

FORSYTH SCOUT - BEECHER ISLAND
Newsletter # 7, August 2008

Another of The Scouts That Went for Relief
2nd Party
Pliley & Donovan

Scout John Joseph “Jack” Donovan

The parents of Scout John Joseph “Jack” Donovan were Patrick Donovan who was born about 1810 in Ireland, possibly in County Cork. In the 1840’s he married Julia _____. She was born about 1817 in Ireland, also possibly in County Cork.

They migrated to New Brunswick, Canada, and later moved in to New England, before moving west and settling near Lanark, Portage County, Wisconsin.

Patrick died after 1870 and Julia died about 1863, probably when or shortly after their youngest son was born in October of 1863. They possibly died and are buried in or near at Lanark, Portage County, Wisconsin.

Children

- i. Mary Donovan was born _____, 1842 in St. John, New Brunswick, Canada.
- ii. Ann Donovan was born _____, 1843 in St. John, New Brunswick, Canada.
2. iii. John Joseph "Jack" Donovan was born March 19, 1845.
- iv. Jeremiah P. Donovan was born _____, 1848 in Massachusetts.
- v. Patrick H. Donovan was born _____, 1850 in Vermont and is believed to have died in the 1920’s in California.
- vi. Daniel Donovan was born _____, 1853 in Canada.
- vii. Julia Donovan was born _____, 1855 in Wisconsin.
- viii. Ellen "Ella" Donovan was born December __, 1858 in Portage County, Wisconsin.

She married _____ Levy, about 1877.

Ellen died July 4, 1938 in Los Angeles, Los Angeles County, California.

By 1900 Ella was living in Cripple Creek, Colorado, where some of her brothers may have lived and worked in the mines.

In 1910 and 1920 she was living in the Los Angeles area.

In 1920 the orphaned children of her youngest brother, James were living with her.

ix. James Joseph "J. J." Donovan was born October __, 1863 in Lanark, Portage County, Wisconsin.

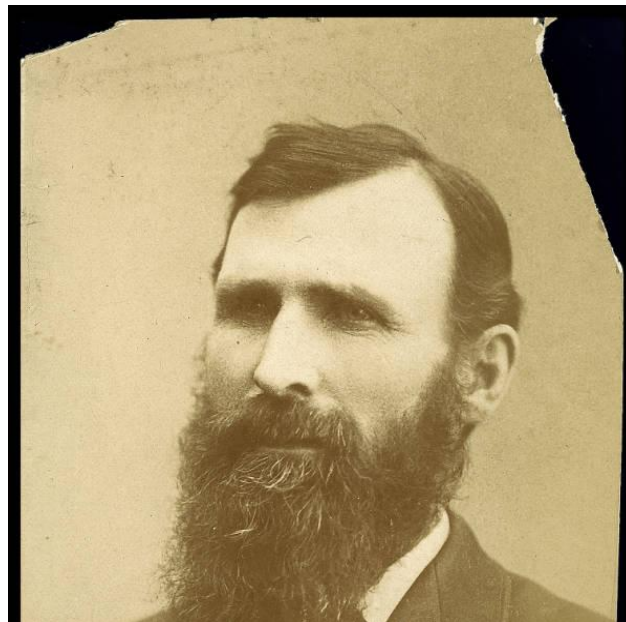
He married (1) _____ Harper.

About 1901 he married (2) Jane Watson. She was born _____, 1875 in _____, California and died _____, 1914 on a train between Guaypas, Mexico and Nogales, Arizona

Scout John Donovan was not the only Donovan to have a fight with the Indians. James was a small child when John fought at Beecher Island in 1868, but on May 11, 1915 near Esperanza or Guaypas, Mexico, "J. J." along with several other American farmers, had a gun battle with Yaqu Indians during an uprising, and most of the Americans, including "J.J." were killed.

James and Jane are believed to be buried in unmarked graves in Nogales City Cemetery, Nogales, Arizona.

By his first marriage "J. J." had a son, Francis Merton Donovan. By his second marriage he had James J.; Kathleen R.; Mary "Ellen"; Kenneth; Thomas Watson (reader Gill Donovan is from this branch); and Patricia Jane Donovan.



Generation Two

2. John Joseph "Jack" Donovan was born March 19, 1845 in St. John, New Brunswick, Canada.

In 1860 John was living with his parents in Portage County, Wisconsin. In 1868 he was at Beecher Island and apparently returned to Kansas for a time.

On July 6, 1871 in Iola, Allen County, Kansas he married Margaret Cecila Burke, (daughter of James Burke and Katherine Sharkey). Margaret was born June 27, 1843 in Pittsburg, Allegheny County, Pennsylvania, and died October 22, 1929 in Denver, Denver County, Colorado.

For a time following their marriage John and Margaret lived in Chico, Butte County, California, as that is where their oldest adult daughter was born.

By the late 1870's they had moved to the Denver, Colorado area where John operated a livery stable and trained horses.

John died September 25, 1892 in Denver, then Arapahoe County, Colorado, possibly of complications of a kick of a horse. John and Margaret, along with all of the children are buried at Mount Olivet Catholic Cemetery, Denver, Colorado.

Children

- i. Mary Agnes Donovan I was born _____, 1872 and died at birth or as an infant.
3. ii. Mary U. "Agnes" Donovan II was born December 27, 1874.
- iii. John Vincent Donovan was born December 4, 1877 in _____, _____ County, Colorado and died June 10, 1918 in Denver, Denver County, Colorado, this hasn't been researched, but at that time it was probably connected to the deadly Spanish Flu pandemic.

In 1905 he, along with his sister, Stella, and possibly other family members, attended the un-veiling of the new monument at Beecher Island.

John was a farmer and rancher. He is not known to have married or had children.

- iv. Alice Stella Donovan was born October __, 1878 in Denver, then Arapahoe County, Colorado and died October 23, 1907 in Denver, Denver County, Colorado. She never married.

In 1905 she un-veiled the new monument at Beecher Island when it was dedicated. The cause of her death at a young age is unknown.

- v. Stephen Alyisious Donovan was born December 23, 1880

in Denver, then Arapahoe County, Colorado and died April 7, 1949 in Denver, Denver County, Colorado.

He is known to have farmed in Weld County, Colorado and in his mother's obituary is listed as Col. Stephen Donovan, so he apparently had a military connection, but exactly what, has not been determined.

4. vi. Leo Joseph Donovan was born August 10, 1882.
5. vii. Bernard Stanislaus Donovan was born August 13, 1884.
6. viii. Margaret "Cecilia" Donovan was born February 09, 1887.

Generation Three

3. Mary U. "Agnes" Donovan was born December 27, 1874 in Chico, Butte County, California.

On _____, 1905 in _____, _____ County, _____ she married Fredrick Theodore Kitt, (son of Joseph A. Kitt and Selena or Aline _____). Fred was born December 29, 1876 in Arago Precinct, Richardson County, Nebraska and died September 4, 1973 in Santa Monica, Los Angeles County, California. They later divorced. In June of 1966 he graduated from UCLA at the age of 89.

For many years Agnes lived at 327 63rd Street in Oakland, California, before eventually moving to 5729 Claremont in Oakland.

Agnes died December 13, 1968 in Berkeley, Alameda County, California and is buried with her parents and siblings in Mount Olivet Catholic Cemetery, Denver, Colorado.

Children

7. i. Fred Theodore Kitt Jr was born April 18, 1910 in Sacramento, Sacramento County, California.

On _____, 193_ in _____, _____ County, _____, he married Dorothy Marie Biggs, (daughter of _____ Biggs and Cleo Cecilia Maue). Dorothy was born June 06, 1911 in _____, _____ County, Ohio and died June 12, 1984 in _____, San Mateo County, California.

Fred died April 16, 1985 in Pacifica, San Mateo County, California. Fred and Dorothy are buried in _____ Cemetery, _____, California. They had four children.

- ii. Phillip John Kitt was born February 12, 1912 in Sacramento, Sacramento County, California.
On _____, 19__ in _____, _____ County,

_____, he married Helen Gillford. She was born January 21, 1915 at _____, _____ and died June 4, 1998 at Bangor, Butte County, California. They had no children.

Phillip died June 4, 1993 in Paradise, Butte County, California and is buried in _____ Cemetery, _____, California.

8. iii. Bernard Joseph Kitt was born January 2, 1914 in Sacramento, _____ Sacramento County, California.

On _____, 193_ in _____, _____ County, California, he married Kathryn Stack, (daughter of _____ Stack and _____). She was born February 16, 1916 in _____, _____ County, _____, and died January 29, 1999 in Sacramento, Sacramento County, California.

Bernard died March 21, 1990 in _____, Sacramento County, California. Bernard and Kathryn are buried in _____ Cemetery, _____, _____. They had one son.

4. Leo Joseph Donovan was born August 10, 1882 in Denver, then Arapahoe County, Colorado.

On February 3, 1903 in Denver, Denver County, Colorado, he married Grace Irene Healy.

She was born May 19, 1882 in Chicago, Cook County, Illinois and died August __, 1981 in Denver, Denver County, Colorado.

He worked as a baker for about 10 years and then in 1912, joined the Denver Fire Department. He was advanced to the rank of Captain in 1925.

Leo died August 9, 1936 in Denver, Denver County, Colorado. Leo and Grace are buried at Mount Olivet Catholic Cemetery, Denver, Colorado.

Children

- i. Leo John Donovan was born August 5, 1905 in Denver, Denver County, Colorado.

On November 7, 1936 in _____, Weld County, Colorado, he married Agnes Piccoli, (daughter of Joseph A. Piccoli and Mary C. _____). She was born _____, 1914 in _____, _____ County, _____, and died in _____, _____ County, _____, buried in _____ Cemetery,

_____, _____.

Leo died February 2_, 1946 in Denver, Denver County, Colorado, and is buried in Mt. Olivet Catholic Cemetery, Denver, Colorado. They are not known to have had any children.

- 9. ii. Frank A. Donovan was born May 7, 1913 in Denver, Denver County, Colorado.

He was married twice, and was survived by his second wife and two sons.

Frank died January 22, 2007 in Denver, Denver County, Colorado and is buried in Mt. Olivet Catholic Cemetery, Denver, Colorado.

- 10. iii. Eugene "Gene" L. Donovan, married and had family.

Photo below: Gene Donovan, one of Scout Donovan's grandsons, and his daughter, Bridget, Great granddaughter of Scout Donovan.



Photo courtesy of reader Larry Shirkey. Thank you Larry.

- 5. Bernard Stanislaus Donovan was born August 13, 1884 in Denver, then Arapahoe County, Colorado.

On September 18, 1907 at Denver, Denver County, Colorado, he married Winifred Theresa Walsh. She was born _____, 1887 in _____, _____ County, Colorado and died May 1_, 1929 in Denver, Colorado.

Bernard died December 3, 1962 in Arvada, Jefferson County, Colorado. Bernard and Winifred are buried in Mount Olivet Catholic Cemetery, Denver, Colorado.

Children

- i. Alice C. Donovan was born April 6, 1909 in Denver, Denver County, Colorado.

On August 22, 1929 in Denver, Denver County, Colorado, she married Arthur Leo Coyle. He was born November 30, 1908 in _____, Bradford County, Pennsylvania and died June 22, 1988 in Arvada, Jefferson County, Colorado.

Alice died February 29, 1988 in Arvada, Jefferson County, Colorado. Alice and Arthur are buried in _____ Cemetery, _____, Colorado.

- ii. Mary "Winifred" Donovan was born April 6, 1909 in Denver, Denver County, Colorado and died there October 29, 1916. She is buried at Mt. Olivet Catholic Cemetery, Denver, Colorado.

6. Margaret "Cecila" Donovan was born February 9, 1887 in Denver, then Arapahoe County, Colorado.

On September __, 1912 in Sacramento, Sacramento County, California, she married Andrew Francis Hagus, (son of Andrew Hagus and Magdalena Baden). He was born August 20, 1890 near Brighton, Adams County, Colorado and died October 9, 1975 in Sacramento, Sacramento County, California and is buried in _____ Cemetery, _____, _____.

Margaret died August 1, 1936 in Sacramento, Sacramento County, California. She is buried with her parents and siblings at Mount Olivet Catholic Cemetery, Denver, Colorado.

Children

- i. Andrew J. Hagus was born June 29, 1914 on Denver, Denver County, Colorado and died February 19, 1943 in Auburn, Placer County, California, buried in _____ Cemetery, _____, California.
 - ii. Bernard Anthony Hagus. It is unknown if he was married or had descendants.
 - iii. Edward Paul Hagus was born August 7, 1917 in Sacramento, Sacramento County, California and died February 18, 2003 in Notre Dame, St Joseph County, Indiana. It is unknown if he was married or had descendants.
11. iv. John "Vincent" Hagus married and had four children and lives in California.
- v. Arthur Joseph Hagus was born February 2, 1920 in Sacramento, Sacramento County, California and died October 26, 1996 in Sacramento, Sacramento County,

- California. It is unknown if he was married or had descendants.
- vi. Louis Stephen Hagus was born August 28, 1921 in Sacramento, Sacramento County, California and died there December 2_, 1921 and is buried at Mt. Olivet Catholic Cemetery, Denver, Colorado.
 - 12. vii. Barbara Cecilia Hagus was born October 29, 1922 in Sacramento, Sacramento County, California. She married and had one known child. Barbara died August 30, 1996 in Sacramento, Sacramento County, California, buried in _____ Cemetery, _____, _____.
 - viii. Marjorie Claire Hagus. It is still unknown if she was married or had descendants.



It would appear that John Donovan was a very quiet and unassuming person. His small death notice in the Denver paper made no mention of his exciting life or contribution to the Beecher Island battle.

*Rocky Mountain News
Denver, Colorado
Monday, September 26, 1892
Page 8*

DONIVAN - In this city, September 25, John J. Donovan, aged 47 years.

Funeral from residence, corner of Welton and Thirtieth streets, tomorrow, Tuesday morning at 8 o'clock. Services at church of Sacred Heart at 8:30. Friends invited.



Maybe it was after they started having the Beecher Island Reunions that some of the scout's stories and families became better known. When John's wife, died and prior to her death, much mention was made of Scout Donovan's actions in 1868. So, for information on the Donovan's I will submit Mrs. Donovan's story that gives some information and insight to Scout John Donovan and his family.

The Denver Post
Denver, Colorado
Sunday, February 17, 1929
Page 14, Column 1 & 2

WIDOW OF FRONTIER DAYS HERO FACES DEATH AS REWARD COMES

**GOVERNMENT RECOGNIZES VALOR of 'JACK' DONOVAN,
Savior of Major Forsyth's Scouts, By Pension Increase - But**

Beneficiary Is Seriously Ill.

A pension of \$12 monthly is being increased by the government to \$20 for Mrs. Margaret Donovan, 86 year old widow of "Jack" Donovan, savior of the little band of Indian scouts under Major George A. Forsyth that made Beecher Island, in the Arickaree, famous with their gallant stand against overwhelming hordes of red skins under Roman Nose, sixty years ago.

But the widow of the man who wriggled thru close packed Indian lines and won his way to Fort Wallace, more than eighty miles from where Forsyth and his gallant band were besieged, may not live to receive her first remittance under the increased allowance.

She is in St. Anthony's hospital suffering from the effects of a stroke of apoplexy. She has been hospitalized for almost three years. Her son, Captain Leo Donovan, of the Denver Fire Department, fears she will not live long enough to know the satisfaction that recognition of the memory of her heroic mate would bring.

The stand of Forsyth's band of sharpshooters on Beecher Island is known to everyone who ever looked in the pages devoted to Indian fights for his thrills - but the part played by Jack Donovan during those trying September days in 1868 was never stressed.

DONOVAN CREPT THRU INDIAN LINES

It was Jack Donovan, who after other scouts failed to get thru the red cordon around the island in the Arickaree, crept past the watchful Indians, crawled, staggered and ran - dragging a fellow scout, A.J. Pliley, part of the long trek to Fort Wallace - and returned with the column of blue coated troops not an hour too soon.

The story of that stand of the scouts on the island, and Jack Donovan's rescue, will be found in the account of the nine day battle, prepared as an official report by Forsyth, and submitted to Congress in order to establish a service record of Donovan, who died twenty eight years ago.

The Forsyth Scouts, including about fifty seasoned frontiersmen, were attacked by an overwhelming force of Indians while scouting along the north bank of the Arickaree on the morning of September 17, 1868. From there on the report of Major Forsyth tells the story as follows: "Our position, on the north bank of the stream, being untenable, it was at once determined to make a stand on the adjacent island."

"Three of our best marksmen took position in the long grass on the north bank of the stream, where they were partially covered by the men on the island and in a situation to greatly annoy the enemy should he make mounted attacks. The rest

of the command was distributed on the island in a circle, directed to lie down and cover themselves by throwing up the sand with their hands and knives, and the animals were tied to trees and bushes in the immediate vicinity.”

ENEMY OPENED HEAVY FIRE

“Dismounting a portion of his force and crawling down the banks, partially concealed by the long grass, the enemy opened a heavy fire upon the island with, as far as he was concerned, capital effect. By 9 a.m. our animals were all shot down and a number of men in the command killed or wounded.”

“At 9:30 a.m., about 300 mounted warriors made a most desperate charge upon our position, but were driven back with severe losses. At 2:30 and again at 5 p.m. charges were made, but in each case they were repelled with losses to the enemy.”

“At dark the Indians ceased firing and at 8 o’clock it commenced raining. Our situation was a little precarious - out of rations, surrounded by Indians, twenty-one out of our aggregate of fifty-two either killed or wounded, our surgeon dead, medical supplies captured, every animal killed and eighty-five miles from the nearest military post.”

“Orders were given to connect and strengthen the rifle pits, to dig and secure a place for the wounded and put them in it, to deepen a small well that one of the men had dug during the day in the bottom of his rifle pit, to unsaddle the dead animals for our subsistence.”

TWO VOLUTEER FOR ADVENTURE

“Two men, Stillwell and Trudeau, volunteered to try and go to Fort Wallace, and started after receiving the necessary instructions. Fortunately the night was very dark, and they succeeded in getting thru in three days. During the next four days the enemy kept up a constant fire upon our works from daylight until dark, but as we were well covered, no one was hurt. On the second night, two more scouts were sent out to try and make it to Fort Wallace, but were obliged to come back, after being unable to get thru the cordon of sentinels established by the Indians. On the third night two men were sent out for the same purpose, and one of them, John Donovan, was the person who guided Colonel Carpenter to our relief.”

But four or five of Forsyth’s scouts and the same number of widows of the scouts are living now, it is believed.



{Actually, only Thomas Murphy and James Peate were living when Mrs. Donovan died, and Peate was not at the battle.}

The Denver Post
Denver, Colorado
Wednesday, October 23, 1929
Page 15, Column 2 & 3

Mrs. Margaret Donovan, Pioneer Scout's Widow, is Dead at Age of 86

(by FRANCES WAYNE)

Mrs. Margaret C. (Grandma) Donovan, 86 years old, widow of John Donovan, pioneer scout and mother of Captain Leo J. Donovan of the Denver Fire Department, died at St. Anthony's hospital Wednesday morning following an illness of three years duration.

With a cheerful "good night" to nurses and sisters gathered at her bedside, Tuesday night, as they always gathered to wish her "pleasant dreams", Mrs. Donovan fell into a peaceful sleep and in this sleep knew no waking, she drifted beyond the gates of life into the eternity for which she prayed and hoped with undoubting faith.

Altho of that vast host of quiet women who are supposed to have no history save that concerned with the development of a home and family, "Grandma" Donovan was linked to one of the most vivid events in the winning of the west.

HUSBAND GAVE ALARM TO SAVE PIONEERS

For it was her young husband, "Jack" Donovan, who on the night of September 19, 1868, under shadow of darkness and a drenching rain, crept through a line of 300 howling, murderous Indians commanded by Roman Nose, and made his way to Fort Wallace, where he gave the alarm that brought relief to Major G.A. Forsyth, besieged on Beecher Island in the Arickaree river.

Years after, in recognition of her husband's valiant service, the United States government increased the \$12 a month pension granted her to \$20.

TOURIST CAME TO DONOVAN STABLES

Born in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, June 27, 1843, of a family that migrated west in answer to the lure of adventure, Mrs. Donovan was married at Iola, Kansas and came to Colorado with her husband in the gay days of the covered wagon. With him she established a home "way out in the country" on what is now Welton street.

Hers was a happy life, for she had growing children to fill her time. To the Donovan stables came all the tourists who had Denver or Central City as points of destination - and the Donovan home was next door to the stables. Next to her children and husband, "Grandma" Donovan loved her church. She became an ardent member of St. Joseph's parish and of the third Order of St. Francis.

Surviving her are five children - Captain Donovan and Bernard Donovan, Col. Stephen Donovan of Fosston, Colorado; Mrs. Agnes D. Kitt, Oaklawn, California and Mrs. Andrew F. Hagus, Sacramento, California. Also three sisters: Mrs. Anna Maxey, Los Angeles; Mrs. Regina Leahy, San Francisco and Mrs. Alice Pulasky, Denver and fourteen grandchildren.



The Rocky Mountain News
Denver, Colorado
Thursday, October 24, 1929
Page 3, Column 2

DENVER PIONEER RESIDENT DIED

Funeral Services to Be Held Tomorrow for Mrs. M. C. Donovan

Funeral services for Mrs. Margaret C. Donovan, 86, Denver pioneer resident and mother of Captain Leo J. Donovan of the Denver Fire Department, will be held in her home, 512 E. Eight Avenue, at 8 a.m. tomorrow. Burial will be in Mt. Olivet Cemetery.

Rosary recitation will be held for Mrs. Donovan at her home at 8 p.m. today.

Mrs. Donovan died in St. Anthony's Hospital yesterday, following a prolonged illness.

She came to Denver with her husband, John Donovan, pioneer Indian scout, in the early 60's (sic 70's) and the couple made their home on what is now Weldon Street. Mrs. Donovan's husband died several years ago.

Mrs. Donovan was a member of St. Joseph's Catholic Parish and the Third Order of St. Francis.

Surviving her in addition to Captain Donovan are four other children, Bernard S. Donovan, Denver; Stephen I. Donovan, Fosston, Colorado; Mrs. Agnes Kitt, Oakland, California and Mrs. Andrew F. Hagus, Sacramento, California; three sisters, Mrs. Anna Maxey, Los Angeles; Mrs. Regina Leahy, San Francisco and Mrs. Alice Pulaski, Denver and fourteen grandchildren.

The Denver Post
Denver, Colorado
Monday, September 18, 1905
Page 1, Column 3

UNVEILED BY HERO'S CHILD
BEECHER ISLAND REUNION FITTINGLY COMES TO END
Miss Alice Donovan, Promptly at 1:30 Today Released Silken
Banner That Draped Handsome \$5,000 Monument

Special to The Times

WRAY, Colorado, September 18, - The Beecher Island reunion closed its three day's session this afternoon and the gathering this year proved grander than any former effort.

The increased interest is due to the handsome \$5,000 monument, the erection of which was completed last week. There are also notable visitors present, including General George A. Forsyth of Washington, D.C., who was here for the first time since that event. Seven of the scouts were also on the ground and there were fully three times as many people camped there as were ever before present at one time.

Fifty five tents and any number of covered wagons are utilized for homes during the reunions and all are having a delightful outing.

The unveiling ceremonies were conducted by the department of Colorado and Wyoming, Dr. Curfman, department commander, and his staff presiding, with General Forsyth delivering the address. Promptly at 1:30 the silken folds that encased the monument were released by Miss Alice Donovan, daughter of the hero of the relief, and as they fell away exposing the glittering shaft of granite containing the names of those who participated in the memorable event, together with the history of the fight, cheer after cheer rent the air.

Then Commander Curfman raised his hand for silence and in a few well chosen words introduced General Forsyth, who delivered a glowing tribute to the brave comrades who were with him in the fight, complimented the people in the vicinity for their fidelity to a good cause and then formally dedicated the monument as a living statue of valor and patriotism.

The ceremonies closed with a sham battle of Indians which was repulsed by soldiers and cowboys.



In the 1960's Philip Kitt, son of Mary "Agnes" Donovan Kitt, grandson of Scout Donovan, corresponded with a cousin Lucille Hagus Inherr of Colorado about the Donovan family history. Below are some excerpts from a letter written by Philip.

“ Mother (*Mary "Agnes" Donovan Kitt*) was born in Chico, California, on Dec. 27, 1874. I remember her telling me when I was growing up that her grandparents came from County Cork in Ireland.”

“My grandfather (*Scout Donovan*) was a close friend of General Philip Sheridan. Mother always said that's why she gave me the name Philip.”

“ Mother used to tell us about two of her uncles (Donovan side-names not known). One was killed in Mexico by some of the Mexicans he sheltered in his barn during a revolution-may have been during Pancho Villa time. The other uncle was killed when he was going down a mine in Colorado. The cable to the bucket on the elevator broke, and he fell to the bottom of the mine.” (We now know that one of these was “J. J.” Donovan).

“I remember Mother saying that her father (*Scout Donovan*) often went to Kansas, and it is my recollection that she said he joined the Scouts in Kansas. She also said he would not join the Army as he didn't think much of soldiers (drank too much, etc.), but that he was so fond of General Sheridan-had shooting matches with him and was a real friend of his.”



Speaking of the monument, with permission of the author, for the first time this previously unpublished article is presented. I had always wondered where the rest of the original monument could be found. Thank you Orvel!

WHERE CAN WE FIND THE MISSING SECTIONS OF THE MEMORIAL MONUMENT?

By ORVEL A. CRIQUI

Author of Fifty Fearless Men: The Forsyth Scouts and Beecher Island

We have read that the states of Kansas and Colorado paid for a beautiful monument that was erected on Beecher Island and dedicated in 1905. We also know that the great flood of Memorial Day, 1935, destroyed it. The base and lower sections were recovered but the top four sections have as yet not been found. The lower section was placed on a foundation just outside the auditorium at Beecher and a frame with stucco was built to replace the missing shaft.

I visited with Professor Ernie Angino, a distinguished hydrologist, about the flood and the monument and asked him, “Where can we find the missing pieces of the Memorial Monument?”

Before we answer that question let us review the flood of 1935. It was of truly Biblical magnitude and it's destructive power challenges ones imagination.

Much of what I plan to share with you is taken from Mariene (Harvey) Wilmot's fine book, Bluff-to-Bluff: The 1935 Republican Valley Flood.

The report of the Army Engineers disclosed that: "The rains which produced the flood began Southeast of Denver, on the headwaters of the South Fork of the Republican and Arickaree Rivers and their tributaries. In several localities the rain approached twenty inches in measure. The rain cloud moved in Northeasterly direction along these two streams at about the same rate that the flood waters descended the valleys. The cloud passed over the Republican Valley and soon was feeding flood water into valleys of the Frenchman, Red Willow, Medicine, Deer, Muddy and Turkey. The timing was such that the peak in the main stream of the Republican almost simultaneously, at the point of confluence." The death toll was 112 or 113!

This was certainly a one in a thousand year flood, but maybe it had happened before. The Indians called the Republican the "Devil River", and told stories of ancient giants and bluff-to-bluff big waters.

Let us share a few frightening observations of the flood from Wilmot's collection:

Many observers spoke of a wall of water engulfing the valley and some reported it to be ten or twelve feet high. The water came with a roar like that of a train, one writer heard the roar an hour before the water arrived and another reported as a small boy he lived eight miles downstream from Beecher Island but on that fateful day he could hear the roar of the water.

The waters drowned over a hundred people and many animals, it destroyed buildings, roads, bridges and twisted railroad tracks like pretzels.

Near St. Francis a steel and concrete highway bridge was washed away. The water either dug a grave for it and buried it or washed it far down stream and near Benkelman, a threshing machine engine was covered so deep in the sand that there was no sight of it left after the flood.

One observer said, "The rise of the waters, the roar of the thundering waves, trees being uprooted like weeds, buildings, livestock and even people floating down the river, painted a mind picture so horrifying and so terribly depressing that as the wall of water approached, I didn't see how any living thing in its path could survive."

Enormous trees were uprooted, carried along at various distances and some were completely buried in the sand. A great tree near Benkelman was flip-flopped until the foliage was submerged and the roots pointed toward the sky. Another resident reported seeing cattle come down the stream fighting the current but without success. Every so often a certain water action would turn the critters head over heels and all they could do would not help them a bit.

Of course there were many stories of rescues and of heroism but it was my intent to remind you of the super-colossal force of the flood waters.

In January 1985, Thomas A. Witty, Jr., Director of Archeology for the Kansas State Historical Society with the help of several local residents attempted to locate the missing blocks but his efforts were unsuccessful and he concluded that, "the writer has no doubt that the stones are still in the Arickaree valley, but just where must wait on new evidence or chance discovery."

And now for some observations by the water man, Professor Angino:

1. Most people underestimate the force of water and mud.
2. Water of this volume rolls downstream in a motion called scouring or saltation and it turns up the sand, perhaps even down to bedrock, thus with the upward movement of the sand, rocks or heavy items may fall down to the bedrock.
3. During the flood of 1951 on the Kansas or Kaw river, three locomotives were swept off the tracks at Argentina (outskirts of Kansas City) and into the sand of the Kaw. Two were found and recovered, but the third locomotive has never been found.
4. And in conclusion Mr. Angino said, "I wouldn't know where to look, it could have been dropped on the spot and be ten feet down or it could be ten miles down the river."

So we may never know where the missing blocks are or science may develop a sensor that can detect buried Silver Plum granite or a barefooted youngster may stub his toe on a corner of the monument which is hidden in the sand.



Photo Courtesy of Kenneth Greene, Tescott, KS
Provided by reader Arliene Matthews, Tescott, KS

Anyone have a guess which Scout this is in his younger days. E-mail your answer or watch for the answer next month.



Trivia, Corrections and other Things

Reader Bob Wilhelm, Director, Fort Hays State Historic Site, says, "I'm sure most who subscribe know this but just in case some don't, the original note Forsyth sent to Fort Wallace is in the possession of the Kansas Historical Society. I don't know if it is on display at the Kansas Museum of History but there is a copy on display here at Fort Hays."

Worthless trivia to clutter your mind.

Samuel L. Clemens (Mark Twain) married Olivia Langdon on February 2, 1870 at Elmira, New York. The ceremony was preformed by Reverend Thomas K. Beecher, an uncler of Lt. Fred Beecher. One of his six Minister uncles.



In reference to last month's article on Scout Allison J. Pliley, author, Orvel Criqui, brought to my attention his comment on page 183 of great book, Fifty Fearless Men,

It states "After reviewing the records it appears to this writer that if Pliley was there and there was a message to be delivered under dangerous conditions, Pliley would do it. Perhaps one reason for Pliley's extended bravery was his belief in the doctrine of predestination. He apparently did not fear danger or death as he felt that when he was predestined to die he would and not before."

Thank you, Orvel.



All for this month.

Happy trails

Mike