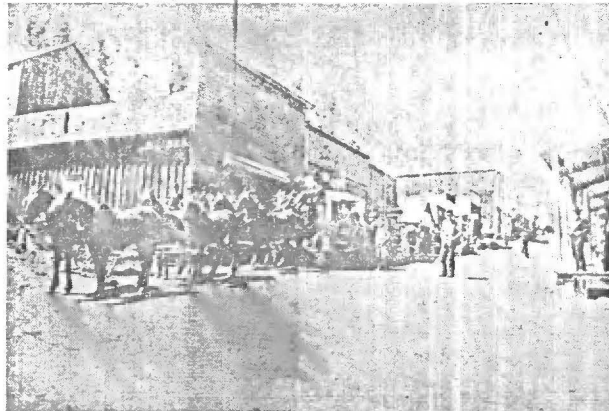


BLAND . . . Ghost Town

by . . . Francis E. Vieth

Albuquerque, New Mexico



1. Street scene in Bland about 1900.

The search for mineral wealth is an old story, often retold, ever changing in detail of time and place. Particularly the search for gold and silver has been a challenge to pioneering Americans, as the search for uranium has challenged Americans today. To many it has brought hardship and to a few wealth.

In 1880 prospectors searched the Jemez Mountains for gold and silver, but were forced out by the Spanish Americans, as they claimed it was a private land grant and not open to the public. Time was to prove they couldn't keep them all out of the area, and a claim was staked in 1890 by D'Arcy and Eagle who made a location and called it the Iron King. As a result of the locations made by D'Arcy and Eagle, the gold rush to the Jemez Mountains began.

The town of Bland was first named Eagle after Joseph D. Eagle, part owner of the Iron King mine. However, the post office department requested they change the name as it was too much like "Engle" an established post office in Sierra county. At a town meeting it was unanimously agreed, the town should be called "Bland" in honor of Richard P. ("Silver Dick") Bland of Missouri.

Needless to say the Bland mining area had its ups and downs over the next fourteen years of its active existence. The mining claims were tied up in court and were finally declared to

be on public domain. To further plague the miner's efforts, speculators came in and they were more interested in making a profit out of manipulation of stock than in improving mining conditions.

Roads in the mining area were nonexistent. To overcome this lack in the area, the miners imposed a corvee system on themselves. It was necessary for all residents either to pay a two dollar tax or work on the roads for two days. Teams, scrapers, picks and shovels were used. Before the miners were able to build the necessary roads to get their ore out, they used burros



2. Street scene in Bland about 1900. Town had, indeed, become a ghost town.

to haul the ore three and a half miles where it was loaded on wagons. The town too suffered from profiteering. A two dollar burro was suddenly worth five dollars.

However, after the roads were built and stage travel began, some were in their favor. The fare from Thornton to Bland was three dollars but as competition began the fare of the various stagecoaches "freeze out" as they called

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Newspaper Office in 1898. Editor, gentleman, was Frank M. Wynne. The two boys were the "circulation" for the BLAND HERALD WEEKLY.

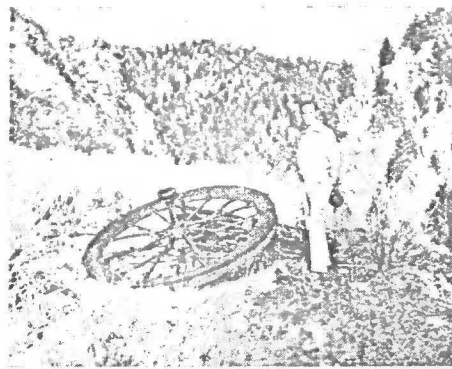
ers got to ride for nothing un-competition was eliminated.

a short time even a ferry oper-ross the Rio Grande, and the were reasonable. The price for man was ten cents, horse and man y-five cents and so on up to two ts for a wagon and six horses. ne time when competition entered e ferry business a few colorful words exchanged and one competitor un off. This competitor didn't any further than Albuquerque, he laid in a supply of ammuni-to take care of any further trouble. ntly it was never necessary to the ammunition as shortly after incident, the Albuquerque firm set low the Cochiti Grant. During water of 1894, the Albuquerque ferry was washed downstream, ped, covered with sand and the ouse wrecked.



that was left of Bland about 1900. u then it had passed its best days.

crossing the river was a constant em and low water occasionally d the tie-up of the ferry. Traffic Thornton forded the river at the ti Pueblo. However, this was not s a safe undertaking. During a flood a stagecoach was caught. horses, and mail were all swept the river and destroyed. Fort-ly, there were no passengers and iver was able to reach the bank. r nature provided more trouble e ferry operators could handle



5. Large hoist wheel from the Albemarle Mine in Colla Canyon. The Albemarle was the district's largest and longest producer. The author of the article stands beside the large wheel. Its size can be judged by the fact that Vieth is a little better than six feet 2 inches tall.

and finally a bridge was built across the river in 1900.

In August of 1894 Bland had one of its first shootings. One of the saloon keepers got drunk and decided to shoot up the town. When the constable asked him to surrender his gun, he took a shot at the constable who turned out to be a faster and more accurate gunman.

One of the most interesting things in the Bland mining area was the road built from Bland to the Albermarle mine in Colla canyon. This five miles of road was a real feat of engineering as in some places the grade exceeded thirty percent and later became known as the "Teamsters Nightmare." Ten to sixteen horses were required to haul the heavy machinery for the Albermarle mill up this grade. Part of the teams were in front and the rest were in the rear of the wagon hitched to a long pole. Heavy chains, "rough locks" were required on the wheels when descending because ordinary brakes could not prevent wagon, team and driver, especially at a curve, from plunging off the road into the gorge, or swiftly

rolling forward with disastrous results. After many near fatal accidents on this road, one did occur in 1900, when an intoxicated driver was killed while hauling a load of supplies over

(Continued on page 29)

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