YARNS FROM COLORADO'S COLORFUL PAST.



MOUNT OF THE HOLY CROSS, W.H. JACKSON, 1873

IT SEEMS MANY YEARS AGO, WHEN THE FRANCISCAN FRIARS WERE EARNESTLY ENGAGED IN THE GRAND WORK OF CONVERTING THE INHABITANTS OF MEXICO TO THE WORSHIP OF THE TRUE GOD, A MONK IN SPAIN YIELDED TO THE TEMPER AND COMMITTED AN UNPARDONABLE CRIME. DAY AND NIGHT, WITH CONTRITE HEART, HE SOUGHT IN PRAYER EXPIATION FOR HIS SIN. IT WAS REVEALED TO HIM IN A VISION THAT WHEN HE SAW A CROSS SUSPENDED IN THE AIR, IT WOULD BE A TOKEN OF HIS FORGIVENESS.

THEN HE BECAME FILLED WITH A FEELING OF UNREST, AND LONGED TO TRAVEL. HE JOINED AN EXPEDITION TO MEXICO AND WANDERED OVER THE COUNTRY IN SEARCH OF THE SACRED SYMBOL, UNTIL HIS HAIR WAS FROSTED, AND HIS LIMBS INFIRM WITH AGE. FINDING NO REST FOR HIS SOUL, HE JOINED AN EXPLORING PARTY COMING NORTH.

BY WINDING WAYS THEY TRAVELED; FROM MOUNTAIN SUMMITS, WHERE THE SUNSHINE LINGERS, TO VALLEYS BARRED WITH LIGHT AND SHADOWS, THROUGH DEEP DEFILES, ROBED IN VERDURE, GIRDLED WITH FLOWERS AND CROWNED WITH SNOW, ONWARD THEY WENT.

ARRIVING ONE DAY ON THE SUMMIT OF A LOFTY MOUNTAIN, THEY PITCHED THEIR TENTS. IT WAS NOT THE HOUR TO CAMP, BUT THEIR FURTHER PROGRESS WAS PREVENTED BY A DENSE FOG, THAT WITH THE MORNING SUN ROSE FROM THE GROUND AND GRADUALLY GREW THICKER AND HIGHER, UNTIL IT MINGLED WITH THE CLOUDS AND ENVELOPED THE WHOLE EARTH.

THE PIOUS MAN WANDERED AWAY FROM THE SOUND OF HUMAN VOICES TO PRAY FOR THE REMOVAL OF HIS BURDEN OF SIN. KNEELING IN DEEP HUMILITY, HE RAISED HIS HANDS AND VOICE TO GOD, WHEN LO! THE CLOUD WAS LIFTED, AND SUSPENDED BEFORE HIM, RESPLENDENT WITH THE RAYS OF THE GLORIOUS SUN, WAS THE 'CROSS.'

THE GREAT SPIRIT OF THE MOUNTAINS BREATHED FORGIVENESS, AND HIS SOUL WENT OUT IN JOY.

WONDERING AT HIS LONG DELAY, HIS COMPANIONS WENT TO SEARCH FOR HIM AND FOUND HIM DEAD IN THE ATTITUDE OF PRAYER, WITH HIS FACE TOWARD THE MOUNT OF THE HOLY CROSS.

1. Tales of the Colorado Pioneers, Alice Polk Hill, 1884.