

THE
WHITE OAKS
(NEW MEXICO)

STORY



One White Oaks, New Mexico Story

THE WHITE OAKS AREA was first known to the Piros Indians who hunted antelope and other game there. When the Senecu and Pilabo acquired stock from the Spaniards they brought their sheep to graze. Some of Onate's men had come to the place in quest of food. They were the first Europeans on the site of White Oaks. Spaniards called it the Mal Pais country because of lava rock and drought, but sheep herders always managed to find water in this one spot destined to attract miners from all sections of the country.

Long before the advent of prospectors New Mexicans from San Pedro, San Antonio, La Mesa, Paraje, San Antonito, Luis Lopez and Manzano sought grass and water for their flocks there after the Apaches ~~and~~ had run off the Piros. Sheep herders found it dangerous also for Apaches picked them off just as easily, the black rocks affording the Indians all the protection they needed. Thus discouraged, they looked for feed elsewhere abandoning the place to antelope and other game that continued to occupy the locality as a private preserve. Game proved abundant even when mining was at its peak. New Mexicans might have settled San Pedro at this spot had it afforded better protection against wandering Comanches, Navajos and Apaches. San Pedro is one of those timeless towns like Cordova, Luis Lopez and Leyba, hidden from public view, hard to find, yet a joy to see as one steps out of this century into the past of silence, brightness, adobe, and steaming chili never so tasty as when scooped up by broken pieces of tortilla. These New Mexicans, far from the maddening crowd, know how to live. Say what we may, they have survived drought, plagues, Apaches, Navajos, Kiowas,

Comanches, poverty and a baking sun in a turquoise sky. Zeal and quest for progress is making New Mexico just another state. The Land of Enchantment is pulling into a shell like a snail and the glamor of the past will localize in spots like White Oaks, Villanueva, Anton Chico, Leyba, Cordova. Even the Chama valley is losing the grip of another century and progress is beating down charm, eternal beauty, customs and multi-colored hues in streams and along ridges. White Oaks — what is left of it — will die because it not the Pueblo de Taos nor Trampas but a place that destroyed and marred for New Mexico will trample those defacing her beauty as evidenced in the past at Elizabethtown, Chloride, Robinson, Lake Valley, Twinning, Arroyo Hondo, White Oaks. The Pueblos remained. No New Mexico Indian built in a place that wasn't called beautiful.

During the days of the Spaniards and Mexican rule natives from San Antonio, Luis Lopez, San Marcial, Valverde, Socorro often looked for gold when away from the vigilant eye of the governor in Santa Fe and the soldiers of the presidio. If they were successful they kept it a well-guarded secret. Nor did they go in for mining as their compadres did over in Santa Rita. Just enough to buy a few sheep or a bottle of wine in Bernalillo or El Paso. General Estanislado Montoya knew there was gold here but it was easier to mine coal and he contracted to supply Fort Craig south of San Antonio. He was responsible for the coal mining in this region during the Civil War and after. Carthage, San Pedro and other mines were able to survive because of government contracts for this black gold that was freighted to Fort Cummings, Fort Craig, Fort Selden, Fort Stanton, Fort Union. So, the place where White Oaks was to be born was forgotten except in cantinas where men spoke of the old days and the secrets of the Mal Pais country. Thus it was that a prospector who drifted into San Antonio one day learned that there was gold where these New Mexicans said it was. He was a native of Missouri and had passed through New Mexico on his way to California in '49, but he had no luck on the gold coast and remembered the Land of En-

chantment. San Antonio — the place that gave the world Conrad Hilton. Here the prospector listened to talk as he sipped his liquor. The New Mexicans knew enough English — acquired during their years in the service during the late war, and in their work freighting, mining coal and selling wood — to tell the prospector where their fathers had found gold during sheep herding days before the advent of the Anglos. This dispels the generally accepted theory that John J. Baxter simply walked into the region and came upon gold. Absurd. The ALBUQUERQUE JOURNAL for April 6, 1881, makes this clear:

“White Oaks takes its name from two immense springs situated two and a half miles from the town of White Oaks — these springs being surrounded by immense growth of white oak trees. The camp was first brought to public notice by the discovery of the far-famed and world-renowned Homestake Mine. John E. Wilson, John V. Winters and other old placer miners, were informed by one Baxter, a Californian of '49, who received his information from a (New) Mexican that there were good placer diggings in the gulch now known as Baxter Gulch, running from Baxter Mountain due east to the arroyo now bounding the west side of the town of White Oaks. These men immediately proceeded to the place and commenced work, meeting with great success, although compelled to transport the water necessary to wash the dirt on the backs of mules for four miles; they established their headquarters in a cabin at White Oak Springs and in the morning would pack to the diggings all the water they could carry, and in the evening would pack to the springs for washing all the pay dirt possible. In this way they worked nearly the whole summer, and realized handsomely as the gulch was found to be very rich, several nuggets being discovered of great value, and one pocket being found from which in one day there was taken by the men over three hundred dollars. For several weeks thirty dollars was the average by each man.

“While at work an old miner by the name of Wilson dropped in among them. He was from Arizona. After a

short time he entered into partnership with John E. Wilson; they worked together for some time, the Arizona Wilson meanwhile prospecting for the lead at the head of the gulch, out of which the placer gold was supposed to have come. One day while out prospecting he sat down on a boulder to rest and eat his lunch, and noticing on one corner of the boulder a few crystals, broke with his pick a portion of it, and exposed to view several particles of wire gold. Taking the piece with him he returned to camp and showed it to his partner. The two immediately returned to the spot, and after digging a short time exposed the vein, and located the famous Homestake. Upon returning to camp the Arizona Wilson offered his share for sale, and it was purchased by Winters for all the funds he could raise, viz., \$40 in washings and \$2 in silver and an old pistol. Work was immediately commenced on the vein and at a depth of four feet wire gold in profusion was struck. Assays had been had from this mine showing the astounding figures of from \$15,000 to \$40,000 to the ton. Work has been progressing continuously from that time, and an immense amount of gold has been taken out, though the ore has only been worked by an araster. Much work has been done and is now being done on the mine. There are two tunnels — one 75 and the other 132 feet in length; three shafts — one 80, one 65 and the other 70 feet in depth; and the Homestake Mining Company of White Oaks, the owners of Wilson's half of the mine, and the first extension south of the same, are now working day and night shifts on two of the shafts, and also running a tunnel on the south part where on March 21st was struck another body of ore with gold visible to the naked eye all through the rock. When it is considered that the latest find is 900 feet from where the wire gold was first found, and where the ore has been so rich all the way down for a distance of eighty feet, some idea can be formed of the richness of the mine. An assay of a piece of one from the last find, showing no free gold, was made on March 24, resulting \$17,000 per ton, flour gold. Surprise to relate, the float from this vein, one the

side of the hill and in bottom of the canyon, near where the last gold was found on soil being washed from it, shows free gold sticking to it on all sides, and on breaking gold appears all through the rock. This float lies where it has been washed over repeatedly for the last three years, and yet was never discovered till a few days ago.

“On the south of the Homestake are many locations. The Ethan Allen, belonging to Mr. James Allen and others, is a well defined lead, supposed to be the Homestake vein. Although no free gold has yet been found in this mine, yet the one, free milling quartz of fine quality, runs well up, from assays that have been made of it, some being as high as \$80 in gold, principally. On the south, on Baxter Mountain, are found the White Swan, Otis, Christopher, Discovery and others, all well-defined leads, showing well in gold and silver. The Christopher, upon which considerable work has been done by A. M. Jones, the present owner, has assayed \$200 to the ton. On the north is found the Little Nell, Comstock, Large Hopes, Little Mack, Hoozier Boy, Old Abe, Starr, and others. Free gold has been found in the Little Mack and Little Nell; both are well-defined leads of gold-bearing quartz. A tunnel is now being run on the Little Nell, and the vein is widening and looking better constantly. This property is owned by Messrs Redman, Hudgens and Sweet. The Comstock is an extension of the Homestake, and yet little work has been done by the owners — James Allen, H. C. Campbell, G. W. Prichard and others. The work that has been done, however, shows it to be a well-defined lead of gold-bearing quartz much like the Homestake in character. The shaft on the Baxter Boy is down forty feet. The mine is on a foothill of Baxter Mountain, known as Bald Hill. Within a few feet of the surface the ore only showed two or three dollars in silver, but at present depth shows a four foot lead of iron stained quartz, carrying 97 ounces in silver and ten dollars in gold. The Red Dick, much like the Baxter Boy at the surface and for some distance down, only showed a few dollars in precious metals, but at 37 feet, the present depth, results from assays show 68 ounces

silver and eighteen dollars gold. This vein is three and one half feet in width of iron stained ore, carrying a great amount of iron and copper pyrites. The Gladstone is in the immediate neighborhood of the Baxter Boy and the Red Dick, and shows at twelve feet a good vein of iron stained quartz, about three feet in width. The Old Abe seems to be an immense deposit of gold bearing rock. The deposit is about one hundred feet in width, and from tests made with gold pan along its entire width, carries gold in paying quantities. The Hoosier Boy is also in the same belt as the Red Dick and Baxter Boy. The development on this mine consists of a ten foot shaft and seventy foot tunnel. The vein is about four feet wide, carrying gold and silver. On Love Mountain, immediately north of Baxter, several gold mines have been discovered and opened, such as the Captain Kidd, DuBois, Little Anne and F. C. Kempton. The Captain Kidd and the DuBois lie in the same vein. The vein crops for sixty feet in width, from wall to wall, and is compared seemingly of iron, mixed with quartz of the finest quality. The iron, however, much predominating, and much of it covered with copper stain. Assays show this ore body to carry the precious metals in abundance. Ore from the shaft of Captain Kidd, only ten feet in depth, shows 30.38 and 65 ounces of silver, 15 percent copper and 12 percent lead; and from DuBois at the same depth 49.50 silver, 20 percent copper, 22 percent — lead. The ore body lies between porphyry and sandstone. The owners of the Kidd are Col. Watts, James Allen and Col. Pritchard; and of the DuBois Messrs Chas. Frost, William Watson, E. Ewing Patterson of White Oaks and L. P. Dubois and Judge Otis of Atchinson, Kansas. The Little Anne lies on the east side of the mountain and belongs to Probate Judge Tomlinson. It is a large vein of carbonate ore, much of it showing a deep green color, running high in silver and copper. The L. C. Kempton lies on the southeast slope of the mountain and belongs to Messers Brothers, Wilson and others; it is an iron lead, cropping in width seventy-five feet. The owners have only at present a seven foot shaft on it, but expect

the coming summer to tunnel across the lead from the foot of the mountain, and then to sink a fifty foot shaft from the tunnel. The ore on testing at present depth of seven shows \$24 in gold. The Black Prince mine is on Baxter Mountain, south and east of Homestake. There is at present a sixty foot shaft and 75 foot tunnel on this vein; the vein is composed of two stratas of mineral bearing ores, one of a fine quality of quartz and the other apparently a carbonate. High assays had been had from this mine — 600 ounces of silver and \$17 gold being one test. It is highly thought of by many experts who have examined it. The Oro Fino is another on Baxter Mountain. This mine belongs to I. E. Sligle, assayer of this place and Professor Robinson who recently purchased one-half interest. Professor Robinson is from Las Vegas. The owners are now running a hundred foot tunnel on this mine. The Monarch is also located on Baxter Mountain and belongs to Dr. Mitchell. Free gold has been found in this mine, and it looks well. The vein is only four feet in depth, composed of quartz mixed with some porphyry, but the porphyry is gradually disappearing, as greater depth is reached and the quartz stained with more iron. Ore from any part of this lead, crushed and worked with gold pan shows many solers. The Reclusia Mine, which occupies a hill near the divide, between Baxter and Lone Mountains, is claimed to be the same lode upon which the Little Mack and the ore is porphyritic quartz. Free gold has been found in a boulder on this claim, but all the work that has been done is the annual assessment. This mine is the property of Dr. A. G. Lane. The Lottie Kirkhorn is situated on the level plain between Love and the White Mountains, about five miles from the town of White Oaks and a mile and a half from Baxter Mountain. The vein runs nearly north and south, as in fact do almost all the veins of this mineral belt. It crops from five to twenty feet above the plain for about 900 feet, sinking at both ends. The vein matter is fifty feet from wall to wall, the walls being granite. The developments are a forty foot shaft and an eight foot shaft. At present depth the pay

streak is two feet in width of quartz carrying considerable galena and assays six ounces of silver and \$40 gold, and the vein, at present depth of forty feet, is gradually widening. The Red Cliff Mining Company of Colorado recently purchased from Mr. O. P. Burtt, the owner, a half interest in this mine, and intend to push development during this spring with rapidity. This mine from its peculiar location and surroundings, has excited considerable attention. It has been examined by several mining experts, who pronounce it a very unique discovery and a valuable find. The extension called the Nina also belongs to Burtt and shows the same character of ore. Other mines are the Queen of God, the Forty-Four. White Oaks is the mining and supply center of several other mining districts: Nogols, White Mountains, Pine . . . White Oaks is situated on a flat of about one hundred and sixty acres. The main street — White Oaks Ave. — is about a half mile in length by one hundred feet in width and is built up on both side with substantial dwellings and stores for nearly the whole length. The permanent population is at present about eight hundred, with families coming in every day. Besides there are hundreds scattered about in the different mining districts who make White Oaks the base of their operations for their supplies. Many wells have been dug in and about the town and the water, found in depth from twenty-five to sixty feet, is good. Mr. F. A. Blake's new saw mill is running constantly. A daily mail is run to and from the town of Socorro and Fort Stanton (30) miles. Good and substantial buckboards are run on the line to Socorro by Kelly and Hagaman, the mail contractors, and bring passengers from that point in sixteen to twenty hours. There is also a first class road to Las Vegas from which point a line of hacks is run by Mr. Straumer, bringing passengers through in about three or four days . . . ”

Of particular interest is the fact that the author makes no reference to Wilson as an outlaw wanted in Texas. How an outlaw on the dodge can travel from Texas in those days without any sidearms to hunt up some cronies in the Mal

Pais area is interesting reading. The legend persists to this day. Prospectors as a rule did not bother to carry guns unless they were in dangerous Indian country. The White Oaks country was dangerous; not because of Indians but rustlers anxious to do business in mules, horses and beef. It was a fertile spot. Tulerosa, Three Rivers, Lincoln, Fort Stanton, Las Vegas, Anton Chico, La Questa, Puerto de Luna, San Antonio, San Antonito, San Pedro, Red Cloud and other little towns they could give and take. Billy the Kid, Rudabaugh, Kinney, Topsy Johnson, Jim Greathouse, Joel Fowler all found this the ideal country for their business. Besides the rustlers White Oaks had its share of painted women, frontier lawyers, dance hall girls, gamblers, horse thieves, frontier doctors, con men, gold brickers, politicians, barkeeps, drummers, gunslingers. It also boasted a Boothill. It might have been as popular with lovers of Western folklore as Lincoln, Socorro, Dodge, Deadwood had it not been so close to Lincoln. Great writers have incorporated White Oaks into their novels but the glamor of Billy the Kid country forced HEART'S DESIRE by Hough into the background. White Oaks was the locale for this book and at one time Hough had a wide circle of readers. His books are still among the top Westerns despite TV.

White Oaks was founded on August 15, 1879. The main street was White Oaks Avenue and was one hundred feet across, with trees planted along the avenue on both sides for shade as well as beauty. At first there was the tent town, then shanty town, hogtown and the city of beautiful homes. A shanty town is built of shacks; hogtown boasts more gambling dens, brothals, dance hals and cantinas than normally found in even large cities. The ratio was usually out of proportion, hence the name. It is not to be confused with hidetown which refers to buffalo hunters and buffalo hides. By July 17, 1880, the first house was built and all White Oaks celebrated. By the end of December in 1881 the town had a thousand souls. J. H. Wise put out the first issue of the WHITE OAKS GOLDEN ERA on December 15, 1880, but he turned it over to Fenn & Morse on July of the fol-

lowing year and on December 15, 1881, exactly a year after first publication J. E. Sligh became manager and editor. Fenn & Morse hoped to start a new paper in January of 1882, giving it the name WHITE OAKS SCORPION but the plan failed to materialize and the paper was never printed. J. Howe Watts laid out the town and was named town surveyor. A. Lampson was named first postmaster. Flour could be bought at six dollars a hundred pounds, butter for fifty cents a pound, canned fruits for sixty cents a can. Nobody paid attention to prices. Everybody figured to strike it rich and bought up without haggling over tags of seeming solid gold. Drinking water was cheap at forty cents a barrel and the cantinas supplied various brands of gutrot for fifty cents although the quality stuff was higher. After you drank enough of the putrid liquid that had been mellowed with dead rodents, snakes, and birds the quality stuff tasted like poison. Prospectors were born with a special kind of stomach that included lots of cast iron. Jack Winters did not survive to enjoy his good fortune. He died on January 21, 1881, and was carried to a spot about a mile south of the new town that was to be the receiving center for many before White Oaks settled back into obscurity. Relatives in the uplands of Virginia who had no use for "Uncle Jack" in the flesh mourned his spirit and were simply shocked to learn that he passed way. They were certain he meant for them to have his gold. So lawyers hurried into White Oaks to make it a legal-ridden town. Litigation after litigation dampened future prospects and miners as well as prospectors were thinking of a lawyer for breakfast each day until the field was narrowed down a bit and they could get along with their work. Despite the plague of lawyers White Oaks survived somehow and the Pioneer saloon realized it had a competitor in the Starr. This latter was a combination stage show-saloon then called Opera House, found along the frontier and built to accommodate dramatic troupes of strolling players as railroads and mining opened up new prospects. The best known troupe was booked as the Wallace Sisters. They often played

in White Oaks. Captain Jack Crawford, the Poet Scout, also gave performances at White Oaks. The first company to play at the Starr (Charley Starr, a prospector) Opera House took to the gaming tables and compelled to remain for further performances due to lack of funds to go on to Socorro. Whiteman's corral was the unloading place for new prospectors anxious for a night on the town before going into the hills. In the early days they often sipped the cup with such drinking companions as Billy the Kid, Dave Rudabaugh, Evans, Joel Fowler, Jim Greathouse, Kinney, Toppo Johnson and others of the galaxy of gunslingers, horse thieves and gamblers. It was almost a ritual to hurrah the town every night and add to the excitement. Although no one was known to have been killed during these shootings it was a dangerous sport nevertheless, for the innocent bystander rather than the riding men who did this possibly because they were too broke for a game of poker, or already lost all they had to hard liquor, painted women and bad luck at cards. The editor of the town paper noted (September 27, 1881):

"This camp has not only held its own during the past year but has increased both in population and material wealth. It is true there have been many obstacles to battle against, which have greatly retarded the growth of the camp and development of the mines, but these are being overcome one by one, and the mining camp is on the high road to prosperity. The introduction of a stamp mill, and its proving a complete success, has added greatly to the firm feeling of the people. This mill cleared about \$20 a ton from Vera Cruz, and is now realizing a large profit from the ore taken from the South Homestake dump. This ore was mixed with wall rock and other surface materials, and was pronounced worthless by Professor Sligh last year. The large yield of this dump matter in a recent run by Leer & Company's mill is in the immediate cause of the enhancement in value of mining property in that district. It proves beyond the question of a doubt that the mines in the White Oaks district are as good, if not better, than they were

supposed to be. The great bug-bear of no water has been done away with. All the water needed for milling purposes can be obtained by digging. Wood is plenty and cheap. In addition to the old reliable business houses of Whiteman, James and others, that were there last year, we noticed the large and well-filled general merchandise store of Dunning and Miller, and the restaurants of the Mayer Brothers and U. Ozanne. Dunning and Miller have been in camp about six months and have worked up an excellent trade. Tuttle and Phillips have purchased the old stand occupied by Judge Frank Lea and are now keeping a news and fruit stand there. J. A. Walters has started a good saloon. Peter Mackel has a well-filled boot and shoe store. A bank is soon to be started by Mr. Chandler and others with Mr. McPherson as cashier."

Besides the stores of J. A. M. James, Whiteman, Dunning & Miller, the mercantile business of I. Cohen was known to all the miners, prospectors and visitors. The saloons kept good brands as well as the doctored poison. The road from White Oaks to Socorro was not the best but it was well traveled. The distance was one hundred miles, with the Rio Grande to cross and the tiresome, dreadful malpais country making it as rough as the Jornada. A toll of one dollar was exacted for the use of the ferry across the river, and six dollars was the fare one way from White Oaks to Socorro. Luggage was permitted up to thirty pounds. Anything over that was taxed five cents the pound. The buckboard stage to Las Vegas was martyrdom, a hell on wheels, and cost about the same as the Socorro stage. Nobody seemed to mind too much since there was nothing they could do to ease the situation. By the time the railroad came along that could have made the journey more delightful, White Oaks had diminished in size and prospectors had sought out other camps, as a result plans for the railroad failed to materialize.

Fergusson must have been successful in looking after the interests of the heirs of Jack Winters for they were able to sell out to James M. Seigfurst for \$50,000. During the

first year he took out enough gold to pay for the mine, the building of a mill and still found himself with a surplus of \$10,000. It has been told around the campfires that he took out \$35,000 in two days. Had the heirs been patient they would have pocketed \$400,000. John Y. Hewett, one of the first owners of the Old Abe, never gave up during the lean years between 1880 and 1890 when mining was at low ebb. The true vein of the Old Abe was not found until November 1890 and Hewitt knew that White Oaks had a claim on him. The total production of the White Oaks camp up to January 1, 1904, is said to be \$2,860,000.

But for many the principals in the story of White Oaks are not Baxter, Winters, Hewitt, mines or mining, but the men and women burned or at least singed in the Lincoln County War. They may have come out of the ordeal unscathed, with their scalps and in their skins, but they remain forever the prisoners of all writers, readers, aficionados, historians, quasi-historians, parlor-historians, who for reasons known only to themselves have re-constructed and re-fought the Lincoln County War more often than the Civil War and both World Wars and have thus succeeded in much that doesn't really count save that they leave behind them irrelevant, unique, shadowy, statistical creations. By far and large mistakes about Winters, Baxter and Hewitt may be overlooked, even blessed, but it is quite heretical to be undogmatic about Jim Greathouse, Billy the Kid, Dave Rudabaugh, Mrs. A. A. McSween, Tom O'Folliard and others who graciously permitted White Oaks to exist and achieve fame because of them rather than they for White Oaks. Joel Fowler is said to have killed three men at White Oaks and wounded another. The event took place in the mountains when Fowler came upon men who had been rustling his cattle. Fowler's nose wasn't clean and he was no paragon of virtue. But he resented anyone making off with his cattle whether he came by them legitimately or not. Jim Greathouse and his men suffered the consequences when Fowler caught up with them. It was the cattleman's code of the day. Fowler lived near Socorro;

Greathouse and his rustlers called White Oaks their home. Fowler is reputed to have accounted for twelve men according to the notches on his gun, but the killing that brought about his own neck-tie party was with a knife. O'Folliard, Greathouse, Evans, Waite, Scurlock, Rudabaugh, Allen, Billy the Kid, Pickett and others addicted to horse-stealing and cattle rustling found the area around White Oaks good pickings. More and more ranchers and homesteaders were moving in to engage in stock farming because of the number of military and Indian reservations in eastern New Mexico. It saved cattle drives to rail heads by contracting with Indian agents, sutlers, post commissaries, butchers at White Oaks, Socorro, San Pedro, San Antonio, Las Vegas, Anton Chico, La Questa, Gonzolez, Puerocito, Puerto de Luna, Los Pueblos and other towns along the Pecos. Horses taken from Fritz, Dolan, Patron, Chavez, Chisum, Yerby and ranchers from Rio Feliz and Hondo areas were sent on to Colorado, Kansas and western New Mexico. Horses and cattle taken in those areas were usually sold at White Oaks for re-sale at Fort Stanton, the Mescalero Reservation and to ranchers seeking to replenish diminishing herds. The Mescalero Indians had to keep guard over their stock for the rustlers were not above seeking fresh mounts out of the Mescalero remuda. These rustlers who worked in the White Oaks area of Lincoln county worked a wide range, moving as far south as Las Cruces, Mesilla, and Organ over to the Gila country around to Tascosa, Mobeetie and the Texas Panhandle and along the plains to Portales and the site of Clovis. A. Grzelachowski and Chisum were two victims more often hit than most. Grzelachowski often saw horses stolen from him at White Oaks (brands changed, of course) and this nettled him since he often fed the very men who rustled his beeves and horses. West & Dedrick's Livery Stable was a sign well known to Billy the Kid and Dave Rudabaugh. Whether Dedrick was in on the rustling deals has never been firmly established although his propensity for rustler trade was well observed. Barney Mason was aware of their presence

at the livery stable one day in late November of 1880 and sought out some cronies to act as a posse to capture the outlaws. If Billy the Kid had been in White Oaks to see Judge Leonard as he later wrote Gov. Wallace, it seems odd indeed that his sallies in and out of the livery stable at White Oaks afforded him little time for the business in hand. Leonard neither confirmed nor denied. Gossip would tell it another way. Billy didn't need Pickett nor Rudabaugh for the trip. Especially Rudabaugh wanted by lawmen from several counties. If Billy the Kid came to White Oaks to see the judge he had a strange way of going about it. Perhaps no one would have bothered themselves about the outlaws had not Barney Mason and his friend Bell not gone to deputy William H. Hudgens and made their demands on him. It is doubtful that the rustlers suspected that the citizens of White Oaks would awaken from their lethargy and come a-gunning for them. Bell paid for it with his life when the Kid escaped from the Lincoln county courthouse. Mason would have suffered the same fate as Ollinger had he been with those named to guard the prisoner. The fates do make sport of us all. The outlaws were trailed to the Greathouse and Kuck place that served as a ranchhouse, an eating place for travelers, a freight station, a gathering spot for rustlers such as the likes of Billy the Kid and Dave Rudabaugh. Had these latter familiarized themselves with the impact of cattlemen associations springing up all over the great plains area to make bounty hunters of many former friends they might have concerned themselves with covering their tracks as they left White Oaks. The fight at the Greathouse ranch resulted in the death of Jimmy Carlyle, the White Oaks blacksmith. He could have been shot by any member of the posse or anyone of the outlaws. He jumped through the window to escape Billy's guns for a shot accidentally fired by one of the deputy's men opened the attack on the desperadoes entrenched in comparative safety while Greathouse was in the hands of the lawmen. He broke away and managed to establish his innocence until some disgruntled miners at

White Oaks decided to burn down his place as an act of vengeance for Carlyle and to prove that they could do it. Violence begets violence as the unconcerned laugh away. Greathouse continued in the freight business as well as in the rustling business and was audacious enough to appeal to the miners, prospectors and businessmen of White Oaks to place their freighting needs in his hands. Soon the rustlers moved on like clouds gathering for the storm that was to break at Lincoln, the county seat, and White Oaks settled down to less killings, lots of drinking, a wee bit of rustling. Mrs. A. McSween could hardly be expected to smile as a permanent fixture in Lincoln after all that had happened during those tragic days when everybody for miles around somehow found themselves mixed up in the curious deeds of a few who brought bloodshed to Lincoln town. There were no neutrals. Those who could not use the sixshooter used their tongues, and Mrs. McSween could lash out like a viper when occasion called for it. Col. Dudley over at Fort Stanton had a few sleepless nights after she hog-tied him with threats and a few choice words that would do justice to his troopers. She was pretty to boot. She was not the type to spend her life sighing over the eventful days that brought tragedy to so many. Failing to crucify Col. Dudley, she remarried and did business in White Oaks. Her herds at the grasslands around Tulerosa, moved in various directions, vacillated through canons, dry beds and mesas but they bowed as she passed. The exuberance of her spirit was felt in White Oaks during lean days and the town held on, but age has a way of taking the fight out of people and the former Mrs. A. McSween was laid to rest in the cemetery at White Oaks.

Pat Garrett was in White Oaks the day Billy the Kid reckoned with Bell and Ollinger. He had gone to visit John William Poe, a lawman working for the Canadian Cattle Company. He had already arrested Pat Coghlin at Three Rivers and hoped to capture Billy the Kid, but Garrett beat him to it when he and members of the Cattlemens Association came upon the rustlers at Arroyo Tivan. Garrett

thought other members of the gang were operating around Tombstone, Arizona. Whether he told him that to get him out of the way or because he had inside information, it was hard to say. One wonders why the tall man didn't go to Tombstone himself if he were so certain of his facts. Poe was gone a few weeks and returned to White Oaks. He was misinformed. While he was gone Billy obliged the press and public by killing his guards and effecting his escape. Garrett was now glad to have John William around. The opportunity now presented itself for fame if the Kid showed up again in White Oaks. Poe was to remain in town and keep a sharp lookout. He never laxed his vigilance. He wanted the honor of capturing the Kid.

John William Poe found plenty to do around White Oaks without developing a one-track mind on Billy the Kid. Rustlers, con-men, gold brickers, horse thieves — he found the woods full of them. Garrett dropped in from time to time to assist in these arrests but never failed to omit asking about the Kid. One night a man Poe had once befriended in Texas came to the lawman's hotel room with the news that the Kid was seen in Fort Sumner. By this time all were convinced that he was well over the border; consequently John William had a rough time convincing Garrett that the outlaw expected everyone to believe he had skipped the country while he hid out in Lincoln county, or adjacent area. He had been seen several times in White Oaks since his escape but no one bothered to tell Poe or Garrett. How the curtain was drawn for the Kid the night he cashed in his chips at Pete Maxwell's in Fort Sumner is better known to all lovers of Western folklore than many Bible stories or even events in the lives of Lee, Lincoln or Washington. Next to disagreement over religious affiliation the second major factor for hate, bigotry and dissention west of the Mississippi is the Lincoln County War, its many historians and fiction writers jawing at each other about what really took place as to make the Bataan March of World War II a walk in the shade by comparison. At least such high ideals are not incompatible with a way of life for there are many

ways of earning a living as the flood of Westerns that have stolen the scene in the last decade on newsstands, radio and TV attest. To quote a biblical phrase, "the truth is not in them." Westerners Corralled from coast to coast and in England are toning things to factual happenings than flights of imagination that have graced the boards before the rise of these clubs. Be that as it may, life went on at White Oaks despite the Kid and his playmates.

"The Old Abe at White Oaks is a genuine bonanza. Passing the Old Abe, one would next reach the Rita mine, where H. J. Patterson, with several men, are taking out quartz rich and free gold. The Rita is a new discovery. It seems that it is a cross vein, and cuts the South Homestake lead somewhere near the present workings of the latter. William Moore and Josh Church claim to be the original discoverers and locators of this lead. They located a claim on the vein last January, but never did much work. Recently Patterson has been making several valuable discoveries on Baxter Mountain, and, among other things, he discovered free gold on this lead on the Oro Cash surface ground, and at once put men to work on it. He claims that the holders of the Oro Cash cannot see it in that light, and, in consequence, there is a three-cornered-country-cut fight for the possession of the vein. No bones have been broken up to date, neither has anybody been hurt. Patterson is still in possession of the property and, we suppose, the court will finally adjudicate the matter. Continuing up the gulch on the wagon road, the next new find is on surface ground of the North Homestake. This find was made by Patterson also, who, acting under the advice of a St. Louis man named Dye, located it and called it the Solitaire and began work on it. But as the discovery was made on the surface of the Homestake, and as the work was being done inside the lines of that mine, Mr. Fergusson, who represents Jack Winters' heirs, took possession of it and is rapidly sinking a shaft thereon, from which rich paying ore comes with every trip of the bucket to the surface. The vein is about five feet wide and the free gold is visible on almost every piece

of quartz, while all the vein matter pans out remarkably well. This discovery increases the value of the Homestake very considerably, in fact, many think it is the richer vein of the two. Marcus Brunswick of this city (Las Vegas, N. M.), procured the issuance of an injunction to prevent Mr. Fergusson from working the mine. However, this was dissolved by the giving of sufficient bonds, and Fergusson continued the work of development. He was on the grounds to save by his prompt and decisive action this mine, which, to draw it mildly, increases the value of the claim at least fifty percent. The dissolving of the injunction has led to this new find for the owners and has resulted in the development of the old Winter's vein of 150 ft. in depth, disclosing some of the richest gold ore ever seen in the West. A large force is at work at the Little Mac taking out ore constantly, which is being hauled to the mill. Eli H. Chandler has a sixty ton mill ready for starting up. Real estate in White Oaks is active at moderate prices. About one hundred and twenty-five miners are employed at three dollars a day. A large force of teams hauls ore, coal, lumber. About four hundred dollars a day is paid them for labor alone . . . "

(LAS VEGAS OPTIC, Aug. 23, 1883).

Such new strikes reanimated the town as more and more life flowed into the area, everyone possessed with the one dream of wealth. By 1885 the town boasted two hundred and thirteen houses. John Brothers owned the hotel; W. H. Weed had a general store; W. F. Blanchard had the stage line; V. V. Parker was superintendent of the Southwestern Stage Line; Mrs. McGinniss was the school teacher; Major Caffery published the WHITE OAKS LEADER. Other mercantile stores were M. Whiteman's; Bond & Stewart's; Young & Butler. Streets were named and trees planted. Progress continued so that by 1888 the directory showed: B. H. Dye, attorney; William Watson, attorney; John Y. Hewitt, attorney; Ed. M. B. Tiomoney, attorney; J. B. Collier, notary public; Theo W. Herman, real estate; D. J. M. A. Jewett, notary public; M. H. Bellowmy, justice of the peace; B. F. Wilson, M. C. had his stand on the cor-

ner of Jicarilla Ave. and Pine Streets; Starr Page, jeweler; James Colp, assay office; Bond & Stewart, merchants; Goodman, Ziegler & Co., dry goods; Dr. J. T. Reid, druggist; Wells & Gardner, City Meat Market; E. H. B. Chew, furniture; Hack's Livery & Baggage; Matthew M. Murphy, druggist. And life went on. The White Oaks Foot Race Club challenged the Lincoln Foot Race Club to a foot race for a purse of twenty-five dollars, an entrance fee of ten dollars requested and one dollar entry fee expected of the spectators. Horse racing was enjoyed at White Oaks. Usually at ten in the morning on Saturday and the Sunday the course was four hundred yards long, the winner received fifty dollars, entry fee was ten dollars to be paid three days before the race, spectators paid one dollar. The Second Class Horse Race was held in the afternoons at 2 p.m. also for four hundred yards and was open only to "cow ponies and horses that have no records." The entry fee was five dollars. There was also the Fast Burro Race and the Slow Burro Race for a purse of five dollars each. Entry fee was fifty cents. White Oaks also had a ball club. The members usually met at the Carfizo Hotel where they put on their uniforms and pranced in sight of visitors. Killings continued. Sixshooters popped like flies on the field or tongues in the barber shop. Val Salcedo, full of gutrot, took his sixshooter and went to the residence of M. Leecher and called him names that in those days weren't fit to print but nowadays termed "cute" on the silver screen or in Western magazines of the "Romance" type, not the "True" type — pulps — they are called, they even get by in a number of paper backs, and after a string of abuse Salcedo began firing the gun. The aim was so far off that Leecher had time to pick up a club and hit the revolver out of the drunken man's hand. He picked up the gun and made no mistake about his aim. Salcedo was no more. Thus life could discontinue to go on at White Oaks also. Even as late as 1900 the killings continued. A dance was in progress. Two men, one a full blooded Yakui Indian, decided to join the gang. They had already had a long session with John Barleycorn and were

quite tipsy over the affair. A guard at the entrance refused them admittance. The Indian drew his sixshooter and his companion a knife and the wild and wooly West was at it again. Jose Leal, master of ceremonies at the baile, was shot through the body and lingered some hours before being laid to rest. The dancers joined in the melee as more fun than dancing. As a result two received broken skulls and were laid aside Leal. Jose M. Ribera, the Indian and Justo Salas, his companion were buried at White Oaks just because they had served a term in the pen, and now, braced by whisky they attempted to be desperadoes in White Oaks. Funeral processions drew crowds just as bailes, foot races, horse races, baseball, especially if the victims died violent deaths.

White Oaks also boasted men of reknown. George Curry, once governor of the Territory, Pat Garrett, W. C. McDonald, who became the first governor of the State of New Mexico and whose remains repose in the Cedarvale Cemetery in White Oaks, the father of Harvey B. and Erna Fergusson, writers of stature making their home in Albuquerque; John Y. Hewitt who edited the WHITE OAKS EAGLE, became the first president of the Exchange Bank in White Oaks, who never gave us his dream to the date of his death in 1932 that White Oaks would some day become a great city of New Mexico; Judge Andrew A. Hudspeth, who practically owned most of White Oaks at the time of his death in 1948, loved the place so well that he willed that his ashes be scattered over the old mining town; Mrs. George B. Barber, the Cattle Queen of New Mexico, better known for her part in the Lincoln County War, found final rest in the cemetery at White Oaks. These are but a few of the many known all over New Mexico, if not the country, who once made their home in White Oaks. The scene of E. Hough's HEART'S DESIRE is laid in White Oaks because the writer lived there, and wrote of scenes and people he knew. The WHITE OAKS LINCOLN COUNTY LEADER supported the Republicans and the WHITE OAKS GOLDEN ERA supported the Democrats. That's why they

did things in White Oaks. The elite registered at the Ozane Hotel but cattlemen preferred the Carizo. White Oaks might have been a bustling city today if a railroad would have built into the fast-dying town. Charles B. Eddy had visited White Oaks several times in May of 1900 and was convinced that the coal, gold and other minerals found there warranted some kind of a line into the town, and the White Oaks & Kansas City Railroad made the local headlines. On paper anyway. It died aborning. The Salado coal fields suffered a setback and caused Eddy to panic. They turned to the Rock Island and used the El Paso & Rock Island to lay track to Carrizozo rather than White Oaks because he lost faith in the coal, gold, copper and whatever else White Oaks was heir to. He continued the courtship with the Dawson coal fields. The El Paso and Northeastern had built within thirty-two miles of White Oaks and on August 3, 1889, the tracks reached White Oaks junction in the Carrizozo flat. Eddy founded the town of Capitan and White Oaks soon learned for whom the train bells tolled. White Oaks took to the rocking chair and joined the ever-growing list of New Mexico ghost towns. The post office closed its doors for the last time in 1954 when the town had dwindled to eight families. There are beautiful homes still standing like the \$42,000 residence a mine superintendent built for his bride-to-be only to learn when the last stone was in place that he was bankrupt and the girl changed her mind. Old Abe mine was still in operation until 1930 when a fire, then a cave-in caused it to be closed. Dave Jackson, a resident of White Oaks since 1897, and who, with Allen A. Lane had a lease on the property, is known as the Guardian of White Oaks. He hopes one day to occupy a place at Centervale which he has cared for through the years. A few families remain because of their ranching interests and are appalled at the vandalism of many tourists. People have interested themselves in the restoration of Fort Union, Abo, Pecos and other historic spots of New Mexico. There should be a society for the Preservation of White Oaks. Dave Jackson would be happy

to know that Cedarvale would be cared for after he joins the oldtimers who have returned to Cedarvale for the last hurrah.

Incidentally, Billy the Kid's contact man for the sale of stolen horses at White Oaks was named Wheeler. He was caught when he tried to sell thirty horses turned over to him by Billy, Rudabaugh and Wilson to Pat Coghlin.