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ANNALS OF ADVENTURE

ROUGHING IT

What two young women found in the Rockies.

BY DOROTHY WICKENDEN

Late on the evening of July 27, 1916, after a five-day journey culminating in a twelve-hour train ride across the Continental Divide, Rosamond Underwood and Dorothy Woodruff arrived at the depot in Hayden, Colorado. They had been hired to teach at the new school in Elkhead, in the mountains seventeen miles north of town. The two women, who were fleeing privileged but unfulfilling lives in the East, had got on the train in Denver. They regarded it, Dorothy said, as “something of a joke,” with its halting progress and periodic breakdowns, but by the end of the journey they were awed by the engineering feat that the rail line represented: it was the highest ever built in North America. They spent the long hours on the observation platform and in the parlor car, preparing for their classes and talking with other passengers. When they finally got to Hayden, they saw that the depot consisted of a single boxcar. The train door opened, and they were greeted by their employer, Farrington Carpenter—a young cattle rancher, Hayden’s first attorney, and the man who was largely responsible for the existence of the school.

The electricity in Hayden had gone out earlier that night, and Carpenter couldn’t see much of the new teachers as he helped them down the steep steps of the train. Rosamond was tall, slender, and soft-spoken. Dorothy, four feet eleven, with a round, cheerful face, was frank and exuberant. They had grown up together in Auburn, New York, a small industrial city in the Finger Lakes region, where Rosamond’s father was a county judge and Dorothy’s owned the Auburn Button Works factory. Their neighborhood had wide streets, imposing Victorian houses, and several generations of Underwoods and Woodruffs. In 1909, they had graduated from Smith College, where students, as the college’s first president described its mission, were taught

to become “refined, intelligent gentlewomen.” Back home, Dorothy had been the president of the Young Ladies’ Benevolent Association, and Rosamond of the Auburn College Club. Supporters of Hull House, they also stood on soapboxes in the nearby town of Owasco advocating women’s suffrage.

They were twenty-nine years old and, uninspired by the Auburn men who had expressed interest in them, were considered by friends and family to be hopeless spinsters. That fate worried them less than the thought of settling into a life without adventure or intellectual stimulation. In the spring of 1916, during a conversation at a tea about career possibilities for women, Rosamond learned about Carpenter’s search for two teachers, and immediately saw it as an opportunity. She called Dorothy, who shared her excitement, but anticipated her family’s alarm: “No young lady in our town had ever been hired by anybody.”

The women didn’t know anything about teaching or about the discomforts of life on the frontier, but they wrote to Carpenter anyway, and he seemed unconcerned about their lack of credentials. He told them that he wanted the Elkhead School to provide the highest standards in modern education, and they were reassured to learn that he was a graduate of Princeton and of Harvard Law School. By the time their families heard about the idea, the women had been hired and were preparing for the journey. Carpenter wrote to say that he had found them a place to live, with a family of homesteaders two miles from the school, and advised, “If you have a .22 you had better bring it out here as there are lots of young sage chicken to be found in that country and August is the open season on them.”

Although Carpenter did intend to create a great school, his plan was also something of a ruse. Tall and rangy, with

large ears, a long face, and a prominent nose, he, too, was twenty-nine years old, and had grown up in Evanston, Illinois, in a family much like the Underwoods and the Woodruffs. He had recast himself as a guileless Westerner, but it was not an entirely persuasive persona. He was shrewd and opportunistic, and his friends had chosen him to solve their

friend about Routt County, Colorado—four and a half million acres of mostly public land between Steamboat Springs and the Utah border, where any adult could file a homestead claim. During the next two summers, he worked as a ranch hand near Hayden, and the day he turned twenty-one he staked a claim in the Elkhead Mountains, ten miles northwest of

a church, and a weekly newspaper, the *Routt County Republican*. One of the two bathtubs in town was at the barber-shop, and cowboys lined up there on Saturdays for a scrub. In the summer, Carpenter rode a bicycle to and from town, a very hilly round trip of close to three hours. In the winter, he slept in a tiny bedroom behind his office, an



Dorothy Woodruff and Rosamond Underwood, in 1916. Elkhead, Colorado, needed teachers and prospective brides.

biggest problem: the absence of eligible women in the vicinity. A freewheeling storyteller, he told a writer who was profiling him in the *Saturday Evening Post*, in 1952, "We did not want strays. We had serious matrimonial intentions, and we decided that young, pretty schoolteachers would be the best bet of all." However, he tailored his correspondence to Rosamond and Dorothy to appeal to their ideals about teaching and to their hopes for excitement in the Rockies. He did not mention that he meant to present them as prospective brides for the local "boys."

Ferry Carpenter, as he was known, had been entranced by the West ever since boyhood, when he spent a summer on a ranch in New Mexico. As a freshman at Princeton, he had heard from a

town. He called his three-hundred-and-twenty-acre property Oak Point, and in his autobiography, "Confessions of a Maverick," he wrote that when he received his certificate of approval from the land office he felt he was "a frontiersman at last, a citizen of the American fraternity of empire builders."

In 1907, he and a friend went into the cattle-ranching business with twenty-five purebred Herefords and a twenty-five-hundred-dollar loan from his father. His partner took care of the ranch while he was in Cambridge, and, four years later, after earning his law degree, Carpenter moved to Oak Point. He set up a law practice on Walnut Street in Hayden, a modest outpost with a population of around four hundred, several stores, two banks, a school,

eight-by-thirty-eight-foot lean-to—formerly a one-lane bowling alley. His office was the social hub of Hayden, as he put it, "a favorite loafing place for visiting ranchmen whose wives traded eggs and cream for groceries at the stores."

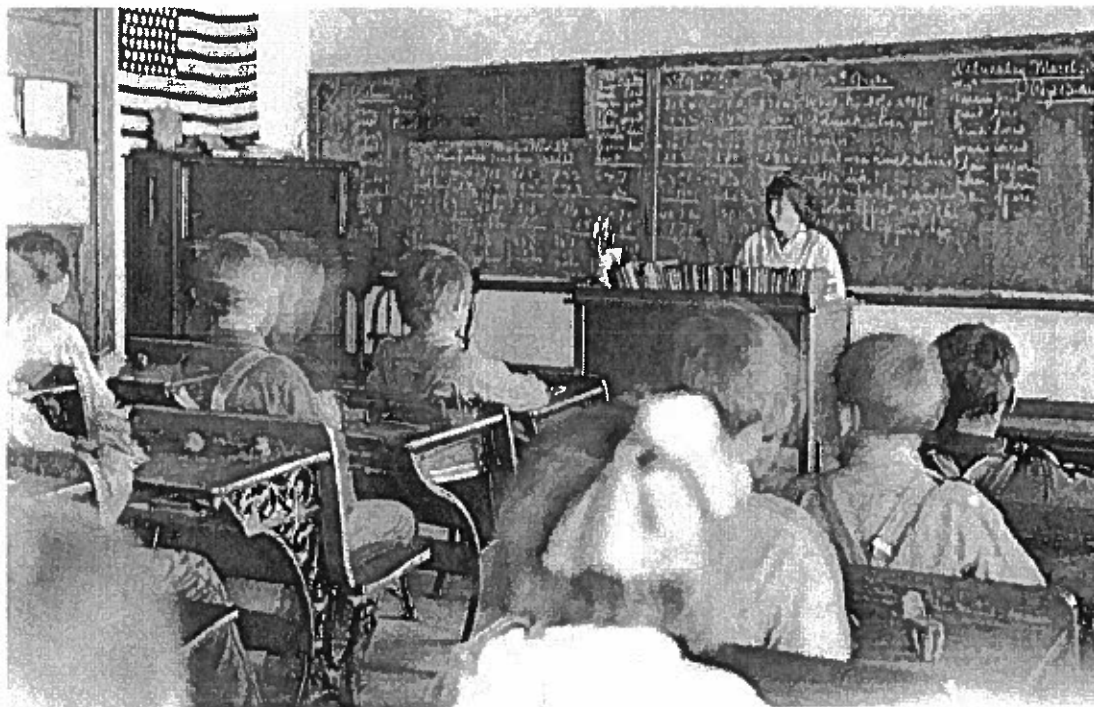
A hundred years ago, the Progressive Era was fully underway, even in the furthest reaches of Colorado, and Carpenter, deeply influenced by the egalitarian and civic-spirited principles of Woodrow Wilson, the president of Princeton when he was an undergraduate, became a prodigious community organizer. He persuaded Hayden's town board to replace the communal pump with a proper water and sewage system, and he was determined to improve the schools, which in the outlying areas were neglected or non-

existent. As early as August, 1910, Carpenter circulated a petition to form a separate school district in Elkhead, reasoning that this would solve two problems: provide a tax base and a good education for the children of homesteaders, who lived too far from Hayden to attend school there; and insure a steady supply of cultured and attractive teachers.

high-minded in the final selection process. His friend Bob Perry—a thirty-one-year-old mine supervisor in Oak Creek, forty-five miles southeast of Hayden—had two sisters who had graduated from Smith. Bob got in touch with one of them, and, according to Perry, she said that Rosamond and Dorothy were “the prettiest and liveliest girls in their class.”

oral history that she recorded in 1973, “had left a note on the table for us saying: Schoolteachers, go upstairs and see if anyone is in Room 2. If they are, go to Room 3, and if 3 is filled, go to Room 4. Well, we found that 3 was empty, so we went to bed, glad to be there after that long trip.”

Early the next morning, Carpenter



Dorothy Woodruff in her classroom. She wrote fondly about the boys at the Elkhead School, despite her trouble disciplining them.

Carpenter, who was the president of the Elkhead school board, was dissatisfied with the first schools built there—two drafty one-room cabins that operated sporadically. So were other board officials and Elkhead parents, and finally, in May, 1915, the residents voted five thousand dollars in bonds to build a large central schoolhouse. The advertisement for two teachers requested that candidates send a recent photograph along with their application. In Carpenter’s roguish account, his ranching partner—also a board member—would call him in Hayden and say, “Two more applicants today, both blondes. I would reply, ‘Tack the photos around the wall of your kitchen and let the bachelors vote on them.’”

Apparently, he was somewhat more

The new teachers, oblivious of Carpenter’s scheming, liked him immediately when he met their train that night. “We are tremendously impressed by Mr. C., who is a big man,” Dorothy wrote to her family the next day. “He has a gentle, kindly manner, with keen eyes, and a fine sense of humor.” Referring to Carpenter and his neighbors who had planned and built the schoolhouse, she wrote, “Their courage and inspiration about it all is wonderful, and you can see that it is *such* idealism which is making this country.”

Carpenter’s initial impression of the teachers was that they did not travel light. He left their enormous trunks at the depot overnight, and staggered down the wooden sidewalk with their suitcases, packed with books, to the Hayden Inn. The proprietress, Rosamond said in an

wrote, he got a call from Bob Perry, who was at the depot and wanted to know what the women looked like. Frustrated by Carpenter’s inconclusive reply, Perry suggested that they meet at the inn. By the time Carpenter got there, half a dozen men, including Perry, “were standing around admiring them. I could see by the glazed look on Bob’s face as he stared at Rosamond that he was already smitten.” Carpenter recalled that Perry took him aside and said, “Watch her mail. Let me know if some man is writing her,” but he failed to mention that he, too, was dazzled by Rosamond. As Carpenter’s son Ed told me recently, “The question was, who’s gonna win her, Perry or Perry?”

Dorothy’s description, decades later, of the scene at the Hayden Inn offers a wry counterpoint to Carpenter’s. She

said that when she and Rosamond walked into the dining room half a dozen cowboys were seated at a large round table. It was the women's first hint that teaching school was not the only reason they had been invited to Routt County. "Of course nobody got up or anything, they simply stared at us," Dorothy recalled. She noticed that the man next to her was wearing a boiled white shirt with no collar, and a diamond stud in the neckband. She and Rosamond politely tried to make conversation, "but all we got out from anybody was 'Yes ma'am' and 'No ma'am' or 'I wouldn't know ma'am.'" The dumbstruck men just passed the food around the table again and again: hot cereal, hot biscuits, homemade jams, and coffee.

Dorothy Woodruff was my grandmother. White-haired, impeccably attired, sometimes stern, she bore the imprint of her Victorian upbringing. The second-youngest of seven children, she was reared mostly by an Irish boarder, and she and her siblings rarely ventured into the kitchen; when her own children were growing up, she didn't know how to cook anything except creamed potatoes and cocoa. Every night, she brushed her hair a hundred strokes with a French boar-bristle brush. Her fourposter bed, inherited from her parents, was so high, and she was so short, that she climbed into it with the assistance of a needlepoint footstool. She once told me, a little haughtily, "I never wore a pair of trousers in my life."

Yet she was also expansive, funny, and full of admiration for the people she had got to know in Colorado. She spent nine months there, which shaped her as much as her entire youth in Auburn. As I was going through some files last fall, I found copies of the dozens of letters she had written to her parents and sisters in 1916 and '17, and the transcript of an oral history that she had made at our house in suburban Connecticut in the late nineteen-seventies. (The originals are now part of the Sophia Smith Collection, at Smith College.) I hadn't read any of this in more than twenty years. Among other things, I discovered that she had worn trousers after all, at least while she was in Elkhead. And, as I investigated further, I learned that the

other main characters in her story had left behind their own vivid accounts of that year.

The homesteaders had embarked upon an exceedingly risky venture. Snow covered the ground six months of the year, and winter temperatures could plunge to fifty degrees below zero; in summer, the few creeks and streams in the hills dried up. Springtime was no easier, with its ice, snowmelt, and heavy, wet adobe clay, which clung to boots, stained clothes, and often made the few roads and paths impassable. Nevertheless, homesteaders were drawn to the region by its stark beauty and by the government's promise of free land.


Soon after breakfast on July 28, 1916, Dorothy and Rosamond climbed onto the seat of an old spring wagon, next to their driver, a young clerk from one of the stores in Hayden. Their trunks, secured by ropes, towered behind them, and their horses—obtained by Carpenter at a good price—were saddled and bridled and tied to the back. Of the ride through mesas and canyons, Dorothy wrote, "We wound in and out, up and down, going at a pace that put our hearts in our mouths, and we were sure the trunks were either going to careen over on us or our horses." Finally, late in the afternoon, they arrived at the homestead of Uriah and Mary Harrison, in Upper Elkhead, "a square box, part log and part frame," as she described it, "with a smoke stack sticking up; the steps consist of a soap box, shakily resting on stones." The closest neighbor was four miles away.

The Harrisons had recently moved from Lower Elkhead, and their house had no dividing walls yet, just partitions made of bedclothes and rugs. "This lends intimacy to an unimagined degree, and you know it every time any one turns over in bed," Dorothy noted. "It is especially sociable when the wind blows." She and Ros ate with the family—the parents and the three of their seven children still living at home, Lewis, Ruth, and Frank—at one end of the large kitchen. They climbed to their room on a set of "rather shaky and ladder-like" stairs. The teachers shared a narrow iron bed—which the Harrisons later proudly replaced with one made of brass—covered with a big feather bed and patchwork quilts. A brown rug served as a wall between their room and the two other upstairs rooms,

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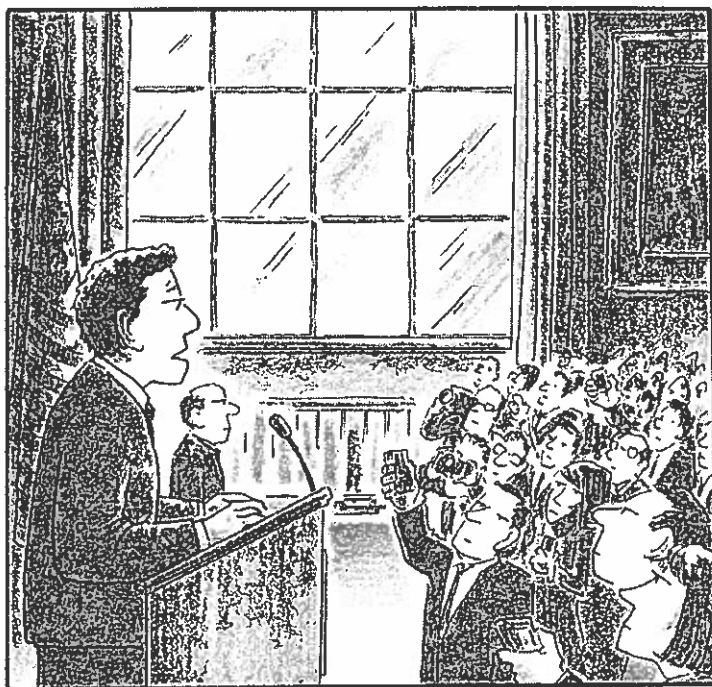
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"I'll take one more question, from the reporter in the back reading the job listings."

where the Harrison children slept.

Dorothy and Rosamond quickly came to revere Mary Harrison, who more than fulfilled their image of the stoic, good-humored pioneer woman. Tiny and wrinkled, she wore her thin gray hair pulled back tightly in a bun and had "an astonishing set of false teeth." She enjoyed her boarders, too, and treated them with extraordinary generosity. But she couldn't understand why they were teaching, and asked them one evening, "You girls aren't here for the money you can make, are you?" She also laughed at their haplessness with simple domestic chores. Rosamond recalled that they set out the first Saturday to wash their silk shirts, fetching water from the sulfur spring a quarter mile away and heating it on the stove. "We thought we'd done pretty well," she said. But the next Friday they returned from school and "found our clothes neatly washed and ironed and laid on our bed."

The schoolmarm's only real concern was about teaching. One source of dread was Sunday school, which turned out to be

among their duties and was overseen by the bureaucratic and pious Iva Rench, who, Dorothy wrote uncharitably, "has as many officers as there are people. You ought to hear her screech out those I lalleluia hymns." Another was the idea of giving instruction in "domestic science" to girls who knew a great deal more about it than they did. In addition, a few weeks after their arrival they had to pass the county teachers' examinations, which lasted sixteen hours over two days, and covered ten subjects ranging from arithmetic to physiology.

The morning after Rosamond and Dorothy arrived at the Harrisons', they rode to the Elkhead School. Thirteen-year-old Lewis Harrison showed them the way; he cared for their horses and served as their guide and, during the snowy months, as their trailblazer. They followed Calf Creek and climbed a small trail through the sagebrush, looking out on a sight that resembled "a topographical map," as Dorothy described it, "roll after roll of rounded bare hills with little

water creases marking them—and no sign of human being or habitation." The snowcapped mountains in the distance were purple and blue, their color changing with the light. Rosamond wrote about their first glimpse of the schoolhouse, a solitary building at the top of the highest hill, "It is the Parthenon of Elkhead!"

The school, which had been completed several months before the teachers' arrival, was already the center of community activities, serving as an improvised church, theatre, party hall, and polling place. Elkhead residents had high aspirations for their neighborhood. In 1973, Carpenter told his granddaughter Belle Zars, who was working on a Harvard dissertation on the Elkhead School, that he had anticipated that the population would double or triple, and said, "You didn't want to build a little wooden shack there." He had in mind a solid stone building, constructed out of rocks from the nearby hillside, and he helped the stonemasons design it. "All the windows were made big, and all the light came in over the child's shoulders and no light came in on his face," he said. The school had electricity, a projector with educational slides donated by the Ford Motor Company, and, in the basement, a domestic-science room, a makeshift gymnasium, and a large coal furnace.

When Rosamond and Dorothy arrived on the first day, many of the children were already there. Fifty-eight years later, Bobbie Robinson, a student of Ros's, said, "I'll never forget the first morning when Lewis Harrison and the two new teachers rode up to the school. I thought Miss Underwood was the prettiest girl I'd ever seen and I still think she was. . . . I don't believe there ever was a community that was affected more by two people than we were by those two girls."

Because Dorothy lacked confidence in her skills in mathematics and Latin, she and Rosamond had agreed that she would teach the younger children. She wrote in August that she had a class of ten boys, between six and fourteen, whom she had trouble disciplining, and one six-year-old girl. Rosamond had two boys and six girls, five of them ninth graders, and her students were far less boisterous. The enormous room was divided by a wooden partition, which the teachers opened for joint classroom activities.

"The most thrilling and satisfactory time in my day is the time devoted to story-

telling," Dorothy said in one letter. "They make a mad scramble to pick up all loose papers, put their desks in order, and then fold their hands and sit at attention! When I stand there and look down at those eager little faces I forget how naughty they are and I try to thrill and please them as I never tried before." On Fridays, she wrote in another letter, "I tell them about current events, if I know any, and then two children from each room recite, and we end up with a song. They hang onto their suspenders and dig a grimy toe into the floor and just agonize through it." She was exasperated by the boys' misbehavior, and occasionally resorted to corporal punishment, but she wrote fondly about twelve-year-old Tommy Jones, whom she described as "the worst of the lot": he "doesn't know *anything*, just never having tried, and his spelling is a work of art." A few weeks after school began, Tommy appeared at the Harrison ranch with some tributes to his teacher: "a turnip as big as a cabbage in one hand, a squash under one arm and a bunch of poppies squeezed in his hot little hand!"

Rudolph Morsbach, age nine, corrected Dorothy when she told the class that London was the biggest city in the world: "No, Mam, my father says New York is!" Then he added, "Well, it might be Kansas City!" He also informed her that Mr. Carpenter was the President of the United States. The boys refused to listen to her warnings about throwing rocks until she bribed them by promising a gift of rubber balls; their own were made of string. On October 26th, Dorothy reported laconically, "Rudolph cracked Tommy over the head with a board yesterday & nearly killed him."

Ferry Carpenter made regular visits to the school, reading Tennyson to the children and helping out with the domestic-science class. One Monday, he gave "a demonstration in corn bread making, old bachelor style," the *Republican* reported. "The corn bread was fine." He also joined the teachers for midday dinner on Sundays, accompanied by Bob Perry, who took the train from Oak Creek to Hayden, presumably the night before, picked up a horse, met Carpenter at his cabin, and then rode the final seven miles with him to the Harrison ranch. Perry had a degree in mining engineering from Columbia, and he was well established in his job at the Oak Creek mine, one of sev-

eral owned by his father, a wealthy Denver industrialist. On horseback, the only place the teachers had any privacy, they weighed the comparative merits of the two men: Carpenter, a witty, intellectual risk-taker; Perry, handsome, steady, and more traditionally gallant.

The suitors didn't do much to disguise their intentions toward Ros, although it was a gentlemanly rivalry. The Harrisons' twenty-year-old son, Frank, observing them at dinner, later described them as "young fellows with tail feathers blooming." In mid-August, when the teachers went to Steamboat Springs to take their exams, Carpenter escorted them to the Hayden station. Dorothy wrote about the "nervous strain" of the train ride to Steamboat, and the tests turned out to be more idiosyncratic than they had expected, including questions such as "Describe the changes that take place in 'egg on toast' during the process of digestion," "Explain methods of bidding on and letting road work by contract," and "Give a physiological reason for not boxing children's ears." The experience was tempered by Carpenter, who appeared on the second evening and took them out for a steak dinner, and by Perry, who drove twenty-five miles from Oak Creek and treated them to a picnic of freshly shot grouse. "This Bob Perry is very attractive and saved our lives by offering to bring us home by machine," Dorothy said. They later reported to their families that they had passed the exams with distinction.

The same month, Carpenter held his annual birthday party at Oak Point. Around a hundred people came, most from ten to twenty miles away. He moved the furniture out and placed benches along the inside walls of his cabin. There was a big bonfire nearby, with a washtub of coffee on top. Carpenter had a newly installed bathroom, and he and Rosamond and Dorothy all described the excitement it generated. He wrote, "Everywhere guests rushed up to me and said:



"Happy Birthday! Show me the flush toilet!" Mrs. Harrison gave the girls old flour sacks to carry their good dresses in, explaining that they could change out of their divided riding skirts when they arrived. Rosamond reported that she and Dorothy "met Mr. Perry . . . and a number of cowboys and settlers," and that Perry whisked them deftly through a quadrille. Still, "Mr. C.," who was dressed up in a tie and white shirt, "was a better dancer than Mr. P."

A supper of sandwiches, cake, and ice cream was served at midnight on a table outside. The dancing continued all night, and at 6 A.M. the company began to disperse. Rosamond said that as she rode home she realized it was "the first time in my life that I've seen the sun set, moon rise, the moon set, and the sun rise all in one night."

In September, Bob Perry, not to be outdone by Carpenter, invited the teachers for a weekend at his cabin and a tour of his mine. On a Friday afternoon, the teachers met him in Hayden, along with one of his sisters and a friend. They piled into Bob's little Dodge, and he drove them to Oak Creek, which, Dorothy wrote, consisted of "a coal mine and a miners' boarding house in a narrow gulch beside the RR, and Mr. Perry's house perched on a mountainside." This may have been a generous description of the hamlet, with its converging rail tracks, coal tipples, belching smoke, and barren hills.

Mining towns were known to be rough. In 1913, the violence in Ludlow had spread to the mines in Oak Creek. First, the state militia was called in, and then the 12th U.S. Cavalry, which remained for a year. At the height of the tensions, the Perry mine was surrounded by guard towers with machine guns and spotlights. Dorothy did not enjoy her tour. "I am glad to have done it, for I never need to go through another," she declared. "I was scared and didn't like it." It also rained all weekend. But Bob's low-slung cabin, its front porch strewn with saddle blankets and other paraphernalia, was comfortable and up-to-date, with electric lights, steam heat, and hot running water. He was an admirable host, calmly taking charge when his cook got sick. "We had most magnificent meals—even grouse for breakfast, duck and ice cream for dinner!" Dorothy exclaimed. The weather cleared long enough for Ros

to take a picture of Bob leaning casually against the porch rail with one of his Airedales.

Life in Routt County was splendid, Dorothy wrote to Ros's mother: "The people out here have real living with none of the frills, which fill up so much of our lives at home." Mrs. Underwood and Mr. Woodruff, as it turned out, had supported the idea of the Western trip, though they worried about wild animals and bands of hostile Indians, notions that seemed even more absurdly overwrought in retrospect. But one Wednesday night in early October, as Perry was getting ready for bed, he stepped outside his cabin and was confronted by two men, one tall and one stocky, their faces masked by blue handkerchiefs. One pressed a rifle against his stomach; the other put a revolver to his head. Speaking with thick accents, they said, "Don't scare, don't scare, we want money," and they forced Perry inside. They took his wallet, some tobacco, a Colt .32, and a holster.

After binding his arms, they made him walk ahead of them at gunpoint through the rough backcountry. Eventually, they stopped for the night on a ridge not far from one of the Oak Creek mines. At dawn on Thursday, soon after the mine whistles blew, the tall man told Perry that he must write to his father and demand that he bring fifteen thousand dollars in gold by Sunday night.

"Dear Pop," Perry wrote:

I do not understand it at all, except they are very definite as to what will happen to me if they do not get the money. They speak a foreign language which I cannot understand. It seems to me that they are "touched." Anything you will do is O.K. to me. If anything should happen to me, give my love to them all. For I have done all that I can. . . . You are to walk the hills straight west regardless of the roads, or, as they say, "as the sun hideth," and they will stop you some time during the day. They tell me we are to start walking tomorrow. —Bob

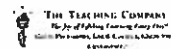
The tall man went into Oak Creek to mail the letter and returned with a sack containing several loaves of bread, a pound of butter, twelve cans of Tuxedo

tobacco, some ham, and four pears. Perry had little appetite, but managed to eat some bread and butter. He was cold, and the tall man gave him his coat to wear.

They moved frequently, and on Friday, according to Perry's testimony at a later inquest in Oak Creek, he woke up at about 11 A.M. The stocky man, who was supposed to be guarding him, had dozed off. The rifle lay across his knees, his left hand resting over it. The taller man was lying on his right side; the edge of the holster holding Perry's automatic was visible under his jacket. Perry jumped over him and, though his arms were still bound, managed to seize the rifle from the stocky man. He backed up to a tree, angling the rifle at the kidnappers, and shouted at them to run or he would kill them. The tall man lunged toward him, and Perry fired once, hitting him in the chest and knocking him down. The man shouted in English, "I am shot," and stumbled toward his companion.

Perry ran in the opposite direction,

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"Daddy works in a magical, faraway land called Academia."

stopping briefly to work his arms free, and several hours later he reached the closest ranch with a telephone and called his father. Samuel Perry, meanwhile, had obtained the fifteen thousand dollars in gold, enlisted four detectives from the Denver police force, and chartered a train. He received Bob's call as he was about to set off with the ransom, and immediately drove out to see him.

Several hours later, a posse found the body of the tall man in Little Middle Creek gulch, about ten miles from Oak Creek. A revolver was on the ground nearby. His clothing was in disarray, and there were two bullet holes, one through the chest—Perry's shot—and another through his right temple. He was identified as George Katsegahnis, a miner who had worked briefly for Perry in Oak Creek. The inquest determined that the bullet through the temple was the one that had killed him. The matter of who fired the fatal shot was never resolved. The owner of the Oak Creek Cemetery refused to allow Katsegahnis to be buried there, anguishing, as an item in the *Oak Creek Times* put it, "We, as a people, do not want this class of citizens, dead or alive, in our midst." The second kidnapper, also a Greek miner, was captured a few days later. He was tried and convicted of kidnapping and "assault

with deadly weapons with confederate." He was sentenced to life plus six and a half years in the state penitentiary.

Although the teachers had been distraught about Perry's kidnapping, they reassured their families that Elkhead was very safe. Dorothy wrote soothingly on October 26th, "Mother dear, When Mr. Carpenter & Mr. Perry came on Sunday, they brought our mail and I certainly was glad to get it." Perry had been to Denver, where he bought mackinaws and gloves for Ros and Dorothy. Carpenter, lacking presents and a story of heroic struggle with two desperadoes, fussed about the women's failure to bring woolen underwear for the winter. Dorothy wrote that Carpenter was "the best raconteur I ever heard" and "so picturesque not only in appearance but his vivid cowboy slang and such wonderful insight into human nature. It really is a treat to have him as a friend." As for "Mr. Perry," he "looks thinner & worn and of course it was thrilling to hear his account of the kidnapping—he carries the deadliest kind of a revolver now. . . . He doesn't go about alone. . . . I think his family are awfully nervous about him, but he doesn't seem to be." In Rosamond's photograph album, under a picture of Perry posing on horseback, rifle in hand, and wearing a bow tie, fedora, and jacket, she wrote

"I hero No. 1." (Next to him is "I hero No. 2"—a candid shot of Carpenter on skis.) Rosamond was discreet about her growing affection for Perry, but Carpenter must have known that he had lost the competition.

He was also dismayed to discover that Dorothy had thwarted the other half of his matrimonial plan. Apparently, scrutinizing others' mail was one of his unofficial duties in Hayden, and he noticed that she received frequent letters in a male hand from an address in Michigan. Eventually, Dorothy confessed that she was secretly engaged to a young banker from Grand Rapids, Lemuel Hillman. He had proposed to her in Auburn, where she rebuffed him, and again, successfully, in Chicago, where she and Rosamond had stopped on their trip west. Eventually, she informed her parents, and her father—after receiving Hillman in Auburn in October and confirming that he had "high ideals, coupled with good business sense, and . . . sound judgment"—wrote to express his approval. In January, Dorothy wrote to her mother, "And now we come to the big news, which is Ros's engagement to Bob! . . . I am so happy about it!"

Suddenly, the two adventurers were planning traditional summer weddings in Auburn. Nevertheless, they were no longer sheltered young society women. Before they left for Colorado, they had ordered tweed riding suits from Abercrombie & Fitch, but as the weather got cold they were more concerned about warmth than about fashion. On November 13th, Rosamond wrote to her aunt Helen in Auburn, "We arose this morning with our thermometer registering twenty-two degrees below zero, cracked the ice in the pail and managed to take our cold sponge with shakes and shivers." In another letter, she described their unflattering outdoor wardrobes: "We wear enormous German socks over our shoes and our galoshes, men's size, countless tights, bloomers, fur coats, scarves and so forth. We can hardly heave ourselves into the saddle."

By contrast, some of the children had no shoes or socks. "Tommy had a torn shirt next to his skin, a ragged coat, and a duster around his neck," Dorothy wrote to her father. Rudolph Morsbach said cheerfully that he always ate radishes to keep him warm. Even "some of the fairly well-to-do ones are in rags because 'the

freight' hasn't come—the familiar cry out here while waiting for Sears Roebuck." This description prefaced a request for more supplies from Auburn. The Underwoods and the Woodruffs, their friends, and their churches had come to see Rosamond and Dorothy as missionaries, and routinely sent barrels of clothing, toys, and books.

By late December, it was frequently well below zero and snowing heavily almost every day. Lewis Harrison marked their path with willow whips, and broke the trail each morning—a small boy on a large white horse, up to its withers in snow, plunging through a vast rolling hillside of white. The children skied to school on barrel staves, propping them up against the outside wall as they came in. The older students wrote in their yearbook four years later that "in the morning there were always at least a dozen small boys holding a crying concert around the furnace."

The big event of the winter was the Elkhead Christmas party, and the teachers spent much of December preparing for it. Ros's Camp Fire Girls organized a sale of homemade candies to raise money for costumes and dues, and she worked with her students on a play. Dorothy's students practiced Christmas carols, and

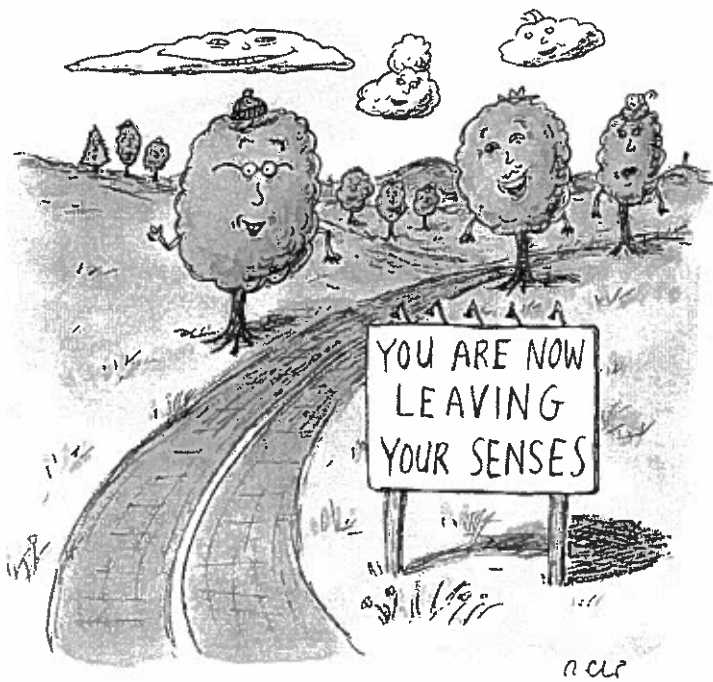
she helped them get together a box of presents for the Children's Hospital in Denver. They donated their own treasures, including squirrel and porcupine skins, dried oak leaves, and an old Christmas card. On Christmas Eve, the teachers saw Isadore Bolten, a young Russian-Jewish homesteader and cobbler, who taught the boys regular classes in his trade, laboring up the hill on his skis, carrying a mail pouch full of Christmas presents from Auburn; Dorothy estimated that it weighed at least fifty pounds. The next day, several barrels were delivered, containing stockings for the children, caps, mittens, purses with money in them, toys, and candy. One of Rosamond's older students, Florence Jones, and several Elkhead parents helped the teachers decorate the Christmas tree.

Families began arriving late on Christmas afternoon, during one of the worst blizzards of the winter. Dorothy wrote that people were "covered with snow, and half frozen; many of them having been on the road for hours. Some of them got way off the road, and even lost, so they never got there at all." The children were treated to their first Santa Claus—one of the homesteaders in full costume. The carols and the play were a success, al-

though, Rosamond said, "babies wailed through the performance, and then proceeded to be sick—not that I wondered. We fed them aromatic spirits of ammonia, not knowing what else to do for them." Dorothy discovered Oliver Morsbach, Rudolph's seven-year-old brother, behind the piano "in a trance of joy—over a doll's tea set, probably intended for a girl and mixed up by mistake—but he just loved it!" The pianist didn't get there, but a fiddler did his best ("It was all pretty bad," Rosamond said). The dancing began at eight. Exhausted mothers put crying babies to sleep and then rolled them up in blankets and tucked them away so they wouldn't be stepped on.

At midnight, Ros and Dorothy slipped out and set off for home, although everyone else had prudently decided to spend the night at the schoolhouse. It was very dark, and about a mile from the Harrison ranch Dorothy's horse stumbled and fell in the deep snow. Chilled and frightened, the teachers put on the snowshoes they kept tethered to the saddles, and after considerable difficulty coaxed the horse back onto its feet. When they finally reached the ranch, they chopped through the ice in the buckets by the barn to water the horses. As soon as they entered the house, Dorothy said, "I know there's a bottle of whiskey here because I saw Old Man Harrison have some one night." In their former lives, they never would have thought of consuming hard liquor, but they hunted until they found the bottle, and each took a large swig. My grandmother told my brothers and me that the whiskey gave them "a good furnace inside," and that they fell into bed without removing their boots. The next morning, the Harrisons returned. As Rosamond recalled, one of them commented that the women must have had trouble on the ride home: "It was all written in the snow."

Contrary to Ferry Carpenter's expectations, Hayden and Elkhead did not prosper. Today, Elkhead has just eight year-round residents, two of whom, Cal and Penny Lowe, live in a snug log house they built on the old Harrison property. Hayden is now a town of about sixteen hundred. Carpenter's law office, no longer inhabited, is sagging with age. His homestead at Oak Point was hit by lightning in 1978 and burned to the ground, but his grandson Reed Zars—an



environmental lawyer—rebuilt it, adding solar panels and a wind turbine.

Carpenter's hopes for the school district were partly realized. The Elkhead School's first year ended in April, 1917, when the children were needed at home on the farms. At a closing ceremony, the school board presented Rosamond and Dorothy with gold medals, inscribed with the words "For Bravery in Attendance, Loyalty in Work." The women left for Auburn the next day, and Carpenter promptly hired two successors, Ruth Bodfish and Delcina Neilson, from Massachusetts; a comfortable stone cottage for the teachers was completed a few hundred yards from the school. Both married local "boys."

On June 30, 1917, Rosamond Underwood married Robert Perry at St. Peter's Church in Auburn. Three days later, Dorothy married Lemuel Hillman at her parents' house, on Fort Street, and they settled in Grand Rapids. Bob and Ros lived in his cabin in Oak Creek for four years and then moved to Denver.

Ros told her grandchildren that the year in Elkhead had been the best in her life. Although Dorothy never said so, it was clear that she felt the same way. The experience also toughened her. One evening in February, 1930, when she and Lemuel were walking to a dinner party, he was struck by a car and killed. She had four young children and the Depression was setting in. To distract herself and to prepare for a job, she took a class in typing and stenography; later, she became the head of the local Red Cross chapter. Dorothy's older daughter, Caroline, remembers her going down to the Grand River when it overflowed and helping the Ottawa Indians, who had nothing to eat but muskrats. "She took life by the throat and dealt with it," Caroline said.

In 1920, Ferry Carpenter married Eunice Pleasant, whom he had recruited to the Elkhead School the year before. He went on to become the district attorney for Routt, Moffat, and Grand Counties, and one of the best-known cattle breeders in Colorado. In 1934, he was appointed by F.D.R.'s Interior Secretary, Harold Ickes, to be the first director of the Division of Grazing (now the Bureau of Land Management). Bob Perry died of pneumonia that year, at the age of forty-nine, but Ferry and Eunice kept up their friendship with Ros. In 1954, Eunice died, and

a year later Ferry and Rosamond were married. It was four decades since he had lured her to Elkhead. They were nearly seventy years old. She moved from her Tudor house in Denver to the Carpenter Ranch, outside Hayden, where Ferry had first worked as an eighteen-year-old ranch hand.

That was also where I met them, in August, 1973. I spent my eighteenth summer working on a ranch in Carbonade, helping Rosamond's granddaughter Roz, who had three children. She took me to visit Ros and Ferry one day, and I learned that the ranchhouse had been assembled between 1902 and 1904 by joining four nearby homesteads, which were dragged to the site by mules. Ros, a gracious hostess, had become a good cook and served lunch on the sunny back porch.

Afterward, Ferry told me that he had something to show me. We climbed into his battered pickup truck, drove through Hayden, and began a long, jarring ride into the hills. At eighty-seven, he was still jocular and voluble, concentrating more on his stories than on his driving. The homesteaders, he told me, unable to make a living, were long since gone, their cabins dismantled and the lumber carted off to be used elsewhere. The Elkhead School had closed in 1938. Still, in 1920, at a time when only about fifteen per cent of students who started high school ended up graduating, of the six in the senior class four went to college and two to professional school. Lewis Harrison, the boy who had been the teachers' trail guide, became the chief forester for the State of Missouri. "Their impact was immediate, but above all lasting," Lewis wrote of Rosamond and Dorothy in 1977.

Ferry and I finally pulled up on a high ridge covered with sagebrush and scrub oak. As we walked around the schoolhouse, he identified the far-off peaks: Bears Ears, Agner Mountain, the Flat Tops. This February, I returned, escorted on a snowmobile by one of the homesteaders' grandchildren. The large windows were shuttered, but the sturdy stone building, which one teacher had described as "the school on top of the world," was otherwise mostly unchanged. ♦

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