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Article Summary: Series of articles / letters and bibliography substantiating extensive article on the "true account" of Wild Bill Hickok and the events of July 12, 1861. See also pages 5 – 46 of this *Nebraska History* 49 for the "true account."

Cataloging Information:

Names: William Monroe McCanles, David C McCanles, J L McCanles, James Woods, Billie Hughes, H Wellman, Dock Brink, James B Hickok, Jack Nye, Pap Towle

Photographs / Images: Diagram of the action at Rock Creek Ranch, July 12, 1861; Half-stocked percussion rifle, reported to be the gun used by Wild Bill Hickok in shooting David McCanles; William Monroe McCanles in repose; George Peterson, John Steinmetz, Oliver Stonehacker, and Frank Peterson sitting by old Rock Creek Ranch Station in 1885; Benjamin Frank Helvey, pioneer historian of Jefferson County, Nebraska, who helped bury McCanles, Woods and Gordon; page from *The Story of the Outlaw* by Emerson Hough

THE ONLY LIVING EYE WITNESS

**Letter from William Monroe McCanles, Now 77, Tells
Story of Events as He Saw Them 66 Years Ago**

This story is by William Monroe McCanles, an eye witness who was standing by.

My father, David C. McCanles, left North Carolina in March, 1859, his destination being Pike's Peak. This was during the gold excitement in Colorado. He came to Leavenworth, Kansas, and outfitted for a trip across the plains. He got as far as Rock Creek, Nebraska Territory, and having met several parties returning from Pike's Peak with such discouraging stories about the gold prospects there, he stopped at Rock Creek and bought of Newton Glenn the only ranch on the creek at that time. This was on the west side of the creek, and was the overland mail and stage station on the Oregon Trail at that time. During the summer of 1859 my father built a ranch house on the east side of the creek, dug a well and found plenty of water. There was no water to be had at the west ranch, excepting the creek water. Also, during this summer, he built a toll bridge across the creek, which was quite an undertaking, for it was the first bridge along the line and a great help to travelers on the Overland Trail. He built the house on the east side to house his brother, J. L. McCanless, who had concluded to come west, and in the latter part of August of that year, his brother and family with my father's family, his nephew, James Woods, and Billie Hughes, an orphan boy, left North Carolina for Nebraska Territory. We came by railroad, steamboat and ox teams, and landed at Rock Creek about the 20th of September, 1859.

My uncle took up his abode in the east ranch house. Billie Hughes died with typhoid fever that fall. My uncle lived in this house until the spring of 1860 when he moved down to the ranch on the Little Blue river near the mouth of Rock Creek. Father then built a barn and a bunk house on the east side and rented that station to Russell, Majors and Waddell, who operated the Overland Stage and Pony Express to California, and they took charge and furnished their own station keeper and stock tenders.

Early in the spring of 1861 father sold the west ranch to a couple of Germans, Hagenstein and Wolfe. The summer of 1860 was a very dry year and my uncle became somewhat dissatisfied with the conditions, so he picked up and moved down towards Nebraska City, and took up land in Johnson County, Nebraska. Now, after father sold the west ranch, he moved to the ranch on the Blue. We had a good lot of cattle and horses and a lot of work oxen. We kept several hired men and were doing a regular ranch business. We furnished the hay for both of the ranches on Rock Creek. The Stage Company had at this time a man named H. Wellman and his wife as station keeper and Dock Brink as stock tender.

Early in the spring of 1861 the Stage Company sent James B. Hickok to the Rock Creek Station as assistant stock tender. Jim claimed to be a South Carolinian and father and he became quite cronies, both being from the south. The Wellmans and father were not quite so friendly. They were too slow with their payments. About the first days of July, 1861, Wellman and I went to Brownville, after a load of supplies for the station and some for father. We were gone about ten days, as it was 100 miles to Brownville, on the Missouri river. We got home about four o'clock July 12th.

There was a little ranch upon the road southeast of the Station, kept by Jack Nye. When we got to the Station I saw some horses hitched up at Nye's and I thought I recognized them as some of ours, so I ran up to Nye's and found father, Woods and Gordon there. Father seemed glad to see me, and wanted to know if Wellman had treated me right while we were gone and I told him that Wellman had treated me well. Then we all came back to the Station.

Father and I stopped at the house and Woods and Gordon went on down to the barn. Father went to the kitchen door and asked for Wellman. Mrs. Wellman came to the door and father asked her if Wellman was in the house and she said he was. Father said "tell him to come out" and she said "what do you want with him?" Father said "I want to settle with him." She said "He'll not come out." Father said, "send him out or I'll come in and drag him out."

Now to make this more plain to the reader,—while Wellman and I were gone to Brownville,—father and Mrs. Wellman had some words, or a quarrel over the affairs at the ranch and Mrs. Wellman had told father when Mr. Wellman came home he would settle with father for his impudence and that is why father made the remark that he wanted to settle with him.

Now, when father made the threat that he "would come in and drag him out," Jim (or Bill) Hickok stepped to the door and stood by Mrs. Wellman. Father looked him in the face and said, "Jim, haven't we been friends all the time?" Jim said "Yes". Father said "are we friends now?" and Jim said "Yes." Father said, "Will you hand me a drink of water," and Jim turned around to the water bucket and brought a dipper of water and handed it to him. Father drank the water and handed the dipper back, and as he handed the dipper back he saw something take place inside that was threatening or dangerous. Anyway he stepped quickly from the kitchen door to the front door, about ten feet north of the kitchen door, and stepped up on the step and said, "Now, Jim, if you have anything against me, come out and fight me fair." Just as he uttered these words the gun cracked and he fell flat on his back. He raised himself up to almost a sitting position and took one last look at me, then fell back dead.

Now Woods and Gordon heard the shout and came running up unarmed to the door, and just then Jim appeared at the door with a Colt's Navy revolver. He fired two shots at Woods, and Woods ran around the house to the north. Gordon broke and ran. Jim ran out of the door and fired two shots at him and wounded him. Just as Jim ran out of the door Wellman came out with a hoe and ran after Woods who had run around the house, and hit Woods on the head with the hoe and finished him.

Then Wellman came running around the house where I was standing and struck at me with the hoe and he yelled out "let's kill them all." I dodged the lick and ran. I outran him to a ravine shelter south of the house and stopped there. Mrs. Wellman stood in the door clapping her hands and yelling "kill him, kill him, kill him."

Father was shot from behind a calico curtain that divided the log house into two rooms, and was shot with a rifle that belonged to himself. He had loaned the gun to the Station keeper for their protection in case of trouble with the many hard characters that were traveling the trail. There were but four pieces of fire arms on the ground at this time, my small double barreled shot gun, small, or boy's size, with one barrel loaded; father's rifle that was kept in the house; a Colt's Navy six shooter that was in the house and a double barreled shot gun that Dock Brink kept at the barn loaded with buck shot.

Now, to bear me out that Woods and Gordon were not armed when they ran up to the door: if either or both of them had been armed they surely would have had their revolvers in hand, and while Jim was shooting Woods don't you think one or the other of them would have done some shooting? Do you think that if Woods had been armed he would have let Wellman knock him in the head without trying to defend himself?

Now, for more evidence that Gordon was not armed: Gordon kept a blood hound that usually followed him where he went. This dog was with him at the barn when the fracas began. After Gordon had made his getaway, being wounded, the station outfit put this dog on his trail and the dog trailed him down the creek and brought him to bay about 80 rods down the creek. When the bunch caught up, the dog was fighting Gordon, and Gordon was warding him off with a stick. Gordon was finished with a load of buck shot. Now, if Gordon had been armed don't you think he would have killed the dog?

All of the sensational writers have had those men loaded down with knives and firearms. When I made my escape from Wellman I ran three miles to the ranch and broke the news to my mother. One of our hands hitched up a team and took mother and the other children up to the Station. I was so exhausted with my getaway that I remained at the ranch, or home place.

I went up to the Station the next morning. There was quite a crowd there that had gathered from twenty-five to thirty miles up and down the Oregon Trail. The first thing I saw when I got near the Station was a crowd of men burying Gordon. They had brought his remains from down the creek up near the station and had dug a grave on a little knoll and put him in, boots and all, wrapped in a blanket. They made a rude box for father and Woods and buried them in the same box in the hill south of the station, by the grave of Billie Hughes. Their bones lay there for twenty years. Then I moved them to Fairbury Cemetery about seven miles west of Rock Creek.

After the killing my uncle, J. L. McCanles, organized a crowd over in Johnson county and came over and arrested Hickok. Wellman and Dock Brink and took them before a Justice of the Peace at Beatrice, Nebraska, and they had a preliminary trial before old Pap Towle, an aged Justice and were acquitted. The county was not organized at that time and the trials were crude, merely sham trials.

My uncle then bundled us up and moved everything moveable over to Johnson county where he disposed of the stock and other property. Mother lived there until the spring of 1862, then moved back to the ranch on the Blue river. We surely went through some trying times. We had to run from the Indians several times. Went through all kinds of hardships, but mother kept her five children born in North Carolina, and one that was born in Nebraska, all together and they are all still alive, but she is dead. Died at the ripe old age of seventy-five years. Her remains rest by father's at Fairbury, Nebraska. My uncle moved to Colorado in 1863 and he became very wealthy and quite prominent. He was a representative and Senator in the state legislature. He laid out the town of Florence, Colorado. Oil was discovered on his land. He died at the age of 86 years.

I lost track of Jim, (or Bill) Hickok after this episode, and did not hear of him again until 1870. He was in Junction City, Kansas, that summer. Next he was in Abilene, Kansas, then Dodge City, Kansas; Denver, Colorado; Cheyenne, Wyoming; and Deadwood, South Dakota. If Jim ever killed one man outright who had an equal chance for his life, I would like to have the evidence, and not fiction.

My father was no killer, horse thief, desperado, nor anything of the kind. We trace the family back to 1770 and there have never been any of our ancestors found hanging on a limb, so far.

This is written by
 William Monroe McCanles,
 3343 Bellefontaine Ave.
 Kansas City, Mo.

October, 1925; at the age of 76 years.

PHIL DAWSON WRITES

**Relates Conversation with R. Shibley and Corrects
 Untrue Statements**

Endicott, Nebraska,
 January 26, 1927.

Supt. Addison E. Sheldon:

Mr. Geo. Hansen of Fairbury, now in Beverly Hills, Calif., wrote me asking me to write you in regard to the photo of Rock Creek Station taken about 1885 and a copy of which Mr. Johnston, the photographer at Fairbury has sent you. This is a view of the south side. The roof of the main building had been torn or blown off and the building was not in use for living purposes. I saw this myself about that time when Mr. Peterson used it for corn. Mr. Peterson's two boys, George and Frank are shown sitting at each end in the picture, the second from the left is John Steinmetz, who had the original copy of this picture and lent it to me. The other is Oliver Stonehocker, a boy from Endicott, I knew him well. Mr. Hansen, also asked me to write you in regard to my conversation with Mr. R. Shibley of Marysville, Kansas in 1923.

Mr. Shibley was past eighty then and there. He expressed his desire to correct some history in regard to Rock Creek Station and the McCanles boys. He had read Hough's book giving erroneous location of Rock Creek Station, also of killing of so many of McCanles gang and wished to correct the statement that McCanleses were bad men, as he had worked for them for several months caring for stock and with their hay and crops and had found D. C. McCanles, with whom he lived, a congenial fellow and his dealings were pleasant with him and during that time neither saw nor heard any scenes or words that would lead him to think otherwise of him. Mr. Shibley owned the land between the present town of Marysville, Kansas, and the Blue River west of town. His old homestead was the first house near the bridge on the south side. He owned this until his death.

He was a fine old man and well respected and it was the conversation with him that inspired me to get the true story from Monroe McCanles. Mr. Hansen infers it is Mr. R. Shibley that is referred to, whom Wild Bill quoted as "having been drug by saddle horse" at hands of McCanles. No doubt this is the same party. I hope this answers Mr. Hansen's request.

Respectfully,
Phil Dawson.

A SKETCH OF GEORGE W. HANSEN

(By Charles B. Letton)

(Former Justice Nebraska Supreme Court. At present Clerk Nebraska Supreme Court.)

A few words concerning the author of the following article may be of interest as giving the present generation a glimpse of life in southeastern Nebraska over fifty years ago.

George W. Hansen is an old resident of Nebraska. His early schooling was at his home at Brodhead, Wisconsin. Afterwards he attended Oberlin College at Oberlin, Ohio. He reached Brownville, Nebraska, on June 10, 1868. This was his 20th birthday. He came by steamer from Kansas City, Missouri, to which place he had returned after several journeys in Iowa and Kansas. The steamer trip took five days on account of the necessity of avoiding snags, getting off sandbars, stopping for fuel, and other ordinary incidents of steamboat navigation on the Missouri River in those days. After two years of teaching in the country near Brownville, he walked over one hundred miles to the new town of Fairbury where his brother Harry, a printer, had gone to set the type for and print the first number of the Fairbury Gazette, afterwards published by Cross & Hansen.

Soon after he arrived at Fairbury he walked to Junction City, Kansas, where, at the U. S. Land Office, he selected a homestead in Republic county, Kansas. In all he had walked over 550 miles before he was able to provide himself with other means of locomotion.

He taught the school at Fairbury in 1871-1872 where he constituted the entire teaching force. In the spring vacation, having a good knowledge of bookkeeping he was employed by the county commissioners of Jefferson county to make an accounting and report of a long-standing controversy with the new county of Thayer. These two counties had previously formed one county under the name of Jefferson county, and had been divided by the legislature. The officers were in dispute as to the

apportionment of revenue and the division of property. He made his report to the County Board and was at once engaged to adjust the dispute. He rode his pony to Hebron, the new county seat, settled the matter with the officers of Thayer county, received county warrants for \$2,469, and returned to receive the municipal compensation of \$9.00 for investigation of the books, and making the report, and \$14 hotel expenses, pony hire, adjustment of the dispute, and collection of the amount due.

Afterwards Mr. Hansen became successively cashier and president of the Harbine Bank of Fairbury. He occupied the latter position for thirty-four years and is now chairman of the Board of Directors, of which Board he has been a member for forty-five years. He is the sole survivor of the members of the original Board.

Mr. Hansen has always taken a deep interest in the early history of Nebraska. He has been a director of the Nebraska State Historical Society. He is the author of several papers treating of local history. He is still hale and hearty. He spends his time mainly in travel and in visiting his son and daughter who live, respectively, in Tulsa, Oklahoma and Beverly Hills, California. He has lived a busy and useful life and is enjoying his well-earned leisure among his books and with his many friends.

DESCRIPTIVE BIBLIOGRAPHY OF "WILD BILL."

(By Addison E. Sheldon)

Advertiser (Nebraska) Brownville July 25, 1861, the first newspaper account so far as known. Reprinted in Nebraska City News a few days later. See page 92 for full text.

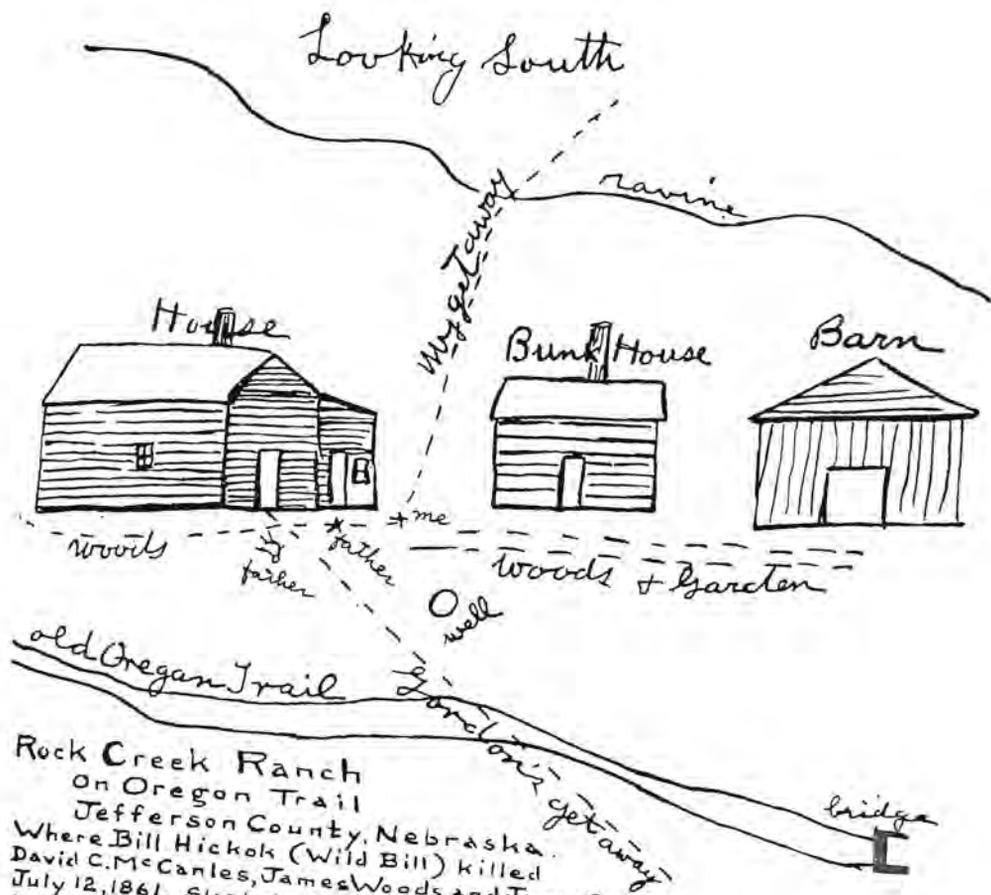
Andreas, A. T. History of the State of Nebraska. The Western Historical Company. Chicago, 1882.

This is a large volume of 1506 pages. The first attempt at a general history of Nebraska. It contains histories of organized counties of Nebraska at that time. These histories apparently are written by local people, among them one of Jefferson county. Its account of the Rock Creek Station fight is as follows:

"James B. Hickok (Wild Bill), a native of Illinois, came first into prominent notice by his memorable fight at Rock Creek, in Jefferson County.

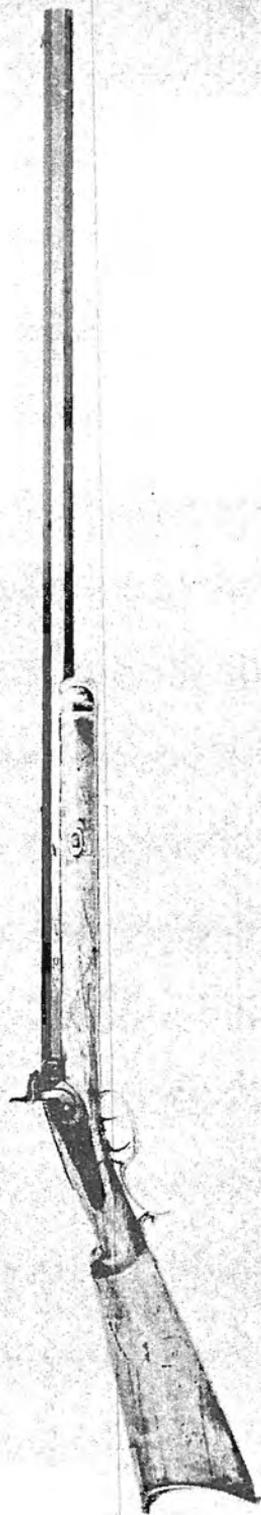
"One of his biographers says of him in the preface to his history. 'Wild Bill as a frontier character of the daring, cunning and honorable class stands alone, without a prototype; his originality is as conspicuous as his remarkable escapes. He was desperate without being a desperado; a fighter without that disposition which invites danger or craves the excitement of the encounter. He killed many men, but in every case it was in self-defense or in the prosecution of a duty which he deemed justifiable. Wild Bill was a necessary character in the Far West during the period which marked his career. He was essentially a civilizer in the sense of a vigilance posse. The law and order class found in him an effective agent for the correction of the lawless; it was fighting the desperate with one of their kind, and Bill had the cunning to remain on the side of society to always flank his enemies.'

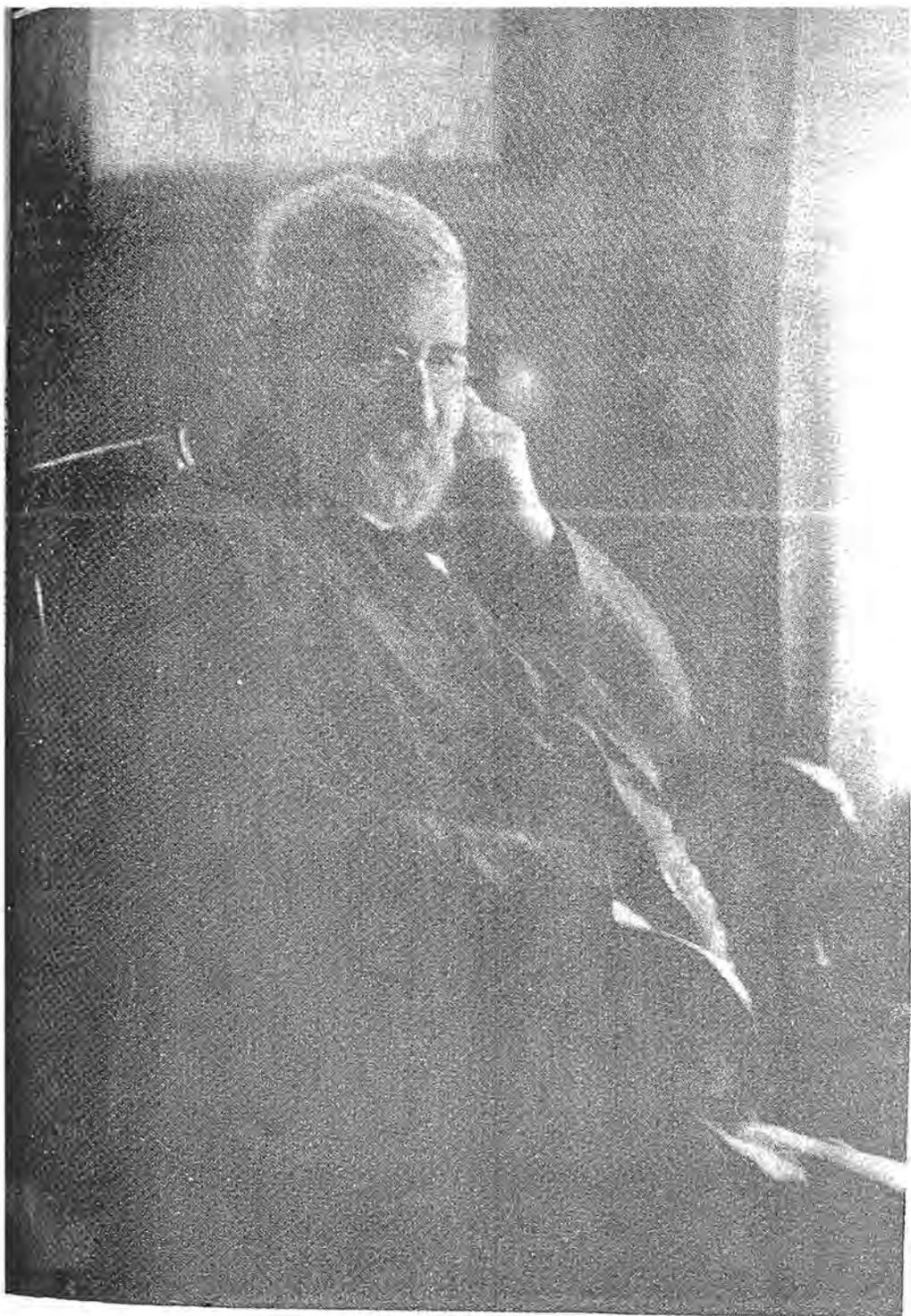
"Perhaps most of this is true, but if the biographer knew that the first noted incident, namely the fight at Rock Creek, was basely exaggerated, he would have been less enthusiastic in his



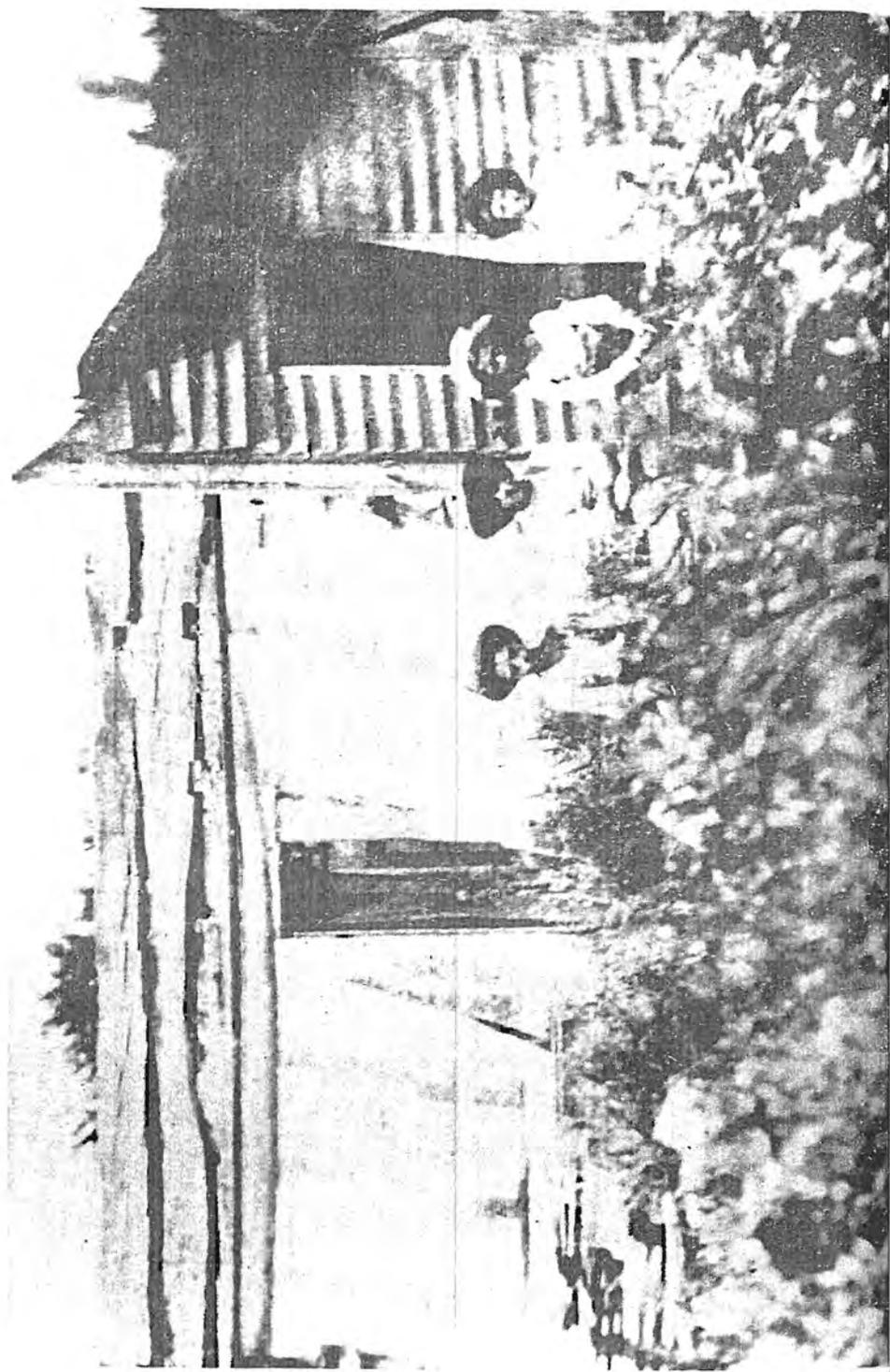
Rock Creek Ranch
 on Oregon Trail
 Jefferson County, Nebraska.
 Where Bill Hickok (Wild Bill) killed
 David C. McCantles, James Woods and James Gordon,
 July 12, 1861. Sketch made by
 William Monroe McCantles, 3343 Belle Fontaine Ave.,
 Kansas City, Mo., at the age of 76 years, in Oct. 1925.

Diagram of the action at Rock Creek Ranch, July 12, 1861.





William Monroe McCandles.



preface. From the fact that this incident is so far from being correct, the citizens of Jefferson are inclined to look upon all the facts given as exaggerations, and many as entire fiction. This biography states that Wild Bill killed eight men at Rock Creek, but after a most thorough examination we find that he only killed three, and in a manner that did not display bravery or courage but simply skill in the use of firearms.

"The facts are these, which we have from S. J. Alexander, Secretary of State, and Hon. D. C. Jenkins, who arrived at the ranch within two hours after the fight and before the bodies were removed, and from many others and reports of Wild Bill's trial:

"Wild Bill up to this time, 1861, known only as Jim Hickok, was tending stock for the Ben Halliday Stage Company at Rock Creek station. J. McCaulas, an early settler in Jefferson, did not have an enviable reputation, but his sons, still living in the same community, are very highly respected. McCaulas was a Southern sympathizer and was raising a company to go South. He came to Wild Bill and tried to persuade him to join and turn over the stage company's stock, and on his refusal McCaulas threatened to kill him and take the stock.

"In the afternoon of the same day McCaulas returned, accompanied by three men. Bill, knowing the desperate character of McCaulas, comprehended the situation and prepared for it. Before the party arrived, Bill went into the main part of the house, which was divided into two compartments by a calico partition, with two doors, one opening into a kitchen and the other outdoors. Taking his rifle and navy revolvers he got behind the calico screen, where he could see who entered the other apartment without being seen. As McCaulas appeared at the outside entrance, Bill took deliberate aim with his rifle and shot him. Two of the other men came in through the kitchen door just as Bill stepped from behind his screen, and being an expert marksman and prepared, two well directed shots from his navy revolver brought them to the floor, where the three soon expired. The fourth man, discovering the situation through the window, took to his heels and made good his escape, but was followed some distance.

"These are the facts that we have been able to gather from the scene of the disaster. There were surely no great display of courage, but considerable skill in the use of arms. He was tried at Beatrice, Gage County. His plea was self-defense, and no one appearing against him he was released. It is evident that the design of the men was to take his life or it is most probable, that the man that escaped, would have appeared at the trial.

"The log house on Rock Creek, where this fatal encounter occurred can still be seen. It is situated about two miles east of Endicott, in Jefferson County, on the line of the Republican River Branch of the Burlington & Missouri Railroad."

Buel, J. W. Heroes of the Plains. N. D. Thompson & Company, New York, 1882.

This book of 548 pages devotes the first 221 pages to the life of Wild Bill. The writer says in his preface, "I was fortunate in securing Wild Bill's diary from his widow Mrs. Agnes Lake Hickok, of Cincinnati, from which I have drawn my facts concerning him, that there might be no mistakes or omissions in recounting the marvelous exploits of his life in this publication."

This book contains the familiar story, regardless of truth,

of the Rock Creek Station fight where Wild Bill fought ten of the McCanles gang single handed. To prove the story a colored picture is given of an interior with Wild Bill slaughtering the McCanles Gang as they rush upon him. The book contains the story of Wild Bill's death and hanging of Jack McCall, his assassin.

Buntline, Ned. Buffalo Bill; or, The Scouts of the Plains.

A play given on the stage in New York City in 1873-76. Also a similar play by the same author: "Scouts of the Prairie."

Cast of Characters:

Buffalo Bill.....	W. F. Cody
Texas Jack.....	J. B. Omohundro
Wild Bill.....	J. B. Hickok
Pale Dover (Wife of Texas Jack).....	Mlle. Morlacchi
Jim Daws (a renegade horse-thief).....	Frank Mordaunt
Aunt Annie Carter.....	Miss Jennie Fisher
Ella.....	Miss Lizzie Safford
Lotta.....	Miss Eliza Hudson
Uncle Henry Carter, a friend of the Scouts.....	J. V. Arlington
Nick Blunder, with song and dance.....	Walter Fletcher
Tom Doggett, in cahoot with Daws.....	W. S. McEvoy
Ebenezer Longlank, Gov't peace Commissioner.....	A. Johnson
Tall Oak, a Kiowa, but on the square.....	W. A. Reid
Big Thunder, a Comanche Chief.....	B. Meredith
Bear Claw, Comanche Brave.....	H. Mainhall
Raven Feather.....	J. W. Buck

Buntline, Ned. Buffalo Bill. International Book Company, New York. No date but probably in the seventies.

This book is a typical blood and thunder western novel, with no pretense at telling the truth. Among its characters are Wild Bill, Tutt, Jake McKandlas, with the usual dressing of Indian fights and impossible rescues.

Burke, John M. Buffalo Bill, From Prairie to Palace, published "With the Authority of General W. F. Cody." Rand, McNally & Company. Chicago, 1893.

The author of this book of 270 pages was associated with Buffalo Bill on the plains and in the show business and was a wellknown character in Nebraska. A portrait and brief sketch of Wild Bill occupy two pages (161-62). His sketch does not mention the McCanles tragedy, but does mention Wild Bill's friendship for Buffalo Bill and his taking part with the latter in the show business. "A dead shot, an enemy to fear, Wild Bill was as brave as a lion and as tender hearted as a woman, and he will go down in history as a true hero of the border."

Cody, Louisa Frederici. (Mrs. W. F.) Memories of Buffalo Bill by his wife. D. Appleton & Co. New York, 1920.

A book of 325 pages. Only reference to Wild Bill is a story (pages 88-89) in which Buffalo Bill asked his wife to dance with Wild Bill with the following words: "Remember how I told about the man who had protected me when the bull-whackers of the wagon train had made up their minds to make my life miserable? If you remember that, you'll also remember the fact that the man who came to my assistance was Wild Bill Hickok. When I saw him today, he asked for a dance with you. Could I—or should I—have said 'no'?"

Cody, W. F. Story of the Wild West. No publisher given, 1888.

This book of 766 pages, with many illustrations, is evidently the work of some literary colleague, since its literary style is

quite beyond the powers of its advertized author. Reference is made to "My old friend, Wild Bill, who was on the point of departing for Rolla, Missouri, to assume the position of wagon master of a government train. At his request to join him as an assistant I cheerfully accepted and went to Rolla where we loaded a number of wagons with government freight and drove them to Springfield." (This was in 1861). The story of Wild Bill killing Dave Tutt follows. A portrait of Wild Bill is given at page 476, and an account of meeting Wild Bill in a confederate uniform inside the Rebel lines.

Cody, W. F. *Heroes of the Plains*. Historical Publishing Company. Philadelphia, 1891.

This book of 766 pages is apparently the same book as the *Story of the Wild West*, dressed up with a new title, but having the same text, the same illustrations and the same references to Wild Bill.

Cooper, Frank C. *Stirring Lives of Buffalo Bill and Pawnee Bill*. S. L. Parsons & Company. New York, 1912.

Mr. Cooper in his preface dated Cleveland, July 4, 1912, states that he was associated for many years with the frontiersmen he describes.

He devotes six pages to Wild Bill Hickok, giving a group picture of Texas Jack, Wild Bill and Buffalo Bill as they appeared in their younger days. His account of the McCandles fight is brief and as accurate as the other contemporary accounts. It reads as follows:

"Probably his most noted battle was a single-handed one against Jacob McCandless and a gang of nine men while riding the pony express in western Kansas in 1861. He was armed with two Colts revolvers. When he halted at Rock Creek relay station, he found the stock-tender had been killed. As he approached, the latter's wife yelled: "My God: Bill McCandless and his men done this."

"The bandits had been laying a trap to kill Hickok. Rushing to the door to remount, he saw several heads pop out of the grass, a bullet striking the door knob. Jumped back and telling the woman to escape, he was fortunate to find a loaded rifle left by the husband.

"There was some raiillery and some badinage between him and McCandless of a defiant nature, when McCandless and his nine men arose and charged for the door. "Wild Bill" had often told his friend, Will Cody, that in an affair of this kind always get the leader, if you can, and this he did in this instance. He fired straight at McCandless, the bullet catching him in the heart, and he dropped instantly. By this time the desperadoes were close upon the cabin. Jumping aside he emptied the revolvers at the charging men. Four men fell dead beside McCandless. Although wounded with buckshot and bullet, he fought on. The cabin was filled with smoke. Everyone he struck he knew was an enemy! With his faithful bowie knife he never faltered, until all was calm and still. Bleeding from everywhere, he felt around the walls to steady himself to the door, then crawled to the well, and drank from the bucket of water which had been freshly drawn on his arrival; then he fell into a faint.

"Hickok was wounded by three bullets, eleven buckshot, and was cut in thirteen places.

"It was fully six months before "Wild Bill" fully recovered from the results of what was one of the most thrilling exploits

in border-story, one that is well authenticated—that "Wild Bill" Hickok, in single-handed conflict, killed ten men—men of desperate character, men who were only duplicates of thousands of others met with in Wm. F. Cody's experiences in his early life on the plains."

Coursey, O. W. Wild Bill. Educator Supply Company. Mitchell, S. D. 1924.

This little book of eighty pages is reprinted from articles in the Sioux Falls Daily Argus Leader. It is evidently an attempt by a newspaper writer to put together tales about Wild Bill compiled from various sources. It bears evidence of using some of the other books referred to in this bibliography. The writer has the advantage of using the account given by William E. Connelley, Secretary of the Kansas State Historical Society, correcting the absurdities and mendacities of other accounts.

Custer, Elizabeth B. Following the Guidon. Harper & Bros. New York, 1890.

A brief chapter of twenty pages headed "Wild Bill as a Magistrate", contained in this book of 341 pages, gives a story of Wild Bill at Leavenworth in 1868:

"Wild Bill and General Custer were fast friends, having faced danger together many times. Physically, he was a delight to look upon. Tall, lithe, and free in every motion, he rode and walked as if every muscle was perfection, and the careless swing of his body as he moved seemed perfectly in keeping with the man, the country, the time in which he lived. I do not recall anything finer in the way of physical perfection than Wild Bill when he swung himself lightly from his saddle, and with graceful, swaying step, squarely set shoulders and well poised head, approached our tent for orders. He was rather fantastically clad, of course, but all that seemed perfectly in keeping with the time and place. He did not make an armory of his waist, but carried two pistols. He wore top-boots, riding breeches, and dark-blue flannel shirt, with scarlet set in the front. A loose neck-handkerchief left his fine firm throat free. I do not at all remember his features, but the frank manly expression of his fearless eyes and his courteous manner gave one a feeling of confidence in his word and in his undaunted courage."

Custer, General George A. My Life on the Plains. Sheldon & Company. New York, 1876.

This is a book of 256 pages, the last literary work of General Custer before starting on the campaign which ended on the Custer Battlefield. Gen. Custer describes Wild Bill at the period of his campaign against the Cheyenne and Kiowa in 1868, as follows:

"Among the white scouts were numbered some of the most noted of their class. The most prominent man among them was "Wild Bill," whose highly varied career was made the subject of an illustrated sketch in one of the popular monthly periodicals a few years ago. "Wild Bill" was a strange character, just the one which a novelist might gloat over. He was a Plainsman in every sense of the word, yet unlike any other of his class. In person he was about six feet one in height, straight as the straightest of the warriors whose implacable foe he was; broad shoulders, well-formed chest and limbs, and a face strikingly handsome; a sharp, clear, blue eye, which stared you straight in the face when in conversation; a finely-shaped nose, inclined to be acquiline; a well-turned mouth, with lips only partially concealed by a handsome moustache. His hair and complexion

were those of the perfect blond. The former was worn in uncut ringlets falling carelessly over his powerfully formed shoulders. Add to this figure a costume blending the immaculate neatness of the dandy with the extravagant taste and style of the frontiersman, and you have Wild Bill, then as now the most famous scout on the Plains.

"Whether on foot or on horseback, he was one of the most perfect types of physical manhood I ever saw. Of his courage there could be no question; it had been brought to the test on too many occasions to admit of a doubt. His skill in the use of the rifle and pistol was unerring; while his deportment was exactly the opposite of what might be expected from a man of his surroundings. It was entirely free from all bluster or bravado. He seldom spoke of himself unless requested to do so. His conversation, strange to say, never bordered either on the vulgar or blasphemous. His influence among the frontiersmen was unbounded; his word was law; and many are the personal quarrels and disturbances which he has checked among his comrades by his simple announcement that "this has gone far enough," if need be followed by the ominous warning that when persisted in or renewed the quarreller "must settle it with me." "Wild Bill" is anything but a quarrelsome man; yet no one but himself can enumerate the many conflicts in which he has been engaged, and which have almost invariably resulted in the death of his adversary. I have a personal knowledge of at least half a dozen men whom he has at various times killed one of these being at the time a member of my command. Others have been severely wounded, yet he always escapes unhurt.

On the Plains every man openly carries his belt with its invariable appendages, knife and revolver, often two of the latter. Wild Bill always carried two handsome ivory-handled revolvers of the large size; he was never seen without them. Where this is the common custom, brawls or personal difficulties are seldom if ever settled by blows. The quarrel is not from a word to a blow, but from a word to the revolver, and he who can draw and fire first is the best man. No civil law reaches him; none is applied for. In fact there is no law recognized beyond the frontier but that of "might makes right." Should death result from the quarrel, as it usually does, no coroner's jury is impanelled to learn the cause of death, and the survivor is not arrested. But instead of these old-fashioned proceedings, a meeting of citizens takes place, the survivor is requested to be present when the circumstances of the homicide are inquired into, and the unflinching verdict of "justifiable," "selfdefense," etc., is pronounced, and the law stands vindicated. That justice is often deprived of a victim there is not a doubt. Yet in all of the many affairs of this kind in which "Wild Bill" has performed a part, and which have come to my knowledge, there is not a single instance in which the verdict of twelve fair-minded men would not be pronounced in his favor. That the even tenor of his way continues to be disturbed by little events of this description may be inferred from an item which has been floating lately through the columns of the press, and which states that "the funeral of 'Jim Bludso,' who was killed the other day by 'Wild Bill', took place to-day." It then adds: "The funeral expenses were borne by 'Wild Bill.'" What could be more thoughtful than this? Not only to send a fellow mortal out of the world, but to pay the expenses of the transit. Guerrier, the half-breed, also ac-

accompanied the expedition as guide and interpreter."

Dawson, Chas. Pioneer Tales of the Oregon Trail. Crane & Company. Topeka, 1912.

This book contains 488 pages, most of it relating to Jefferson county, Nebraska and its early period. The author gives a brief biography and portrait of Wild Bill, (pages 178-184). He also gives a biography of David Colbert McCandles and an account of the Wild Bill-McCandles tragedy (pages 209-224). Mr. Dawson was apparently the first writer to put in book form a correct account of Rock Creek Station Fight.

Hart, W. S. "Wild Bill Hickok."

A motion picture. Referred to by Wilstach. Date not given, but probably since 1920.

Helvey, Frank. Experiences on the Frontier. Nebraska Pioneer Reminiscences. "Issued by the Nebraska Society Daughters of the American Revolution, 1916" The Torch Press, Cedar Rapids, Iowa.

Mr. Helvey's reminiscences cover pages 152-54. His father crossed the Missouri river at Nebraska City in 1846, and built a ranch in 1859 on the Oregon Trail at Little Sandy Creek. His father entered this land in 1861, being the first land taken in Jefferson county. Mr. Helvey states: "I spent about nine years freighting across the plains from Atchison, Leavenworth, St. Joseph, and Nebraska City to Denver, hauling government supplies to Ft. Laramie. In 1863-64 I served as substitute stage driver, messenger, or pony express rider. I have met at some time or another nearly every noted character or "bad man" that passed up and down the trail. I met Wild Bill for the first time at Rock Creek Ranch. I met him often after the killing of McCandles, and helped bury the dead. Wild Bill was a remarkable man, unexcelled as a shot, hard to get acquainted with. Lyman, or Jack, Slade was considered the worst man-killer on the plains."

Hooker, William Francis. The Prairie Schooner. Saul Brothers. Chicago, 1918.

This book is written by a frontiersman and tells with much accuracy in its one hundred and fifty-six pages some of the incidents the writer knew in the plains region. Five pages only are given under the title "Bill Hickok, City Marshal".

"Wild Bill" Hickok was perhaps the best known "character" in Cheyenne in the 70's. He, too, was a ministerial-looking person, but was not a confidence operator. He was just a plain gambler, and not a very good one, but he managed to escape the halter every time he put a notch in his gun. "Bill" killed no one in Cheyenne; in fact, his days there were quiet and prosy. His killings were all done in Kansas at the time the K. P. was being built from the Missouri to Denver. When in Cheyenne he was on his last legs—had begun, as they say nowadays, to slow up. Nevertheless, he was feared by a great many owing to his reputation, although among certain classes it was generally understood that he had lost his nerve. This was demonstrated while the Black Hills excitement was at its height. "Bill" was more than six feet tall, straight and thin. He carried two big revolvers in his belt and they protruded sometimes from the side of his long broadcloth coat. He also carried a bowie knife. But for all this and his reputation, he weakened one night when an undersized little California buccaro challenged him to walk into the street and fight a duel at twenty paces.



Benjamin Franklin Helvey, pioneer historian of Jefferson County,
helped bury McCanles, Woods and Gordon.

as opportunity offered. Two border outlaws by the name of the McCandlas boys led a gang of hard men in enterprises of this nature, and these intended to run off the stage company's horses when they found they could not seduce Bill to join their number. He told them to come and take the horses if they could; and on the afternoon of December 16, 1861, ten of them, led by the McCandlas brothers, rode up to his dugout to do so. Bill was alone, his stableman being away hunting. He retreated to the dark interior of his dugout and got ready his weapons, a rifle, two six-shooters, and a knife.

The assailants proceeded to batter in the door with a log, and as it fell in, Jim McCandlas, who must have been a brave man to undertake so foolhardy a thing against a man already known as a killer, sprang in at the opening. He, of course, was killed at once. This exhausted the rifle, and Bill picked up the six-shooters from the table and in three quick shots killed three more of the gang as they rushed in at the door. Four men were dead in less than that many seconds; but there were still six others left, all inside the dugout now, and all firing at him at a range of three feet. It was almost a miracle that, under such sur-

roundings, the man was not killed. Bill now was crowded too much to use his firearms, and took to the bowie, thrusting at one man and another as best he might. It is known among knife-fighters that a man will stand up under a lot of flesh-cutting and blood-letting until the blade strikes a bone. Then he seems to drop quickly if it be a deep and severe thrust. In this chance medley, the knife wounds inflicted on each other by Bill and his swarming foes did not at first drop their men; so that it must have been several minutes that all seven of them were mixed in a mass of shooting, thrusting, panting, and gasping humanity. Then Jack McCandlas swung his rifle barrel and struck Bill over the head, springing upon him with his knife as well. Bill got his hand on a six-shooter and killed him just as he would have struck. After that no one knows what happened, not even Bill himself, who got his name then and there. "I just got sort of wild," he said, describing it. "I thought my heart was on fire. I went out to the pump then to get a drink, and I was all cut and shot to pieces."

They called him Wild Bill after that, and he had earned the name. There were six dead men on the floor of the dugout. He had fairly

"Bill" laid down, saying his eyes had gone back on him and that his shooting days were over.

"Shortly after this incident the Cheyenne authorities decided to rid the town of a few of the worst criminals, so they tacked a notice on telegraph poles containing a list of a dozen or more names of men, headed by "Wild Bill," giving them twenty-four hours' time to get out of town. When "Bill" saw the notice he smiled, and with his bowie knife cut the notice into ribbons, and he stayed until he got ready to leave some months later. He went to Custer City, then to Deadwood, where he met his death at the hands of an avenger, who shot him in the back as he sat in a poker game."

Hough, Emerson. *The Story of the Outlaw*. Grosset & Dunlap, New York, 1905.

Chapter XII of this book is entitled Wild Bill Hickok. It tells the story of the McCanles fight very much as told in the original Harper's Monthly Magazine—without any regard for the truth.

Ingraham, Prentiss. *Wild Bill, The Pistol Dead Shot; or, Dagher Don's Double*. Beadle's Dime Library No. 168. January 11, 1882. Cited by Wilstach.

Kansas Historical Society Collections Vol. 5. 1891-96. p. 485. "Apr. 21" (1858)—"Officers of Monticello township, in Johnson county"—J. B. Hickok, as constable."

Ibid Vol. IX. 1905-6. p. 532 City Marshal of Abilene.

Ibid Vol. XI. 1909-10. P. 579. A scout and marshal of Hays City. p. 290. At Ellsworth. p. 579. In danger of assassination by soldiers at Ft. Hays.

Ibid Vol. XIII. 1913-14. Reminiscences of Louis Charles Laurent of Denver, Colo. p. 369 (Clever Story) Removing gnat from eye of Wild Bill.

Ibid Vol XV. 1919-22 p. 539. "Wild Bill." at Hays, "who was one of the finest gentlemen I met on the plains." (Scout Sigmund Shlesinger.)

Ibid Vol. XVI. 1923-25. p. 478. Mentioned.

Lewis, Alfred Henry. *The Sunset Trail*. 1922 Quoted by Wilstach, p. 229.

Little, E. C. (Kansas City) *A Son of the Border*. Everybody's Magazine, June, 1901. Cited by Wilstach.

Nichols, George Ward. *Wild Bill*. Harper's Monthly Magazine, New York, February, 1867.

This account, purporting to be an interview with Wild Bill, and witnessed by other reliable authorities, seems to be the source of information, or nucleus, for the vast amount of exaggerations and imagined impossibilities claiming to be the true life and experiences of various heroes and bad men of the plains, carrying Wild Bill as the central figure in so many cases. This story is, therefore, reprinted in this issue of the Nebraska History Magazine.

Ray, Clarence, E. *Famous American Scouts*. Regan Publishing Corporation. Chicago. No date.

This is a paper covered pamphlet, such as used to be sold on railroad trains, of 189 pages. The story of Wild Bill with portrait is given on pages 139-189. It locates Rock Creek Station fifty miles west of Topeka, with the same account of the McCanles gang who were "collecting horses for the confederate army." It tells the story of the fight of Wild Bill with the ten members of the McCanles gang very much as told by Emer-

son Hough.

Robinson, Doane. *Encyclopedia of South Dakota.* Published by Author. Pierre, 1925.

In this book of 1000 pages, Secretary Robinson of the South Dakota Historical Society, gives a comprehensive survey of South Dakota as he came to know it in half a century of life therein. On pages 346-47 he gives this sketch of Wild Bill:

"Hickok, (Wild Bill) James Butler, 1837-1876; native of Illinois; gambler and gunman; veteran of the border wars; there has been much and contradictory writing pertaining to him; he removed from Illinois, to Springfield, Missouri, about the close of the Civil War; was known as a gambler there; settled upon a homestead near Beatrice, Nebraska, and while there made his first notable fame by breaking up the notorious McCanles band of guerillas, killing three members of it; after this affair he removed to Julesburg, Colorado, where he killed a man in a gambling row. Afterward he plied his calling in Denver, but went thence to Abilene, Kansas, a place utterly dominated by the toughest outfit in America. Bill's reputation in the McCanles case having followed him, the better element in Abilene proposed to him that he clean up that city; he agreed to do so if they would make him city marshal and pay him \$1000 per month. The contract was made and with a few killings he soon had the place as tame as a New England village. He came to the Black Hills with the gold excitement and on August 2, 1876, while gambling in a saloon, was shot and killed by Jack McCall; the attack appeared to be unprovoked. McCall was arrested, tried and acquitted by a "miner's court", but was again arrested by the federal authorities taken to Yankton, tried, convicted and hanged. Hickok is buried in Mt. Moriah Cemetery at Deadwood and a statue has been erected over his grave. He is said to have been usually a civil fellow, not looking for trouble; but having acquired the reputation of being a bad gunman, he was compelled constantly to defend his title."

Stanley, Henry M. *My Early Travels and Adventures in America.* Scribner. New York, 1895.

This book is a reprint of New York Herald letters written by Henry M. Stanley, many of them from Omaha, in the years 1867-68. Stanley, afterward famous African explorer, characterizes Wild Bill, (pages 6-8) as follows:

"James Butler Hickok, commonly called "Wild Bill," is one of the finest examples of that peculiar class known as frontiersman, ranger, hunter, and Indian scout. He is now thirty-eight years old, and since he was thirteen the prairie has been his home. He stands six feet one inch in his moccasins, and is as handsome a specimen of a man as could be found. We were prepared, on hearing of "Wild Bill's" presence in the camp, to see a person who might prove to be a coarse and illiterate bully. We were agreeably disappointed however. He was dressed in fancy shirt and leathern leggins. He held himself straight and had broad compact shoulders, was large chested, with small waist, and well-formed muscular limbs. A fine, handsome face, free from blemish, a light moustache, a thin pointed nose, bluish-grey eyes, with a calm look, a magnificent forehead, hair parted from the centre of the forehead, and hanging down behind the ears in wavy, silken curls made up a most picturesque figure. He is more inclined to be sociable than otherwise; is enthusiastic in his love for his country and Illinois, his native State; and is endowed with

extraordinary power and agility, whose match in these respects it would be difficult to find. Having left his home and native State when young he is a thorough child of the prairie, and inured to fatigue. He has none of the swaggering gait, or the barbaric jargon ascribed to the pioneer by the Beadle penny-liners. On the contrary, his language is as good as many a one that boasts "college larning." He seems naturally fitted to perform daring actions. He regards with the greatest contempt a man that could stoop low enough to perform "a mean action". He is generous, even to extravagance. He formerly belonged to the 8th Missouri Cavalry.

"The following dialogue took place between us: "I say, Mr. Hickok, how many white men have you killed to your certain knowledge?" After a little deliberation, he replied, "I suppose I have killed considerably over a hundred." What made you kill all those men? Did you kill them without cause or provocation?" "No, by heaven! I never killed one man without good cause." "How old were you when you killed the first white man, and for what cause?" "I was twenty-eight years old when I killed the first white man, and if ever a man deserved killing he did. He was a gambler and counterfeiter, and I was then in a hotel in Leavenworth City, and seeing some loose characters around, I ordered a room, and as I had some money about me, I thought I would retire to it. I had lain some thirty minutes on the bed when I heard men at my door. I pulled out my revolver and bowie knife, and held them ready, but half concealed, and pretended to be asleep. The door was opened, and five men entered the room. They whispered together, and one said, 'Let us kill the son of a———; I'll bet he has got money.' "Gentleman," he said, "that was a time—an awful time. I kept perfectly still until just as the knife touched my breast; I sprang aside and buried mine in his heart, and then used my revolver on the others right and left. One was killed and another was wounded; and then, gentlemen, I dashed through the room and rushed to the fort, where I procured a lot of soldiers, and returning to the hotel, captured the whole gang of them, fifteen in all. We searched the cellar, and found eleven bodies buried in it—the remains of those who had been murdered by those villains." Turning to us, he asked: "Would you not have done the same? That was the first man I killed, and I never was sorry for that yet."

Tallent, Mrs. Annie D. *Writer upon Black Hills—1875. Quoted by Wilstach.*

Times, Los Angeles. Febr. 4, 1906. Article signed by G. W. S. Cited by Wilstach.

Wilstach, Frank J. *Wild Bill Hickok, The Prince of Pistoleers. Doubleday Page & Co. New York, 1926.*

This book of 300 pages is the latest literary attempt to tell the story of Wild Bill. The author has evidently made considerable effort to correct the mistakes and lies of other writers upon the subject. His book is commented upon by Mr. G. W. Hansen in this issue of Nebraska History Magazine, as it relates to the Rock Creek Ranch affair.

Young, Harry. (Sam). *Hard Knocks, A Life Story of the Vanishing West. Laird & Lee. Chicago, 1915.*

A book of 242 pages with many illustrations, giving some very accurate accounts of early life on the Western plains in-

cluding contacts with the Sioux Indians. The writer first met Wild Bill at Hays City in 1868 and was befriended by him. On pages 44-45 the McCandles story is told as follows:

"Shortly after this occurrence, Bill left Springfield and went to St. Louis, Missouri, where he was employed by Ben Holladay, who at that time was operating the Overland Stage Line from St. Louis to San Francisco. Holladay had suffered no end of trouble from gangs of desperadoes who were continually holding up his stage coaches, robbing the passengers and making off with the Wells Fargo strong box, which was carried under contract.

"Foremost among these desperadoes and the most feared was the noted McCandles gang. Bill was given instructions to exterminate this gang, which consisted of nine men. He was asked how many men he would require to assist him and replied: "None!" This was certainly a good evidence of the man's grit and pluck. Leaving St. Louis single handed, he made his initial move by going to Rock Springs station on the Cimmaron river, arriving at about four o'clock in the afternoon and assuming charge immediately. He had been in his new quarters but one hour when McCandles, the leader of the gang, rode up and asked him what he was doing there. Bill replied that he was the "new station agent." McCandles' response was, that if he (Bill) was not away from there within twenty-four hours, he would be shipped to St. Louis in a box. Bill's reply was that when they returned, they would still find him on the job, for he had come to stay. True to McCandles' word, the gang did return on the following afternoon and gave Bill the hardest battle of his life. Approaching the station, in which Bill was quartered, they opened fire on him,—nine men against one. They certainly were hardly prepared for what was to follow.

"In less time than it takes to write this, Bill had shot four of them; but at this critical moment, his gun was knocked from his hand. Seizing a knife from the belt of McCandles, Bill used it to advantage. Again good fortune seemed to favor him, for regaining his gun, he speedily exterminated the remainder of the gang, except one, who had gotten some distance away. One more shot from Bill's six-shooter, and the extermination of the gang was complete.

"Bill had not escaped unharmed. When he was found by a stocktender shortly after the battle, he was lying on his side unconscious and not a charge left in his gun. He had received three bullet and two knife wounds, which wounds came very nearly ending his useful career. He was taken immediately to St. Louis, where his life hung by a thread for a long time, but his remarkable vitality finally predominated. It was, however, fully a year before he was restored to his full mind and vigor."

EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION TO ORIGINAL WILD BILL STORY

(Addison E. Sheldon)

So far as known this article is the first printed upon the subject. Furthermore, this article became the basis and starting point for an extensive literature upon Wild Bill.

It has seemed to the editor of the Nebraska History Magazine that the publication of this article in full might serve an important purpose, enabling each reader to sift and separate fact from falsehood and better to evaluate the criticism upon Wild Bill literature given in this issue of our magazine.

The article, it will be noticed, gives personal interviews with Wild Bill as the basis for the narrative. These interviews are located at Springfield, Missouri, in the period immediately following the close of the Civil War—that is to say in 1865. The author of the article is apparently an officer of the Union Army, signing the initials "G. W. N.", shown in the table of contents to be George Ward Nichols, of Boston, Mass.

He asserts in a final footnote to his narrative that he tells these stories as Wild Bill told them to him and states they were confirmed in all important points by many witnesses. It will be noticed that the author of this article gives Wild Bill's surname as "Hitchcock" instead of "Hickok", its true spelling. This error, easily enough made from hearing a name in conversation, does not mark the author as a careful student, since the correct spelling of a name is one of the first things sought by a painstaking historical writer. Since the purpose of this issue of the magazine is to assemble all the important data upon the subject, placing it in a form where the intelligent reader may pass upon its truth and transmit it to future student generations of American literature we give in its complete form the original Wild Bill story as follows: