James H Pyle
1896-1976

James Harold Pyle

TEN SLEEP—Funeral services for James Harold Pyle, 80, will be Wednesday at 2 p.m. at the Ten Sleep Methodist Church with the Rev. Ruth Wight officiating. Pyle died Sunday at his home in Ten Sleep.

He was born January 27, 1896 in Valley City, Ill. the son of Edgar Parker Pyle and Mary Electa Pyle. His early years were spent at Valley City and Grigsville, Ill. where his father worked on the Wabash railroad and farmed.

In 1908 he moved to Worland with his parents and two sisters where his father worked on ranches until 1901 when he homestead.

In 1928 he married Wyoma Hemry. They lived on the homestead until 1968 when they retired and moved to Ten Sleep.

He is survived by his widow and one son Charles of Oxnard, Calif.

Burial will be in the Ten Sleep Cemetery.

Some History (Probably written by James Pyle)

Uncle Oscar (Hoback, Mary Electa Pyle's brother, uncle to Jim Pyle, Florence Lurana Coleman and Edna Lucile Greet) came back to Illinois for Christmas 1907 and Dad who had allways been interested in the west went out to Nowood early in the Spring where Oscar had a job for him with Noble and Bragg working on the ranch at Nowood. The family then sold our possessions at a farm sale and came on out. We arrived March 8, 1908 and moved into the Cornell house on the upper end of the Bragg ranch where the big lambing sheds were being built. Uncle Oscar was blacksmith for the ranch and the surrounding trade. (Largely sheep outfits).

We lived in the Cornell house until fall when Florence got a job teaching school at Nowood and Bragg got us to move to the "Cook shack" at Nowood and mother cooked there while Dad continued to work on the ranch. Meanwhile Florence who had met George Coleman the summer before when he was freighting thru to the railroad at Moneta. Married him that spring, April 1909. This was also the April of the Ten Sleep raid.

Our mother who was finding the cooking to hard for her and was also homesick for the east got Dad to take us back. We got as far as Sedalia, Mo. where Dad got a job on the R. R. section at Hughsville, Mo. We only stayd there perhaps a couple of months.

When we returned west. George and Florence met us with the freight outfit on their way to Casper. We went with them as far as Wolton then returned to Nowood where Dad worked for the Brower ranch at what is now called "Lone Tree."

Source: Handwritten document in the possession of Charles Pyle, loaned to the Fred Drake's, 2002-2004.

Coleman History (Brother-in-law of James Pyle)

GEORGE A. COLEMAN FREIGHTER

AS WRITTEN BY HIS SON ARTHUR L. COLEMAN

The winning and development of the west is well documented. The role played by the wagons in the early history has also received much recognition.

The covered wagon has been the subject of many books and movies and is familiar to almost everyone.

This story concerns the true experiences of the owner and operator of a different type of wagon train.

George A. Coleman operated a freight outfit variously known as 'string team' or 'jerk line' team similar to the well known "20 Mule Team Borax" outfit except that horses were used instead of mules.

George's outfit was well known and has been referred as the 'best freight outfit' or the 'fastest freight outfit' in Wyoming at that time.

Freight teams of this type played an important role in the transportation of large loads and enormous amounts of goods, but using only one man to drive and operate each outfit consisting of many horses and several wagons.

The first recorded joining teams and multiple wagons was in 1866 and this system of utilizing teams and wagons grew in numbers as the west developed and continued until the development of trucks provided faster service.

The completion of the transcontinental railroad in 1869 and subsequent competitive railroads did not appear to greatly reduce the need for wagon transportation, in face as the rail lines pushed deeper into the unsettled parts of the west, wagon transportation was urgently needed to distribute the supplies to the new communities which were being developed.

The discovery of gold in Montana resulted in large quantities of material being freighted north over Wyoming trails and roads.

The freight outfits with which I am familiar was owned and operated by my father, George A. Coleman. George was born in New York state on February 18, 1880. When he was three years old his father Augustus Coleman went to Colorado leaving his wife Irena with only $3.00 to live on until he would return at some indefinite time. My grandmother "took in" washings and whatever work was available and supported herself and son, until 1886 when grandfather returned.

Gus Coleman (my grandfather) became acquainted with W. A. Richards in 1883 when they both were in Colorado. Richards continued on to the Big Horn Basin in Wyoming in 1884.

Gus Coleman went to Wyoming in 1885 (possibly 1884) and taught school in a log cabin in the mouth of a canyon known as 'Mahogany Buttes" in the NoWood area of the Big Horn Basin. It is believed that this was the first school in that area.

When Gus Coleman returned to Wyoming in 1887 from New York State with his family, Irena, his wife and sons George and Howard, he worked as manager of the old Bar X Bar Ranch. The next year they moved to Hyattvillle where Gus again taught school.

In January 1887 occurred the worst snow storm in Wyoming history, with temperatures dropping to a -70 degrees. The resulting suffering and loss of livestock caused the collapse of many cattle empires, in that part of the west. Other events important in Wyoming history were occurring rapidly. In the south Cattle Kate and Averill were hanged for their part in cattle rustling. In as much as Cattle Kate was the first woman hanged this received much publicity. On the plains the continual slaughter of the buffalo had for all practical purposes depleted the herd.

On July 10, 1890, Wyoming was admitted to the Union as the 44th state with a population of 62, 555, approximately three-fourths of this population was in the southern part of the state where the railroad was located.

Frances E. Warren was the first Governor.

Gus Coleman was elected to the house of Representatives serving during its first term. He was also U.S. Deputy Surveyor the following year and conducted a survey in the Frontville area.

Gus homesteaded a ranch in 1888 on NoWood Creek which became known as the Lazy T.

During 1892 the smoldering animosity between the large cattle ranchers and the smaller nester's suspected of cattle rustling broke into open warfare in the infamous "Johnson County War'. The story is told that the 'invaders' sent a rider over to ask Gus Coleman to send some riders to join them. He, however is said to have told them that they were heading for trouble and would not participate.

William A. Richards who Gus had previously met in Colorado had moved to a ranch on NoWood Creek and in 1885 was elected County Commissioner of Johnson County. He was subsequently elected Governor in November 1894.

Gus again was elected in 1895 to the State Legislature serving four years as a State Senator. During that year he was appointed Chairman of a board of Commissioners to form and organize Big Horn County.

During the same year Butch Cassidy organized the "Wild Bunch" gang and used a section of the foothills of the Big Horns known as the "HOLE IN THE WALL" as their hideout. From this place they started their career of robberies, one of their first being a bank robbery in Montpelier, Idaho, on August 13, 1895. The following year they robbed the bank at Belle Fourche on June 28th.

While Gus was in Cheyenne when the Legislature was in session and on surveying trips in his available spare time, George was going through his teens working on the Lazy T.

While he liked ranch life and became very proficient in riding, roping and other facets of ranch life he was becoming extremely interested in having his own freight outfit.

During the yeas of 1898 and early 1899, he acquired as least twelve horses and three wagons. He modified the wagons to carry wood and trained the horses to pull as a 'jerk line team' and in the spring of 1899 he made his first trip to Casper and return as a 'freighter'. (During that trip an event occurred which almost ended his life.)

The first freight outfit was later improved upon and he became known as one of the best freighters in that part of the west. George's wife Florence (my mother) later described his outfit thus:

Hauling was done in those days with what was known as a string team which consisted, in George's case, consisted of from 16 to 20 horses, pulling 4 to 5 freight wagons and campwagon which was built like a sheep wagon. Two saddle horses were with the outfit to use in taking the horses to water and a grazing site and for riding for them in the mornings. If there were any horses who were liable to go home or wander from the place, these horses were hobbled. Usually the horses could be found within a reasonable distance from where they had been left the night before. Once in a while though one would make its get-away and maybe it would be weeks, months or years before it was recovered.

The wagons diminished in size from the large load wagon to the campwagon. The teams diminished in size from the wheelers to the leaders. The wheelers were next to the wagon. The the next team was known as the 'pointers' so called because they were hooked to the end of the tongue of the lead wagon. These four and the four and the leaders were trained for their particular work. Old Pet, Georg's off wheeler, was a wile one. She would pull over when she felt that the wagons weren't tracking and get them in line. Pet and Kate were the wheelers. Blanch and Pansy were the "pointers' in the team I remember best.

The driver rode the near wheeler or the 'lazy board' occasionally, but most of the time he walked. or rode the lazy board which was a plank suspended by iron straps just under the rack and pulled out when in use. The near wheeler was saddled and the driver rode there at times. He guided the team with a 100 foot line (rope) that ran through rings on a strap, three rings to each horse, more on the pointers. The end of one rope was attached to the bridle bit of the near lead horse. A stick called a jocky stick connected the two lead horses. A slow pull on the line turned the team to the left and quick jerk turned them to the right.

The driver a tough lunged individual with a sizzling vocabulary would let out a yell and if every horses head did not come up snappy and everyone begin to move there were other ways of emphasizing the command. He carried a slithery "shot whip' draped around his neck which was used effectively when necessary to waken a lazy horse or

before a hard pull to get each horse on his toes and eager to pull. This whip was never popped except in an emergency, in that way the team did not become accustomed to it and when it popped it meant business to them. When our little son came along and was able to walk by his Dad he was fascinated by the shot whip and teased for it but seldom got it because he would drag the popper in the dirt and soon ruin it. To illustrate a circumstance where the shot whip was used effectively -- once George was coming from Brown's shearing pens and had gotten out on to the road along the creek at the foot of the mountain when suddenly the lead wagon began to drop into a mud hole that had not been apparent. If the team had stopped it would have meant a lot of trouble. George popped the whip and yelled and the team dug in and although the mud was so deep it pushed up in front of the axle, they pulled through.

The 'shot whip' described by my mother is still in my possession and was made by Dad and I while I was a very small boy. The whip is approximately eight feet long with a large leather knob on the handle and a piece of buckskin on the other end which served as the 'popper' when the whip was cracked. The body of the whip was constructed by cutting a piece of tanned leather approximately six feet long and tapered slightly for its entire length. The small end was sewed together using an awl and leather thong. This formed a small tube into which buckshot was poured and tamped. sp;pd;u [cannot figure out this word] using a blunt awl. As the stitching and filling continued the whip took shape. When the first layer was completed, the whip was laid on the floor and Dad would roll it using the sole of his boot. This procedure resulted in the leather stitches being worked into the leather so they did not protrude greatly above the surface. The second layer was cut slightly larger than the first and sewed over the outside of the first except that the stitching was rotated 180-. Again the whip was rolled to indent the stitches. After this was completed the small end was applied. This consisted of buckskin thongs being braided into decreasing size to increase the length of the whip approximately two feet. The popper was attached to the small end of the braided section.

The whip was a very important tool in the operation of the team. But not used to alert the horses to the need for extra pulling on their part bu it was also used to punish a horse which was not pulling its share.

The 'popper' end was of course the business end. Dad was very humane in the treatment of his horses and never under any circumstances abused them. He was, however, very firm in hes expectations of what was required of the horses. Upon extremely rare occasions he has been known to use the popper and on a disobedient or lazy animal. It was said he could cut a 'button hole in the hide of a horse with unnerving accuracy. The 'knob' however was more often used as this was most effective when applied to the rump of a horse.

Dad's accuracy with the whip had other uses. I have seen him cut off the head of a coiled rattlesnake with one stroke. Strictly as a demonstration he has cut off the end off a cigarette while held in a persons mouth.

Dad's whip is one of my most prized possessions.

Mother's description continues - "A day began with the first break of dawn and what a glorious early mornings they were. Cool clear sparkling air, a peaceful quiet that gave one a feeling of harmony with nature. How good it was to be part of this plan.

George had filled the nose bags the night before, while I got breakfast he rode after the work horses, sometimes two or three millers from camp, near a water hole. Back in camp the nose bags were put on the horses. Once George had a new horse and when he put the nose bag on her, she became frightened, bucked and reared, she threw her head up and the oats went up her nose and in her eyes. George thought she would strangle to death before he could do anything as he couldn't get near her. The nose bag eventually came off and George never fed her that way again but used a box fitted with an iron bracket to fit over a wagon wheel.

George began with the leaders to harness the teams working back to the wheelers were the last. The nose bags were removed as each horse was harnessed. Then with the familiar explosive "HAWK' the horses settle into the harness and things began to move. No paved road and so the clank and rattle of chains and bump going over the rocks. The dust which rose in clouds made a mess of things in the camp wagon.

Water for drinking and cooking was carried in a 20 gallon wooden keg on the back of the camp wagon. It would get so sickeningly warm in the summer but was wet and so was endurable. I have had to be very sparing in the use of water, so have often washed dishes using two cupfuls. That was on trips from Casper to Pathfinder Dam where George hauled while the dam was under construction.

Mother further continues - 'Baking bread was sometimes rather difficult. The yeast required starting the bread the night before. Once as we were going from the Cabbage Tree, and old familiar land mark and camp site for the freighters above Lost Cabin, I had to bake my bread and oh the day was hot. I had a wood fire in the cookstove and a jolt of the wagon over the rocky road broke the front door off the stove. I had to set on the overjet and with the stove poker hold the door to in place until the bread was baked. You would wonder that bread would raise under such rough treatment. There was always an empty space of about on inch under the top crust but the bread was nice and light.

In the later years Dad described his first trip as a young freighter during which occurred an incident which almost put an end to hid freighting career.

Dad had loaded in Casper with freight for Thermopolis and I quote him, "I picked up a little Irishman who wanted to work his way, so I took him along on my first day out I met old man Douglas, a Scotchman who lived near Ten Sleep and I told him I was loaded for Thermopolis. He said he didn't think I would ever get there with my load. He said: "Look ye now mon, them fellows that loaded two weeks ago aint out of sight yet." The trip from there to Wolton next morning one of the horses had a water galled on her shoulder as big as your arm, so I laid over there two days leaving the Irishman to watch the camp. I went over to the ranch (probably the Lazy T) and got another horse. We got along from there very well till we got over to the 'D' ranch between Thermopolis and the head of Kerby Creek. Going along some sidling road the hind wheel of the trail wagon broke all to pieces. The next day I went up to the 'D' ranch and borrowed a wagon from them. Walt Long ran the 'D' at that time. Then we reloaded the load and started off. Camped a short way from there for the night. Next day we started out and hadn't gone very far when I tipped the trail wagon over, bottom side up. Well we straightened that up and got it loaded up again and hooked it on. From there we got along very well until we got to the River Crossings on Kerby Creek about fifteen miles from Thermopolis. We stopped around 3:30 in the afternoon to camp for the night. After I turned the horses loose, I got on a little black pony bareback to drive them down to the water, little Irishman going along with a pail to get water for the camp. As I left camp I looked up the valley and saw about twenty horsemen coming of a dead run. All seemed to have rifles and they were waving them like Comanche Indians and yelling at the top of their voices. "Throw up your hands." About that time I looked down to see that the little Irishman was doing. He was standing on the highest point of ground he could find close with his arms raised as high as he could and his fingers spread to their utmost. I couldn't help but laugh. He knew enough to be afraid. These men coming closer every second and I kept riding toward them which fact kept me from being shot. The officer kept telling the men not to shoot. When we met it developed that since I left Casper, the Union Pacific Train had been robbed. The Sheriff from Douglas, Joe Hazen and two deputies followed the robbers to a place northwest of Casper known as "Point of Rocks", when they got close, the robbers shot the sheriff Joe Hazen. After that they took him back and next morning the Posse was formed headed by a U.S. Marshall from Cheyenne. They picked up the track and claimed they had followed it from there and when they saw me they were sure I was one of the robbers. They had me go to Thermopolis that night. It was early spring and the river was up. There was little chance of their trying to swim the river. To find out if those fellows had crossed on the ferry and go to Thermopolis to see if I could find any work of them. I made the trip but could find no clues and came back that night and had a hard time waking anybody up, they had camped there also, to give my information to, or lack of it. The next day we went on to Thermopolis and unloaded our freight.

In the preceding episode concerning the sheriffs posse, it will be noted that Dad does not identify the robbers, however after much research, there is no question in my mind but that the posse was looking for the "Wild Bunch" from the hole in the wall. The Union Pacific Train Number 1 overland flyer was held up at 2:30 a.m. on June 2, 1899 near

Wilcox, Wyoming. The express car was blown up and the Hole In the Wall bandits escaped into the Medicine Bow Mountains. The posse found the trail of the bandits and chased them to a place approximately thirty miles north of Casper. In a gun battle Sheriff Joe Hazen was shot. The three Wild Bunch members Curry, Logan and Loy were pinned down for a while but escaped during the night and eventually joined Butch Cassidy and all rode approximately 300 miles to 'Browns Hole'. The posse was apparently looking for them when they found Dad and the 'Little Irishman'.

I was born April 11, 1910, the only child of George and Florence Pyle Coleman. I was the first delivery made by the local doctor. It was a difficult birth as evidence by the large scars on my head made by the tongs (or forceps). The birth was not recorded and during World War II when I needed a birth certificate for security identification purposes, my mother wrote to the doctor asking for one. He sent here a blank certificate and suggested that she fill it out and return it to him for signature. He said he would remember more of the details than he.

I have old pictures of the small house in Center Street, Casper where I was born and in recent years I have tried to locate it but have been unable to identify it. I believe it is still in there but have been unable to identify it. I believe it is still in the vicinity but has been moved.

In one of the early pictures of the freight outfit taken on the road to Pathfinder Dam, I am sitting on the leadwagon. I appear to be only a few months old. There is also a picture of me in a baby carriage on top of the dam apparently taken on the same trip. It appears therefore that I made my first trips in the campwagon at a very early age.

After I had grown to be a small boy it became my job to fill the nose bags at night when we stopped. I placed a quantity of oats in each one by using a 1/2 pound lard can. We carried several sacks of oats on the wagons at all times for that purpose.

In the morning after a breakfast of pancakes and when the horses were all harnessed. I will always remember what a thrill it was when Dad gave the command and the entire outfit would start to move.

Going down hills was a serious procedure as only one team, the wheelers, had the ability to hold the wagons back on the down grade. The retarding efforts of two horses was quite futile when the total weight was considered. I do not know what the total gross weight of wagons and loads was, however, I know of one trip when he had a load of over 30,000 pounds of wool. It can therefore be assumed that the total weight may have exceeded 40,000 pounds at times.

When we came to a hill Dad would 'set' the brakes on the lead wagon if the hill was not very steep. He could do this by pulling on a strap fastened to the brake arms, while ridding the 'near wheeler'. If the hill was moderately steep he would get off the horse

and 'set' the brake on each of the wagons as they passed by him. Then he would run and catch up with the wheel horse, his normal position while driving the teams. If the hill was very steep, Dad would stop the outfit and rough-lock the rear wheels of the loaded wagons. This was accomplished by using chains that were attached to the wagonboxes ahead of the wheels. The other end of the chain was wrapped around the rim of the wheel. When the wagons started up the wheels rolled ahead far enough so that the chain was under the wheel tire and the wheel could not turn. As the wagon went down the hill the chain plowed a furrow in the road. This was a severe method to use to retard the wagons but was necessary in extreme cases. On rare occasions Dad would let me ride in the saddle of the 'near wheeler'.

When the road was straight and level and the teams were performing properly Dad would sometimes pull out the 'lazy board and we would ride on it. The lazy board was a large plank which was suspended under the wagon box of the lead wagon. When nor in use it was pushed in but when Dad would pull it out, it was an interesting place to ride.

Often when the roads were dry the horses would stir up so much dust that it would hang like a cloud over the teams and wagons as we traveled along. On those occasions I would often walk along parallel to the team but sufficiently far out to escape the dust. As I walked through the sage brush it was necessary to keep a sharp lookout for rattlesnakes which were plentiful.

A favorite place to ride was on top of the load of the lead wagon. It was a treat to be able to look over the backs of all of the horses as they strained and pulled. I could turn my head and look back over the following wagons. They would bump and jolt as they hit the rocks and ruts in the road.

The camp wagon in which we lived while we were on the road, was somewhat similar to the present day travel trailer. As can be seen in many pictures, the roof was curved and was covered with heavy canvas over blankets for insulation. The bows were of varnished oak. Across the back a bed was built approximately three feet above the floor with a storage place underneath. The table was a board about three feet wide by one inch thick that was pulled from a slot under the bottom of the bed. The sides of the wagon box had over hangs on the top which were called 'over-jets'. We sat on these when eating or resting. There was a cast iron stove in the front with a small cupboard near it. The food was usually carried under in boxes, built on the sides of the wagon box but available my lifting up a lid or door in the over-jet.

Our only water supply while we were on the road, was in a 20 gallon keg which was fastened to the back of the camp wagon. There of course was no form of refrigeration and the water would become unbearably hot while exposed to the boiling sun all day. We did keep some drinking water in desert 'water bags' which maintained an acceptable temperature through evaporation. Sometimes were lucky enough to have a campsite near a stream or spring of good water.

Very often however we were forced to replenish our water supply with water heavily tainted with sulfur which made it very unpleasant to drink unless you were very very thirsty.

When I was a small baby I slept lengthwise on the over-jet and was kept from rolling off by a board fastened to the side. After I became larger, Dad would pull the table board out and place it lengthwise across the over-jets and I would sleep on that. When I became still larger I would sleep in by bed roll on the floor.

Life in the campwagon was quite pleasant while the weather was moderate. During very cold weather the floor was so cold it was necessary to keep our feet on the over-jet.

The front door was cut in half like a 'dutch' door and while we were traveling on the road we usually kept the upper half open which gave anyone riding inside a good view ahead. If the freight wagons ahead were empty, otherwise about all you could see was the load on the wagon directly in front.

When I was small mother and I rode in the campwagon most of the time. On one occasion DAd found a small colt had been born during the night to one of the work mares. The colt was too small to walk so Dad gathered it up on the saddle horse be was riding and brought it back to camp. When we got ready to start Dad placed the colt in the campwagon with Mother and me, where all three rode for the next two or three days until it was old enough to follow by the side of its mother in the team.

As the colt grew it would lie down under the wagon in the shade, while we were stopped to rest the teams, Dad was always afraid we would run over it when we started up, so Mother rode on the load on the lead wagon. When we were ready to start up she would reach down with a long willow thick and touch the colt so he would get out of the way. This worked very well until one day when the teams were 'spooked' and started up unexpectedly. The wagon ran over the colt and killed it. For a long time in the future the mother would 'whinny' for her baby every time we would pass that place in the road.

Mother's health was not always equal to the rigors of campwagon life. On some occasions she would remain at our ranch on Canyon Creek and I would travel with Dad. On those trips Dad, of course did all the cooking and we lived mainly on pancakes, canned pork and beans, the only dessert we ever had was canned fruit or dried apricots, that I can remember.

During Dad's career as a freighter he hauled many interesting cargoes.

I remember best the trips we made from NoWood, loaded with wool to Casper where it was unloaded in warehouses and shipped east by rail. On the return trip his wagons were partly loaded with general freight, for the Noble and Bragg store at NoWood.

When Dad first hauling, Casper was the rail head for that part of Wyoming, later the railroad was continued and we hauled to Lysite loads and return

Pathfinder Dam was one of the first large reclamation dams and much of the materials needed for its construction was hauled from Casper to the dam site by many freighters. Dad was one of those. Near the completion of the dam a large bronze needle valve weighing several tons was shipped by rail from Pittsburgh to Casper.

The Government built a special rack which was suspended between two wagons and on which the needle valve was loaded. The road to Pathfinder was typical for that part of the country and in one section wound through a small canyon. A long freight outfit was not very agile when making sharp turns however Dad got the valve to the site without incident. This was important as it would have had to be returned to Pittsburgh for repairs if the fine threads had been damaged.

When the oil field began to be developed Dad then hauled casing lumber and machinery to such locations as Salt Creek, Midwest, Poison Spider and others. At that time there was intense competition among the early oil companies and on some occasions 'wild catting' and 'claim jumping'.

Dad eventually started the second outfit of 16 horses and 4 wagons. No campwagon with the combined capacity of 8 wagons and 32 horses he was able to haul at one trip sufficient lumber to enable the construction crew to complete an entire derrick and not wait for him to return with the next load

I remember one occasion when he was instructed to arrive on a site at midnight. A crew was waiting and by the next morning the derrick was well under construction. Before long one of the other oil companies showed up with the sheriff who had some 'cease and desist' papers. That claim was tied up in the courts for a long time.

Dad also hauled asbestos from mines in his open wagons to Casper.

One winter Dad took a contract hauling soda from mines north of Casper. I believe the time was the winter of 1917 or 18 and we lived in a one room house when we were at the ope pit mine. We also had a house in Casper.

While we were at the mine Dad came down with the flu of which there was an epidemic at that time. Mother was very alarmed and felt she should get some medicine. We had a car in which she started for Casper. I will use her narration. "During our stay at Soda Lake, Georg came down with the flu. We were 18 miles from town and no phone. About a foot of snow covered the ground and a cold stiff wind was blowing. I was afraid. We had no medicine and George had a high fever. I felt I must go to town for the doctor, We had a Buick car not enclosed in those days. Just curtains. The gas tank registered empty, but we knew there was some gas yet in it. The road was just a track through the

sagebrush made by teams going to and from Soda Lake 15 miles until it joined the main road between Casper and the Salt Creek oil fields. At several places on this road were soap holes -- places that never seems to dry up in the summer and would 'bog or snip' when a team struck one soap holes. The driver would try the likeliest place hoping not to get stuck. Consequently in the winter there were deep ruts across these places seemily nothing, it was risky with a car because of the danger of "hanging up on high center'. I was determined to go for a doctor. George asked the men if one of them would go with me but they evidently thought I was crazy and none would risk it. I put on an old bearskin overcoat that had belonged to George's father and after we had a difficult time getting the engine started, I left camp. I had brought along with me a bunch of red rags which I had intended to tie on the sagebrush at intervals so the Doctor could follow them and find his way. As the gas tank was near empty I took along two two-quart fruit jars and a two food length of rubber hose. George said that if I went as easy as possible and coasted down the hills he thought I would have enough gas to get out to the Salt Creek Road where I could find a car and get gas. I was very fortunate. I tied the red rags on the sage brush at noticeable paints and success full and negotiated the soap holes. I was about 100 yards out on the main road when I ran out of gas. I got out and stood in front of the radiator in my big old bearskin coat hooping to deep it from freezing. I flagged every car that passed. Four big trucks went by but took no notice. George said later it was because it would have been hard for them to get at their gas and knew a car would be along soon that would take care of me. But the wind was biting cold and it was discouraging to see them go by. Finally a car with four men came by and they stopped. I told them I was out of gas and would like enough to get to town. They were kind and said they had a tank full but no way to get it out. I said, 'Oh, I can get it out alright'. So I got out my fruit jars and rubber hose and unscrewed the gas cap on the tank at the back of their car. I stuck one end of the hose into the tank and sucked on the other end until I tasted gas. Then I siphoned the two jars full. Those men were really more helpless than I, for they had never seen that don before. They were evidently not used to Wyoming where one must learn to be self-reliant. They were so concerned about me and kept close behind till I got safely into town. I was perfectly at ease now that I had a gallon of gas in the tank. I talked to the doctor who headed out and by following the red rags on the sagebrush safely reached the camp at Soda Lake.

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This lower part is not part of the authors story but is their birth dates and death dates of two of the three men.

Augustus Coleman Born May 25, 1855 in New York Died October 24, 1926 in New York

Son George A. Coleman Born February 18, 1880 in New York Died October 1, 1965 in New York

Son of George Arthur L. Coleman Born Casper, Wyo. April 11, 1910.

More Coleman History:

HON. AUGUSTUS L. COLEMAN. (George Colman's father).

To preside over the birth or formative period of a new political entity, to give shape to its plastic substance and establish its rules of action, to fix the trend of its civil policy and start in motion its educational and moral forces, is a privilege allowed to few men, and those who possess it are entitled to all honor, if they perform their duties well and wisely. In this class must be numbered Hon. Augustus L. Coleman, of Bighorn county, Wyoming, a prominent ranchman, stockgrower, legislator and leading citizen, who is now living on his beautiful ranch of 320 acres near Bigtrails. He has been so essentially a leader of thought and mental and political action in this county that he must ever occupy a place of high regard among its people, and be revered as one of its founders. He was connected with the U. S. survey which fixed the metes and bounds of much of its land and he has also performed a considerable amount of other surveying within its limits. He helped to organize the first school district in the county and taught the first school in the Bighorn basin. In order to qualify as a member of the board for this school district he was obliged to make an eight-days' trip to Buffalo. He was a member of the first board of county commissioners of the county, and also one of the first justices of the peace. He represented the county in the lower house of the First State Legislature, and has since represented it in the State Senate. For many years he was a deputy U. S. surveyor, and is now a U. S. commissioner. In all these capacities he has served the people well, discharged his duties with fidelity and skill and maintained a high standard of official propriety and dignity. Mr. Coleman was born on May 23, 1855, in Oswego county, N. Y,; where his parents, Morell and Helen (Curtis) Coleman were also native, and were his ancestors on both sides had lived for generations.. He passed his childhood and youth in his native county, and from her public schools secured his education in the way of scholastic training. After leaving school he engaged in both farming and teaching near his home until 1885, when he accompanied ex-Gov. W. A. Richards, of the Colorado Ditch Co., to Wyoming, the next year coming to his present location, where he began the raising of stock and farming. He was assiduous in improving his land, fitting it up with the necessary equipment for his purposes, beautifying it with a commodious and comfortable residence. He also labored diligently and judiciously in cultivating much of the land, thus making it subserve the requirements of his extensive and increasing herds of cattle, which now number 500 head and rank in grade with any in his vicinity. As has been noted, he served in the First State Legislature, and in 1896 he was elected to the State Senate and served four years. In this exalted station, wherein he was associated with a number of the best and ablest men in the state, he was conspicuous for the wide and accurate knowledge which he displayed of the affairs of the state, for the correctness and wisdom of his views and for his skill and vigor in enforcing them. He rendered valuable service to his constituents and to the state at large. He was married in New York, on June 2, 1878, to Miss Irene Slater, a native of that state. They have two

children, George and Howard. Mr. Coleman is in all respects a truly representative man of the state, one of hit most respected and influential citizens. Mrs. Coleman came to the West in the spring of 1887, and, although not strong physically, and, for the past nine years, almost an invalid, she has labored in the interests of her husband and family untiringly, often beyond her strength. One of the most self-sacrificing, kindest and best of the ever noble women of the frontier, she is universally beloved in the county where she has done her full share in all matters aiding in the establishment of civilization. Mr. Coleman writes us thus: "If I have been successful here, either politically or in a financial way, she is certainly entitled to the credit, for, without her loving counsel, I certainly should not have attained to any prominence." Source: Progressive Men of the State of Wyoming, A. W. Bowen & Co., Chicago, Illinois,1903, pages 787-788.

Mrs. Dean Doyle of Hyattville copied this from the book and sent it to Wyoma Pyle. She stated that Gus Coleman taught school there. Fred Drake copied directly from the book at Sheridan Public Library, Sheridan, Wyoming

Freighting With A String Team In Early Days

by Florence Coleman in Collaboration with her husband, George Coleman, now of Angelica, N. Y.

George Coleman had camped and few his horses during the winter of 1908 and 1909 at the Ferris ranch on Otter Creek in the upper No Wood country and it was to this camp that he took me as a bride in early March, 1909. The camp wagon stood about half way between the ranch houses of Keyes and Ferris. It was while we were at this camp that Tommy Dixon rode up and told George that there had been a sheep raid over on Spring Creek and that two sheep men had been killed. George said, "Oh, I guess there must be some mistake, they surely weren't killed." Tommy replied, "Well, I guess they were alright." Subsequent events showed he knew what he was talking about as he was there.

We left camp in April, as I remember, and went to haul for Noble and Bragg at No Wood hauling wool from the ranch to the railroad at Moneta and supplies for the store and ranch on the return trip.

Hauling was done in those days with what was known as a string team which consisted, in George's case, of from 16 to 20 horses, four wagons and a camp wagon which was built like a sheep wagon. Two saddle horses were with the outfit to use in taking the horses to water and a grazing site and for bring them in next morning. If there were any horses who were liable to go home or wander from the place, these horses were hobbled and so usually the horses could be found within a reasonable distance from where they had been left the night before. Once in a while though one would make its get-away and maybe it would be weeks, months or years before it was recovered.

The wagons diminished in size from the large load wagon to the camp wagon and the teams diminished in size from the wheelers to the leaders. The wheelers were next to the wagon; then the next team up was the pointers, so called because they were hooked to the point of the wagon tongue. These four and the four and the leaders were trained for their particular work. The driver walked most of the time or rode the lazy board which was a plank suspended by iron straps just under the rack and pulled out when in use. The near wheeler was saddled and the driver rode there at times. The team was guided with a 100 ft. line of rope which passed through rings on the harness except that of the pointers up to the line horse, the near leader. There were three large rings to each horse, one attached to the top of the hip strap by means of a 6 inch strap which allowed the line to play across the horses hips when making a turn. Otherwise the line would bind and become uneffective. Another ring was on the hame housing and a third on the bridle. The jockey stick was fastened by means of a curb strap to the bridle bit of the off leader, the other end being fastened to the bottom of the hame on the line horse so when the line horse turned the other leader did also. A slow pull on the line turned the leaders to the left and a jerk to the right.

Breaking a line horse wasn't easy for George at first. One day after selling his line horse he was attempting to break another coming back from Casper when he met Bear George and Jake Goodrich. They stopped to talk as all folks did in those days when travel was slow and there were no phones. Jake asked George how he was getting along breaking his line horse and George admitted he wasn't doing very well, so Jake said, "Let me see if I can't show you something about it," so The Bear waited while George took the hors out of the team and in about 15 minutes Jake had showed George how to bread a line horse. From then on George always used his method and says Jake, Dell and Billy Goodrich were natural freighters.

Sadie, a little gray mare, was the best line horse George ever had. Her team mate was Mabel. Once with 3 or 4 wagons and 10 or 12 horses he turned around between the store and cook house at No Wood, which is not much room for that much of an outfit. This was not done as a stunt but just because it was necessary.

The driver of a string team was a tough-lunged individual with a sizzling vocabulary of expletives. He would let out the explosive "Hauh!!" and if every horses head did not come up snappy and everyone begin to move, there were other ways of emphasizing the command. He carried a slithery shot whip draped around his neck, its tip nearly reaching the ground, which was used effectively when necessary to awaken a lazy horse or to put each horse on its toes eager to pull when the command came. This whip was never "popped" except in an emergency. In this way the team did not become accustomed to it and when it was popped, it meant business to them. It made a sound like the crack of a pistol. When our little son came along and was able to walk by his dad, he was fascinated by the shot whip and teased for it, but seldom got it as he would drag the popper on the ground and soon ruin it. George still has his old shot whip. To illustrate a circumstance when the shot whip was used; once George was coming from

Doubleday's shearing pens and had come to the old road along the creek at the foot of the mountain, the lead wagon began to sink in a mud hole that had not been apparent. If the team had stopped it would have meant a lot of trouble, but George popped the whip and yelled. The team dug in and pulled through.

A day with a freighter began at the first break of dawn and what glorious early mornings those were, cool clear sparkling air and a peaceful quiet that gave one a feeling of the harmony of nature and the goodness of life. After breakfast, the nose bags having been filled the night before, George went for the horses, sometimes two or three miles from camp near a water hole. Back in camp the nose bags were put on the horses and hooking up began. Once when George put a nose bag on a new horse, it went crazy, bucked, reared and threw its head up and the oats went up its nose and into the lungs until he thought she would strangle to death before he could do anything as he couldn't get near her, but the nose bag finally came off and he never tried using one again but fed her from a box made with strap irons to hook over a wagon wheel.

Harnessing began with the leaders as the unharnessing had begun with the wheelers and the harness so laid back of each team that it could be drawn up onto the team again working from the reverse direction. The traces were never unhooked from the single trees. I timed George once at unharnessing and it took him seven and a half minutes to free the sixteen horses. When everything had been put in order and secured, the driver took hold of the line, tested it, gave his familiar explosive yell, "Haw!" and the team settled into the harness and the wagons began to roll. No paved roads and so the clank and rattle of heavy chain, the thud of hoofs and Thunk and clatter of wheels on rocks and rough ground and through the dust which rose in clouds to make a mess of things in the camp wagon could be heard and seen for some distance.

Water for drinking and cooking was carried in a 20 gallon keg on the back of the camp wagon and would get sickening warm in summer but it was wet and so endurable. I have had to be so sparing in the use of water at times for fear we might have to lay over because of breakdown or the loss of a horse far from water that I have sometimes washed dishes in two cupfuls, then wiped the linoleum with it. That was on trips from Casper to Pathfinder Dam where George hauled during the construction of the Dam.

Baking bread was sometimes a problem. Yeast in those days required starting the bread the night before. Once as we were on the way from the Cabbage Tree, an old familiar landmark and camp site for freighters above Lost Cabin on Bad Water to Lysite, I had to bake my bread. The day was very hot and we burned wood in a little cook stove. The road was very rough. The bread had only begun to bake when the front door broke off the stove. I had to sit there on the overjet and with the stove poker hold that door in place till the bread was baked. You would wonder that bread could raise under such rough treatment. There was always an empty space of about an inch under the top crust but the bread was nice and light.

Little colts, while not expected, sometimes surprised us by their appearance. Such a one was presented by Old Pet, the off wheeler, one morning when George went for the horses. As he sometimes did, George spread a canvas on the floor of the camp wagon and put the little fellow there while we were traveling. After a day or so he was able to follow his mother. Because of her place near the off side of the wagon, it was feared the colt would get run over as he always lay down to rest when the team stopped so I rode on the corner of the rack where I could touch him with a long stick and get him up before the team started. After a couple of days of this, George said I needn't do it any more so I went back to the camp wagon. He hadn't gone far when a fellow came along on a motorcycle who attempted to pass too near the off side which frightened the team and he couldn't stop them till the colt was run over. I knew instantly what had happened. The little fellow had lay down in front of the wheel and had been run over. I was heart-broken and the mother, Old Pet, was a long time forgetting that place in the road for when we would pass that place in the road for when we would pass that spot where she last saw her "little fellow," she would whinny time and again, a mother's cry and call in vain.

Between No Wood and Moneta the familiar camping places were the Double Crossing near the old Cornell Place above the crossing before you begin the climb over the mountain, Cottonwood Pass and the Cabbage Tree. Among the names of freighters were those of John Earley, George Brown, Harry Mills, Berch Warner, Lew McCreary and Ernest McMillan and also Billy Goodrich and Bill Garrison, Charley and Ed Mills.

Here is the story of George's first trip as a freighter at the age of 19 (1899) told in his own words:

I was with Bill Garrison and Billy Goodrich, both on their first trip freighting also. We loaded wool at Lost Cabin and started for Casper by way of Bader Road. We camped for the night somewhere near Armento's. Next morning we went for the horses --- Bill and Billy each had six and I had eight. We found all but two of Bill Garrison's so we started out in different directions to find the two that were gone. I found Bill's horses and brought them back to camp. Along about noon Bill came back carrying a joint of stovepipe that one of us had lost the day before (this was before camp wagons). Bill never mentioned the horses as he rode up but said "I had one h---- of a time finding this stovepipe." Just like old Bill. After dinner we hooked up and the rest of the trip to Casper was uneventful. We will leave Garrison and Goodrich in Casper. I loaded out for Thermopolis. A little Irishman came to me and wanted to work his way, so I took him along. My first day out I met old man Douglas, a Scotchman, who lived around Ten Sleep. We stopped to talk and I told him I was loaded for Thermopolis and he didn't think I'd ever make it there with my load. He said "Look ye now, mon, them fellows that loaded two weeks ago ain't out of sight yet." The trip from there to Wolton was uneventful. Next morning one of the horses had a "water galled" on her shoulder as big as your arm so I laid over there two days leaving camp in care of the Irishman and went over to the ranch (the old Lazy T, the Coleman ranch near Bigtrails) and got another

horse. We got along from there very well till we got over near the "D" ranch between Thermopolis and the head of Kirby Creek. While going along a sidling road one hind wheel of the trail wagon broke all to pieces. Next day I went over to the "D" ranch and borrowed a wagon from them. Walt Long ran the "D" at that time. Then we reloaded the load and started off and camped a short way from there for the night. Next day we started out and hadn't gone far when I tipped the trail wagon over bottom side up. Well, we straightened that up, got it loaded again and hooked it on. From there on we got along good till we got to the Twin Crossings on Kirby Creek about fifteen miles from Thermopolis. We stopped around 3:30 in the afternoon to camp for the night. After I turned the horses loose I got a little black pony I had to drive them (bareback) down to water, the little Irishman going along with a pail to get water for camp. As I left the camp I looked up the valley and saw about twenty horsemen coming on the dead run. All seemed to have rifles and they were waving them like Comanche Indians and yelling "Throw up your hands." I sized up the situation at once and decided it was some of the M Bar boys who had been to Thermopolis and got too much whiskey. They kept coming and yelling "Throw up your hands." About that time I looked down to see what the little Irishman was doing. He was standing close to by with his arms raised as high as he could and his fingers spread to their utmost. I couldn't help but laugh but he knew enough to be afraid. These men kept coming nearer every second and I kept riding toward them which fact kept me from getting shot. The one man kept telling the men not to shoot. When we met it developed that since I had left Casper the Union Pacific train had been robbed and the sheriff from Douglas, Joe Hazen and two deputies had trailed the robbers to a place north west of Casper known as "Point of Rocks" where they got too close and the sheriff, Joe Hazen, was shot by the robbers. After that he was taken back to Douglas and next morning a posse was formed, headed by a U. S. Marshall from Cheyenne. They picked up the trail and claimed they had followed it from there and when they saw me they were sure I was on of the robbers. They had me go to Thermopolis that night. It was early Spring and the river was way up and there was little chance of their trying to swim the river. They wanted me to find out if fellows had crossed on the ferry and to see if I could find any word of them in Thermopolis. I made the trip but could find no clues. I came back to camp that night and had a hard time waking anybody up (they had camped there also) to give my information or lack of it. The next day the little Irishman and I went on into Thermopolis and unloaded our freight and so ended my first trip as a freighter.

His Dad Was a Wagon Train Operator

A retired Endicott industrialist spent his early years riding the wagon trains operated by his father across Wyoming. Young Arthur Coleman is shown with his dad, George, as they get ready to start the five-wagon rig, loaded with sheep's wool, across the plains to the nearest rail spur. The eight-foot "shot" whip draped around 'the elder Coleman's neck was rarely used on the horses but could decapitate a rattler with a snap. For more rare pictures and a story on these "land ships" of the West please turn to Page 16 and

17. Page 1. Pictures are Nos. 10 to 18, in the George Coleman Scrapbook of this file in Family Tree Maker 2006.

He's Never Forgotten Thrill of Riding the Wagon Trains

by MARY ANN SCOTT, Staff Writer

Spending much of his early boyhood as a passenger on one of the West's leading wagon trains, Arthur L. Coleman of Vestal says he never ceased to thrill at the start-up of a line of 20 horses as they strained and began the long haul at daybreak across miles of largely unpopulated land.

Coleman's father, George, was known as one of the better operators of wagon teams. Living in Casper, Wyoming, where Coleman was born in 1910, his father would drive teams of 16 or 20 horses hauling for or five wagons of wool from the sheep ranches to Casper, then the end of the railroad.

He then hauled supplies back to the ranches and the few stores of rural Wyoming, often the ranchers' only connection with the "outside world" except for the stagecoach delivery of mail.

The sight of the long wagon train was so impressive that a young teacher, who went West to teach at No Wood, began photographing the train.

She later met the sole driver of the train, and married him. She continued her photographic record of the era, developing film in the camp wagon she and her son traveled in, washing the film in available streams, and making contact prints in the wagon.

Besides remembering the sheer size of the long freight train, Coleman also remembers the dust from 20 horses plodding across the prairie. Although there was a board on the camp wagon for him to sit on, Coleman says the dust was so deep it hung in clouds.

To avoid dust, he usually walked in the sagebrush to the side of the team. The chief disadvantage, he recalls, was that he had to be ever watchful for rattlesnakes.

A few years ago Coleman and his wife camped at Cottonwood Pass in the Big Horn Mountains to wait out a severe rain and hail storm.

It was familiar turf to Coleman, on the route his father had driven in earlier decades. The couple was using, of course, not a campwagon but a modern camping trailer.

As the storm subsided, the couple tried to continue on their way.

But the mud on the dirt roads was so thick they couldn't make any progress. During a full 24-hour period, the couple didn't- see "anything else alive---not an animal or a person," Coleman says.

In the next 24 hours, a car, airplane and horse and rider appeared---only because they had heard that someone might be stranded there.

He also recalls the names of the tiny towns---Ten Sleep (Meaning a 10-day trip from one place to another), Lost Cabin, and Big Trails where he attended school in a one-room schoolhouse.

Big Trails was named by Coleman's grandfather, who served in the first term of Wyoming's House after it became a state, later serving also in the state Senate.

The Coleman team came in handy when the government began construction of a pathfinder dam, Coleman says. The government ordered construction of a special body for two wagons, suspended a large valve between the two wagons, and had Coleman's father haul it to the dam site.

When oil was discovered in Wyoming, Coleman's teams also hauled lumber to the oil fields. By then the operator of two 16-horse teams, he was able to haul enough lumber on a single trip to construct an entire oil derrick.

As the era of wagon trains drew to a close, Coleman's father continued his trade. He bought trucks, however, to continue his hauling to the oil fields.

Like most men in the early 20th century, Coleman's father led a hard life.

The typical day began at 4 a.m., Coleman recalls, when his father would gather up horses, unharnessed and released the previous evening to find water and grazing pasture.

His father knew the nearest water holes as well as the horses did, Coleman says.

The Coleman team was one of the few that used a single rope for the full length of the team, with the front end hooked onto the bridle of the lead horse. The single rope was called the jerk line.

A gentle pull on the rope turned the horses to the left, Coleman says, while a sharp jerk moved them to the right.

A resident of Vestal over 30 years Coleman is a former town board member and has been active in civic organizations. In recent years he and his wife Sara Jane have

wintered in Florida following his retirement as president of Endicott Forging and Manufacturing Col. they live at 517 S. Benita Blvd.

The couple's three children also live in Vestal---Nancy Jane Myers, 505 Hazel Dr.; Lauren Arthur Coleman, State Line Road; and Joyce Ann Terry, 329 Brooklea Dr.

Coleman has never lost the sense of nostalgia, however, for the covered wagon trains on which he rode until he was about eight.

The camp wagon that was home to him during that period is still in existence, owned by a rancher who uses it on the range in the summer. Coleman would like to purchase it to donate to Girl Scout West, a nearby ranch, both for historical reasons and for use as a storm shelter.

Thwarted in his efforts at research because "very little material is available" on the subject, he has turned over 40 negatives to the Wyoming Bureau of Archives, which previously had only six pictures of the wagon trains.

He also applauds the part of the 1976 Centennial plan that calls for covered wagon trains to begin treks from various parts of the United States, all converging on Philadelphia for the grand Centennial observance.

In the meantime, Coleman gives talks and shows his unusual collection of pictures to anyone who is interested. He says he never needs coaxing to begin his reminiscences. SOURCE: Tempo OF THE TOWNS, Vol. IV, No. 45, Vestal, New York 13850, Wednesday, December 18, 1974, pages 16-17.

1900 United States Federal Census about George Coleman

Name: George Coleman Age: 20 Birth Date: Feb 1880 Birthplace: New York

Home in 1900: Redbank, Big Horn, Wyoming

Race: White Gender: Male

Relation to Head of House: Son

Marital Status: Single

Father's Name: August Coleman Father's Birthplace: New York

Mother's Name: Irene Coleman Mother's Birthplace: New York

Household Members:

Name Age

August Coleman 45

Irene Coleman 40

George Coleman 20

Howard Coleman 6

Fred Bedford 23

Charles Rider 19

Leonard Earley 24

1910 United States Federal Census about George G Coleman, Home in 1910: Casper, Natrona, Wyoming

Name: George G Coleman

[George A Coleman] Age in 1910: 30 Birth Year: 1880 Birthplace: New York

Race: White Gender: Male

Relation to Head of House: Head

Marital Status: Married Spouse's Name: Florence L Coleman

Father's Birthplace: New York Mother's Birthplace: New York

Household Members:

Name Age

George G Coleman 30

Florence L Coleman 24 [26]

Leon G Coleman 8/12 [0]

Edna Pyle 17

1920 United States Federal Census about George A Coleman, Home in 1920: Moran, Spokane, Washington

Name: George A Coleman Age: 39 Birth Year: abt 1881 Birthplace: New York

Race: White Gender: Male

Relation to Head of House: Head

Marital Status: Married Spouse's Name: Florence L Coleman

Father's Birthplace: New York Mother's Birthplace: New York

Home owned: Own

Able to read: Yes Able to Write: Yes

Household Members:

Name Age

George A Coleman 39 M

Florence L Coleman 36 F

Arthur L Coleman 9 M

1930 United States Federal Census about George A Coleman, Home in 1930: Binghamton, Broome, New York

Name: George A Coleman Gender: Male Birth Year: abt 1880 Birthplace: New York Race: White

Marital Status: Married Spouse's Name: Florence L Coleman

Father's Birthplace: New York

Household Members:

Name Age Birthplace

George A Coleman 50 M Head New York

Florence L Coleman 46 F Wife Illinois

Arthur Coleman 20 M Son Wyoming

Irene Coleman 70 F Mother New York