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YOSEMITE NATURE NOTES

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BODIE, DEAD CITY OF MONO

By C. P. Russell

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"Good-bye God! I'm going to Bodie."

When in the late 70's, that turbulent town, Bodie, was attaining its reputation as a tough place, a newspaper of Truckee, California, quoted the small daughter in a Bodie-bound family as having offered the above prayer. An editor of one of the several Bodie papers rejoined that the little girl had been misquoted. What she really said was, "Good, by God! I'm going to Bodie."

For a number of years the writer of these lines has been tracing the story of the rise and fall of the mining activities in Mono county. These researches into the trend of human events east of the Sierras were made in connection with the organization of historical data and relics for the Yosemite Museum. With the first dips into the exciting matter, however, the studies became more than a duty. At any rate, they became a most enticing and engrossing duty. It was easier to pursue the work to a conclusion than it was to leave it alone.

Four Newspapers Published in Camp

Search in the Bancroft library uncovered files of newspapers printed in the "roarin'" camps. Chief among these were the Bodie Chronicle, Bodie Free Press, Bodie Morning News and Bodie Standard. If the reader doubts the ability of mining camp editors to perpetuate the living spirit of cities that are doomed to physical ruin let him go

to these absorbing files.

Then there is Joseph Wasson's "Bodie and Esmeralda," written in 1878. Wasson's objective, no doubt, was to place the mining companies in a way to sell more stock, but he has given some interesting history also upon which one may depend:

"See Jim Cain!"

Best of all, one may go to Bodie! For some time past all of my contacts with men of former Bodie experiences have resulted in one and the same admonition, "See Jim Cain. He is still in Bodie!" Recently it was my opportunity to drive into Bodie, and my very great pleasure to "see Jim Cain." Through his kindness and through the great hospitality of his son and daughter-in-law, Mr. and Mrs. D. V. Cain, I enjoyed an old-time Western welcome to their home, and a twenty-four-hour visit in the ghost town of Bodie.

An Amazing Sight

We entered the old town from Bridgeport. The road is narrow but grades are not steep and the surface is good. Over this road from "Big Meadows," as Bridgeport was known in the days of its building, have passed thousands of stages and mountains of freight. As we topped a sage-covered mountain there opened before us the amazing sight of the deserted city, and the mightily-scarred hills, tumbled hills which have given up fabulous wealth and engulfed still other fortunes.

The Landlord of Bodie

Do you know the loneliness of a truly deserted city? It is appalling. Through a long street lined with business houses, grayed and warped with weathering, and despairing in aspect, we made our way to one structure of promise. There we found Mr. J. S. Cain. There is nothing weather-beaten nor spent about Jim Cain. Since 1879 he has engaged in Bodie affairs, and today he regards the future with all the optimism of youth. He is the landlord of Bodie. Its blocks of business houses, hotels, saloons, newspaper offices, fire houses, amusement places, undertaker's establishment, churches, schools, lodges, Chinatown, red-light district, cemetery, mills and mines, are chiefly his. He opens his old bank building, in the vault of which was once stored a mint of wealth, and entertains curious visitors. He regales these tourists with witty stories and amazes them with ancient photos. Apparently his recompense is the satisfaction of having pleased others with his review of the old town's palmy days.

The Wildest of the Latter-Day Mining Camps

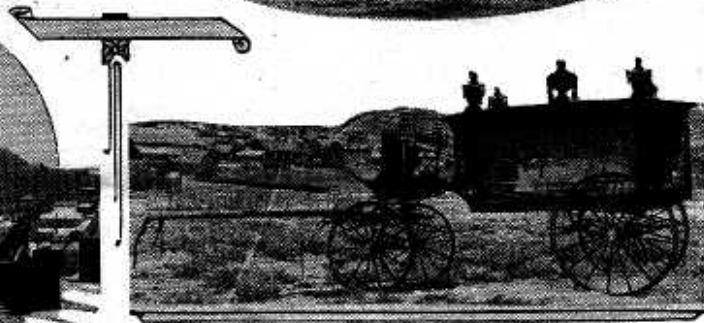
It was my privilege to enjoy these recountings in the hospitable parlor of the Cain home. Would that I might have prevailed upon Mr. Cain to put his intensely interesting anecdotes and reminiscences in print. Through the years of Bodie's actual scenes of violence that won for the town the reputation of being the wildest of the latter-day mining camps. "The Bad Man from Bodie" became nation-wide in repute. Jim Cain witnessed these exciting events and now resides among the disintegrating stage settings and trappings of the arena of Bodie drama. Practically every street corner, yes, every building and every sagging door, recalls to him some spectacular occurrence in the romance of Bodie's boom days. It is futile to recount those tales here, but perhaps some reader may prevail upon Jim Cain to enrich western history by chronicling those stirring events. Twelve thousand

active citizens centered their hopes upon the mining bustle on Bodie Bluff, twelve thousand men and women lived the unrestrained existence of the almost lawless camp, hundreds of men met violent deaths, and human character was there disclosed at its worst and best. It is the writer's purpose to briefly outline here the history of the Bodie region. The detailed story of events in Bodie comprises a chapter in California history, rich in sensation and human interest, that probably can be well presented by but one man. It should be written now and Jim Cain should write it.

The Moore Punitive Expedition

The first records of mineral finds in the Mono Lake region are those that pertain to Lieut. T. Moore's Indian-fighting expedition in the Yosemite. In May, 1852, a party of prospectors found their way into Yosemite valley, where they were attacked by the presumably quieted Yosemite Indians. Two members of the party were killed and the survivors fled to Coarse Gold Gulch, where their experiences were recounted to the already inflamed miners, to whom Indian treachery was well known. The commander of the regular army garrison at Fort Miller was notified of these events and a detachment of the Second Infantry was dispatched to Yosemite in June, 1852. Lieutenant Tredwell Moore was in command.

A few Indians were captured in Yosemite and executed. Tenaya's scouts undoubtedly witnessed this pronouncement of judgment, and the members of the tribe fled to their Piute allies at Mono lake. The soldiers pursued the fleeing Indians by way of Tenaya lake and Bloody canyon. They found no trace of the Yosemiteites, but they explored the region north and south of Bloody canyon and found some promising deposits. In August they returned to Tuolumne Soda Springs and then made their way back to Mariposa by a route that passed south of the Yosemite valley. Their trail is indicated on the accompanying chart.



SCENES IN THE GHOST CITY, BODIE

Upper left - Standard mill. The Bodie and the Standard consolidated and operated successfully for years after Bodie's decline. Upper right - In the palmy days a half dozen hotels strained to care for Bodie's transients. Lower left - Affairs of the church were not entirely lacking. Lower right - Two hearses are to be found at the cemetery. Photos by FRASHERS, Pomona.

The Rise of the Sonora-Mono Trail

Upon arrival at Mariposa they exhibited samples of their gold discoveries. This created the usual "excitement," and Lee Vining with a party of companion hastened to visit the region to prospect. Leevining canyon, through which the Tioga road now passes, was named for the leader of this party. These first miners, with a few others, continued to work in the Mono region, apparently unthought of by their former associates west of the Sierras. In 1857 it became known among the miners of the Mother Lode that rich deposits had been found at "Dogtown" and Mono-ville, and a rush from the Tuolumne mines resulted. The Mono trail from Big Oak flat, through Tamarack flat, Tenaya lake, Tuolumne meadows and Bloody canyon was blazed at this time and came into great use. The Sonora pass route was also used and it was over this trail that the discoverer of Bodie traveled from the Tuolumne mines to Mono.

W. S. Body, Founder of Mining Camp

According to accounts printed when excitement at Bodie was high, the discoverer of the Bodie wealth, W. S. Body, came to California on the sloop Matthew Vassar, in 1848. He had lived in Poughkeepsie, N. Y., and there left a wife and six children. (1) In November, 1859, Body, Garraty, Doyle, Taylor and Brodigan crossed Sonora pass to test the Mono possibilities. On their way back to the west side of the mountains they dug into placer ground in a gulch on the east side of Silver Hill, one of those present pock-marked hills just above Bodie.

Tragic Deaths.

The partners apparently remained on the ground and equipped themselves, there transpired those perpetuities to work their claims. In March, 1860, Body and "Black" Taylor went to Mono-ville for supplies, and en route were overtaken by a severe snow storm. Body became exhausted and Taylor attempted to carry him, but was forced to wrap a blanket around him and leave him. Taylor returned to their cabin, obtained food,

and then wandered about all night in a vain search for his companion. It was not until May that Body's body was found, when it was buried on the west side of the black ridge southwest of the present town. Taylor's fate was more melancholy than that of his companion. He was killed by Indians at Hot Springs, north of the town of Benton. (2)

Other miners came into the vicinity and at a meeting with E. Green presiding. "Body Mining District" was organized. Subsequent usage changed "Body" to "Bodie." In the summer of 1860 prospectors located lodes a few miles north of Bodie that were destined to put the Bodie find "in the shade" for some years to come. This was the Aurora discovery, upon which the Esmeralda District, organized in 1860, centered.

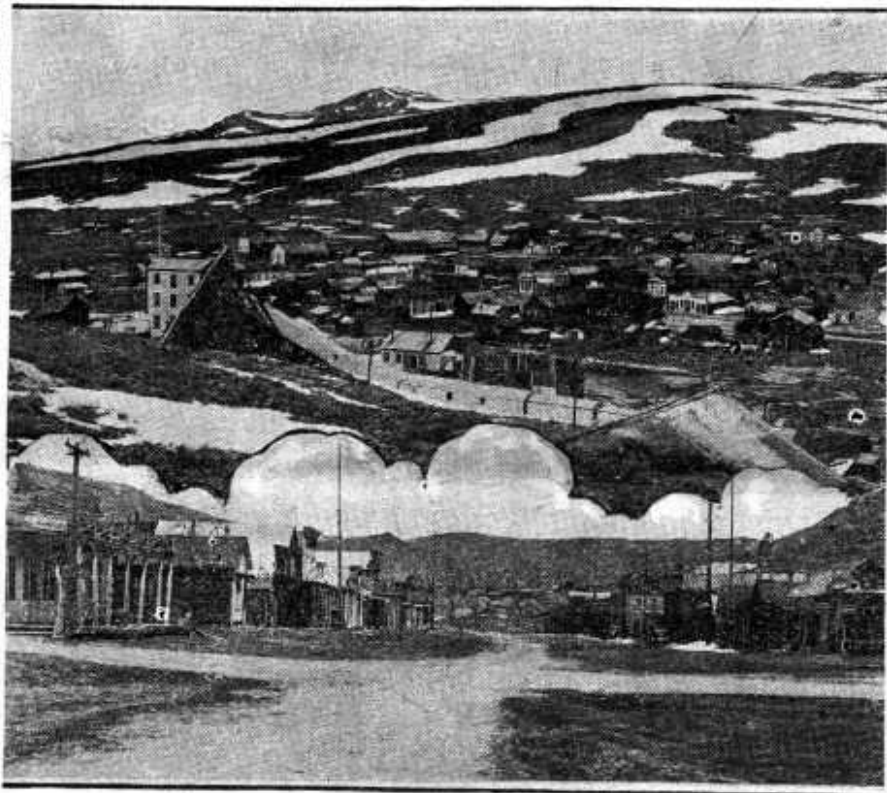
Mono County Is Organized

Aurora forged ahead and became a wildly excited camp, but, its bloody career was little more than a drunken orgie. The rich ores which had induced extravagance and wild speculation disappeared when shafts had been sunk about 100 feet, and the "excitement" came to a sudden end.

It is worthy of note that the first board of county supervisors of the county of Mono met in Aurora, June 13, 1861. By 1864 it was discovered that the camp was some miles within the state of Nevada, so Bridgeport was named the county seat. (3) Just before the move was made a substantial courthouse had been built in Aurora, and the old building still stands. E. A. Sherman, first editor of the Esmeralda Star of Aurora, journeyed to our eastern states prior to 1863-64, and took with him a fifty-pound specimen of rich Aurora ore. This chunk of rock had been sold and resold at mining camp auctions to swell the sanitary fund, of Civil war significance. Thousands of dollars were added to the fund by this one specimen, just as had been done through repeated sale of the celebrated Austin, Nev., sack of flour.

Plymouth Rock Is Cornerstone

Mr. Sherman met Mr. Davis of the Pilgrim Society, in Plymouth,



Bodie views. (Left) Jim Cain, landlord of the old town. Photos by FRASHERS Inc., Pomona.

Mass., and exchanged the Aurora ore for a piece of Plymouth rock. This fragment of Plymouth rock was brought back to Aurora, and when the Modoc county courthouse was built there, the Plymouth rock fragment was laced in the corner stone. Someone, eventually will pull that bit of sacred rock from out the deserted courthouse wall. Perhaps they will know the significance of it, and perhaps they will not.

Mark Twain's Cabin

Mark Twain at one time resided in Aurora and engaged in his humorous exaggerations. His cabin there, which even in 1878 when Wasson wrote his "Bodie and Esmeralda," had become somewhat mythical, was recently located and moved to Reno, where it is now exhibited. At any rate, an Aurora cabin was found which might have been occupied by Mark Twain. Since it is of the old type it is perhaps as valuable as would be were its complete pedigree known.

The truly important activity in the Esmeralda region prompted the building of the Sonora Pass wagon road. The Mono county supervisors ordered that road bonds on the "Sonora and Mono road" be issued on November 5, 1863. The road was projected in 1864 and opened to travel in 1868.

The Little Girl's Prayer

Bodie in the meantime had not given up the ghost, but only a comparatively few miners occupied the camp. From its discovery until 1877 an average of twenty votes were polled each year. In 1878 the Bodie Mining Company made a phenomenally rich strike of gold and silver ore and the entire mining world was startled. Stock jumped from 50 cents to \$54 a share. The news swept all western camps like wild fire, and by 1879 Bodie's crowd and reputation was such that the little girl's prayer of "Good-bye God! I'm going to Bodie" was representative of the opinion held by contemporaries.

Body's Bones Exhumed and Paraded

Even W. S. Body, whose body had moldered in a rocky grave for nearly twenty years, was not undisturbed by the activity. His bones were dug up and paraded

before the hilarious hordes that foregathered in his former haunts. In 1871, J. G. McClinton had discovered the forgotten Body grave while searching for a horse. (5) He made no move to change the burial site until some one of Bodie's several newspapers launched erroneous reports as to the whereabouts of Body's remains. In the fall of 1879 McClinton and Joseph Wasson exhumed the skeleton, exhibited it to Bodie's motley populace, and then gave it an elaborate burial, not excluding an eloquent address by Hon. R. D. Ferguson. (6-7) Now this honored skeleton occupies a grave that is quite as neglected as the sage-grown niche in which it originally rested, but it at least shares a place with the other several hundred dead, disposed of in Bodie's forgotten cemetery.

The Bottom Falls Out

To make Bodie's story short, let it suffice to say that for four years the camp maintained the same high pressure activity. Men mined, milled, played, fought, and hundreds died. Some fifty companies tunneled into Bodie's bluff, and all but turned it inside out. Probably twenty five millions in bullion were conveyed in Bodie stage coaches to the railroad at Carson. Perhaps an amount almost as great was sunk into the hills by the numerous companies that carried on frenzied activity but produced no wealth. Only the Standard and the Bodie had proved to be immensely profitable, and in 1881 the stock market went to pieces. Bodie's mines, one after another closed down. In 1887 the Standard and the Bodie consolidated and operated sanely and profitably for some twenty years longer. (4) But the camp's mad days of wild speculation and excessive living were done. Gradually activities have ceased and a few years ago, even the Standard closed. The town is a spectre. Only Jim Cain's optimism and very healthy humor prevent the place from assuming all of the aspects of an unburied skeleton.

Mr. Cain gave me a specimen of ore from the Addenda mine. He declares that Bodie's activities in 1879 will be as nothing when compared to the boom that is coming!

HISTORY OF OTHER SUMMIT CAMPS

The Mono Trail, Mariposa Trail, the story of Monoville, and the history of Bodie have been considered in the text of the accompanying article. A brief history of the other points shown follows:

Tioga Mine

In 1874, William Brusky, a prospector, came upon a prospect hole, shovel, pick and an obliterated notice at this place. The notice indicated the mine had been located as "The Sheepherder" in 1860. It was presumed by Brusky that the original locators were returning to Mariposa or Tuolumne from Mono Diggings, Bodie or Aurora when they made the find. He flattered the claim by supposing that the original locators probably perished as it is not likely that they would abandon so promising a claim." (8) At any rate, he relocated the claim as the "Sheepherder."

In 1878, E. B. Burdick organized the Tioga district. (9). Most of the mines were owned by men of Sonora, although some eastern capital was also interested. The district extended from Kings ranch at the foot of Bloody Canyon, over the summit of the Sierras and down the Tuolumne river to Lambert's Soda Springs. It was eight miles in extent from north to south. At one time, there were 350 locations in the district. Bennettville (now called Tioga) was headquarters for the Great Sierra Mining Company offices, which concern was operating the old Sheepherder as the "Tioga mine."

Opening Trails to Tioga

The company apparently suffered no lack of funds and operations were launched on a grand scale. Great quantities of supplies and equipment were packed into the camp at enormous expenditure of labor and money. At first the place was accessible only via the Bloody Canyon trail, and Mexican packers contracted to keep their pack animals active on this spectacular mountain highway. A trail was then built from the busy camp of Lundy, and that new route to Tioga proved most valuable. The Homer Mining Index of March 4, 1882 contains an amazing account of transporting 16,000 pounds of

machinery up 4000 feet of almost vertical mountainside to Tioga, in winter. Such difficulties prompted the Great Sierra Mining Company to construct the Tioga road that they might bring their machinery in from the west side of the Sierras. The road was completed in 1883 at a cost of \$64,000.

In 1884, one of those "financial disasters" which always seem to play a part in mining camp history, overtook the Great Sierra Mining Company, and all work was dropped. Records show that \$300,000 was expended at Tioga and there is no evidence that their ore was ever milled. Now, we are told, heirs of the former owner are investigating the possibilities of a re-summation of work.

Summit Mine

Yosemite hikers who have climbed into that interesting summit region above Gaylor lakes, have been led to ponder over the origin of the picturesque village of long-deserted rock cabins clustered about a deep mine shaft. This is the Mount Dana Summit mine, whose owners were determined to operate in winter as well as in summer. In the Homer Mining Index, Lundy, of October 30, 1880, we are told that the superintendent of this mine visited Lundy and employed skilled miners to spend the winter there. In December of the same year a Mr. Burdick descended to Bodie to obtain money with which to pay those miners. "He got tripped up on Bodie whisky and was drunk for weeks. Some of the miners returned to Lundy from the Summit mine. The distance is but seven miles, but they were two days making the trip and suffered many hardships." Later F. W. Pike took charge of the Summit mine, but no record has been handed down on the final demise of the camp.

Lundy

Prior to 1879 W. J. Lundy was operating a sawmill at the head of Lundy lake. His product helped to supply Bodie's enormous demand for timber. In 1879 a discovery of placer diggings was made, along Mill creek between Mono lake and the mouth of the canyon. Prospectors rushed to the region and when it was determined that the

placers amounted to nothing a search was made in the mountains above. A rich region was found, "Homer district" was organized, October 9, 1879, and Lundy townsite was located at Lundy lake. C. I. Nye is credited with the discovery. It is worthy of mention that the Sierra Telegraph Company extended its line from Lundy to Yosemite valley, where it made connection with Street's line to Sonora in 1881.

Reports from the State Mining Bureau would indicate that something like \$3,000,000 has been taken from the May Lundy mine. The town of Lundy proved to be substantial for many years, and the "Homer Mining Index" printed there is the best of all the newspapers that were produced in the ephemeral camps of Mono. Something of the spirit of mining camp journalism may be gathered from the following note taken from a December, 1880, number of the "Index."

Running a Mining Camp Newspaper

"The Index wear a cadaverous aspect this week. It is the unavoidable result of a concatenation of congruous circumstances. The boss has gone to Bodie on special business. The devil has been taking medicine, so that his work at the case has been spasmodic and jerky. The printing office is open on all sides and the snow flies in wherever it pleases. In the morning everything is frozen solid. Then we thaw things out and the whole concern is deluged with drippings. It is hard to set type under such conditions. When the office is dry it is too cold to work. When it is warm the printer needs gum boots and oil skins. In fact it has been a hell of a job to get this paper out."

Like the other camps, Lundy is now defunct. The May Lundy mine has not operated for some years, and the building of a dam has raised Lundy lake so that a part of the townsite is submerged.

Fuller and Hayt Mine

At the very head of Bloody canyon, within Mono pass, are to be found sturdily built log cabins in various stages of decay. From the Homer Mining Index, it has been possible to glean occasional bits of information regarding the strange old camp.

It is stated in an 1880 number of the Index that Fuller and Hayt discovered large ledges of antimonial silver there in 1879. The Mammoth City Herald of September 3, 1879, contains a glowing account of the wealth to be obtained from the "Golden Crown," as the mine was christened; and predicts that thousands of men will be working at the head of Bloody canyon within one year. Other references reveal the fact that S. H. Crane and O. Humphreys were interested in the property as well as Fuller and Hayt. In 1881, these owners bonded their mine to New York operators for \$15,000, and not later reference is made to activity there.

1—Mammoth City Herald, Nov. 22, 1879. William M. Barnes, editor.

2—Bodie and Esmeralda. Joseph Wasson, 1878.

3—Records of the Board of Supervisors, Mono county, 1861 to date (In courthouse, Bridgeport.)

4—Bodie; last of old-time mining camps. Grant H. Smith, Calif. Hist. Soc. Quart. Vol. 4, No. 1; 1925.

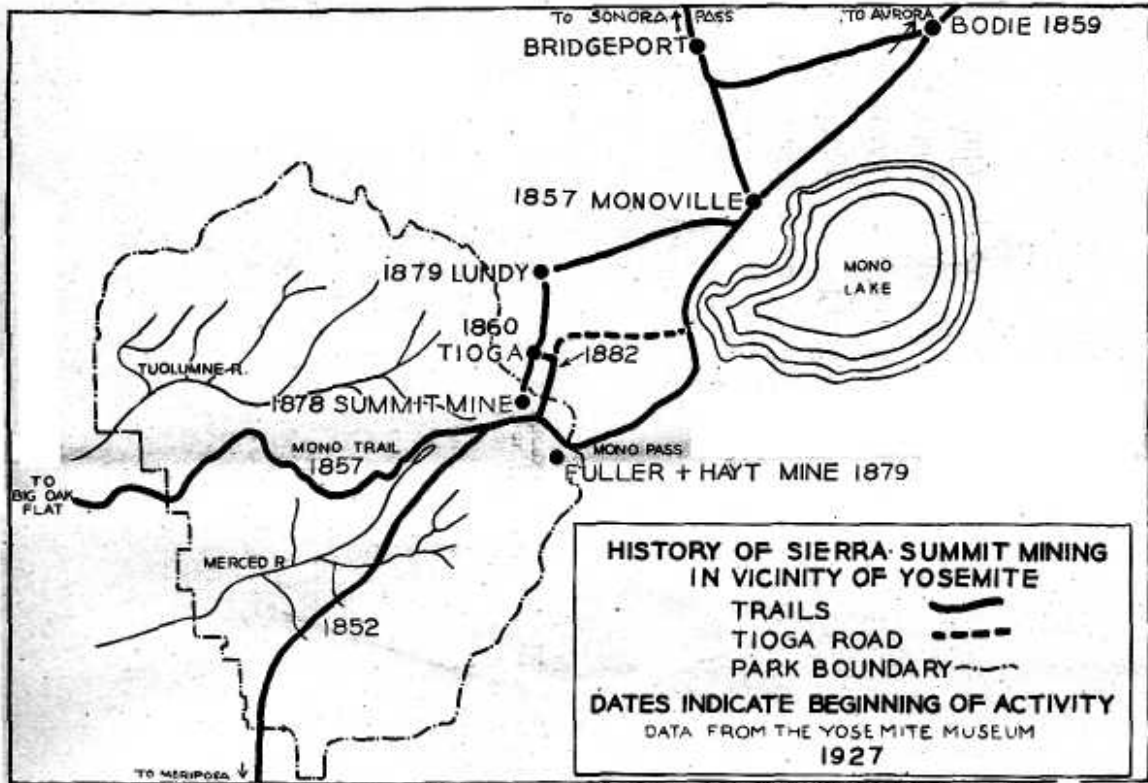
5—Mammoth City Times, Oct. 29, 1879.

6—Bodie Daily Free Press, Nov. 3, 1879.

7—The Chronicle, Bodie, Nov. 1, 1879.

8—Homer Mining Index, Sunday, Sept. 19, 1881.

9—Bodie Daily Free Press, Dec. 29, 1880.





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Dan Anderson