Rabbit Creek Country

Three Ranching Lives in the Heart of the Mountain West

Jon Thiem

with Deborah Dimon

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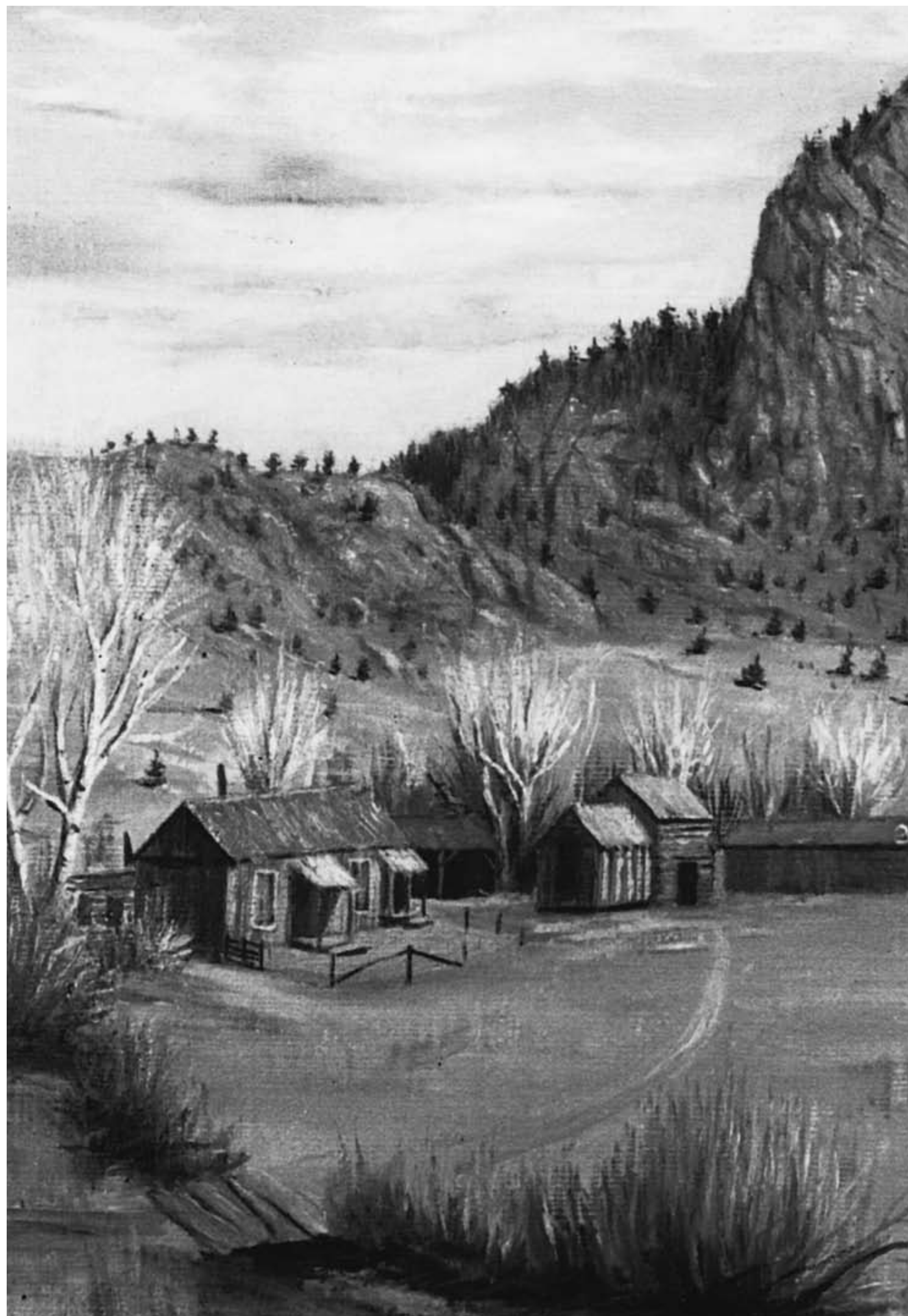

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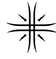


To the descendants,

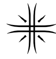
direct and collateral,

of Josephine, John, and Ida,

and to the people who shared

with us their memories

of the Livermore that was.



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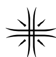
PREFACE



I WALKED INTO THE LIVES OF JOHN ELLIOTT, IDA ELLIOTT, AND JOSEPHINE Lamb. The chance discovery of a deserted house on Rabbit Creek in the northern Colorado foothills turned me into a biographer. I have spent the better part of a decade researching and composing the story of the last occupants of that house. When I think back on the origin of this project, I can only wonder at the role geographical accident plays in altering our destinies and destinations.

As a boy, I liked to walk the countryside, but mountains were a land form I did not know, for I grew up on a flat, sandy peninsula bounded by the Chesapeake Bay and the dark gray Atlantic. There were no hills in rural southern Delaware, and the only mountains were the waves of the ocean seen through the eyes of a child. Then, on a Boy Scout trip in Virginia, I climbed Massanutten Mountain, merely a hill by western standards, but for me a turning point in my experience of the world. I moved to northern Colorado in 1979, taking a position as professor of English at Colorado State University in Fort Collins. Ever since, I have roamed the hills and mountains of the Front Range.

Where I most like to go is the Livermore country, a land of pastoral valleys—Rabbit Creek is one of them—and granite monoliths. Two emotions are at the heart of my book: dismay at the progress of rural sprawl in this region and curiosity about the early-twentieth-century settlers who ranched these grasslands. Their way of life, like all ways of life, was flawed, and the myths and clichés about the Old West that arose out of it have left a misleading picture of the past, with all the usual consequences. Yet these ranchers also developed an extraordinary intimacy and affinity with the mountain lands they occupied, and they saw themselves as good stewards of the environment.

I wrote this biography to understand the interwoven lives of the Elliotts and Miss Josephine Lamb, and to convey a particular vision of

the land-bound culture they represented, a culture that flourished in the first half of the twentieth century. Their story, fascinating in its own right, offered a window into the inner life of times that, though different from ours, are nonetheless a prologue to the profound changes we have seen in the foothills during the past two decades.

John Elliott, Ida Elliott, and Miss Josephine Lamb lived together for forty-two years. This fact provoked intense discussion in the community and dissension within their family. As a result, their lives became more accessible to me than they would otherwise have been.

Yet I never met the ranchers about whom I write. The last of them passed away six years before I came to Colorado. I myself am neither a rancher nor a resident of Livermore, both of which might have posed an obstacle to gaining the trust of the people I talked to. From the beginning of the project, however, I had the good fortune of working with Deborah Dimon. She agreed to be my research associate and is a colleague in the Department of English at Colorado State University. Deborah had lived in the Poudre Canyon and worked there as a natural and cultural resource interpreter for the United States Forest Service. Not only was she familiar with the local scene, but she had personal connections to many Livermore people. Her presence opened doors. Together we were able to uncover the remarkable story of the three settlers.

After that first walk up Middle Rabbit Creek, an urge took hold of me to unwrap the mystery of the place, to lay bare the destinies of the unknown ranchers who had lived there. It was as if those three individuals were asking me to disinter them from obscurity and bring them back to life—no matter what the risks. I have taken up their invitation.

Jon Thiem
Fort Collins, Colorado

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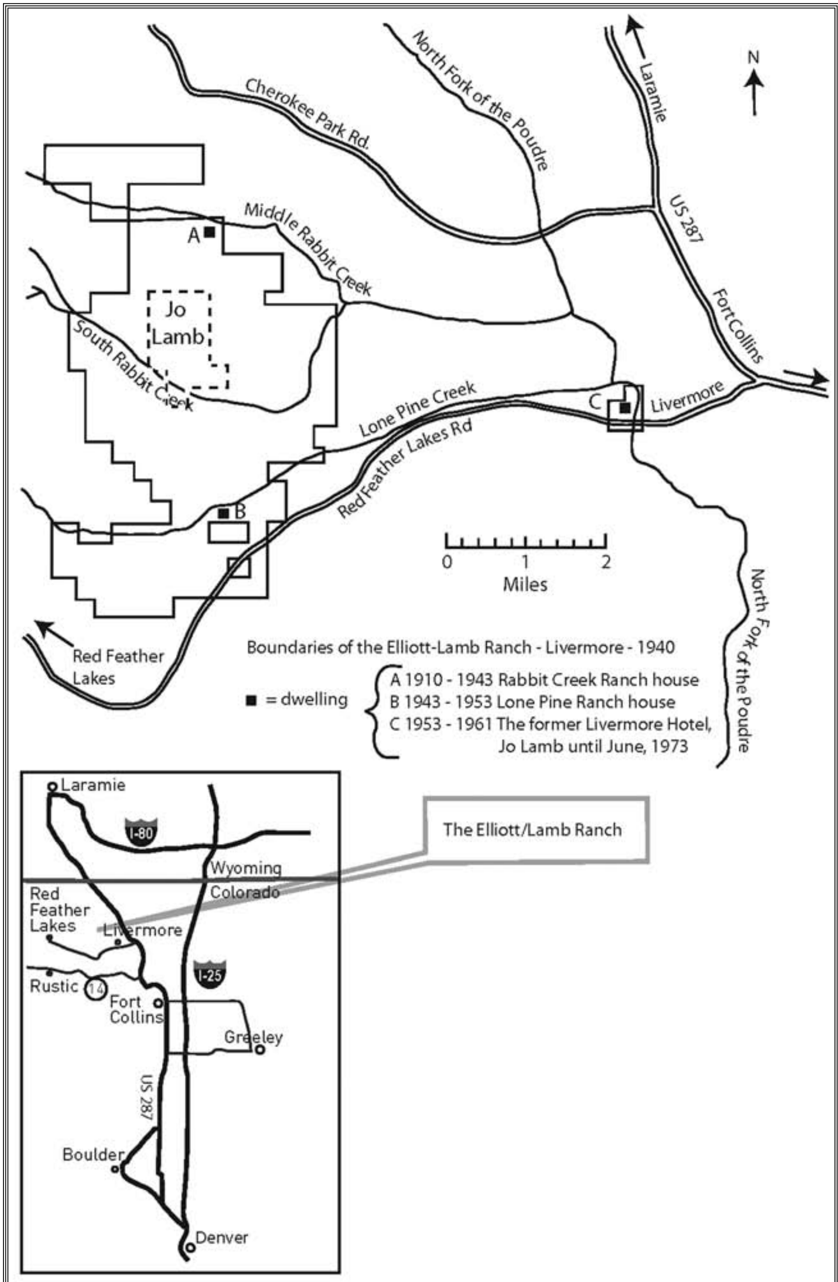
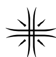


Courtesy of Vicki Cotton

INTRODUCTION



In the early 1840s, John Charles Fremont pushed north through the eastern foothills of the Rockies in what is present-day Larimer County, Colorado. He was a little off course. Instead of ascending the main branch of the Cache la Poudre River, as he thought, he was going up its north fork, the North Poudre—of which Rabbit Creek is a tributary. He thus became the first Euro-American explorer to write a description, however brief, of Rabbit Creek country, the main setting of this book. It is not likely that Fremont knew what the little creek was called, though the Mountain Utes and early trappers doubtless had names for it. Nor did he specifically mention the creek in his journal. Nevertheless, the wild beauty of the surrounding region made a profound impression on him, and he wrote extensive notes on the uninhabited landscape and its flora.

Two-thirds of a century after Fremont's passage, John and Ida Elliott bought a thousand acres of land on the middle fork of Rabbit Creek, eight miles away from the small ranching community of Livermore, Colorado. The year was 1910. The Elliotts were part of the intensive Euro-American settlement that occurred in the region during the last decade of the nineteenth century and the first two decades of the twentieth. This book tells their story and the interwoven story of Miss Josephine Lamb, a mountain teacher who lived and ranched with them.

I first entered the valley of the Middle Rabbit on foot with four friends. It was a crisp December day in 1997 when an act of trespass led to the discovery of an abandoned ranch. Like Fremont's party, we did not know our exact location or the name of the creek. Our walk began on public land—the Cherokee State Wildlife Area. Jacques Rieux was leading; he had ridden horseback here, though never this far upstream. We had followed a two-track along the North Rabbit, through bare cottonwoods

and greenish-blue junipers, and then veered west up another creek, drawn by the beauty of the valley. Low hills rose ahead of us, and cattle and four woolly horses grazed the tawny grasses. No buildings as far as the eye could see. We hiked around an immense monolith, the old granite a latticework of faults and fractures. This was the peak we would later call "Symbol Rock."

Then we were stopped by a fence. "Private Property—No Trespassing." Marie-Laure snapped a picture of the sign. We squeezed under the barbed wire and walked on, climbing a bluff that overlooked the creek. Below, in the draw, among trees on a bend of the stream, was a house. We were simply astonished. We had walked an hour without seeing any structure. Was the house inhabited? We did not see or hear any signs of life. No dogs. Cautiously we made our way down the steep slope. The house was derelict, yet the roof was intact.

In a journal entry dated December 12, 1997, I set down my first impressions of the place. "The oldest part of the building is built with rough-hewn timbers, log-cabin style. . . . This was later added onto. . . . The external walls, especially on the south side . . . are full of doors and windows. . . . The rooms are large. One was painted an Easter egg blue, Minoan blue according to Rick. . . . The various textures and fadings of the blue-painted plaster. . . . Blue with white streaks, or dappled white. The floor littered with broken-off blue plaster . . . the pieces with fine fissures like craquelure . . . the light streaming in. An old 'Mission oak' chair sits in the doorless doorway looking south. Its bottom cushion eviscerated. . . . The old cookstove in the house is riddled with bullet holes. The location and the house show an unusual attention to . . . aesthetic values. Dave is right . . . the excessive number of windows and doors, the blue room."

The presence of a dwelling transformed how we experienced the unnamed valley. The realization that the occupants had reveled in the beauty of the terrain put a different slant on the way we saw it. We had noticed a striking pair of rounded granite peaks rising out of the broad meadow south of the house. Now we saw them framed by the large windows and doors that had been set into the south-facing wall (page 66 in chapter 3). The habitation made us imagine what it was like to live and work in these environs—bringing cows in from the pasture, hauling meat from the "icehouse," jars of preserves from the root cellar, water from the creek.

Of the occupants, we knew nothing. Only one thing was certain: nobody had lived in the house for a long while. Passing through the barbed wire, we had returned to the past. Later I would learn that the Elliotts and Miss Lamb left the house in 1943 and that it was never reoccupied. Now it stood there, gabled, roofed with cedar shakes, a chair in the doorway, an old stove, tattered wallpaper . . . I was in somebody's house. But whose?

Stepping outside the house again, I walked around and noticed the nails a pioneer had pounded into the logs of the old cabin. The nails were square, so the cabin was built before 1900, earlier than the rest of the house, which was wood framed. I crossed the ranch yard and peered into the old icehouse where the ranchers had most likely hung raw meat. The walls were fourteen inches thick. Then I dropped into the root cellar. Strewn over the floor were glass shards of mason jars. Two or three jars were undamaged, but the tomatoes and cucumbers the woman of the house had harvested and canned were gone. Down by the creek there were no traces of a kitchen garden. Grass and shrubs had taken over.

After the hike, I located the valley on a 1960 U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) topo map of the Livermore Mountain Quadrangle, where an inch on paper is roughly one-third of a mile in the real world. The old house showed up as a tiny hollow square. This meant that in 1960 the house was derelict. Deborah Dimon, my research assistant, then found a property map from 1940, which established beyond a doubt that a certain "J. W. Elliott" had owned the parcel south of Middle Rabbit Creek. Farther south of the Elliott holding, a woman named Josephine Lamb owned 640 acres in the uplands above South Rabbit Creek.

No less than the garden gone to grass or the ditch silted up in the meadow, land ownership is prey to the vicissitudes of time. A few years before the first homesteader on the Middle Rabbit drove square nails into the logs of his cabin, Native Americans had hunted in the valley. It was communal territory for them—a winter hunting range. Then Euro-American settlers came and seized the land, brought in cattle and sheep, and divided the valley and hills into private parcels. The settlers were in fact trespassers. For 130 years, the land of the little valley was privately owned. Then in 2000—two years after I began looking more closely into the ranch's residents—the rancher who owned the old Elliott property on the Middle Rabbit sold it to the Colorado Division of Wildlife. Again,

the land became a communal hunting ground. Anyone with a hunting license could come into the valley during the appropriate season, and in the summer months the land was open to all who wanted to walk or ride horses there.

A good way to get a sense of where the Middle Rabbit lies on the continental landmass is to look at the Raven map of North America, where 1 inch represents 140 miles. On this scale the Middle Rabbit is invisible. The map brilliantly conveys, however, the sweep of the Rocky Mountains along the whole length of the continent, beginning in the Aleutian Islands, curving down through Alaska, becoming broader west of the Great Plains, and running through Mexico and Central America to their end in Panama. The folds and furrows of individual ranges and subranges, snowy white at their highest elevations, are easily distinguished. The map makes palpable the fact that the Rockies are the longest mountain chain in the world. To the east of the chain on the map lies the planet's largest grassland, the Great Plains.

Among these immensities, the Middle Rabbit valley is a mere dot (penciled in by me) upon the face of North America. Thus pinpointed, the valley can be seen to lie near the middle point of the Rockies' great length, putting it in the heart of the Mountain West. The map also shows the valley's position on the Eastern Slope of the Colorado Front Range, in a border region of foothills that divides "the high country" of the true mountains from the plains. The Middle Rabbit valley lies only twelve miles west of that great sea of grasses and shares some of its character, which was likely one reason the Elliotts bought a ranch there.

Some individuals are more sensitive to their surroundings than others. Finding the right place to live becomes a top priority. They go out of their way to occupy the kind of environs that will sustain their life illusion, their sense of who they are. The reasons such people want to possess parts of a landscape are not only economic, but emotional. I have come to the conclusion that the Elliotts and Josephine Lamb were people of this sort. Their love of the land rooted them in the soil. All three might have done otherwise. They had a choice. Ida and Josephine, for example, had

the opportunity to live in town. They rejected it. A study of their three lives reveals the wide-ranging consequences of bonding with a particular landscape. Today, such rootedness seems an anomaly, which is why a small industry can thrive by playing on people's nostalgia for it.

As ranchers, John, Ida, and Josephine possessed the land and worked it themselves, largely by hand. It can also be said that the land possessed them, in every sense of the word. Land and its availability shaped and in some measure contorted the lives of these early-twentieth-century settlers. For them, the foothills landscape was not just pretty background. It was the stage upon which their lives played out. Land supplied not only grass and hay, but also the script of personal destinies—the turns of fortune, the fulfillments, the losses.

To understand why the Elliotts and Josephine Lamb bonded with the Middle Rabbit landscape is not difficult. It is grass and granite country, well watered by springs, streamlets, and creeks. The Middle Rabbit has water year round, except in droughty times. The stony parapets and granite monoliths that rim the valley of the lower creek give the visitor a protected feeling. At the same time, the open and gently rolling meadows impart a sense of freedom. In the bottomlands, however, shrubs and trees enclose the meandering stream. There, walkers need to pick their way carefully through thick brush, circumambulate beaver ponds, and leap over the stream at horseshoe bends. In the uplands south, west, and north of the valley, groves of Ponderosa pine darken the ridgetops. On drier slopes, there is a scattering of small junipers, some of them scraggly and some perfectly round. Locals call them "cedars." On some of the steeper slopes, springs and torrents have carved out niche canyons that form little worlds of their own.

The walker who scrambles up one of the granite peaks is rewarded with views of snowy mountains to the west and of smoky blue (or smoggy brown) expanses of steppe land—the Great Plains—to the east. In the valley itself, the coalescence of rounded monoliths and gentle savannahs softens the opposition between rocky peak and flat prairie. Therein lies the visible charm of this terrain.

It is distinctly pastoral. In general, human beings in the western world tend to experience a greater sense of well-being in grassy parklands with scattered trees than in other landscapes, such as dense forests, narrow gorges, or wide-open plains and deserts. We evidently prefer the

kind of terrain that most resembles the East African savannahs in which our hominid ancestors developed into beings capable of walking and running on two legs. In that landscape, our forebears could see a long way, easily spotting game as well as potential predators. Feeling threatened, they could hide behind or climb up a tree. This parklike ambiance was good for both food and protection. Though most of us in the western world have become urban, we still feel pangs of longing for such a landscape, and the lawns and scattered trees of our suburban neighborhoods try to mimic it on a small scale. The same holds true for burial grounds and memorial parks, such as Grandview Cemetery in Fort Collins, where the Elliotts and Josephine Lamb were buried, far from the grasslands of Rabbit Creek.

The subjects of this biography were born in the nineteenth century. Miss Josephine Lamb, the youngest, died in 1973. The three lived together for forty-two years. John Elliott built up one of the largest ranches in the region. His wife, Ida Elliott, was an emigrant from Nebraska and an early amateur photographer. Lamb was a mountain teacher and ranched in partnership with the Elliotts. She never married.

The three settlers' lives were representative for their times but for one important fact: they were united in a domestic triangle. The narrative at hand traces their backgrounds and the unfolding drama of an unusual bond. Chapter 12, "Three Lives," closely examines the relationship through a variety of perspectives. The decisions that the man and the two women made are the basis of a poignant story. I look carefully at the personal motives and idiosyncrasies of each rancher and describe in detail their family life and domestic routines. I also show how the triangle affected their status in the ranching community and how the people of Livermore dealt with a situation that challenged their deepest values. One of my conclusions is that the ranchers' domestic arrangement served as a complex adjustment to shifting attitudes about sexual behavior, birth control, and marital relations in the second decade of the twentieth century. Finally, though, it was land hunger that gave rise to the triangle and land hunger that held it together.

Although Livermore saw the triangle in many different lights, most people were troubled by the unconventional living arrangement. Some of those we talked to were reluctant at first to speak of it. They wondered about me, the man who had come to ask them so many questions. He was not local. He was an outsider, yet they knew he was writing a book that would draw on their conversations.

Several factors, besides Deborah Dimon's local connections, helped establish an atmosphere of openness with the mountain people we talked to. The project began at an ideal point in time. Most people were forthcoming because our subjects had died several decades earlier and thus become part of Livermore history. As one family member put it, the whole matter was "water under the bridge." At the same time, there were enough people around who had known the Elliotts and Josephine Lamb to give us detailed accounts of their lives. Many people welcomed the chance to discuss the triangle with an outsider who did not personally know the three ranchers. Another reason for people's openness was that we did not tape the conversations. Note taking seemed to put them more at ease.

All that said, some individuals who were close to our subjects may find the story I tell painful. That is understandable. Writers of lives, however, must address and present their subjects' flawed humanity. In doing so, we risk disagreement with the local guardians of reputation. On this count, I found support in Vikram Seth, who clearly stated the biographer's position: "Every even-handed biography of a completed life has to deal with private matters and to present its subject as fully as possible, even if the subject, when alive, might have preferred to keep these matters obscured—or at least not open to the world."

Josephine Lamb was a local historian of Livermore. She did not agree with ignoring "inconvenient truths" in the name of propriety. In this regard, I have followed her lead—though, some may say, at the expense of her reputation. She, however, paid little heed to reputation. When wearing pants was scandalous, she wore pants. When people condemned her for living with the Elliotts, she did not stop living with them. She set her own course, regardless of others' opinions and judgments.

As historian, Lamb advocated and practiced an uncensored approach to the past. In an interview intended for publication, she candidly told Lloyd Levy that her father liked to drink. In another interview, she coaxed

John Elliott into talking about an incident of which he was ashamed. And Lamb was scornful of Ansel Watrous, the early county historian, because he censored the life of the trapper Rock Bush. Watrous omitted an important fact: Bush had had a Native American wife who bore him children. Watrous (and his contemporaries) considered this relationship shameful, so he mentioned only Bush's family by his Euro-American wife, a woman the trapper married later. When Lamb exposed Watrous's lack of integrity, she did so at the risk of offending Rock Bush's grandchildren, whom she knew personally. Regarding her own life—as controversial in its own way as Rock Bush's—I do not know that she would have welcomed an uncensored version. However that may be, I have striven for a balanced and many-voiced interpretation of my subjects.

Writing the lives of three people, rather than of just one person, was an involved undertaking. It demanded more research and more time, and it required a narrative that did not always adhere to strict chronology. Several chapters range back and forth in time to develop particular themes—for example, environmental history in chapter 4, "Seeing the Land in Time," and domestic life in chapter 9, "A Livermore Home Companion." In addition, the dynamic of three interpenetrating lives engendered multiple and sometimes contradictory points of view on a single human situation.

Another challenge of the project was that the Elliotts and Josephine Lamb rarely expressed personal thoughts and feelings in writing. This is not to say that their characters and individualities were hidden. Locals saw all three ranchers as eccentric and pointed to their single-mindedness and strange living arrangement. It is clear that they were not only eccentric, but exceptional in many ways. At the same time, they were ordinary people in the sense of not being well known outside their community. They were not upper class. They were not celebrities, even in Colorado, and did not hold high office. Hard workers, they had little time for writing letters and diaries, the mainstays of biography. They were the kind of people whose stories remain untold for lack of personal writings. Yet it is precisely because they were of the common people that, in the realm of written biography, their lives seem unusual and worth the effort of retelling.

Public records and local histories supplied the primary dates and

facts out of which Deborah and I built the hard infrastructures of our subjects' biographies. Yet such sources did not tell much about inner states of feeling or about how the ranchers saw their world and the people with whom they lived.

It was, however, our good fortune to uncover a rich vein of nonwritten materials, both oral and visual, that made up for this deficit. These sources generated a different kind of book, more visceral and closer to the local culture than are more general histories of the region. In oral testimonies, more than one hundred people shared with us their experiences and observations. Our informants' words, often in the vivid vernacular of mountain people, added color to the narrative. We were surprised and pleased that people wanted us to hear their stories, their version of things. Even when testimonies were not consistent or wholly believable, we were able to draw from them useful inferences about our subjects' characters and motives. Apart from the testimonies arranged by us, we also discovered four interviews that two of our ranchers had given in their lifetime. Three of the interviews were on tape and had never been transcribed or published. Hearing our subjects' real voices, inflections, pauses, and chuckles added to our understanding of who they were.

Spoken sources pose special challenges and need to be used with special care. Oral testimony depends a great deal on personal memory, and memory is selective, prey to confusion, distortion, and false imaginings. Time and age simplify our perception of the past, a process that can sharpen insight or dull it. Knowing this, we worked hard to confirm what people told us by comparing testimonies and consulting written sources. Even so, confirmation was not always possible. We could not verify, for example, the testimony that Ida Elliott made Devonshire clotted cream or that John Elliott tried to buy back the Middle Rabbit spread after he sold it. However, we had no particular reason to doubt these testimonies, so they remained part of the narrative. There was a second limitation: many people interviewed were actual participants in our subjects' lives. They were relatives, friends, neighbors, or employees. Every informant inevitably had his or her particular point of view, his or her own bias. The existence of the love triangle aroused strong feelings and moral judgments. These emotions had to be taken into account in our overall assessment of the situation. In the end, the reliability of any narrative based on oral testimony depends on a writer's discernment,

which can also be fallible. That said, the use of oral sources is of immeasurable help in uncovering the inner life of the past, which is the very heart of biography.

Other major resources we used for exploring the inner life of the past were the photographs and artworks people shared with us and permitted us to copy. They form a crucial part of the narrative. Many of the photos, paintings, and drawings I have included here were made by the three ranchers themselves. These depictions provided particular value in showing how the land was seen and interpreted through their eyes. Many of the historical photographs were labeled and dated, people and landscapes readily identifiable. These photos were of great service to us in documenting our ranchers' personal interactions and activities. The stark black-and-white images often spoke more eloquently than the proverbial "thousand words."

To bring across to the reader the inner life of a subject, I have on several occasions created an imagined scene that I describe in the present tense. At one point, for instance, I imagine Josephine Lamb sitting at her desk looking out of the window of the old Livermore Hotel. At another place, Ida Meyer (before she became Mrs. Elliott) is riding horseback to the Middle Rabbit house and observing her surroundings. In chapter 8, I bring Josephine Lamb back to life in order to imagine how she might have reacted to land use in Livermore at the beginning of the twenty-first century. I use this device sparingly, and whenever I do, I let the reader know that the situation is invented. For all that, Josephine did sit at her desk, and Ida did ride her horse. The invented part lies in their reactions, which I based on my knowledge of their characters and backgrounds.

Apart from these few imagined scenes, everything in the book is *nonfictional* in the narrow sense of the word. There is the inevitable reconstruction and interpretation, without which neither history nor biography is possible, but there is no invention out of whole cloth. Every form of life writing, whether biography or autobiography, is based to some extent on surmise, on fitting together disparate pieces of evidence and finding connections between seemingly unrelated matters. This book is no exception. For stylistic reasons, however, I have endeavored to spare the reader a litany of qualifications and caveats, of "probablys" and "possiblys."

Tracing the trajectories of our subjects' lives and the intricate drama that unfolded from their unusual bond has been an exacting but also exciting quest. For that reason, I occasionally share with the reader moments of discovery. A minor thread of my narrative is the tale of how we uncovered the story. The reader now and then gets a glimpse of me and Deborah Dimon at work: in a library, at a mountain site, or in conversation with one of the many people willing to sit down with us and go back in time.

Rabbit Creek Country preserves a story that is remarkable in its own right. I believe this story also contributes to our understanding of the West today, the place we are now. Rabbit Creek country is a small and still remote district of the northern Colorado foothills, yet its history and its situation reflect the profound changes in land use that have occurred in pastoral economies throughout the West and in much of the western world. Having an historical record of the land is helpful, perhaps essential, for a clear-eyed view of the present.

The Elliotts' and Josephine Lamb's ranching lives embraced an important moment in the history of the Mountain West. It was a moment shaped by the ranching culture of the late-nineteenth-century and early-twentieth-century Anglo settlement. In the Livermore district, this culture prevailed for a hundred years, roughly from the 1880s to the 1980s. During the last decades of the twentieth century, however, the foothills ranching culture began to lose dominance under the pressure of a new wave of settlement into rural areas by emigrants from the cities. Hundreds of affluent newcomers, many of them second-home owners and outdoor recreationists, began acquiring forty-acre ranchettes carved out of what were once large cattle ranches. The new emigrants usually want as little to do with cows as possible. With this influx, an older West has given way to a different kind of rural economy. New patterns of land use and abuse are now emerging.

Josephine Lamb lived just long enough to witness the beginnings of the new wave of mountain settlement by urban, nonranching immigrants. She had mixed feelings about what she saw. By the 1950s, she had already become one of Livermore's first environmental activists. Her ecological awareness anticipated one of the main themes of the Mountain West in the early twenty-first century.

Today there is a growing sense of urgency about the fate of the land, not only in Livermore, but throughout the world. The Rabbit Creek story is instructive. It shows the changes in a particular foothills landscape wrought by both natural and human processes. Land hunger, private ownership, grassland use in traditional ranching, and volatile market conditions had large impacts on mountain landscapes. Chapters 6 and 8 address these issues. It was a surprise to discover in our researches that the mountain lands we see today are less natural than they appear. We also learned that the grasslands are more vulnerable than many want to believe and require more careful stewardship than they have had.

The Rabbit Creek story shows that we are part of a long past. This consciousness is in danger of being lost and with it the sense that what we do now has large consequences not only for the land, but for the air, the climate, the animals we eat—and ultimately for ourselves and coming generations.

A Postscript on Names

An historical work must name names, yet there are constraints on this imperative. Certain geographical places lack names. To orient themselves, early Euro-American settlers in Livermore did of course give names to many features—a first step in taming and appropriating the land. Yet for them, as for other Colorado mountain settlers, the abundance of terrain, the plenitude of streams, valleys, gulches, ridges, hills, and peaks made naming them all a daunting task. One sometimes feels their fatigue. Thirteen places in Colorado, for example, are called "No Name." Twenty-seven streams are called "Beaver Creek." And there are two other Rabbit creeks in the state.

Among the important land features in Rabbit Creek country that are nameless on maps is the striking granite monolith a half-mile northeast of the Elliott house. Phil Elliott, noting how often it appeared in photos of his grandfather, told us that this peak was John Elliott's symbol. So we have called it "Symbol Rock." Similarly, the uncanny double monolith just south of the ranch house has no map name. One document shows that the Elliotts called it "Twin Mountain," and we follow their usage.

I sometimes refer to the principals of this book by their first names,

by which I intend no undue familiarity. The reasons for this practice are stylistic: to avoid the use of initials and to reduce repetitiveness. The given name of John and Ida's son was Orville, but everyone called him "Buck." To avoid confusion, I refer to him as "Buck" at every stage of his life, even though he may not have acquired the nickname until he was a teenager. John W. Elliott's second grandson was given the name John Lee Elliott. From the context, it should be clear which is which.

To avoid choppiness in the text, many shorter quotations gleaned from interviews have not been keyed to names in the "Oral Testimonies" section of "Sources." A close friend of one of our subjects asked that her name be left out, and we have honored this request. Every person interviewed was told we were working on a book about the Elliotts and Josephine Lamb and that direct quotations might be published. Except in the cases of informants who passed away before we could get back to them or whose whereabouts could no longer be traced, written copyright permissions were obtained for testimonies that are quoted or paraphrased at some length. In the text, if informants' full names are not given, we have sometimes placed initials in parentheses after direct quotations or sometimes paraphrases. The initials are keyed to names in the "Oral Testimonies" section in "Sources."

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Part One

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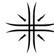
ONE

Elliotts Go West

Toward evening I was struck with a peculiar tint in the shadow of a cloud along the horizon. After half an hour's study I pronounced it to be a mountain. . . . My fellow travellers dissented at first from this opinion.

—Bayard Taylor's first view of the Rocky Mountains, *Colorado: A Summer Trip*, 1867



Daniel Elliott first came to Colorado on a wild horse chase. For the previous ten years, he had been farming in northwestern Kansas. There, his oldest son, John—one of the three subjects of my narrative—spent his boyhood years.

The story of the horse chase passed down in the Elliott family. The version I heard went like this. After Dan Elliott claimed his Kansas homestead, he sold his wife's ox team and bought a team of horses. Then he traded the horse team for a matched pair of buggy horses, but one of the two mares was lured away by wild horses. Elliott grabbed his bedroll and a revolver, saddled up the other horse, and chased the feral mare and wild herd into Colorado. Near Colorado Springs, he found the herd, but he could not get the mare out. Night fell. He unsaddled his horse, wrapped himself in blankets and slept, but he woke again when he heard his horse fretting at the howling of wolves. Soon the wolves had closed in around him. He saddled his horse, and as he rode off, he fired at the

wolves and killed some. He believed the wolves would stop to eat their dead. His horse was fast, and he got away. Though he did not retrieve the fugitive mare, he did discover Colorado. He liked what he had seen. Back home he sold the remaining buggy mare, bought another team of horses for his wagon, and headed westward with his family. That is how, according to family tradition, the Elliotts came to Colorado.

At the time of the chase, around 1890, Dan and his wife, Lizzie, would have been in their midthirties, their seven children ranging in ages from one year to thirteen. John Elliott was twelve.

For the Elliotts, horses were destiny. John Elliott's favorite sister, Ruby, told the story of the chase. She was the sister John taught how to shoot from a galloping horse. The story echoes those ancient myths in which a hero, in pursuit of an animal—a white stag or a golden hind—enters another world, another realm of being. I have not been able to verify the truth of Ruby's account. Whether it is imaginary or historical is perhaps less important than the fact that it is powerful and that it tells us how the Elliotts themselves thought about their passage west. It is an archetypal story: a man gets lost in a failed attempt to recover an animal and as a result makes a discovery, finds a new life. Above all, the story distills the essence of adventure that moving west meant for the Elliotts.

Ruby Elliott Johnson told the horse chase story on a tape recorded in 1977, eighty-seven years after the incident. I first heard the story when John Elliott's grandson Jim Elliott let me copy the tape, which proved to be an important source for tracing the lives of Dan and Elizabeth Elliott, John's parents. Ruby was not born until after the family came to Colorado, so she did not experience firsthand the earlier events she tells about. She heard the stories from her parents and her older brothers and sisters. Some of the stories, especially those of the early emigrations of her Elliott and Worthington ancestors, partake of legend. According to Ruby, both her mother's family, which was Protestant, and her Elliott forebears, Irish Catholics, came over on the *Mayflower.* Another tradition she relays is that Daniel Boone, a cousin of the Elliotts, led the family into Kentucky. Her Elliott grandfather and grandmother were indeed born in the Bluegrass State. The renowned explorer may have been Daniel Elliott's namesake. Undeniable is the fact that Elliotts and Worthingtons journeyed west from Europe across the Atlantic to the New World. Ruby's references to the *Mayflower* and Daniel Boone are

colorful markers for the stages of a westward odyssey that took place over several hundred years.

Like his forebears, Daniel Elliott had a passion for moving, a passion that seems ingrained in the national psyche. The Europeans who settled North America were, after all, the ones who followed a strong urge to leave their homeland. People in the United States are reputed to have the highest attention deficit rate in the world. This high rate may be due to thorough testing, but it also may be due to the fact that chronic emigrants are the sort of people who will not focus on where they are, and when they have the chance to move, they jump at it.

John Elliott passed through a great deal of country in his early years because his father had a hard time putting down roots. Dan Elliott habitually thought the grass was greener over the horizon, yet the itinerary he pursued took him into ever more arid landscapes. He was in the vanguard of people pushing the settlement frontier westward. That moveable frontier was originally on the eastern coastline of the continent. In the seventeenth century, an area fifty miles inland from the Atlantic constituted the West. Then wave after wave of settlers, including Dan's ancestors, pushed the frontier, first into the western reaches of the seaboard states, then over the Appalachians with Daniel Boone, and then across the plains all the way through the Rocky Mountains to the Pacific Coast.

It was partly hunger for land that drove Dan Elliott west. That, along with drought on the plains, the boom-and-bust cycle of the economy, and something else besides—simple wanderlust. If he wasn't chasing a wild horse, he was chasing a dream.

Dan was born in hilly south-central Iowa in 1856. His father and mother, both Kentucky born, had moved west to Iowa and northern Missouri, where they farmed. His mother was not literate, and, according to census data, Dan Elliott never learned to read or write. When he was sixteen, he went to work for a prosperous Iowa farmer named John Worthington, and in 1875 he married the latter's daughter, Elizabeth. She was called Lizzie. Daniel was eighteen, and she fifteen. They lived the first three years on her father's farm. Their first two children, Mary and John William, were born in the Iowa farmhouse, Mary in 1877

and John on December 22, 1878. John was named after his grandfather Worthington.

Of English Protestant stock, Lizzie Worthington was born in Indiana in 1859, before the family moved to Iowa. When she was ten, her mother died after giving birth to Lizzie's sister Maggie. According to Ruby Johnson, Lizzie took care of the baby and did all the cooking until she was sixteen. Around that time, John Worthington married his housekeeper.

A photograph of Lizzie Elliott from the 1870s, one that her son John carried with him, shows a fine-featured young woman with short wavy hair, a sensitive mouth, and sad eyes.

John was the second oldest of Dan and Lizzie's eleven children. It is not likely he had memories of Iowa, for he had barely gotten himself born when his parents left there, around 1880. He probably had no memory of the rolling lands or the large barns of his birthplace. According to Ruby's account, the Elliotts moved west with their in-laws, the Worthingtons. They traveled in a wagon train with other emigrants. Interestingly, it was Lizzie, not Dan, who owned the oxen and wagon. Lizzie's father, John, came as well, though his second wife, the housekeeper, died before they left Iowa, probably in childbirth. Lizzie's brothers, Horace and Will, and her stepsiblings, Orville and Lucy, from her father's second wife, were part of the entourage. John Worthington went in style, in a horse-drawn buggy, holding his little daughter Alice on his lap. The family trailed a herd of cattle from the Iowa farm. The first stop in Kansas was Hutchinson, which John Elliott's mother remembered as not much more than a store and a livery barn. The Elliotts did not stay there long, but went farther west. By June 1880, they had a homestead in Decatur County in the hills of northwestern Kansas. John Elliott was still a toddler.

Dan settled in territory that had only recently been invaded by Euro-American settlers. This characterization is dramatized by the fact that in 1878, two years before the family arrived, a band of half-starved Cheyenne, led by Dull Knife and Little Wolf, escaped from their reservation in Indian Territory and passed through the county. The band killed a number of settlers before they were captured. John Elliott would have grown up with the stories of the uprising, which was the last Indian raid in Kansas.

The Elliotts filed a claim on 160 acres in Jennings Township, Decatur County, just south of the Nebraska border. It was a remote area then and still is. In the 1880s, four of John's younger sisters and a brother were born in Kansas.

The Elliotts' immigration to Kansas reflected a larger movement in which tens of thousands of immigrants, pushing ever farther west, claimed lands from which the Indians had recently been expelled, either by force or through dubious agreements imposed on them by white governments. Half of these settlers, like the Elliotts and Worthingtons, came from midwestern states. The trigger for this migration had been the Homestead Act of 1862, which allowed people to claim, virtually without cost, 160 acres from the public domain. The main requirement was residence on the land for five years. The late 1870s and early 1880s, when the Elliotts came to Kansas, were the heyday of the land boom. The settlement frontier had gone past the one hundredth meridian, that line west of which the weather was usually so dry that crop farming was unprofitable. It is this line that most historians see as the beginning, or eastern boundary, of the true West, where the annual rainfall is less than twenty inches and the land is semiarid. The Elliotts, when they moved to northwestern Kansas, crossed that line. The grasslands were waiting to be claimed. The Indians had been driven off, and the bison, animals superbly adapted to survival in those dry prairies, were being killed at such a rate that by 1884 only a thousand were left in all the northern plains.

In spite of the region's natural aridity, the 1880s, when the Elliotts homesteaded, were good for agriculture. Moisture was unusually abundant, and this anomaly played into the hands of the railway companies and their settlement schemes. The banks were flush and ready to loan money, and there was a real land boom, or bubble. The mid-1880s saw a quarter of a million new settlers straggle into western Kansas to claim land and reap the rewards.

Dan Elliott's homestead, however, was not fruitful. The terrain was rugged upland, with little stream water, and the climate dry, with a long-term yearly average of less than sixteen inches of moisture. It was difficult to farm. In 1885 only 20 of his 160 acres were under cultivation, 5 in corn, 10 in sorghum, and 5 in millet. Nor was the land very good pasture. The number of Elliott's livestock was meager, even by local standards: two horses, two mules, two milk cows, two head of cattle, and

one sheep—the latter perhaps supplying wool for clothes. In 1884, the Elliotts sold no poultry or eggs, which is surprising because these products would have been a good source of income. They had no orchard, no bees, and no trees. They had no dog. Their two milk cows, however, produced two hundred pounds of butter. The Elliotts ate lots of butter. Dan had to do other kinds of work to provide for his family, so he did some freighting. According to his daughter Ruby, he also rode the mails.

John Elliott grew up in rural poverty, though he may not have known it. Chances are he liked the farm and the freedom of the hills. When he was seven, he and two sisters attended a one-room school in the neighboring township. The twenty pupils ranged in age from five to sixteen. The school term was only sixteen weeks long. The other thirty-six weeks of the year offered ample time to forget what had been learned. For four years, through the 1889–90 term, John Elliott attended this school and learned to read from *McGuffey's Reader.*

In 1889, Dan Elliott moved again. He and Lizzie bought a farm in the neighboring township, probably after selling their Jennings land. The new farm was closer to the school and had bottomlands and a seasonal stream that made it more arable than their first farm. But to acquire the new place they took out a mortgage and went into debt.

John Elliott's earliest memories were doubtless Kansas memories. He would have remembered the sod shanty his father built on their first farm. According to Ruby Johnson, the "shanty" was an excavation in the side of a hill. It probably had one room, one door, and one or two windows at the front. The walls were stacks of three-inch-thick prairie sod cut into strips three feet wide and two feet long. The roof was another layer of sod placed on rafters, probably covered with willow twigs and hay. With walls, roof, and floors made of dirt, the "soddies" were hard to keep clean and dry. The Elliotts may have kept a newborn calf or lamb in the shanty, as was typically done. The air inside would have been fetid.

Even so, the sod shanty kept them warm in the harsh winters and cool in the blistering summers of Kansas. Weather in the state was extreme, with violent cyclonic storms, tornadoes, and terrific winds. At the age of seven, John Elliott experienced the disastrous blizzard that struck western Kansas in January 1886. Chill factors were a hundred below, and daytime temperatures did not rise above zero for weeks. Mountainous drifts of snow trapped people in their homesteads, and

large numbers of cattle died. It was one of three great blizzards John Elliott would experience in his lifetime.

He must have had vivid memories of the birth of his sisters Lois and Minnie in the sod shanty. Dan Elliott himself delivered the babies. There were no midwives, no physicians, and no hospitals in this remote outpost of the high plains. Medical treatment was "do it yourself," and the only medicine was the home remedy.

In the spring of 1885, Lizzie Elliott was about to give birth to her fifth child, but Dan had traveled to town to look for work and get supplies. Lizzie sent John, Mary, and the little ones outside to gather buffalo chips, the main fuel on the treeless prairie. She delivered the baby alone. When the children came back with the chips, there was a thunderstorm. "The sod shanty leaked. She got under the feather bed with all the kids—to keep warm with the leaky roof." They slept all night that way. The next day, when Dan came home, Elizabeth was sitting in the chair nursing the baby. John was six years old at the time.

As the oldest son, John helped with chores at an early age. He fed and milked the cows, brought the cattle and horses in from the pasture, and weeded the corn patch. The food he ate was typical for a pioneer household in that area: salt pork, bacon, eggs, butter, corn bread and mush, wheat bread, biscuits, pancakes with sorghum syrup, potatoes, carrots, and turnips. Fruit pies and berries and fresh vegetables from the garden were available in season, and in the winter there were canned goods (in mason jars) and stocks from the root cellar. In the summer, they ate a lot of fried chicken. Their main beverage was water, supplemented by milk, coffee, and corn liquor probably made at home. The Elliotts had a single stove for heating and cooking, and in it they burned buffalo patties. After the buffalo-killing rampages of the 1860s and 1870s, few of these great beasts remained, but their dried excrement was still plentiful. Lizzie, with the help of the older children, made soap and candles, washed clothes, and put up food for winter. Most of the furnishings and tools needed for housekeeping and stockraising the Elliotts would have made themselves. Dan was not able to read or write, but he had plenty of know-how. He planted and harvested crops, raised and butchered livestock, repaired his wagon, built stables, and delivered babies.

John Elliott's boyhood on the Decatur farms shaped his view of the material world. The rolling landscapes and ecstatic skies of western

Kansas became part of his sensibility. From his parents, he learned the disciplines of rural life on the unforgiving prairie. Except in winter, he lived mainly outdoors, helping with farm tasks. It was good preparation for life as a mountain rancher in Colorado.

In 1890, Dan and Lizzie Elliott sold their new farm—within a year of having bought it. They sold at a loss and still owed a substantial mortgage. Not long after the sale, they left for Fort Collins, Colorado. The town lay at the foot of the Rocky Mountains, fifty miles north of the growing city of Denver. Why did they move again? Ruby told how her father, in pursuit of a runaway mare, discovered the state, but there were also strong economic reasons behind the Elliotts' decision to go to Colorado.

Once again they were part of a larger exodus, this time driven by climate changes and hard times. When they left, half the population of western Kansas was also leaving. All through the plains states, homesteaders were on the move because of drought, farm failures, and economic hardship. In Kansas, the land boom had gone bust, and there were thousands of foreclosures. The drought that began in 1887 persisted for a decade. The normal aridity of the high plains returned, and, contrary to the land boosters' claims, farmers discovered that rain did not always "follow the plow." Agriculture prices fell, and interest rates rose. This was the situation when Dan Elliott sold out. Unlike most settlers who went bust, however, he did not go back the way he came. He did not follow an easterly course, but ventured deeper into the West.

When the Elliotts left Kansas, they were a burgeoning family of nine, the youngest being only a year old. At age twelve, John Elliott was still half a boy. But he was also half a man. As Dan's main helper, he conducted himself like an assistant father. He took charge of the younger sisters and brother. Because he ordered them around so much, Ruby compared him to a famous Civil War general.

By the time of the long trek across the plains to Fort Collins, Colorado, John had already learned to ride, break, brand, and shoe horses. He had learned to hitch up the team, tie the necessary knots, and keep the animals in line with the great bullwhip. On their way to Colorado, he helped drive the heavy-loaded covered wagon. The journey across the droughty plains was hard on the Elliotts and their animals. A story was passed down in the family that at one point, after running

out of water, the Elliotts, to quench their thirst, piled wet sand onto bed sheets and squeezed the water out.

John had grown up on the prairie. What did he feel that day when he became aware of a strange, nebulous ridge rising out of the distant plain? How did he react to his first view of mountains? Did he have an inkling of their importance to his future life?

Dan Elliott doubtless knew he could find work as a freighter in Fort Collins. The Colorado town, which was on the edge of the foothills, had become a vital link between the farmlands of the Piedmont and the Rocky Mountains, which were rich in minerals, timber, game, and water resources. Elliott owned a wagon and a team of horses. He had experience and a son to help him.

The 1890s and early 1900s saw the construction of major water diversion and dam projects in the high mountains of northern Colorado. Their purpose was to put water from drainages west of the Continental Divide into the Cache la Poudre River for use in the fertile Piedmont farmlands of Fort Collins and Greeley. Grand Ditch, Skyline Ditch, and Chambers Lake Reservoir were being built or rebuilt. Access to these places was over steep, rough tracks. The workers and the workhorses at such remote sites had to be supplied by freight wagon. Gold-mining towns such as "Manhattan" also needed to be provisioned.

At the age of twelve or thirteen, John began freighting with his father when they arrived in Fort Collins in 1890. They hauled supplies along the State Road, later called the Red Feather Lakes Road, a major link between Fort Collins and the high country. A notice in the *Fort Collins Courier* in May 1897 announced: "George Baxter and Dan Elliott are engaged in hauling freight to the numerous mining camps." Mountain ranchers also hired Dan Elliott to bring supplies up from "Collins." Ruby Johnson recalled her father's runs from town to the mountains and back. "He freighted from Fort Collins up and brought all the groceries for the people that lived up there . . . they'd make a list on a sheet of paper like that, groceries, grain they wanted, you know, and all the potatoes and everything." Elliott also delivered mail to the mountain settlers.

The Elliotts stayed in Fort Collins five years—from 1890 to 1895. Their residency was John Elliott's first and only extended experience of

town living. At only one other time in his life did he live in Fort Collins—this was in the last months before his death in the early 1960s.

Fort Collins was named after a U.S. Cavalry fort built in 1865 for the protection of travelers on the Overland Trail. The local Arapahos under Chief Friday had been friendly. With their expulsion, the fort had closed in 1867. The Fort Collins of 1890, when the Elliotts arrived, had a population of around 2,000—not much more than in 1880, but many more than in 1866, when the settlement boasted only 144 taxpayers. The small population, however, did not reflect the town's importance as a market, transportation, and communication center for the northern part of the Colorado Front Range, a major stockraising and farming region that encompassed foothills, mountains, and the westernmost edge of the Great Plains.

When the Elliotts pulled into Fort Collins, after a decade of rough living on the Kansas prairie, the amenities and conveniences of town life must have astonished them. They probably experienced culture shock. It was eye opening for the children. At the bakery, they could get fresh bread without having to bake it themselves, and at the creamery they could get fresh milk without having to milk a cow. At Scott's Drugstore, they could buy shakes and sodas and play the jukebox (five cents a song). I wonder if young John Elliott went to hear the tunes magically emanating from that strange device, which was still a popular fixture in my own youth.

The Elliotts lived in town, and their house may have had piped water from the municipal waterworks. The town also had a plant for generating electricity. Telephone service came in 1893. Added to these marvels of progress was the fact that from 1893 on, the women of Fort Collins were able to vote in elections. Colorado introduced universal suffrage long before it was established nationwide.

Though small, the town had a fire department, churches, hotels, saloons, brothels, schools, and several mansions. There were still no cars or bicycles, but the Colorado Central Line provided rail service to Denver. The Elliotts lived not far from the tracks, which ran right through town (as they still do). The younger children may have been frightened by the wail of the locomotive. It is hard to imagine, though, that John did not enjoy the spectacle of the loud train trailed by a great cloud of smoke and steam.

Several blocks from where the Elliotts lived was Colorado Agricultural College, which had begun admitting students in 1879. Here were imposing buildings, including Old Main, Agricultural Hall, the Civil and Irrigation Engineering Building, and Horticultural Hall. Research at the college concentrated on agricultural development and the irrigation of the arid lands of northern Colorado. Stately elms, apple orchards, and beds of pansies graced the campus. The Elliotts lived near the college, and they probably strolled on occasion through the groves of academe. Lizzie Elliott gave birth to two babies in Fort Collins (one of them Ruby). She may have taken them to campus to enjoy the gardens and fresh air.

The older Elliott children, meanwhile, went to school. In 1891, John Elliott, age twelve, and his sister Minnie, age eight, appear in the lists. By 1894, six Elliott children were in school. Before they came to Fort Collins, their education had been scanty. One reason Dan and Lizzie chose to stay in town was doubtless the good educational system.

John Elliott last attended school in Fort Collins in 1895. At that time, he was sixteen, but not in high school, which probably meant he was catching up on the basics most children had learned in grade school. He attended school for five years in Fort Collins. In the last three of these years, he did not go the complete term, but spent the winter months working for mountain rancher John S. Williams in the foothills of Livermore. Nevertheless, he mastered the fundamentals. As an adult, he was an avid reader of magazines. His math skills were good enough that he later learned surveying.

If John Elliott did not go on to high school, it was not for lack of brightness or ambition. Throughout his life, he demonstrated a keen practical intelligence. The reason he did not continue his education was that he had to work—the usual story in those times. He needed to help out in the large family. In a taped interview from 1974, John's son, Buck, said his father had wanted to study medicine. "Dad . . . wanted to be a human doctor, and there was an old doctor offered to put him through college if he wanted to study, but there was a big family, the kids. Dad was like I was. He was bashful and so on. Brothers and sisters were always calling him 'Doc' and this 'n' that, you know. And finally he said, 'Oh to hell with you.' Instead of going ahead and learning it and taking it, like I did, he went to work."

The Elliotts lived in different places in town. They lived on Garfield and on Mathews, both just east of Colorado Agricultural College, and they lived in an icehouse on City Park Lake. Ruby, who said she was "born on the lake," told how her parents put the ice in a corner and set up a bed and stove. Dan was probably hauling ice at the time. John Elliott watered his horses in the lake and the first few head of cattle he owned.

After five years in Fort Collins, the Elliotts decided to move into the mountains, near Westlake, a beautiful, thinly settled region of high meadows and perennial streams in the western part of the Livermore country. At the time, the name "Livermore" referred to a large expanse of mountain land northwest of Fort Collins, ranging from the Wyoming border south to Greyrock Mountain, and west from the plains all the way to the Medicine Bow Mountains. "Livermore" was also the name of the little community (on the North Poudre River) that provided essential services to greater Livermore. The settlement had a post office, a general store, a hotel, and a livery barn. The Elliott homestead was about twelve miles west of Livermore proper and about thirty miles northwest of Fort Collins. It was situated close to a lake and not far from the top of what later came to be known as "Elliott Hill." The chain of lakes that define the district's character were in fact small reservoirs built to trap the water of Lone Pine Creek for irrigation purposes. Later, developed as a destination for summer tourists and anglers, the place was renamed "Red Feather Lakes."

Why did Dan Elliott move his family from "Collins" into the mountains? In March 1895, John's seven-year-old sister Vernie died of pneumonia in Fort Collins. Dan also caught pneumonia around this time and nearly died. The doctor urged him to go to the mountains—the thin dry air, it was thought, helped damaged lungs ward off tuberculosis. The English traveler Isabella Bird, in her Colorado sojourn of 1873, described nine of the ten settlers she met as "cured invalids" who had had lung complaints. Because of the good air, she characterized the state as "the most remarkable sanatorium in the world." In fact, a surprising number of settlers said they came to Livermore for the salubrious air, in the hopes of strengthening lungs weakened by tuberculosis, asthma, or pneumonia. Dan Elliott was one of them.

The availability of land in the Livermore region enabled the Elliotts to move. In the 1890s, the Westlake-Elkhorn district was on the settlement frontier, which meant that acreage in the public domain was still open for homesteading. Dan Elliott wanted to heal his lungs, but he also longed to breathe the sweet mountain air on a ranch that he owned himself.

John Elliott was sixteen when, for the seventh time, he moved with his parents. Dan took up land and built a two-room log cabin on the parcel. He ran a few cattle and continued freighting. Though the little ranch offered expansive views of a range of snowy mountains, the Mummies, the family of ten felt cramped in the two-room cabin, especially in winter. It was in this cabin that Lizzie bore three more children. The second baby was the first one ever delivered by a doctor. The last was her twelfth child. All of her children except Vernie survived into adulthood, a remarkable rate for that period. She had begun having babies when she was seventeen and did not stop until she was forty-five years old, when her second-born child, John, was twenty-five. Surviving so many childbirths was an achievement in those times.

Mortal sicknesses took a great toll of pioneer children. I have encountered their little graves in the meadows of Livermore. Ruby claimed that the family did not have many sicknesses, but she then went on to say that her sister Isadora contracted typhoid fever, her father kidney disease, and she herself smallpox. "Dr. Quick came up from Loveland, vaccinated for smallpox, and gave us each a quarter," but Ruby's vaccination did not take, and she exposed several other people, including the mountain teacher who was boarding with the family.

The Westlake-Elkhorn district offered the Elliotts well-watered grassland good for cattle. To further open the land for grazing, sawmill operators such as the Elliotts' neighbor Fred Smith clear-cut many of the ponderosa forests. Smith was the first settler in the area, and he later hired John as a cowboy.

The topography of this landscape of meadows, ponds, and streams became as familiar to John as the back of his own hand. Another neighbor who lived at Westlake in this period, Amanda Hardin (Brown), described the experience of growing up there: "It was the most wonderful place, big high piles of granite rocks and beautiful pine and spruce trees all around our yard. There were wonderful springs coming out of the ground everywhere." The average elevation of eight thousand feet

meant there were no rattlesnakes, but it was also too high for raspberries and gooseberries. Chokecherries and plums abounded, however, as well as wild anemone, purple iris, and the stately columbine. Amanda Hardin also remembered the silence of the hills and the beauty of the lakes. She wrote of the mountain savannah as a summer paradise. Winters, though, were dreary. Hard winds and snow made the outdoors inhospitable.

John's sister Ruby used the same word, *wonderful*, to describe her childhood in Westlake. The place was the scene of many adventures. One day she and an older brother were charged by their mother to take care of the latest baby. Near Elkhorn Creek, they decided to go into a cave that was off-bounds to them. The three children, accompanied by their shepherd dog Ring and a neighbor boy, walked in holding lanterns. At one point, the dog, which was ahead, growled. Suddenly three mountain lions leaped past the children and out of the cave. Ruby recalled: "I never told my mother till I had four children. She said, 'I should whip you now.'" This incident offers a rare glimpse into the character of John Elliott's mother. She was a strong woman, a matriarch who tolerated no nonsense. Ruby was on the wild side, the reason John liked her best.

This was the environment, then, in which John spent his teenage years. Living and working in the western Livermore country, he came to know the lay of the land. From age fourteen (with his parents still in Fort Collins) to age seventeen, he spent winters working as a ranch hand for John S. Williams. Born in 1839, Williams had come to Colorado in the gold rush of 1860, then later settled in Livermore. From him, young John Elliott learned the fundamentals of mountain ranching. His employer was one of the first to replace the half-feral Texas Longhorn cattle with registered Herefords. The homestead lay in a wild, remote area at the confluence of the two branches of Lone Pine Creek. There, Elliott boarded with the Williams family. We have found only one photograph of John Elliott from this period. He is about age sixteen and shows the beginnings of a mustache.

When he first arrived, he may have marveled at the Williamses' house, one of the finest in western Livermore. The two-story building had wainscoting and a large bay window, which Mrs. Williams filled

John Elliott about age sixteen, circa 1895.
Courtesy of Judy Cass.

with flowers in season. Running water from a spring was piped into the house. The sitting room had lace curtains, a canary, and an organ. This was John Elliott's winter home for four years.

After he left the Williams, he continued to cowpunch in the greater Livermore country. Between freighting jobs, he worked the next fifteen years for other ranchers, first as a hand and top hand, then as ranch manager and tenant. Through this period, he lived frugally and built up a small cattle herd of his own. He probably kept some on his father's range near Westlake and some on the ranches where he was a hand. One transaction gives us a glimpse into his working methods and efforts to get ahead. When he was nineteen, he paid fifty dollars for a bull calf from the Wyoming Hereford Ranch east of Cheyenne. He hauled it back to Livermore in a "wagon box." Fifty dollars was a large sum then, but the bull calf was a registered Hereford, and the Wyoming Hereford Ranch bred the finest cattle in the region. John fed the little bull, a "weaner calf," all winter long and in the summer let him breed his cows. He kept the bull four years and then sold it to rancher Leslie Horsley—a well-to-do Englishman who would have been picky about the quality of his livestock—along with forty heifers. John apparently held back one top bull calf from this sire to maintain the bloodline and probably used the money to buy more heifers.

As a young man, John rode for ranchers who had settled and developed the Livermore country as cattle range. It is worth taking a closer look at this first generation of settlers, for they were John's mentors and benefactors.

The earliest of these settlers was Fred Smith, the Elliott neighbor mentioned earlier. John worked for him from 1897 to 1899. Born in 1837, Smith first came to Livermore when it was still wilderness. He worked as a professional hunter in the early 1860s and made a living selling game meat to the Denver market. Later, he returned to the area to ranch and run a sawmill near Westlake. Smith was apparently the first settler to use the higher terrain of Deadman Park, a meadow west of Westlake, as summer pasture for his cattle. Due to the elevation and climate, the summer grasses were green and lush. He and the other ranchers who used this open range needed someone to watch over their cattle, which ran loose, so they hired John Elliott.

In 1900, John was boarding with John Sargisson, who ran a dairy

outfit and supplied butter to Fort Collins. His holding was close to the Williams ranch. Born in Lincolnshire, England, in 1842, Sargisson was the first of several Englishmen for whom Elliott would work in the next ten years.

Through the first decade of the new century, John hired out with the more affluent ranchers who lived in Livermore proper. He now had a reputation as a first-rate cowhand and seems to have made a specialty of working for English ranchers or their wives. From 1903 to 1905, he was employed by Leslie Horsley, to whom he had earlier sold the Hereford bull and heifers. Horsley had come to Livermore from England in 1893. His wife, Cora, was from Iowa. Many Livermore settlers, like the Elliotts, came from the midwestern states, but there was also a strong contingent of Englishmen. Most of the latter, like Elliott's employer Horsley, were "remittance men"—Victorian "trust fund babies," as it were, landed families' younger sons who were given allowances (or remittances) and sent off to make their fortune in the New World. The names of these Englishmen and Scots stand out in the roster of early Livermore: "Lord" Cecil Moon, Malcolm Bellairs, John McNey, John Sargisson, Charles Cradock, Harry and Charles Gilpin-Brown. Educated and well-to-do, they created an unusual standard of gracious living in the newly settled region. Through their efforts, for instance, telephone service was established early, in 1898. These men had the wherewithal to build fine houses, a few of which stand to this day. They and their (mostly American) wives fostered cooperation, mutual good will, and a festive atmosphere in the ranching community of Livermore.

Later in life, John Elliott was thought of as a man's man, big, self-reliant, and tough. When he was in his twenties, though, he worked at different times as the hired hand of two women ranchers, "Lady" Catherine Moon and Mrs. Helen Gilpin-Brown. Neither was English, but both were wives of Englishmen.

It was in the late 1890s that Elliott worked for the Moons, though as he himself put it, Kate Moon rather than her aristocratic husband, Cecil, was the boss. She was a flamboyant Irish woman of the working classes who had divorced her first husband to become "Lady" Moon. An avid equestrian, she wore spectacularly large hats adorned with expensive ostrich feathers. Locals, however, did not consider her much of a "lady." She and Moon eventually separated. In an interview in 1956, Elliott

reminisced about his former boss. He recounted how, when Cecil's father died, the son inherited his father's wealth and title and returned to England. Kate went, too, but, according to Elliott, Cecil paid her a large settlement to go back to Livermore. There she wasted her money on racehorses, for which she had a passion, and ended up dying, in John Elliott's words, "a pauper." He remembered her as a "good-hearted old soul. She'd pull the shirt off her back if you needed it."

Elliott managed Mrs. Helen Gilpin-Brown's ranch from 1906 to 1907. Helen Poland was born in Massachusetts and raised in Livermore on the North Poudre, where her parents ranched. Her eccentric father, William, was a well-educated, independent-thinking architect from Boston. As a young single woman, Helen taught school in Livermore, then met and married Charles Gilpin-Brown, an English immigrant from a landed family in Yorkshire who bought a fine ranch that lay along the Lone Pine and lower Rabbit Creek close to their confluence with the North Poudre. Charles died in 1906. Helen, then living in Fort Collins, hired John to oversee the day-to-day operations of the Livermore ranch. He was twenty-six, and this was his first real opportunity to run a cattle outfit. After two years, he took a lease on the Helen Gilpin-Brown operation.

Like Kate Moon, Helen Gilpin-Brown was a formidable woman, but in different ways. She, too, had been to Europe. A founding member and former president of the Livermore Woman's Club, she was a "bluestocking"—a woman who had literary or intellectual interests. She and Elliott were nonetheless able to work together. Involved in Fort Collins life, she gave him a free hand on the ranch. Later, she earned a bachelor of arts degree from Colorado State Teachers College in Greeley and became dean of women there. In that capacity, she reappears later in this narrative.

Before young John Elliott began managing the Gilpin-Brown ranch, he had not only wandered the hinterlands of Livermore as a cowboy, but traveled the back roads and trails of northern Colorado as a freighter. He apparently made good money in the hauling trade. Elliott's personality was formed by his youthful experiences as a freighter's son and as the driver of a team himself. His later successes owed something to qualities he developed in this line of work. Endurance, daring, the

willingness to use violence, and a vivid way of talking reflect his teamster background.

Freighters were the truckers of the era before mechanized transportation. Their horse-, mule-, or ox-drawn wagons carried anything and everything—hay, furniture, dried fruit, axes, flour, grand pianos, barrels of whiskey, ploughs, blocks of ice, tinned oysters, calico cloth, dynamite, and champagne glasses. They supplied the new settlements.

In his twenties, Elliott and a partner ran a freight line between Fort Collins and Walden in North Park, a hundred miles to the west. Eight-horse teams pulled the heavy wagons over the new "State Road," much of it through steep mountainous terrain. Elliott picked up his lading at the freight depot in Fort Collins, took the road into the mountains, and later stopped at the hotel and livery barn in Livermore. He then took the uphill road past his father's homestead in Westlake, proceeded over Deadman Pass, then down into the Laramie River valley, then up and over the Medicine Bow Range at Ute Pass, and down again into Walden in North Park. Sometimes he continued on to Steamboat Springs—not yet a ski resort—150 miles from Fort Collins. That was indeed a long haul. The outgoing journey took five days. Today, it is three and a half hours by car. The "State Road" that Elliott plied was often one lane wide, in some places no more than a glorified trail, and thus proved a real test for freighters and their teams.

Between 1900 and 1903, Elliott did a great deal of freighting. I found a record of a month's deliveries he made to the Moon ranch in January 1903. According to Cecil Moon, Elliott delivered to him 3,300 pounds of grain, twenty-four cakes of ice, and two loads of sawdust (to insulate the ice). For one of the deliveries, he was paid $10.75. After another delivery, Lord Cecil invited Elliott to dinner. The mountain ranches depended on the freighters.

Like his father, John freighted for some of the great water projects that changed the landscapes of the Mountain West. These projects, under way from 1890 to 1910, redimensioned the water flow and drainages of major river systems. Their channels and catchments transformed the physical terrain, and the water they redirected was the means and impetus for converting wildlands into irrigated farmland and hay meadows. Elliott hauled dynamite for the construction of the Laramie-Poudre Water Tunnel, a dangerous business. When one wagon (not his)

carrying dynamite was struck by lightning, it exploded and blew huge holes in the ground, like bomb craters, that are visible to this day. He hauled supplies for the construction of Skyline Ditch. He hauled hay for the draft animals used in the reconstruction of Chambers Lake dam after a flood destroyed it. Apart from these mountain water projects, he also freighted coal from Coalmont in North Park over Buffalo Pass into Laramie, Wyoming, and salt for cattle up to Deadman Pass. He freighted supplies down treacherous Pingree Hill, where the hairpin curves and steep sides took their toll in human lives.

The freighters were colorful men. They had to be daring to get the job done. The language they used was not maidenly. Ruby Johnson described her father, Dan Elliott, as "an awful swearer" and said that "he could hold his own with the muleskinners." One local Indian name for *freighter* was "goddam-giddyup-whoa." The freighters, though they drove mostly horse teams, called themselves "bull whackers" because of their long whips, which they referred to as "blacksnakes." John Elliott was an expert in the use of the blacksnake. The one-inch slit a bull whip made in the hide of a wagon horse was a "buttonhole." Freighters called their wagons "spine pounders." The log used to firm up a boggy road was a "crib." A muddy quagmire was a "soup hole."

As these terms suggest, freighting was tough in the mountains, where roads were rudimentary and the weather unpredictable. A wheel or axle might break or the horses might spook and lunge over a cliff. The work was dirty, the conditions for sleeping and eating miserable. On a winter night, Elliott rolled his bedroll out in the snow and cooked his simple supper over an open fire.

In a 1956 interview, Elliott recalled an incident that conveys the challenges of his work.

Interviewer: What freighting would you do? What supplies?

JWE: Used to haul flour into Steamboat.

Interviewer: Flour. So, they tell me a great story about you going in over there when they were out of provisions and you had to haul over there in a blizzard.

JWE: Yea.

Interviewer: Well, when was that?

JWE: Oh, I couldn't give you a date, but we went over there,

> oh, I guess it was in November sometime. They thought they didn't have quite enough flour, and they rode out here to old B. F. Harvel to send in two more loads. . . . [T]hey didn't care how big. So a couple of us, we loaded up and went over the pass. There was, aw, maybe that much snow. Rabbit Ears. We laid over a day down there, and next morning it was [unintelligible] smooth, you know, clouded over, and I said I was goin'. The other fellow said he wanted to stay a day. No, I'm goin' out. I think, it's goin' to storm. When I got on top of Rabbit Ears Pass, it was just four feet of snow and still a-snowin'.

Elliott put his wagon on sled runners. He made it into Steamboat, and the people there had bread to eat that winter. On the return to Collins, John looked forward to stopping at the hamlet of Livermore, where he fed and watered his team. The Livermore Hotel was a well-known "roadhouse": there, John could have coffee or a meal or go to a weekend dance that went on until daybreak. Later in life, he and Josephine Lamb together bought the defunct hotel and lived there.

In the same interview, Elliott told of a freighting adventure he had with his father in the high mountains above the main canyon of the Cache la Poudre River. The interplay of father and son, the way they talked to each other, is revealing. The story offers a glimpse of young Elliott's character—as remembered by the old man looking back sixty years. When Elliott's words were recorded on tape, he was in his late seventies and didn't have a tooth in his mouth. He used dentures only for eating, not when he was talking. The words are sometimes difficult to interpret, so there are a few gaps.

The young John Elliott that emerges is bold and confident. He is not afraid to push the limits. The father yields to his son and against his own better judgment allows the lad to take a dangerous course of action. They were hauling hay for the workhorses used for rebuilding the dam on Chambers Lake. The dam burst in 1891 and again in 1904, when torrential rains also resulted in the flooding of the Livermore Hotel. The episode described probably took place during the earlier reconstruction in the 1890s, when John was twelve or thirteen.

John Elliott told the story like this:

And hay was all we had, my dad and I, and we was loaded for everything that we could pull. And we thought some of the other fellas was goin' to take some of the load, you see. John McNabb was down from the lake with a wagon, and he was goin' to take some extra to haul. So we were loaded to all we could pull. And at that time there was no road up the Poudre, so you'd get trailed, you know. They'd take those rocky points that come down there and get to trailin' a lot of rock along here, you know, and just wide enough for a wagon, and some of those about forty-five degrees [unintelligible], you know. They'd fill them in and kind of level them up, and I come along on one of them pitches where they run up over one of them. I heard something plunk down the river, and I looked back, and I was tearing all the ridge off, and my wheels was just slidin' along that, pushing that all off, you know. I had to yell out at 'em, and one took mine over.

Dad was setting down there, and he says, "That's a hell of a road you left for me." He says, "We'll have to pack my load all up."

I says, "No, look, put mine on and run it."

"Run it, hell," he says. "You can't run that and keep it on there."

"By God, we can try her."

"No. We'll lose the whole outfit."

"Well, hell," I says, "it's too hard work to pack that up. Let's put mine on and run it."

He said, "By God, you'll drive it."

"I'll drive her all right." [Laughs.]

And I put mine on, and one head [of a horse] lowered it a little bit low, about comin' into it. And I put a buttonhole on him. Course, I hated to, but I did, I put a buttonhole on him, put him up in the collar. I run it.

The old man, he didn't hollar anything about running it, or anything, but, "Goddamn, you buttonholed my horse." [Laughs.] It happened to be his pet.

And we went on and got pretty near up to where they would camp that night, and I lost my wagon in the soup hole, ditch, fell right in. [Laughs.] And had to come down the next morning and unload the whole works. Put all the horses we had on, even to pull the wagon out. The bank was hard, you know, and straight up.

> So we just simply . . . I pulled the wagon to pieces gettin' it out. McNabb was the foreman, and he said the cribs were gettin' a little rotten up in there, and he went ahead. And then he motioned us into the bank, you know, on the rotten cribs. And there was a fella there, his first trip over—he's from Nebraska—the first time he saw the hill. A big rock sticking out on the bank. Any blind man could've seen it. But Frank, there was this old guy, just motioned him in, and he kept crowdin' in, crowdin' in, and he hit that rock and upset and went down about thirty feet, down into the river, team, wagon, and all. And he thought he was killed.

John Elliott's first seventeen years in northern Colorado—from age eleven to his marriage at twenty-nine in 1908—gave him new skills and an intimate understanding of greater Livermore and its geography. His life resembled that of many another youth growing up and finding his way in the wide open world of the West, and those years doubtless witnessed setbacks and frustrations. What these frustrations were, we do not know. The stories John Elliott told of his working days as a young man do not reveal a great deal about what was going on inside him. Even so, the stories give us a sense of his character and sometimes his feelings. They show his aggressiveness, know-how, and business savvy—all qualities consistent with what we know about John Elliott as a mature man.

In the same interview, John Elliott told how he once stole a calf. This story shows how far he was willing to go in order to build up his herd. It shows his readiness to seize the main chance.

At first, Elliott refused to tell the story. "It might make it appear that some of our people and all of us around here were cow thieves." The incident took place in Livermore. He and several others grabbed some "slick" calves—that is, ones with no brands on them. The calves doubtless belonged to someone else. Each young man used a knife to cut the calf's ear with an identifying "earmark." Like branding, cutting the ears was an act of possession. It is understandable that Elliott was reluctant to record on tape an incident in which it appears he was a party to theft. Finally, though, Josephine Lamb and the interviewer cajoled him into telling the story. They tricked the old trickster, telling him that he didn't

have to name names and that he could delete anything he didn't want included. So John Elliott told the tale.

> I won't mention no names, but we was a bunch of us over here ridin' fall roundup. And there was a devil of a lot of slick calves, big ones. And these two boys, they just went into the bunch, started to draggin' 'em out, you know, and puttin' earmarks on 'em, turning 'em in a little field. They was going to sell those mavericks and collect the money up. But all their earmarks are goin' on there, and, aw, there was a big bunch of 'em, and they drug one out, and I jumped off my horse and I says, "Wait a minute here, fellas." And I slapped my earmark on it. And old Bart Griffiths was standing out there to one side, and they went in and they drug another one out, and old Bart, he jumped off his horse and he was reaching for his knife, you know [laughing]. "Hold on, fellas, hold on, by God, I've got to have one of them." [Laughs and laughs.] And he slapped his earmark on, and the boys said, "We might just as well quit—they'll take 'em all anyway." But, uh, I told 'em, I said, "Hell, go ahead. I've got one. That's all that I want." And so they went on. They got 'em out and put 'em in the field there, Bart's field, and wanted to know if they could leave them there overnight. Bart told 'em, yea. So they come up that night and got 'em, see. In fact, they never went away. We had all come this way, except them two, and they went that way, and they just went outside and waited. [Laughs.] And old Jim Rosebrook was living down here, and he was on the drive, and when they got down there to his place, so he just cut mine out and put it in the corral. And he brought it up to me. [Laughs.] . . . I was the only one that got one out of the bunch. Old Bart never got his.

The story shows Elliott's willingness to step across moral boundaries to further his own prospects. It is a kind of parable of his early life, of his determination and good luck. He gets the calf, his friend does not.

What set John Elliott apart from other men of his time was not his greed or ambition. There was plenty of both among his peers. What set him apart was a strength of will that allowed him to realize his ambitions. The family he came from was large, had no money, and owned

little land. Yet in 1910, at the age of thirty-one, John became owner of a thousand acres of top cattle range. It was the first step in his putting together one of the biggest ranches in Livermore.

The year before John bought his own ranch, Dan Elliott sold his. He pulled up stakes and left Colorado. Perhaps he was tired of freighting the mountains. Ruby Johnson said her father wanted to farm again. His small holding in Livermore was not really enough for mountain ranching. Dan had heard that farm land was cheap in South Dakota. So had others. Between 1900 and 1915, half a million settlers poured into the Dakotas. The railroads and the government pushed hard for rapid settlement of these lands that had been recently stolen from the Indians. Once again Dan Elliott rode the wave of emigration.

Dan did not go to South Dakota by train, an unaffordable luxury. He and the older children traveled in their horse-drawn, covered "spring wagon." Lizzie rode with the young ones in a buggy. There were eight children and five cows. John, who was thirty, and two of the older daughters did not go along with the family. They chose to stay in Colorado. At the time Dan Elliott left, he had eight heifers, which he sold to John.

The Elliotts left after the Fourth of July rodeo in Livermore. Ruby was fifteen at the time. Her saddle horse, an Indian pony named Prince, was born the same year she was. Ruby remembered the difficult sixteen-week trek, much of it across waterless stretches of Wyoming. They took the "Emigrant Trail" in the reverse direction—eastward. After Cheyenne, it disappeared. They had to ford streams, and their wagon sank in the mud. Dan got mad at the horses when they could not pull it out. Ruby remembered that her father was so angry, he picked up an axe and was going to kill a horse, but his daughters sent him off, took charge, and got the wagon out. Another time when the wagon tipped over, Dan, in a fit of despair, ran a half-mile away and hid in a gully.

These incidents throw light on the character of John Elliott's father. He was hot-tempered and impatient. The women in the family, though, were able to calm him down and set him on the right course. John Elliott's coolness and undemonstrativeness as a man were in all likelihood a reaction to his father's irascibility, just as the son's later success complemented the father's ineffectiveness.

In western South Dakota, the luckless Dan bought a forty-acre farm—at the onset of a five-year drought. He then moved again, to a farm

closer to water. There he stuck it out through the dry years and the early Depression. He had finally found a place to stay and call home. He died in Newell, South Dakota, in 1934, and Lizzie followed him in 1937. It is uncertain whether John saw his parents again after they left Colorado.

If Dan Elliott had the wanderlust, his eldest son did not. John Elliott came to Colorado in 1890. After that, he never lived anywhere else than in Larimer County. In Livermore, he changed his ranch headquarters and residence twice, but he never left that part of the county. He grew attached to the land. His knowledge of the Livermore country was wide and deep, and he ended up owning a big piece of that country. He lived in Larimer County seventy years. For fifty of those years, he ranched his own land.

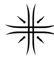
Back in 1907, however, he was only twenty-eight and did not own any land. And he did not have a wife. Before he could set up as a rancher, he believed he needed a helpmate—someone to cook and keep house for him, someone to bear his children. So John Elliott went a-courting. In that year, he wrote a note in the scrapbook of a Livermore woman he knew. It is the only writing of his that we have from his early life.

Livermore col
April 12–07
As ever your friend
John Elliott
Just keep a cosy little
corner in your heart
for me

TWO

Ida Meyer

> [C]haracter forms a life regardless of how obscurely that life is lived and how little light falls on it from the stars.
>
> —James Hillman, *The Soul's Code*



When Ida Meyer was twenty-four, she shot a bobcat. One of the earliest photos of her in the West records that event, which took place in Livermore in 1898. Whoever snapped the picture probably used Ida's Eastman Kodak camera. It seems she took it with her everywhere, and she was as good at shooting pictures as bobcats.

Miss Meyer came to Livermore in 1897, two years after the Elliotts had moved to Westlake. This chapter surveys her early life up to age thirty-four and looks closely at her work as an amateur photographer. *Early life* is a relative term. The average life expectancy of white men and women born in 1874 was forty-three years. At thirty-four, Ida would have been considered middle-aged, if not old. Yet she lived to be ninety-three. Given her longevity, the first thirty-four years were indeed her early life, a part that presented a striking contrast to the sixty years that followed.

In the bobcat photo, Ida Meyer stands next to Elmer Keach, the son of early settlers in the Rabbit Creek district of Livermore. He was not married at the time of the photo. His early biography illustrates the fragility of life in the second half of the nineteenth century. Keach's

Ida Meyer and bobcat, with Elmer Keach, 1898.
Courtesy of Phil Elliott.

mother died when he was six. In 1896, his first wife died in childbirth. She was in her twenties, and they had been married less than a year. In 1901, Keach remarried, but his second wife also died in childbirth (though the baby girl named after her survived). To become pregnant was to court death.

Ida holds the rifle with ease. We know she carried a pistol. She and Elmer stand on a verandah. He is holding the bobcat: it would have been unladylike for Ida to do so. She wears a well-tailored dress, the

waist tightly drawn in by a corset that is perhaps stiffened by whalebone. There is something wry in her half-smile. With slightly raised brows, she seems to be telling us: "I have bagged this bobcat. I am pleased to be such a woman and glad you are looking at me in my fine hunting costume."

She imbibed the spirit of adventure from hearing the itinerant early life of her mother, Lizzie. Ida's parents were Nebraskan, though not by birth. Lizzie, born Louise Heidenreich, and Ida's father, William Meyer, were from Prussia, but they met in Wisconsin. Both had immigrated to North America in the 1850s. Like countless other German pioneers in this period, their families left home with the intent of acquiring free or cheap farmland on the Midwest settlement frontier. Some came for political reasons, but the majority were driven by land hunger. Lizzie was around seven when she made the long Atlantic crossing to New York with her parents and two siblings. The family then came overland to Dane County, Wisconsin, around 1860, where Lizzie's father, Charles, and mother, Sophie, settled on a timber holding near Hope, Wisconsin. Her father cleared the land. Not long after, Lizzie's mother died at age thirty-six. Lizzie was about ten.

In 1867, Lizzie's father married again, to another Prussian-born woman, Wilhelmina Meyer, called Minnie. A widow in her fifties with seven children, she was also farming in Dane County. That year—Lizzie was seventeen—the family moved again, this time to Nebraska. They came out by covered wagon, "carrying with them their provisions, cooking and camping by the wayside." Along with Lizzie, Charles brought two other children, Charles Jr., age nine, and Minnie, six. Wilhelmina brought two of hers, William, twenty-three, and Herman, fifteen, her youngest. The Heidenreich-Meyers bought land northwest of what would become Lincoln.

Lizzie's family were among the early settlers of eastern Nebraska. The 1860s were years of intensive white settlement east of the ninety-eighth meridian—that is, in the wetter part of the state where the land could be reliably farmed. On the unimproved holding that Lizzie's father bought, only a few acres of prairie had been broken. By 1870, however, the farm was worth three thousand dollars. They had prospered. According to the *Biographical Album of Lancaster County* (1888), Ida's grandfather

was “an honest, hard working man respected by all his neighbors.” Ida, who was nine when he died, would have remembered him.

From her mother and her aunts, Ida heard stories of the hardships and adventures of the early settlement. As a mature woman, she enjoyed retelling them. Unfortunately, few of these stories have passed down. Her family did not bring much with them to the unsettled prairie. Willa Cather said of these pioneers that they “came into a wilderness and had to make everything, had to be as ingenious as shipwrecked sailors.” As a child, Ida heard her elders speak of the effort to turn back the thick sod and make the land arable, of the solitude of life on the prairie, of the buffalo and Indians. Her mother told her that when she first came through Lincoln, it was two houses and a store. Ida heard about Aunt Mary, who homesteaded in the next county over: Lizzie’s sister had married a German-born farmer whose mother had died when he was six and whose first wife had died in her thirties. He married Lizzie’s sister and came to Nebraska to start a new life. For groceries, they had to drive their horse-drawn wagon seventy-five miles one way. When Aunt Mary ran out of flour in the winter, she ground field corn in the coffee mill.

Ida was fascinated to hear her mother tell of the bizarre circumstances of her own marriage. In 1870, Lizzie married her stepbrother, William H. Meyer. She was twenty, he twenty-five. It was the second Heidenreich-Meyer alliance, and not the last. Lizzie’s sister Minnie later married Herman Meyer, William’s brother. Two brothers had married two sisters, daughters of their mother’s husband. It was an unconventional family. The name changes alone are bewildering. Minnie Meyer, the mother, became Minnie Heidenreich, and Minnie Heidenreich, her stepdaughter, became Minnie Meyer. These unions were not incestuous, for the stepsiblings were not blood related. Nevertheless, for Herman, who grew up with Minnie, it must have been like marrying a sister. Why didn’t they marry farther afield, outside the combined families? In the early settlement period, the number of eligible men and women to choose from was few, and German immigrants were clannish and married among themselves.

Witnesses to Lizzie and William’s wedding were Aunt Mary, a Mr. Preuchenbach, and “the whole church.” The year before his marriage to Lizzie, in 1869, William filed a homestead claim on eighty acres in the Middle Creek precinct, five miles from the Heidenreich farm. There the

new couple settled and began turning the prairie into farmland. Their first child, Henry W. Meyer, was born in February 1871. Lizzie was four months pregnant when she married, though Ida may never have known it.

Ida was Lizzie and William's second child—born on the farm on April 18, 1874. As the oldest of four daughters, Ida would have been close to her mother. Lizzie was a German girl who had grown up in Wisconsin, but Ida was Nebraska born and Nebraska bred. After Ida, Lizzie and William had two more daughters, Sarah and Mary.

When Ida was six years old, her father, William, died suddenly of an inflammation of the bowels. The year was 1880. He was only thirty-five. Little is known of him except that he was a farmer and a prominent Republican who represented his precinct at county conventions. When William died, Lizzie was thirty. She was left on her own with an eighty-acre farm and four children between the ages of two and nine.

Ida's mother wasted little time remarrying. In 1882, she became Mrs. Christian Biel. Ida lost her dad, but gained a stepfather and, not long after that, two half-siblings: Lillie and Charlie Biel. Lizzie now had six children.

Lizzie's second husband was also a German immigrant. Her marriages to German men were part of a larger pattern in the family. All of Ida's closest relatives were German (or German American), and they married other Germans. It is fitting that the family lived near Germantown (now Garland), Nebraska. In the period 1860 to 1880, Germans coming to the United States outnumbered other immigrant groups and were the largest ethnic group in Nebraska. German immigrants typically brought with them substantial savings and a good knowledge of farming, so they were usually more prosperous than other ethnic groups and better able to hold out in hard times. Lizzie's second husband was no exception.

Ida's stepfather, Christian Biel, had made the sea voyage to the States around 1870. He later came to Nebraska, where his older brother Peter Biel already owned a farm. Peter had been a friend of Lizzie's first husband, William: they were the same age, and the two young men filed homestead claims on the same day on adjacent parcels. It was doubtless through Peter's friendship with the Meyers that his brother Christian, who was unmarried, came to know the widowed Lizzie Meyer, who was

the same age as he. In marrying her, he not only became a husband and father, but also a landowner. Lizzie was relieved to find a father for her children and a man to help run the farm.

Christian's colorful family history made a strong impression on Ida. Youngest of seven children, he came from a prominent, landholding family in Schleswig-Holstein. Some of his brothers were soldiers, some mathematicians, and, according to family tradition, one of the latter was tutor to the German kaiser. His oldest brother, Ewald, was in the Royal Guard of the Danish king and married Marie Mathilda von Glucksburg, a distant member of the royal family. She was disinherited for marrying a commoner and died at age thirty-five, leaving Christian's brother with six children. Ewald married the cook from a neighboring estate and emigrated with her and his children to the States, eventually settling in North Dakota. After his second wife's death, Ewald returned to Germany. His youngest child, Conrad Biel, settled in Denver and manufactured patent medicines there. Biel's Stomach and Liver Pills cured "constipation, nausea, distress after eating, coated tongue, indigestion, heartburn, torpid liver, piles, belching, foul gasses, sallow skin, pain in side, high colored urine and sick headache." Christian's older brother Peter, their neighbor and the friend of Ida's father, divorced his wife, Augusta, after she took him before the Insanity Commission and charged him with trying to poison her with strychnine. She said he was having an affair with a Mrs. Hoppe. Peter claimed his wife had hit him across the knees with a poker as he was sitting by the fire trying to drive out his rheumatism. At the time of their divorce in 1895, Ida was twenty-one and unmarried.

These romantic and tragicomical tales about the Meyers, the Heidenreiches, and the erratic Biels gave Ida a keen sense of the perils of married life and the importance of choosing the right spouse.

Ida's German stepfather settled in as a Nebraska farmer. From the 1885 Nebraska Census, we get a close description of the landholding on which Ida grew up. She was eleven years old at the time of the census. As the oldest daughter, she was responsible for looking after Lillie and Charlie, her young stepsiblings, and helping her mother with domestic and farm chores. The farm, located four miles west of Lincoln, was a mixed operation, including crops, livestock, and dairy cows. The

Biel-Meyer family was well off and employed a live-in servant to keep house and one or more farm laborers. In 1893, Christian had enough money to take Lizzie to the World Fair in Chicago, where they bought furniture. Did Ida go with them?

Between 1885, when Ida Meyer was eleven, and 1897, when we know for sure she was in Colorado, evidence of her life and activity is so sparse that I call this decade "the missing years." The loss to fire of the 1890 U.S. Census makes itself felt. We know that in 1885 Ida, age eleven, was in grade school. It is unlikely she went beyond eighth grade.

Around 1895, when Ida was twenty or twenty-one, her family moved to Lincoln. The reason is uncertain. We do know that Christian Biel opened a saloon there. How did Ida regard her stepfather's saloon and its clientele? It was called Biel's Corner and offered "Fine Wines, Liquors and Cigars." It declared itself the "[b]est place in town for a glass of beer." A sign above the bar read, "In God We Trust, All Others Cash."

The Biel-Meyer farm had been close to Lincoln, yet living in the city was nevertheless a novel experience for Ida. After twenty years as a farm girl, she found the pace of urban existence quite different—the crowds, noise, and distractions both exciting and bewildering.

Sometime in the mid-1890s, a formal portrait was made of Ida in a photograph studio in Lincoln. This image does not take us far in reconstructing the "missing years," but it does give clues about our subject's persona and character. Ida looks to be twenty or twenty-one, maybe a little younger. Her dress with its double-tongue collar, the gold locket on her breast, and the very circumstance of her sitting for a portrait hint at a good standard of living. Does the conspicuous locket reflect a sentimental attachment? A characteristic half-smile lurks around the lips. The sitter gives an appearance of self-assurance and firmness. The eyes are those of an observer and express a willingness to be amused at the goings-on of the world.

Lincoln then had thirty-five thousand people. When Lizzie had come to Nebraska thirty years earlier, the landscape was mostly open prairie, with a few houses, and the railroad had gone no farther west than Omaha. By the 1890s, though, Lincoln was a major rail center. With regular train service came many kinds of people, including traveling

Studio portrait of Ida Meyer, Lincoln, Nebraska, 1890s. Courtesy of Phil Elliott.

theater companies and musical groups. The city had a good university. Ida must have felt keenly that the prairie and the city were distinct worlds. On the prairie, many farmers still lived in holes in the ground, whereas in Lincoln there were "people in top hats and tails eating oysters shipped in from the East in blocks of ice and sipping French champagne at their after theater parties." Ida apparently stayed in Lincoln only two years. She may have worked as a seamstress, as her sister Mary did. The stylishness of her wardrobe shows she was good with the needle.

Christian Biel's business did well enough to give Ida and the family a genteel home life in Lincoln. The house, though not grand, was comfortable. The move to Lincoln meant that the Biel-Meyers became part of the urban middle class. They knew the rewards and hardships of rural life, and most of the children continued to farm when they became adults. Yet their ties to the city where Lizzie and Christian lived remained close. Photos in Ida's albums show their houses, reunions, festivities, and attire, which suggest that the family attained a measure of urbanity and bourgeois refinement. The Biel-Meyers knew how to farm, but they were not "hicks." Jim Elliott remembered his grandmother Ida as "having the poise of a well-bred person."

It was said of Ida's stepfather that he dressed like an aristocrat and looked like a president. With his heavy face, mustache, and domed forehead, he resembled William Howard Taft. Christian's granddaughter Adella Freitag told me he was strict. "He'd get after me if I put one shoe over the other." He always wore a clean shirt and polished shoes. He sat in his chair with a sense of majesty, decked out in jewelry and with a gold watch chain draped over his stomach.

Adella remembered her grandmother Lizzie as a "lovely person, a good Christian lady." Brought up Lutheran, Lizzie said prayers in German and read the German Bible every day. Her English, though, was without accent because she was so young when she came to the States. Ida's mother had suffered two great losses early in life: the untimely deaths of her own mother and her first husband. Later photographs reveal Lizzie as a proud homemaker who reveled in the domestic arts and ran a prosperous, tidy household. Three decades after Ida left home, a remarkable photo, taken around 1927, shows Christian and Lizzie Biel in old age in front of their Lincoln house, surrounded by all of their grown children (see photograph on page 258 in chapter 9).

The six Meyer-Biel children remained devoted to one another. Four stayed in Nebraska. Mary Meyer moved to Wisconsin, where she married a farmer from Hope, the town in which the Heidenreiches had originally settled—another Lincoln-Dane County alliance. Mary stayed in the Midwest, in a place with strong family ties. She did the proper thing—found a husband and had children.

Ida Goes West

Ida, however, decided to leave the Midwest for good. By 1897, she was settled in Livermore, Colorado, where she worked as maid and nanny on a mountain ranch. She was around twenty-two. Her sisters and brothers, who all felt close to their sister, were dismayed by her decision to live in the Mountain West under what they saw as trying and primitive conditions. They did not understand her desire to return to the lifestyle of their pioneer grandparents rather than enjoy the material comforts that had accrued to them (from the older generation's daring and indifference to hardship).

What brought this unattached girl from Nebraska to Colorado in the first place? According to her niece, Adella Freitag, Ida first came to the state on a visit to her sister Sarah and brother-in-law, who was a railroad engineer. At the time of Ida's visit, Sarah and her husband were living in Leadville, Colorado, where the railway had sent him to work. Although they did not stay long in Colorado and returned to Nebraska, Ida did not follow them.

"Go West, young man, and grow up with the country" were Horace Greeley's famous words of counsel. He said nothing about middle-aged men like Dan Elliott who were perhaps too old to grow up with the country. Nor did he say anything about young women. Presumably, a genteel young woman did not venture alone into the West. To leave home unmarried and go into the Mountain West was a bold step.

Other unmarried women lived in the West, but their numbers were not large. In 1900, three years after Ida arrived there, the state of Colorado had a thousand women teachers, mostly unmarried, and in the city of Denver there was a host of women servants, dressmakers, and waitresses. Most of them remained single only a short time. Ida Meyer was part of this demographic group of young single women in Colorado, yet she did not marry for a long time.

Ida's decision to stay in the remote foothills of the northeastern Colorado Rockies seems a little odd, considering that she came from a middle-class milieu. In Livermore, she worked ten years in low-paying, low-status jobs: as the "servant girl" of a ranching family and as a waitress at the Livermore Hotel. Perhaps she stayed in order to forget a love debacle back in Nebraska or simply to explore a new kind of life in the mountains.

She left the Midwest in the Gay Nineties, which did not live up to their name, but instead brought drought and economic depression to the plains states. Masses of settlers left for other parts, among them the Dan Elliotts. Did Ida leave Lincoln because the Biels' finances declined in the depression and few city jobs were available? Did she feel she was a burden on the family? Perhaps hard times only provided the excuse she needed for taking an adventurous course.

I believe that as a young woman she shared her grandparents' wanderlust. Like them, but unlike her siblings, who settled into comfortable lives in the Midwest, she wanted to follow the settlement frontier. In Colorado, she became an avid traveler. Her contemporary, Elinore Pruitt Stewart, who came to Wyoming in 1912, wrote of the urge to travel before getting tied down in marriage. Pruitt imagined her life in the West stretching out before her like "one long , happy jaunt." Perhaps Ida did also.

Sightseeing in the mountains had been popular since the late 1860s. Travelers such as Bayard Taylor (1867) and Isabella Bird (1873) came to the Rockies from afar to appreciate scenery they found more majestic than the Alps, and they published books about their experiences. City people by the thousands took the train to vacation in Colorado. They came to see the Wild West, to camp in the wilderness, and to play cowboy at dude ranches and resorts, like the one Ida photographed in Cherokee Park in 1898. Pikes Peak and Steamboat Springs were already established tourist destinations. Among Fort Collins people, it was fashionable in the late 1890s to escape the summer heat and spend six weeks in July and August fishing and camping in the Steamboat Springs region. Ida herself went camping near Steamboat and took a picture of a tent set up in the midst of a stark, open plain, its bold vertical stripes like the pavilion of a desert prince.

When Ida Meyer settled in the Mountain West, she lived on her own, without husband, without family or relatives. Yet she was not entirely alone. In the early years, she lived on the Horsley ranch in Livermore.

Watered by Rabbit Creek, the Lone Pine, and the North Poudre, Leslie and Cora Horsley's ranch was situated a mile and a half from the Livermore Hotel. They were the same Horsleys who employed John Elliott as ranch hand from 1903 to 1905. Cora Horsley was three years older than Ida. Like Ida, she was from the Midwest and had worked as a waitress at the Livermore Hotel. She had also attended the Agricultural College in Fort Collins before she married Leslie Horsley, one of the British settlers in Livermore. They had three small girls, who were respectively three years, two years, and five months old in 1900. The Horsleys hired Ida as nanny and servant in exchange for room, board, and modest wages.

A photo of Ida from around 1900 shows her at work on the Horsley ranch. Cora probably took the picture, perhaps with Ida's camera. It is a rare impromptu shot: Ida is convulsed with laughter. The reason is not evident. She stands next to one of her young charges, Dorothy Horsley. Her apron is wonderfully long, as are her arms. Laughter transforms her features, creating a slight blur in the photograph. To see Ida's spontaneous expression, in contrast to the posed portrait, is a pleasure. The bare fields of winter reach back into the distance. The bucket of split kindling is an emblem of Ida's new station in life.

Yet it is hard to imagine this Ida as unhappy. Though unattached, she did not seem to have been lonely. The photos of the period 1897 to 1902 disclose a young woman in her twenties who was sociable and well accepted. She had her own calling card and evidently used it. She had a knack for hooking up with families that were not her own, such as the Horsleys in the first instance. Photos of the period also document her close ties to the Nightingales, Kilburns, and Kellers. This attachment to families not her own became a life pattern. She was friends with Mrs. Kilburn and Mrs. Keller. Both the Kellers and the Kilburns had Nebraska and Wisconsin connections. Though they lived a hundred miles away, on ranches in the high mountains—the Kilburns in North Park and the Kellers near Steamboat Springs—Ida visited them. Molly Kilburn and Lulu Keller were about Ida's age, in their midtwenties, but unlike her were married. Ida evidently stayed with Lulu from July through November 1900 and again in April 1901. She took a series of photos of the pioneer ranch and its environs, no doubt with her Eastman Kodak camera. With Lulu, she traveled west to Rifle in the Colorado River valley, and with Molly she went fishing near Steamboat.

Ida Meyer with a Horsley child, outdoors, circa 1900.
Courtesy of Phil Elliott.

Her financial resources seem in excess of what she earned as a nanny and waitress. She traveled widely. In the first decade of the new century, she made two journeys to Wisconsin and two to Nebraska. She traveled locally on horseback. To more distant places, she went by horse and buggy, horse-drawn wagon, or train. She took trips through Colorado, eager to experience the mountain landscapes. She visited the Western Slope of the Rockies, including Rifle and De Becque on the Colorado River, Pikes Peak in the southern part of the state, and Mancos in the southwest near Mesa Verde. These trips were with friends, with her sisters, and with the Horsleys.

She owned a horse, a camera, and an extensive wardrobe. In every picture we have of her at this time, she is wearing a different outfit. Ready-made dresses of the period cost between $5 and $50—a large sum for a “domestic.” Good fabric, however, could be bought reasonably at thirty-eight cents a yard. Most likely, she cut and sewed her own dresses using widely available “patterns.” A stylish persona was an important expression of her character at this time.

In 1900, the average yearly income of domestic help was $240—not the sort of wages on which one could afford a horse and a fine wardrobe. Food and material goods were not cheap in Colorado at this time: tea was sixty cents a pound, and a quart of whiskey was a dollar. Her Eastman Kodak camera cost $5, a large portion of her monthly pay. Had she been living in the late twentieth century and making $2,000 a month, the camera would have set her back a handsome $500. The fact, though, that she received room and board with the Horsleys and worked at the hotel helped her finances. The people she traveled with doubtless helped her with travel costs. Her parents and siblings paid for her rail travel back to Nebraska and Wisconsin; and she probably received some support from home.

A snapshot dated 1898 shows Ida mounted on her horse Billy. She is not dressed like a cowgirl in Buffalo Bill’s Wild West Show, which was popular at the time. Her riding costume is formal, and she sits sidesaddle. Ida’s pose invites the viewer to regard the special rapport she has with this animal. Billy’s ears are thrust forward, a sign of trust. She took horse-and-buggy trips around Livermore and far beyond, one in 1897 to the Nightingale ranch at Happy Hollow, an aptly named parkland in the mountains west of Fort Collins. On this trip, she took snapshots of the striking foothills scenery.

Photographs from this period show Ida enjoying the company of young men, among them J. Lawrence Nightingale, whose family lived in Happy Hollow. The men seemed to like her. It is hard not to infer that some of them courted her. Elmer Keach, the widower who stood next to her in the bobcat photo and the postmaster for the Rabbit Creek district, was an eligible man. If there was a romantic interest between them, it did not go far because Keach married another woman in 1901. Another young man who was interested in her was Fred Brandt. They went canoeing together on a lake during one of her trips back to Wisconsin. One snapshot shows Ida and Fred together and is inscribed "Chewing the Rag." For all of the talk, this friendship did not culminate in marriage.

J. Lawrence Nightingale was a well-known personality in the county. Like Ida, the Nightingales emigrated to Colorado from Lancaster County, Nebraska, during the 1890s. It is possible Ida knew them from Lincoln. Lawrence was the assistant postmaster of Livermore. A photo from this period, perhaps taken by Ida, shows him behind the counter of the Livermore post office/grocery, adjacent to the Livermore Hotel, where Ida waitressed. Ida and Lawrence also saw each other back in Nebraska. A snapshot shows them with Ida's brother Henry and sister Sarah. Ida and Lawrence are fooling around. He is standing behind her, and she is seated, fending off his hands with her hands. Both are laughing. They evidently liked each other, but even so, no marriage ensued. Either Lawrence never proposed, or Ida turned him down.

There were no lack of suitors. The Livermore Hotel, where she was waitress and "pie lady," was a busy way station on the stage line between the mountains and the towns of the plains. A waitress there met all kinds of men—ranchers, cowhands, prospectors, stage drivers, tourists, and "bull whackers." In the ranching and mining country of the northern Colorado mountains, women were at a premium, and there was a good supply of eligible men eager to renounce bachelorhood. In Colorado in 1900, the statewide gender ratio was 56 percent male to 44 percent female. The difference was greater in mountain areas, heightening the marriageability of any single woman. In Livermore, when a new teacher arrived, the single men gathered at the Livermore Hotel to welcome her, and not because they were interested in the education of local children.

A mountain schoolteacher did not as a rule stay single or on the job for very long.

Ida, however, lived as a single woman in Livermore eleven years before she deigned to accept a suitor. She waited until she was thirty-four, an age people considered beyond the time of first childbearing. The average age at which Colorado homesteading women in that time got married was twenty.

Was Ida not the marrying type? It is doubtful. Did love of independence and a sense of adventure make her shy away from the yoke of matrimony? Did she fear pregnancy because so many women in her family died as a result of childbearing? Or did she mistrust intimacy because of some event in her past? Perhaps her requirements in a spouse were simply too high, and she was holding out for a man of stature who would take her freedom and do something magnificent with it.

From an Emigrant's Album

Ida's photographs are our best guide to the West she knew. They reveal her attachment to the landscapes of her new home. Livermore proper lay in a broad valley of the foothills and was surrounded by rolling meadowland. The terrain Ida captured with her camera seems bare and empty, with fewer trees than today. Roads are primitive tracks. Her shot of the lane up Calloway Hill into the Rabbit Creek country makes one wonder how any vehicle could have gotten up it. There are very few houses. A decade after she came, only 663 registered voters were on the lists for the whole Livermore region, which was an extensive area.

Not long after her arrival, Ida took a photograph (dated 1897) of the hamlet of Livermore in winter. The largest building, as it appears in the picture, is the livery barn. From left to right, we see the barn, the post office/grocery (where Lawrence Nightingale worked), the Livermore Hotel, and the Community Hall—with the North Poudre River in the foreground, frozen. In 1843, Charles Fremont had passed by here—fifty-three years earlier than Ida's photo—in a time before there were settlers. Now there were the hotel, built in 1890, and other buildings to serve the far-flung ranching community. To modern eyes, the hamlet of 1897 seems to offer little more than bare necessities, yet the hotel was a welcome sight where people could get a cup of coffee, have supper, and on weekends go to a

Livermore, with the Livermore Hotel in the center, 1897.
Photograph by Ida Meyer. Courtesy of Phil Elliott.

dance. The "roadhouse" was the heart of "New Livermore." There Ida Meyer gained renown in the region for her fruit pies.

Ida did not take pictures of the hotel's interior—indoor shots were rare because of the difficult light. We know, however, that the hotel had a dining hall, a reception area, a reading room ("the Library"), ten bedrooms, a large kitchen, and a sleeping loft where ranchers' children could sack out during the late hours of the frequent dances and holiday banquets. The hotel boasted two balconies, but was neither large nor fancy. Ida recorded the flood of 1904, when the adjacent North Poudre River inundated the hotel and post office with four feet of water. Foodstuffs in the grocery had to be stacked quickly onto higher shelves to keep them dry, and the raging river swept the community piano twenty miles downstream.

The contents of Ida's albums give us a precious record of what

captured her attention, of what she actually saw in her early years in the West. Her pictures are historically significant because local photography was not much in evidence. Fort Collins newspapers of the late 1890s did not print photos, and there were few commercial photographers in the county. The work of a skilled amateur like Ida Meyer provides a valuable visual archive of the late settlement period in the Colorado mountains.

Her activity as a woman photographer owed much to the times. By the 1890s, women were able to develop negatives without blackening their fingers. All-male camera clubs, unlike other clubs, began admitting women. The camera was a great equalizer. Eastman Kodak's introduction in the 1890s of a lightweight apparatus that used rolled film gave a big impetus to women as photographers. By the turn of the century, a hundred thousand of these cameras were in the hands of amateurs. It was what Ida herself owned: a camera of the folding bellows type. Her camera has been passed down, and I have held it in my hands. The box is black, the bellows burgundy colored. On the inside of the brown leather carrying case are inscribed the words, "July 15, 1900 Ida Meyer Livermore Colorado."

Over the years, Ida accumulated four albums of photos. She also displayed photos on tables and walls, and projected them as lantern slides, a widespread practice in the late 1890s.

When she began taking pictures, there was debate in hobby magazines about the purpose of photography. Ida's camera work suggests an awareness of contemporary trends. Amateurs of the period began to see the camera not only as an instrument for family records, but also as a means of artistic expression. The range of Ida Meyer's early photography shows she had both objectives in mind.

Picture taking was more important to Ida than writing. Hundreds of her photos survive, but not, to our knowledge, a single letter. Her portable stationary case, from around 1900, passed down to a grandson. It includes a book of formula letters titled *A New Letter Writer for the Use of Ladies,* a 1901 calendar, paper, envelopes, an ink tin, blotter holder, and a small gadget for stamping the name "Ida Meyer" on envelopes. Everything is in pristine condition, as if it had rarely been used. Ida Meyer wrote in a beautiful regular hand, but we only know this from the captions she wrote on photos. The spoken word and the photograph were her preferred means of expression.

She was not a professional photographer. She did not make a living from taking pictures—few women of the time did—yet she was more than a casual hobbyist. The quality and range of her work hints that she saw herself as a "serious amateur."

Photography gave Ida a way of connecting with a mountain environment that was novel to her and to the nation as a whole. As a Nebraska woman, she saw Livermore as wilderness—beautiful, but also primitive and perilous. Her camera, like the Derringer pistol she carried, gave her a sense of control in unfamiliar, unpredictable surroundings. It gave her the power of representation, a feeling that she had a stake in the West. As a result, she succeeded in documenting significant features of a landscape unknown to all but a few U.S. citizens.

Her camera work participated in the mythos of the West and extended it. She took shots of cowboys, horses, ranch life, scenery, and wild animals. Here is a sample of her captions: "Mr. Horsley's Cattle," "Stacking Hay on Kellers Ranch, July 1900," and "Colorado Cowboys 1897 Masonville." These pictures are a local counterpart to the mass-produced commercial photographs of the West in this period. Two years before Ida began taking pictures, Charles Kirkland publicized his popular photo series "Views of Cow-boy Life and the Cattle Business." These "views" gave the public at large its first real look at western rural life. They became the basis for postcards, magazine illustrations, and those sentimentalized images of the West—panoramic views, buffalos, friendly Indians, and idyllic homesteads—employed by railway companies to draw in the tourists and settlers' business. Ida's images, like Kirkland's, were inspired by a romantic perspective, yet her work seems truer to the realities of mountain life than the commercial photography of the time.

The Ida Meyer collection numbers in the hundreds and covers a span of fifty years. Not all were taken by her—some studio portraits and shots were taken by friends and relatives. The majority are mounted in four albums of different sizes, using several mounting methods. Most of the photos were printed in a small format, three by three and three by four.

These albums are of special historical interest because so many people and places in them are clearly identified through captions. Ida took the trouble to name names and give dates. This practice suggests that she thought her collections might have importance later on for family members, which has proven to be the case. She may also have had an inkling

that her visual records of early communities in the West were of historical value. If only other amateurs had felt that way. In most old photographs I have encountered, the subjects are not identified. The faces and scenes are striking in their immediacy, but their significance in the annals of time has been lost. This is not true of Ida's albums. The labeling adds a layer of meaning to her collections. Album users can establish connections between the people pictured and draw on the dates to create a narrative. Our reconstruction of Ida's early life in the West comes in part from the stories implied by groups of photos in her albums.

When Ida was an old woman, her daughter-in-law asked her to identify some of the people in the albums. Ida said, "Oh, those people don't mean anything to me anymore," yet she did give their names, and they were written down. To the writer of lives, those people mean a great deal indeed. It is odd that Ida lost interest in them: elderly people typically enjoy looking through photo albums. Perhaps for reasons connected to her disappointing married life, she felt uncomfortable contemplating the friends of her early days in Livermore.

The largest category of photos consists of family and friends, the amateur's staples. These "people pictures" often record the reunions, parties, and visits of the Biel-Meyer clan. In Livermore, Ida took pictures of her "adopted" families and other friends. Ida's affection for Cora Horsley and the Horsley children is evident in her snapshots. A number of photos depict the Kilburns and the Kellers and their ranches. In one amusing shot, Ida and Molly Kilburn, both in bonnets, hold between them a string of thirty fish they caught.

Several photos demonstrate Ida's susceptibility to art photography. One is a shot of Mrs. Keller standing precariously at the top of an "ice cone" in Rifle Creek Canyon, Colorado. Ida has captured the young woman in a dramatic silhouette against a background of blurry trees covered in snow. This photograph, from around 1900, strongly resembles a romantic image entitled *Silhouette of a Woman*, taken in 1899 by the renowned art photographer Gertrude Käsebier. The latter shows a woman in profile—her hands together, raised as if in prayer—against the blurred background of an open French window. This stylistic parallel suggests that Ida Meyer was influenced by the artistic trends of her time.

"Ice Cone Rifle Creek Canon, Mrs. Keller," circa 1900.
Photograph by Ida Meyer. Courtesy of Phil Elliott.

Another category of pictures comprises scenes of work and daily living in her new home—taken from the perspective of an immigrant woman from the Midwest fascinated by the routines and settings of the West. Besides ranch work, Ida paid close attention to the domestic world of women and children. There are shots of dwellings and household activities. Her captions offer a conspectus of her subjects and give us clues about what interested her in her new surroundings: "Livermore School," "Livermore School Children Miss Viets Teacher 1898," "Woman's Club at Polands 1898," "Mrs. Charlie Bush" (feeding chickens), "After the Hunt, S. A. Keller's Ranch," "A corner in Mrs. Keller's house," "Hauling Lumber at 'Rusts Saw Mill,'" "Mr. Harts Pig," "Breaking Land. Garfield Co. Colo.," "Edna Viets. Washing Dishes in Camp." Two images titled

"Church Fair in Livermore 1897" depict the materials and products of domestic crafts—spools of thread, quilts, fancy fans, paper ornaments, and Chinese lanterns.

In addition to Mr. Hart's pig and Mrs. Bush's chickens, Ida took shots of other animals, including a "whining pup," "Dina's Colt," a herd of elk, and a badger in a doorway. One arresting photo is captioned "Coyote Shot by Mrs. Horsley, September 3, 1899." The young mother, gun in hand, sits beside the dead animal—a companion piece to the picture of Ida and the dead bobcat.

Rural women knew how to shoot. Ida herself owned a .22-caliber Derringer. It was a "powder puff" pistol, small and easily concealed. The weapon seems a toy, but the appearance is deceptive. It was designed for use at close range. A woman in danger could push the barrel into a man's midriff and pull the trigger. Like the gold locket, the silver calling-card holder, and the Eastman Kodak camera, Ida's Derringer passed down to a later generation. These objects of history are tokens of her character and interests in early adult life.

Landscape photography is another important genre she practiced. The albums contain few country scenes from Nebraska, but the mountain terrain of the West is a major theme. The small size of the prints, usually three inches square, of such expansive subjects creates a visual paradox, like a ship in a bottle. The western vista is bounded in a nutshell. This incongruous effect was characteristic of most amateur landscape photography at the turn of the century.

The mapping expeditions of the 1860s into the Mountain West brought with them professional photographers such as William Henry Hunt who established a landscape tradition emphasizing panoramic views and wide vistas from the tops of mountains. Their photos not only recorded western landscapes, but helped transform them. It is a striking example of how observation can change that which is observed. On the one hand, the powerful images they made with the camera inspired legislation in the nation's capital to preserve areas such as Yellowstone and Yosemite from development. On the other hand, the same images attracted settlers and entrepreneurs into the West and thus contributed to the uncontrolled exploitation of natural resources. The landscapes

pictured were transformed, and whole ecosystems, such as forestlands, were in certain districts devastated by logging and mining.

Ida Meyer's landscape images are of particular interest because she resisted the general mania for panoramic scenes. She preferred nature scenes on a human scale—scenes that the viewer might walk into. Typical of this aesthetic is her photo with the "picturesque" caption "Deserted Schoolhouse, Happy Hollow 1898."

Her photos offer one individual settler's perception of western land features at a time when such images were scarce. That she regarded landscape as a distinct genre is shown from her captions and from her grouping together "views" of different localities—for example, the grouping "Scenery on the Pine Creek 1897," "Scenery Between Livermore and Cherokee Park 1897," "Mad Creek in Routt Co. Colo.," "Elk Creek in Routt Co.," "Owl Canon," and "View of Steamboat Sprgs. from Bear Creek. Aug. 1900."

As the list shows, she was partial to creeks and small canyons. Here, she parted company with so many other amateurs of her time for whom wild alpine scenes were the primary objective of western photography. Ida had traveled through and seen the majestic peaks, the vast snowy ranges, yet she largely ignored them. She may have felt that mountain grandeur was overdone. Her real love was for the foothills landscape.

Her nature scenes are rarely static. She succeeded in catching and teasing out latent tensions between foreground and background, light and shadow, rough surface and smooth. These values are evident in her "Ice Cone" photo. They recur in a snapshot of a large rock, entitled "From Happy Hollow to Livermore 1898." Both images belong to the "view" genre, which typically focused on a "wonder of nature." The "view" of the rock is not panoramic, yet Meyer presented the curious formation so as to evoke in the viewer a feeling of awe. In both the ice cone and the rock pictures, Meyer used people to define the scale of the formation, thereby creating a theatrical effect. The juxtaposition of the monolith and the diminutive buggy demonstrates Ida's skill and photographic wit.

Meyer's emphasis on the local is refreshing. The attention paid to specific creeks and valleys rather than to generic mountain scenes permits present-day viewers to study how known places and land features appeared a hundred years ago. There are images of the North Poudre

"From Happy Hollow to Livermore 1898."
Photograph by Ida Meyer. Courtesy of Phil Elliott.

River in spring spate, the steep track over Calloway Hill, the road through Owl Canyon, and the meadows of Happy Hollow—all dated 1898.

The finest of this series, "View of Horsetooth Mountain, Colo. 1898," presents from an unusual perspective a well-known formation of the Colorado Front Range. A singular mass of rock highly visible from the plains, it is the signature mountain of Fort Collins. Ida took the shot from the high meadowland of Happy Hollow, which at seventy-three hundred feet was on a par with the mountain itself.

Horsetooth is seen from a distance, which allowed Ida to create an interesting dynamic, giving the viewer a sense of the rough and varied landscape she was traversing in her buggy at the time. The tense articulation of foreground, middle ground, and background in the photograph

implies the story of a journey over perilous terrain. The mule's head in the lower right corner of the picture defines the immediate foreground. It puts you, the viewer, into the buggy next to the photographer. Turn your head and you will see Ida looking through the viewfinder.

This photo creates a feeling of instability, even vertigo. Rocks in the foreground lead the eye down to the pines in the right middle ground. Their darkness contrasts with and draws the eye toward the snowy white slope in the far middle ground to the right. It is winter, the icy turf treacherous for animal and buggy. In the background, mountain and sky blend together in a menacing snow cloud that hangs over the pass to the right of the mountain, a pass the buggy must travel through. This shot brilliantly conveys the uncertainties of horse travel in mountainous terrain in the 1890s.

As photographer, Ida Meyer was ready enough to turn other people into her subjects. How did she herself respond when put into that position? The surviving images of Ida show she was a "knowing subject." For her, as for many amateurs, the photograph was a seductive medium for exploring or even fashioning the self in its many different guises. In nearly every picture, Ida seems to be on stage. I believe that she used the occasion of being photographed to play with her self-image.

The pictures of Ida in her twenties present a puzzle, for they display an array of personas. In a studio portrait, she is well groomed, amused, and slightly complacent. In a snapshot, she appears as the gangly farm girl, a hewer of wood with an irrepressible laugh. In another, she is the self-assured slayer of bobcats; in yet another, the elegant equestrienne. Others show the flirt and the social butterfly—wearing a fancy dress and hat to match. The features of her face as they appear in different photographs might belong to different people. From one image to the next, within a narrow span of years, she can seem a wholly different person. Was Ida Meyer the sum of all her personas?

Her many masks possibly reflect instability of identity, indecisiveness about who she wanted to be. The phase of life between ages twenty and thirty is often when a person has not taken up his or her real calling or settled down with a partner. Such was the case with Ida. Through varied personas, she explored the possibilities the West offered a young

woman. It was doubtless a quest for self-realization that impelled her to move West in the first place. The Midwest was too settled for her, in every sense. The West, in contrast, was that part of the nation where a person could most easily get beyond the past and its strictures. The West was the great venue for refashioning the self.

If this was true, it also must be said that her frequent travels to and from the Midwest and her long delay in deciding on a vocation and a husband indicate that this quest was not an easy one for her. It stretched out much longer for her than for other women of her generation, whether western or midwestern.

Behind her varied guises, however, one can discern a coherent set of personal values. Ida enjoyed people and showed affection for them, especially relatives and children. She treasured her friends, both women and men. Personal appearance and refinement in dress were important to her, and she placed a high value on artistic expression, which shows in her camera work. Her poise and dress marked her as middle class, yet she was not fussy or squeamish. Rather, she appeared to have been down to earth and perfectly willing to engage in menial work. All of these traits reflect her midwestern, German, agrarian upbringing. Even as a "servant girl," she maintained a sense of dignity and style that belied her low economic status. Finally, she valued her own independence. The move to Colorado and her journeys through the mountains show that she had courage and a sense of adventure. It seems reasonable to infer that she esteemed these qualities in others.

The most striking image of Ida in early life is entitled "April 1900." She is sitting with a book in her lap. The photo was probably taken in Livermore, I would guess at the Horsley ranch, where she then lived. She appears leaner here than in other photos, as if she had recently lost weight. Her attitude is formal, her posture a little artificial. Ida is not the picture taker, yet she is aware of the camera. It seems likely she helped construct the scene.

The photo exploits a fashionable subject in nineteenth-century painting and photography—a woman sitting alone with a book. The emotional force of this shot owes much to its restraint. Ida in a dark dress sits in front of a white wall. Her finger is inserted between the book

Ida Meyer, captioned "April 1900."
Courtesy of Phil Elliott.

pages she has just read, as if she intends to resume again. It seems she has looked up in order to pursue a thought of her own.

What might she be thinking? We cannot know, yet the picture's title, "April 1900," which is written out in her hand, offers a clue. The year signaled the birth of a new century—the renewal of time itself. April is the emblematic month of spring, of birth and rebirth. Yet Ida is pensive, and her dress displays no flowery springtime motif.

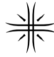
She has just turned (or is about to turn) twenty-six, which may account for her wistfulness. She was an April child. Did the coincidence of springtime ("the only merry ring time") and her birthday remind her of her unwedded state?

April 1900. Ida sits before us, an attractive woman. She likes men and adores children. She is proficient in the domestic arts. Yet she is unmarried.

Six years later. April 1906. Ida Meyer is still unmarried. She is thirty-two, almost beyond childbearing age. Seated on the porch steps of the Livermore Hotel, where she works, she waits for the next stagecoach to come over Kahler Hill. What will the future bring? She is a waitress with few prospects in life. She is the owner of an Eastman Kodak camera of the folding bellows type.

THREE

Rabbit Creek



Ida Meyer married John Elliott on December 3, 1908. They had known each other at least five years, likely more. John worked as ranch hand for Ida's employers, the Horsleys, from 1903 to 1905. Ida later told a nephew of Josephine Lamb that John met her when she was waitressing at the Livermore Hotel.

It was John who in 1907 wrote into Ida's scrapbook, "As ever your friend . . . Just keep a cosy little corner in your heart for me." He does not address her by name or declare his love. He is her friend, and it seems he has been so for a while, but he does not say what feeling he has for her. When it comes to her caring for him, however, he invokes the language of the heart. Apart from several photos, few records of their early courtship or the nature of their feelings for one other have survived. Little remains except for the memory of a lost letter and a family tradition that John Elliott wooed Ida Meyer by riding his horse up the steps onto the verandah of the Livermore Hotel.

Some Livermore men got a charge out of riding their horse up a stairway; in one instance, the steed got stuck and had to be winched down. Such a display was not inconsistent with John's character, and I believe Ida would have been duly impressed. The legend, if true, shows she was no pushover—she had to be wooed and won.

The wedding was in winter and took place in Livermore. Dan Elliott and John's sister Minnie "stood up" as witnesses. If the season for the

ceremony was unusual, that was probably because the couple planned to set up house in the new year on the Helen Gilpin-Brown ranch, which John had leased.

In the wedding portrait, John is seated. He wears a three-piece suit with white shirt, white tie, and starched collar. He is mustached. His forehead shows the pallor of a man who has spent hours in the sun with a hat on his head. His look is confident, a little defiant. The large hands are prominent, the fingers of the right hand curled in. It is as if in this passive position he can barely contain his energy. The bride stands, holding a bouquet of roses. The wedding dress is perhaps white, and her full figure seems to be corseted. A flower adorns her hair, which she wears gathered up, in the fashion of the time. The imminence of a smile hovers over her lips.

Ida was nearing thirty-five when she married. People saw her as middle-aged. In light of her decision to accept John's proposal, it is useful to revisit those conjectures offered in the previous chapter for her not marrying sooner: reluctance to give up her independence and freedom to travel; a possible earlier attachment in Nebraska, from which she needed a long time to recover; and her own choosiness.

Her deciding on John Elliott lends force to the last explanation without necessarily eliminating the others. John was an impressive man. He was intelligent, ambitious, and a hard worker. The prominent ranchers of Livermore held him in esteem, even though he was not a landowner. At the time of their marriage, he had good prospects of becoming one himself. Elliott was a marriage partner Ida might be proud of. She hoped to help him in his bid for success. John's attractions apart, Ida was keenly aware that her time for becoming a mother was running out. The expression "now or never" doubtless went through her mind. And she was probably tired of her jobs as waitress and "servant girl." By 1908, the Horsley daughters were all in school and less in need of her.

The evidence that Ida Meyer loved John Elliott is strong. It appeared in a letter Ida wrote, but is now lost. It was a rejection letter to one of her suitors. She wrote to tell the man she had decided to marry Elliott. She wrote that there was a time when she had not been sure about which man she loved and that she had struggled over the decision, but that now she realized she loved Elliott. The letter was written with compassion and showed respect for the other man.

Ida had indeed kept a "cosy little corner" of her heart for John Elliott. An early photo from the courtship period shows the two sitting on a bank of the North Poudre River. Ida has reached over to John and placed her hand on top of his. It is a gesture of tenderness and affection, a gesture that accords with the high feeling expressed in the lost letter.

When John Elliott tied the knot with Ida, he was twenty-nine, four years older than the average marriage age for homesteading men in Colorado. In his case, the reason for delay is not hard to understand. He first wanted to build a herd of cattle and accrue the money needed for a down payment on a ranch. Through his twenties, he had no land. The census classified him as a "farm labourer." He had not forgotten the poverty and struggles of his father, who never had enough money for his large family. Hard experience taught John the importance of getting a ranch big enough to support a family. By the time he and Ida joined their lives, we know that he was close to being able to acquire land, and he did so in the second year of his marriage.

Why did he devote his attentions to Ida Meyer and not another? Her age and her ability to bear children make this an important question. Here again, the shortage of women in Livermore provides an answer: there was not much choice. Outside of the mining towns, there were few unmarried women. And John, on the verge of acquiring a ranch, felt in great need of a wife. It may have mattered little to him who she was or how he felt about her, provided she could do the work of a ranch woman.

The economics of ranching depended a great deal on the institution of marriage. John knew it would be foolish to settle on land without a homemaker. The demands of a cattleman's days left little time for food preservation, cooking, sewing, and washing. One rancher expressed the necessity of a wife in no uncertain terms: "If it wasn't for the woman, you couldn't survive on one of these mountain ranches." Also, ranchers wanted a wife to bear and rear the children who would share in their work and inherit the land.

Apart from her limited childbearing potential, Ida must have seemed a good choice. She had a large supply of know-how from growing up on a farm. She was an excellent cook. She had a nurturing disposition, liked children, and was experienced in caring for them. If John

was going to be a rancher, then he needed such a woman as Ida was. Not a city girl, but someone who knew and liked rural ways, and who could, if necessary, endure privation. With a herd of cattle and good prospects, John Elliott was ready to give up the itinerant life of a cowhand, and Ida Meyer was available.

The marriage was a sensible arrangement for both parties. They were mature adults with considerable life experience. They evidently knew what they wanted. Their wedding put to a definite end that unsettled state of late youth, of unmarried life, which for both of them had extended itself longer than was usual—indeed, through the period of early and middle adulthood. Each had need of the other to realize his or her hopes, and marriage was a major step toward the fulfillment of these hopes. They shared in the desire for a pastoral life on the land. John Elliott wanted to distinguish himself from his hapless father by becoming a successful cattleman, and Ida felt the powerful urge (passed down through the generations of German and midwestern farmers who were her ancestors) to create a prosperous agrarian life.

After marrying, John Elliott shaved his mustache. Overall, he looked younger, healthier, and more relaxed than he did before he had a wife. Her good cooking and a more settled life agreed with him physically.

With marriage, though, came other changes. It is true that John and Ida had always lived with others in households not their own, yet each was used to being single—for at least a decade of adult life. Now they had to live face to face every day, planning activities, eating together, sharing a bed. After the ingrained habits of singlehood, the daily intimate proximity of a spouse was disconcerting.

Their early months together were spent at an idyllic location overlooking Lone Pine Creek, with fine views of Greyrock and Livermore mountains. Their first abode was on the Helen Gilpin-Brown ranch, which John had managed since 1906, when the Gilpin-Browns had moved to Fort Collins to oversee their daughters' education. When Helen's husband, Charles, died that year, John took a lease on the ranch in 1909, and he and Ida occupied the house. The Elliotts may have had no honeymoon, but for Ida, at least, living in the Gilpin-Brown house must have seemed like a dream come true. She had gone from being a "servant girl" to a married woman in charge of a household. The three-story house was by local standards magnificent and luxuriously appointed, with fourteen

rooms and hot and cold running water. Most Livermore ranch dwellings were one or two stories, modest in scale and amenities.

It was in the leased house that in July 1909, seven months after their wedding, the newlyweds gave a farewell dinner for Dan and Lizzie Elliott before they left for South Dakota. Ida cooked the meal. Ruby Johnson later described her sister-in-law as a marvelous cook. "She was a lovely woman . . . and she always treated me so good. I just felt like she was my mother and I used to tell her I wished she was my mother." Ida was indeed old enough. Ruby's fifty-year-old memory of Ida and of her own sadness at having to part with this woman whom she preferred to her own mother offers insight into Ida's sympathetic understanding of young people.

Apart from having to abandon old routines, John and Ida initiated two life-altering events in their first two years together. They bought a foothills ranch, which gave them a home of their own, and shortly thereafter they had a child.

In the 1956 interview, Elliott told why he gave up the lease on the Helen Gilpin-Brown ranch: "Yea, then I leased the place, and [Helen] had a chance to sell it, and I sold my lease. And then I went to work for, worked there for the winter, for the fellow that bought it, and then I went up yonder and started to build up one myself." He tells how he bought the Charles Bush holding on Middle Rabbit Creek. The ranch "up yonder" became available through the breakup of Bush's marriage when his wife and a man named Peterman became involved with each other. As John Elliott put it, "They got to fightin' in amongst themselves, and I wound up and bought it." In the middle of this sentence, old John Elliott gave a little laugh.

The Bush ranch that the Elliotts bought was in the Rabbit Creek country of Livermore. In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, this country was known as "the Alford district," a name no longer in use because the hamlet Alford, on the North Rabbit, has disappeared. Middle Rabbit Creek, on which the Elliotts located, was first settled in the late 1860s by Joseph Harden and his four sons, one of whom, James, became the first

postmaster of Alford. “Dick” Harden lived on the site the Elliotts occupied forty years later. The log cabin part of the house (with its square nails) was possibly the original claim shack the Hardens put up.

Of the Hardens’ operation on the Middle Rabbit we know little more than what Josephine Lamb wrote: “The Harden boys were horsemen and a large pasture was fenced with a quarter-mile crowding pen that led into a quarter-mile lane that led right into the corrals. The working corrals were several poles high and only one horse was known to have cleared the top. All of the horse lane was fenced with good pitch posts and barbless wire, called horse wire.” The Hardens evidently sold their Middle Rabbit holding in the mid-1870s to Adolph Kahler, a German, and Kahler evidently sold the holding to Charles Bush, who sold out to the Elliotts in March 1910.

For the Bush holding, Elliott paid six thousand dollars in cash, five thousand of which he borrowed from a prominent Livermore rancher. The spread was 1,040 acres and situated between Middle Rabbit Creek and the South Rabbit. The rangelands were not wilderness, but part of an established operation that included a wood-frame house, outbuildings, fences, and probably irrigation ditches. Ida must have been pleased not to have to move into a homesteader’s shack. She enjoyed possessing, at last, a home of her own, one she could alter in ways suited to her taste and habits, and manage according to her own lights. Now she was Mrs. Elliott, no longer a waitress, but a real ranch woman.

The Elliotts called their place Rabbit Creek Ranch. Most of it was top grassland. When Elliott bought the ranch, he owned “forty head of Southern heifers” and “six or eight old cows.” Though he had used a registered bull, the cows that were bred were not themselves registered breeds. With the ranch purchase, John took over Charles Bush’s 3X cattle brand.

Why did Elliott go into debt buying property when he might have claimed and homesteaded nearby public land for almost nothing? One reason is that he knew Livermore. The best grazing land there had already been homesteaded by 1910. What remained was either too dry

for good grazing or too rugged and difficult to reach. Moreover, current law allowed most homesteaders no more than 160 acres, enough to graze around six cows in that semiarid country. The Bush ranch was 1,040 acres, the equivalent of six and a half homesteads. Another advantage was that Elliott did not have to put up a house and outbuildings, but could give his full attention to cattle raising. In buying the Bush place, he made a smart decision. He was well situated to increase his acreage by purchasing the small unviable claims of the homesteaders who surrounded his land. The Middle Rabbit holding was the foundation he needed in order to stay in ranching for the long term.

The Elliotts could not have swung the deal without the loan from Livermore landowner Charles Emerson. For those times, five thousand dollars was a sizeable amount—the equivalent of ten years of a public schoolteacher's average annual salary. Emerson's willingness to stake Elliott with this sum reflected faith in the younger man. Emerson knew Elliott, who had worked for him in 1903. The trust that the older man placed in him is significant in that Emerson was one of the shrewdest and most experienced cattlemen in Livermore.

The Emerson spread lay in the wide valley of the lower Lone Pine Creek, three miles west of the hamlet of Livermore. Few trees grew in the meadows of the lower Lone Pine, which was well named. So Emerson hired a man to cut the Ponderosa pines that grew on the slopes above Middle Rabbit Creek to use for fenceposts on his own ranch. His familiarity with the Middle Rabbit terrain and its potential was another incentive to invest in young John Elliott.

The ranch on the Middle Rabbit was higher in elevation than Emerson's on the lower Lone Pine, and the lay of the land was different. Although still a part of greater Livermore, the upper Rabbit Creek country (or Alford district) lay eight to twelve miles northwest of the Livermore Hotel. Four tributaries of the Rabbit carried water through the district, which is divided from the lower Lone Pine country by a line of wooded hills. The Elliotts' ranch was not close to towns or railheads, but it was two miles from the Cherokee Park Road and Alford, which then consisted of a few dwellings and outbuildings. By 1910, the Alford Post Office had closed. The Livermore Hotel was eight miles away from Alford, and the trip by wagon to Fort Collins, which was thirty miles, required most of a whole day. From a stockman's perspective, however,

the rangelands of the Middle Rabbit were first rate. John quickly noted that the native meadows south of the creek provided good hay and winter pasture. The year-round creek gave ample water. If he put in a few ditches, he could irrigate the meadows during spring runoff.

Ida's photographer's eye took in the beauty of this landscape.

I imagine her on a June day returning home on horseback after visiting Alice Kluver in the next valley over. She rides up the unpaved Cherokee Park Road, which rises steeply over Calloway Hill. She remembers the time a decade before her marriage when she took a picture of this dramatic stretch of road. At the top of the hill, she stops to rest her pony and take in the view. Rabbit Creek country spreads out far below her. She picks out the large peak close to her house, but the house itself she cannot see. Farther west rise the crests of blue mountains, range after range, some capped with snow.

She rides down the hill into the valley of the North Rabbit. At the bottom is the settlement of Alford. There, branching south off the main road and descending with the creek, is a dirt track that Ida follows for two miles, sometimes bending her head as the pony walks through the cool cottonwoods near the stream bank. At one point, she reins the pony in to get a closer look at the thickets of currant, river maple, and alder, and she makes a mental note about the golden currant—good for jam. A rabbit darts into the scrub. On her right, amid the tawny grasses, stand thick little junipers full of pale blue berries. It occurs to her that she would like to paint a room in the ranch house that color. One of the junipers with a round crown grows in the middle of a twisting sandy arroyo. Beyond the scatter of trees rise the ramparts of the large peak she saw from above. Turning her pony west, away from the North Rabbit, Ida follows the Middle Rabbit (and a line of telephone poles) another mile or so upstream toward her ranch. Here she slows the pony again and marvels at the southern face of the mountain, a high horizontal expanse of rugged, scored granite. Looking up at it makes her feel giddy. Her eye finds relief, however, in the soft slopes and savannahs that lie ahead, in the beaver ponds and serene meadows along the creek. A half-mile farther on, she reaches a small bluff. From there she has a view that never fails to surprise and delight her—a secret

and protected part of the valley, at the bottom of which, nestled among river trees, lies her house.

The house is surrounded by corrals and outbuildings. Inside are six rooms. Ida walks in the kitchen door and back through to the south side of the house. Here, large windows capture the sweep of scenery. Ida looks out and admires the bizarre lines and contours of a matched pair of granite peaks that are joined at the base. The peaks share a kindred spirit and yet are mysteriously distinct. Rising out of this pastoral landscape, the twinned mountain is an enigma.

The features of this terrain were shaped in part by a climate that was by turns mild and constant or severe and intemperate. Drought, blizzard, and flood were typical hazards of ranching in the region.

In their first year, the Elliotts faced a long dry spell. Spring brought no rain, but produced a late killing frost followed by a hot, rainless summer. The cattle suffered, and hay prices soared. John Elliott, in debt and needing money, did "odd jobs for Charles Emerson and struggled along." Three years later, the Elliotts were hit by the "big snow of 1913," a blizzard that set records unbroken for ninety years. Snow quickly accumulated to a height of four feet on level ground. Drifts were higher. Cattle died, calves froze. These early years were tough. Yet, for that reason, the Elliotts learned about the nature of their land and what they needed to do to survive. With the onset of the First World War, however, armies of men needed meat, so the cattle business in general and the Elliotts in particular did well.

The weather was capricious and the ranch remote, yet that did not stop some of Ida's relatives from visiting the new couple. We know of these early visitors to the ranch from photographs. They came to learn about her new circumstances, curious about her husband and the baby. They were able to come because recent improvements in transportation—railways, automobiles, and new roads—put the Rabbit Creek ranch in reach. They came not only to visit Ida, but to see the sights of the Mountain West, a fashionable pastime.

Lillie Biel, Ida's younger half-sister, visited Rabbit Creek in 1911. She followed in the footsteps of her brother, Charlie Biel, who had visited the newlyweds on the Gilpin-Brown ranch, rode horses, and learned a

Twin Mountain as seen through the south doorway of the parlor, Rabbit Creek ranch house, 1998. An old chair (possibly John Elliott's) sits in the doorway. Courtesy of Benji Thiem.

The Elliotts (with guests) standing next to the Rabbit Creek ranch house, 1911. *Right:* John, Ida, and baby Buck. *Left:* Ida's half-sister Lillie Biel. Courtesy of Jim Elliott.

little cowboying. Lillie, now a woman of twenty-eight, stayed with the Elliotts. Taking the train from Lincoln, she was picked up in Denver and driven to the ranch by Conrad Biel, Ida's Denver cousin and the manufacturer of patent medicines, along with his wife, Hattie.

In an Elliott family photo taken at the Rabbit Creek house in the summer of 1911, Lillie is seen on the far left. John and Ida are standing in front of a touring automobile, next to another couple with dogs (not the Conrad Biels). John and Ida, both wearing wide-brimmed hats, are holding the hands of a toddler dressed in a gown and a billowy cap. It is their first child. He is about ten months old. Ida gave birth to him in the ranch house on October 6 in the drought year of 1910, less than a year after she had moved in. He was given the name Orville—perhaps after John's uncle who had emigrated with the Elliotts to Kansas. Most of his

Ida Elliott and her baby, Orville ("Buck"), on the south side of the Rabbit Creek house, 1910. Photograph probably by John Elliott. Courtesy of Phil Elliott.

life, though, Orville Elliott was known as "Buck." For the sake of clarity, that is what I call him in this narrative.

His birth was a momentous event and, for Ida, a triumph. She was thirty-six, quite advanced in age for a first-time mother. She had been acutely aware of the many women among her friends and family who died as a result of giving birth. Yet both she and her child survived. Single for so long and perhaps fearful she might never be a mother, Ida at the last moment produced a healthy boy. It was like pulling a rabbit out of the hat. The baby rounded out the Elliott family and offered hope for its continuation.

Buck's arrival gave John's labors a larger purpose. His son would be

John Elliott reading in the parlor of the Rabbit Creek ranch house, Buck on his knee, 1910–11. Photograph by Ida Elliott. Courtesy of Phil Elliott.

the heir. He would establish his own family and in due time take over the operation. The birth of a child was a great boon for a mountain rancher. A child brought cheer and high spirits and lessened the feeling of aloneness in the thinly settled Rabbit Creek district. A child was another pair of hands on a mountain ranch. Homesteading families in Colorado in 1910 had on average five children. Buck turned out to be the Elliotts' only child—a disappointment to John. Yet, compared to none, an only child was a blessing.

John sits in his chair, looking down. He is reading. His left arm cradles a baby. Sunshine streams through the south window. Part of the man's face is illumined, part cast in shadow. The bold light throws one

ear into sharp relief. The man hears nothing. He is absorbed in reading. A magneto telephone hangs from the wall, the mouthpiece thrust out, ready for the spoken word. Silence, however, rules the scene. No cry from the baby pierces the air. No sound comes from the people and dogs inside the framed photos hanging on the wall behind the man. It is a wall covered with wallpaper. The baby's mother chose a paper with large leaves, arabesques, and stylized clusters of tulips, violets, and bellflowers. In front of the floral wall stands a baby crib, the bedclothes disturbed. Ida is taking the picture. The photographs hanging on the wall, of people and of dogs, were taken with her camera, an Eastman Kodak of the folding bellows type.

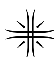
This image of John Elliott sitting indoors with a baby on his lap is exceptional in the annals of early Colorado photography. It marks a shift in the way a rancher let himself be seen and thus reflects a turning point in the history of the West. With her camera lens, Ida Elliott has discovered or invented something new: a cattleman at home in the nursery.

The photograph is silent. We do not hear the wind rustling down Rabbit Creek or the click of Ida's camera. We do not hear any words. Yet Ida's picture can hardly speak more eloquently to us of the onset of Buck's life, of John's life as father, and of hers as mother.

This snapshot is the first in a remarkable series Ida will take over the next decade. In them she will show John in a variety of situations as he introduces their son to the animals and activities of ranch life on the Middle Rabbit. The series documents a father's love. Now we see him holding the baby in front of him on a horse. Now he is kneeling and putting Buck on the back of a cattle dog. Now he steadies the boy on the rail of a hay wagon. The draft horses stand patiently in the snowy meadow by the creek.

FOUR

Seeing the Land in Time



I

The first major explorer of the interior West to see Rabbit Creek country was John Charles Fremont, who passed near the mouth of the stream in 1843.

Fremont was leading his second expedition into the Rocky Mountains to find, as he put it, a new "road of emigration" to the west coast—a quicker, more southerly route for the Oregon Trail, which was already in use. His sponsors' goal was to open the West to white settlement. Fremont's second expedition did in fact play a key role in extending the American empire westward. The vivid reports of his explorations (written by him and Jessie Fremont) inspired thousands to emigrate, and the maps made by Charles Preuss, his German cartographer, were used as itineraries by the Forty-Niners and emigrants on the Oregon Trail in the 1850s and 1860s.

In July 1843, Fremont's company entered the eastern foothills of the Rockies in what is present-day Larimer County, Colorado. At that time, this country was uncharted—"an uncertain and dangerous region," Fremont called it. He noted that few trappers remained in the area; he heard some had been killed by Indians. No one was able to tell him of an easy passage over the mountains to the west coast. Christopher "Kit" Carson served as guide to the company, but he did not know, and Fremont evidently did not ask the local Indians.

It cannot be said that Fremont was lost in these eastern foothills of the Colorado Front Range, yet neither was he precisely where he thought he was. He had mistaken the river he was following for another. Fremont believed he was ascending the main branch of the Cache la Poudre River, but he was wrong. He was in fact going up the North Fork, whose main watershed is the Livermore region. In what is probably the first written account of this landscape, Fremont described the North Poudre River. The lower canyon was “almost a chasm,” and “the scenery was very wild and beautiful.” Passage through the canyon was rough. The company had to ford the river eight or nine times, and it rained heavily. Fremont reflected that with a little effort a good road might be put in.

This foothills landscape made a strong impression on him. “Towering mountains rose round about; their sides sometimes dark with forests of pine, and sometimes with lofty precipices washed by the river; while below . . . the green river bottom was covered with a wilderness of flowers, their tall spikes sometimes rising above our heads as we rode among them. . . . The mountains appeared to be composed of a greenish gray and red granite.”

That night (July 29) they camped within a mile or two of what, twenty-five years later, would be called “Livermore.” Rain continued to fall. The explorers built large fires to dry out their clothes, and hunters brought back “a fine deer.” Next morning, the company broke camp and passed near the confluence of Rabbit Creek and the North Poudre (see the map in the introduction). They then proceeded north up a large broad valley “bounded on the right by red buttes and precipices, while to the left a high rolling country extended to a range of the Black Hills.”

This “high rolling” terrain and the “Black Hills” to the west of the company were in fact the upper Rabbit Creek country, seen at a distance of four miles. “The Black Hills” were so called because they were crowned with groves of dark-looking Ponderosa pine, which sharply contrasted with the tans of the predominant grass and shrublands. Middle Rabbit Creek flows through this higher terrain and then joins with the North Rabbit and South Rabbit to form the main stream that drops down into the parklands of the lower Livermore region.

Fremont’s brief description of the Livermore valley records some of its salient features. The heavy rains that plagued the expedition were part of the short monsoon season that typically occurs at the end of

July in this part of the country. Herds of mule deer still pass through the brushlands. The southernmost canyon of the North Poudre, though now partly filled by a reservoir, is still unspoiled and dramatic, and the river is no easier to ford. I know this from personal experience. As of this writing, there are plans to expand the reservoir and flood most of Fremont's wild and beautiful chasm. I wonder, would he have approved this latest step in the conquest of the West?

Today, the watershed of the North Poudre is still largely rural, yet since Fremont's expedition the landscape has been reshaped by human hands and machinery. For that reason, it is poignant to think back and imagine the time, only 165 years ago, when Fremont passed through. There were no dams in the Livermore country then. There were no rural subdivisions, no houses of any sort, no barns, no ranches. There were no fences, irrigation ditches, power lines, cell phone towers, paved roads, or even improved dirt roads. Exotic plants such as tumbleweed, wooly mullein, leafy spurge, cheatgrass, and crested wheatgrass had not yet invaded the native soil. Wolves, grizzlies, bison, and elk had not yet been hunted into local extinction.

There were no Euro-American settlers when Fremont passed through, yet even at that time the landscape was not untouched by human beings. By the 1840s, seasonal trappers had eliminated the beaver from the streams. Much earlier than these latecomers, Paleo Indians and their successors had used the Livermore lands as hunting grounds—for at least ten thousand years. Native Americans set fires to renew the grasses and to aid in hunting, and those fires altered the landscape and patterns of vegetation. The Indians made tepee rings of rocks to hold down the hides at the base of a tent, and they dug cooking pits in the soil. They named the features of the land. "Rabbit Creek" may have been a Ute name that trappers later translated. The Mountain Ute name for the North Poudre was the "Little Otter"—evidence that this rare mammal thrived in the valley, though it is no longer found there today. Otter figured in Ute tales: he had more hair than any other creature and so wanted winter to last nine months of the year, but Hawk held out for a shorter cold season, and he more or less prevailed.

After Fremont's passage, the Livermore region and within it the

The Middle Rabbit valley seen from an upland in the west, the "Bushfield," with Symbol Rock catching the westering light of the sun, October 2001. By this date, the valley had become part of the Cherokee State Wildlife Area. Photograph by Jon Thiem.

Rabbit Creek district remained Ute territory for twenty years or more. In 1860, Colorado became a U.S. territory, and the decade that followed witnessed the first wave of white settlement in the Livermore valley. Fremont thought it would be easy enough to build a road up the lower North Poudre Canyon. Did he have an inkling that this region would soon be settled and that thirty-three years after his visit, it would be one of the main stockgrowing areas in the new state of Colorado?

John and Ida Elliott bought their ranch on Middle Rabbit Creek in 1910, two-thirds of a century after Fremont passed through Livermore country. They were not, however, the first Euro-Americans in the little valley, which, as we know, was first settled by the Hardens in the late 1860s. The Elliotts, like Fremont, were susceptible to the beauty of the landscape,

but, like most of their contemporaries, they saw the land chiefly in economic terms, as a place for raising livestock.

Place is of course relative to scale and point of view. The Middle Rabbit valley changes aspect with the kind of lens used to examine it. The electronic eye of a satellite gives us a different place than does the eye of a stockman looking at pasture grasses. A different place meets the eye of a western harvester ant living in a populous mound near the creek. I catch sight of that ant pushing a bit of granite up the slope of its hill. Another ant goes down a hole and enters a sandy subterranean region teeming with insects, grass roots, fungi, and trillions of bacteria. There it might encounter a springtail or a noodlelike nematode, or it might fasten onto a lost Indian bead.

The Middle Rabbit valley's terrain can be seen through many kinds of human eyes, those of a walker, hunter, botanist, poet, escaped convict, or lover. Who else might be looking, listening, touching? An eagle, perched on top of Symbol Rock north of the creek, catches a glimpse of cottontail hopping through brush. The rabbit, with its own view of things, sniffs at an odd-looking stone—a flake of quartzite.

II

> The Ute Creator, Senawahv, made the land for the use of the Indians. He created the buffalo, the deer, and other animals for food and clothing. He caused the earth to produce berries and roots. He also created the Ute people. . . . Senawahv said, "This small tribe of people shall be Ute, but they will be very brave and able to defeat the rest."
>
> —Fred A. Conetah, *A History of the Northern Ute People*

Among the artifacts left in the Livermore countryside by nomadic Stone Age peoples is a woman's pendant made of an elk's tooth. Some of these wanderers no doubt visited the Middle Rabbit valley in pursuit of game.

Workers accidentally uncovered the woman's bones in 1963. She was Paleo-Indian, between twenty-five and thirty years old. Members of her band buried her 9,700 years ago near Gordon Creek, only five and a half miles south of the Middle Rabbit. Her bones were coated with red ochre, and along with them archaeologists found scraping tools, a hammerstone, and the cut-and-grooved ribs of a small mammal. They also

found an elk incisor, the root of which had a hole bored through it. This was the pendant.

A thousand years earlier than Gordon Creek Woman, Folsom hunters at the end of the last ice age left stone flakes and tools in Owl Canyon ten miles southeast of the Middle Rabbit valley. These people pursued the gigantic *Bison antiquus*, now extinct. During the dry Archaic period, other hunting groups in winter followed elk down into the foothills of the Colorado Front Range. Later still, at a spot on the North Poudre six miles southeast of the Middle Rabbit, tribal peoples drove bison over a "buffalo jump" and butchered them. These bison hunters did not know the horse and probably lived before white men entered the region. After this period and probably up until Euro-Americans came in the 1860s, Native Americans regularly visited the Middle Rabbit. For these hunters and foragers, the valley was a place to find food and shelter in the winter. Josephine Lamb wrote in her essay on Livermore: "The more recent Indian left his tools and using our own term, his teepee rings. He left his buried charcoal fires and heated stones, long since grown cold and buried under silt and debris much deeper than he left them. This evidence of communal living is found near all of our springs, along our streams and all around the outer rim of our valley."

The Elliotts' Middle Rabbit parcel lay six miles east of the "Warrior's Trail," a north–south path connecting Estes Park to Wyoming. An east–west spur of this trail leading to the plains passed a mile and a half north of the ranch's future site. These trails were used by various tribal groups. Indian artifacts were plentiful where the Elliotts lived, and John, Ida, Buck, and Josephine eagerly collected them. Josephine urged her Livermore schoolchildren to examine harvester ant mounds for Indian beads, which these insects bring up to the surface of the earth. She asked them to exhibit the "Indian relics" they found on their ranches. On the Middle Rabbit, a hundred yards north of the Elliott ranch house, an area of large boulders once sheltered an Indian encampment. There the ranchers found flakes, arrow points, and grinding stones.

In a diary entry dated January 23, 1941, Helen Elliott, who was at that time living on the Rabbit Creek ranch with her husband, Buck, and her in-laws, wrote: "Buck gave me an Arrow-Point Locket on a gold chain." This was doubtless a projectile point Buck had found somewhere in the valley. But who were the people that made it? The answer remains

uncertain. Even if we knew that the arrow point was recent, it might still have come from one of several groups of mountain or plains Indians—Ute, Shoshone, Arapaho, or Cheyenne.

Local tradition identified Mountain Utes as the native people who frequented Livermore in the nineteenth century. They were probably Yamparika Utes. In her essay "The Livermore Valley," Josephine Lamb stated unequivocally: "Our valley had been the site of Ute villages." She should have known, for she collected the stories of old settlers who had had direct contact with the Native Americans.

Concerning the band of Utes who left their stone points and scrapers in the Lone Pine and Rabbit valleys, little is known. The Utes ranged over all the Colorado Rockies, and yet there are surprisingly few early studies of their culture. With the white settlement, they did acquire horses, and they moved around in small bands made up of family members. In 1861, a band of Utes stole 125 horses from trappers in Laporte, on the southeast border of the Livermore region. The trappers pursued the Utes up to North Park, caught them, and killed all but one of them.

The Utes tried to defend their communal hunting territories from both Euro-Americans and their own traditional foes, the Arapahos. Like the prehistoric Native Americans, the nineteenth-century Utes followed the elk in the autumn months down from the high country into the Livermore foothills. In summer, the bands went with the elk back to the higher terrain of North Park. Their encampments on the Middle Rabbit were probably seasonal.

The abundance of cottontails on Rabbit Creek made the valley an attractive food source to the Utes, who were famous for their communal rabbit hunts—hence, their nickname "rabbit eaters." The fur they stitched into blankets. For the hunt, they hung nets woven of soft bark around the perimeter of a brushy area and then set the grass in the center on fire, driving the conies into the nets. Fires that got out of control burned through the Ponderosa pines of the valley's uplands, producing the hardened wood locally called "pitch pine" and later used by the earliest Anglo settlers for fence posts and firewood. The burnings thinned the stands, giving them an open, parklike character. In this way, the Native Americans, like the settlers who supplanted them, altered the land.

Josephine Lamb collected a story about some Utes in the vicinity of the valley. She told it to Midge Boyle, who told it to Josephine's trapper,

George Stewart, who many years later told it to me. It took place on the Lone Pine, which runs parallel to the Middle and South Rabbit and cuts through the southern portion of the enlarged Elliott ranch. A band of Indians was hunting along the creek when a deer ran between two of the hunters. One of the two shot an arrow. It missed the deer but killed the other hunter. Lamb called the incident "the first fatality of deer hunting in the area"—a veiled allusion to the death of a woman neighbor who was killed when a deer hunter's rifle accidentally discharged. Whether or not the story is literally true, it confirms that the Utes used these valleys for deer hunting.

Apart from stone artifacts, tepee rings, and "pitch pine," the vestiges of the Native American presence on the Elliott ranchlands are few. With the exception of "Little Otter," the Ute names for the streams and peaks have been lost. Although the Elliott ranch lay between two roads with Indian names—the Cherokee Park Road, two miles to the north, and the Red Feather Lakes Road, which intersected the southern part of the ranch—the names referred to tribal groups that were not indigenous to the area. Even in local place names, the Utes got short shrift.

To the southwest of the Middle Rabbit house stands a small knoll where it was thought that Native Americans had ceremonies. John Elliott refrained from sowing grasses on the knoll. He disked it lightly, and after a blustery day he went out and picked up arrow points and spearheads that the wind exposed. Part of his collection he displayed in a wooden case under glass, the points artfully arranged to form the letters of his cattle brand, the 3X. It was Elliott's way of appropriating the Native American legacy. A white settler occupying Ute land, he deployed the projectile points—used by Utes to take wild game and intimidate trespassers—to represent his use of the land as cattle pasture, making their stone artifacts into an insignia of ownership.

In a similar way, Buck transformed the arrow point he found into a pendant—a birthday gift for his wife, Helen. On a visit to Buck's son Jim Elliott, who lives in North Park, I mentioned the entry about the pendant in his mother's diary. He left the room and returned with the object

in question. All at once I thought of the elk tooth buried with Gordon Creek Woman ten thousand years ago. That, too, was a pendant. A hunter wrenched the tooth out of the animal's mouth and bored the hole so that it might adorn a woman's neck. Natural things become the objects of history, and these objects, in turn, become symbols, ornaments, and museum pieces, far removed from their source and original purpose.

The first human beings visited the Colorado Front Range between ten and twelve thousand years ago, perhaps earlier. Those men and women saw the land with a distinctive consciousness. They named its features with words from their language. At chipping sites, they worked the local stone into points and scrapers. And they buried one of their own on Gordon Creek. The Middle Rabbit valley came into existence several million years before those early visitors. The mountain range of which the valley is a small part rose up tens of millions of years before that. And the rock of that range formed a billion years earlier than the range itself. The human history of our valley is the tail end of a much longer story.

III

In 1911—the year after John Elliott bought his first holding—Ansel Watrous, the early historian of Larimer County, described Rabbit Creek country as "an excellent stock and dairy region. The valleys of the three streams afford good meadows." Where did they come from, these meadows, streams, and hills that were sought out by Stone Age hunters and Euro-American settlers, as well as by the grazing animals, wild and domestic, on which the humans depended?

The vastness of the earth's history and the mutability of terra firma make it difficult for us to see the land in time, to describe accurately the forces that ultimately shaped the Middle Rabbit valley as we know it today. The valley's emergence came at the end of a long succession of earlier formations, including our galaxy, the solar system, our planet, North America, and the Rocky Mountain chain itself. The past telescopes back into the far reaches of cosmological time. Geologic tables neatly present the sequence of events, yet the human mind finds even the short span of a billion years difficult to grasp. For this reason, I take a parochial view

of the land in time, skipping over the birth of our planet and leaping forward three billion years. Writing is like a cataclysmic geological force: it can erode vast chronologies down to a thin layer of essence. Let us begin with what, in cosmic terms, is recent past, the late Precambrian era, which dates from 1.6 billion years to 570 million years before the present.

The red ochre smeared on the remains of Gordon Creek Woman was ferrous oxide, almost certainly taken from rocks near her burial site. Those rocks were Precambrian. Symbol Rock and Twin Mountain, the striking monoliths that flank the Middle Rabbit, are Precambrian granite, the foundation rock of North America and the most abundant substance in the valley today. Silver Plume is the kind of granite found there. It is a fine- to medium-grained, pinkish-gray rock that came into existence 1.42 billion years ago. Middle Rabbit topography was eventually shaped out of this ancient granite, and the sediments that eroded from it make up the mineral part of the soil that sustains plant and animal life in the valley today.

Like other granites in the Colorado Front Range, the Silver Plume of our valley was once a pulse of magma that rose out of the earth's crust, then crystalized, and became solid. It was emplaced over a period of a hundred million years, part of an extensive intrusion that formed the roots of Precambrian mountain ranges—ranges that were much older than the Rockies and have long since eroded away. In the three billion years before the intrusion of the Silver Plume granite and in the billion years afterward, the earth substance that would eventually become the valley was subject to continuous and extensive change. Uplift, volcanic eruption, erosion, flooding, subsidence, sedimentation, and compaction repeated themselves in cycles through eons of time. Successive mountains and uplands formed, some probably taller than the later Rockies, and then were ground down again to a level plain. In at least three different periods, seas covered the land and then evaporated or drained away, leaving thick deposits of black coal and white limestone. The climate changed, and there were both ice ages and tropical and temperate periods.

The series of uplifts that created the Rockies did not begin until the latest 2 percent of geologic time, around seventy million years ago. The name of the mountain chain aptly conveys the huge quantity of visible rock produced by its emergence. The building of the Rockies began when Precambrian rock below the crust of the earth pushed upward into

mile-thick layers of ancient sediments deposited by prehistoric rivers and oceans that once covered the central part of North America. Over time, this mantle of sediments eroded, leaving the exposed granite of the mountains. In Colorado alone, this mountain-building episode—the Laramide Orogeny—created around fifty distinct ranges or ridge systems, often quite diverse in character and orientation. By sixty-five million years ago, the rudiments of the ranges and basins as we know them today were in place, although the river systems and valleys differed from the ones we know now.

The formation of the Rockies produced the Colorado Mineral Belt, a fifty-mile-wide zone where ores of gold, silver, and lead intruded into the faults created during uplift. In 1858, it was evidence of one such precious mineral that captured the attention of some Cherokees coming back from California, which in turn set off the Colorado gold rush—the first great influx of Euro-Americans. The white settlement of the region and the expulsion of Native Americans soon followed. Josephine Lamb's father emigrated to Colorado in order to find gold and at one point worked in a mine in Central City, Colorado, situated on the Mineral Belt.

The Middle Rabbit valley is a little furrow on the great brow of the Eastern Slope of the Colorado Front Range, the most easterly and longest of the Rocky Mountain ridges in the state. This range, as its name implies, "fronts" the Colorado Piedmont and the Great Plains. It runs from the Wyoming border, about twelve miles north of the present Middle Rabbit valley, down to Canon City in southern Colorado and encompasses Pikes Peak, Longs Peak, and most of Rocky Mountain National Park.

The Colorado Front Range of the Rockies emerged about sixty-five million years ago, yet the Middle Rabbit valley did not come into being at that time. The next twenty million years witnessed massive erosion of the mountains and the emergence of a new kind of life, the mammals. Still, there was no Middle Rabbit. Then came fifteen million years of intense volcanic activity. Then another twenty million years of uplift raised the highest Front Range mountains, such as Longs Peak and Pikes Peak, to more than fourteen thousand feet and the westernmost part of the Great Plains to six thousand feet above sea level. And still there was no Middle Rabbit Creek as we know it. The rivers and tributaries of the Front Range are fairly recent. Because of their characteristic erosive and self-transformative powers, rivers are ever changing and short-lived.

The topography of the Middle Rabbit valley took shape toward the end of the second round of uplift, about four million years ago. This uplift created new alpine terrain that drew large amounts of moisture from the chilled air. Mountain waters swelled into large swift rivers. Coursing down the uplifted slopes, they cut out the canyons and deep valleys that reflect the river systems of the present day. Over hundreds of thousands of years, the torrential waters and abrasive sands of the Middle Rabbit ate away at the Silver Plume granite to carve out what I call Twin Mountain and Symbol Rock. The roundedness of their boulders and knobby outcrops comes from the distinctive chemical interaction between granite and water. Although the glaciers of the ice age never reached the valley, the cycles of freezing and thawing during that two-million-year period, which lasted up to the time of the Folsom hunters, also contributed to the faulting and breakup of the rock.

As our creek did its part in grinding away granite and sending sediments downstream—into the Poudre, the South Platte, and the Missouri—its own drainage filled with the gravel, sands, and rocks it had eroded from higher up. Over time, the valley leveled out, and a top layer of alluvial sand began to thicken, providing soil for grass, forbs, and shrubs. The Middle Rabbit gradually slowed. It began to meander through those native meadows that John Elliott considered fine enough to purchase at the beginning of the twentieth century.

Ranging between six thousand and seventy-five hundred feet above sea level, the Elliott ranch was situated in a classic foothills landscape—in other words, a landscape that mediates the extremes of the montane zone lying above it and the prairie zone lying below it. To the west were the forest-clad peaks of the high country and to the east the Great Plains and their borderland, a series of sedimentary escarpments, or "hogbacks." These escarpments are the first foothills, the tattered edges of the flatlands that were bent upward by the rising of the granite Rockies. They resemble the spines of sleeping dragons and are indeed a repository of dinosaur bones.

Josephine Lamb grew up between the first hogbacks lying just west of Fort Collins. Her father made his living quarrying their colorful sandstone. Above the hogbacks, but still below the Middle Rabbit, is the lower Livermore valley—a tableland that looks like rolling prairie. The rock there, like the hogbacks and the bedrock of the plains, is sedimentary,

chiefly sandstone. The dominant rock of the Middle Rabbit, however, is the igneous granite of the true Rockies, not the sandstones, shales, and limestones of the plains.

IV

The flora and fauna found in the Middle Rabbit valley place it squarely in the Foothills Life Zone. This zone occurs on the Eastern Slope of the Rockies at altitudes between five and eight thousand feet. Harboring life forms that spill over from the heavily wooded mountains and the treeless plains, the foothills have a greater variety of species than either.

Grassland is only one of five principal ecosystems in the valley, and it is the focus of the next section. The valley also accommodates Ponderosa pine forest, mountain mahogany shrubland, and juniper woodland—all well adapted to dry conditions. At the bottom of the valley is the creek's riparian habitat. The boundaries between these ecological areas are largely determined by altitude, soils, and moisture, yet they continually fluctuate with climate changes and alterations in the land wrought by human beings.

The last great uplift of the Rockies was crucial in determining both the valley's climate and its life forms. The Rawah Peaks to the west, rising more than twelve thousand feet above sea level, cast a "rain shadow" over the Eastern Slope. Pacific and Arctic storm systems usually drop their moisture on the Western Slope of the Rockies or in the Rawahs, or even in the Baldies, low mountains that rise sixteen miles west of the valley. Relatively little precipitation makes it to the eastern foothills where the Middle Rabbit valley is situated.

In winter and spring, strong westerly winds and warm chinooks blow down the Middle Rabbit, creating more dryness, yet blizzards can dump several feet of snow in the valley. Overall, though, this part of the Eastern Slope is semiarid, averaging only thirteen to eighteen inches of precipitation annually, depending on elevation and the microclimate. There is usually a prolonged Indian summer and a warm spell at the beginning of the calendar year. Far from the continent's sea coasts and in its middle latitudes, the valley has a temperate climate. Here, though, the winters are milder and the summers cooler than they are in the Great Plains region.

According to weather data collected in the first half of the twentieth

century, when the Elliotts lived in the valley, January was usually the coldest month of the year, with an average temperature of seventeen degrees Fahrenheit—the daytime average being of course considerably higher, between thirty and forty degrees. In July, the warmest month, the average daily temperature was a pleasant sixty to sixty-two degrees. The growing season was short, between 100 and 120 days. Because of the volatility of weather in the eastern foothills, hardly any year is "average." Years of drought, even five or six in a row, typically alternate with years of greater-than-average rain and snowfall. This climate combines with elevation and slope orientation to produce a wide array of habitats and plant communities in the valley.

Between the riparian habitat of the creek itself and the bare rocky crests high above, the valley contains the four ecological systems already mentioned. The mountain mahogany shrubland became established on the drier slopes lying above the native meadows and below the Ponderosa uplands. These shrubs grow in dense thickets. Nearby are golden-flowering rabbitbrush and wild currant. Mule deer and their fawns browse the mountain mahogany twigs in the spring. Rufous-sided Towhees, Scrub Jays, and Mexican woodrats are drawn to this habitat, as is the bush-climbing green snake.

Above the meadows and below the pines are juniper woodlands. These drought-resistant trees are sparsely scattered in the valley and usually are no higher than seven to ten feet. Rabbitbrush, antelope bitterbrush, skunkbush, and mountain mahogany grow between the trees. In the winter valley, robins by the hundreds and Townsend Solitaires devour the juniper berries.

On the moister terrain of the uplands, Ponderosa pines grow on sunny, south-facing slopes with good drainage. Pasqueflowers, penstemons, wallflowers, spring beauties, and mountain ball cactus with striking pink flowers bloom in and among the stands in spring. The ebony black Abert's squirrel, deer mice, nuthatches, Hairy and Downy Woodpeckers, Stellar's Jays, and chickadees depend on the pine seeds.

Along the Middle Rabbit, the habitat is distinctly riparian. The stream itself and the wetlands created by beaver dams supply alder, peachleaf willow, and cottonwood with the water they need. These trees grow thickly among numerous shrubs—chokecherry, Rocky Mountain maple, hawthorn, and scrub willow—and a plenitude of wet-loving herbaceous

plants. Western rattlesnakes wait in ambush for small prey drawn to the water. Harvester ants build their hills nearby on the sandy upper banks of the stream. Beaver drag willow branches below water for winter fodder. Along the creek, I have seen the reclusive snipe, whose long bill probes the mud for insects. Mallards are common, and merganser ducks arrow down the creek. Cedar Waxwings visit in large flocks. Insect-eating warblers, Audubon's and Wilson's especially, add their color to the bottomlands.

V

Grass is a long time and a big space.
Your own life in it? A match going out.

—James Galvin, *Fencing the Sky*

Most crucial of the ecosystems in the valley for the sustenance of larger mammals, herbivorous and carnivorous (including ourselves), is the foothills grassland. Native meadows flank the creek, and drier pastures extend up the rolling hills wherever conditions are favorable for them. Before white settlement, recurrent wildfires, encouraged by dryness, kept trees and shrubs from taking over and stimulated grass growth by returning charred organic matter to the soil.

In earlier times, the Middle Rabbit's grasslands supported a variety of grazing animals, including elk, pronghorn, and Rocky Mountain bighorn sheep—not to mention the lowly rabbit, after whom the valley is named. It is likely that bison also wandered up here. By grazing and manuring, these wild herbivores helped the grasslands thrive. Grazing discouraged the invasion of woody plants and shrubs and increased the humus in the soil—as did the animals' manure and decomposing carcasses. The grazers' hoofprints planted seed and captured precious water. Sustained by grass and shrubs, the elk, deer, and mice in their turn supported an array of carnivorous mammals.

Other animals, less dependent on grass, also inhabited the valley, including beaver and bear, the latter especially in the upper Middle Rabbit. Legions of birds, insects, and frogs lived along the creek. Here, though, I describe animals that fed either directly on grass or on the grass eaters themselves.

Two familiar animals, the rabbit and the eagle, are today often seen

in the valley. It is worth noting that for the Northern Utes, Rabbit was not only a favorite food but also a prominent character in their tales. In the myths and folklore of many cultures, both animals serve as archetypal images of the herbivore and the carnivore—roles they continue to play in local ecology. In the grass and granite terrain of the valley, they are links in a typical food chain.

Cottontail is an organism especially made for converting grass into flesh, and the eagle, here the Golden Eagle, is adept at converting rabbit flesh into feathers and talons. Grass is hard to assimilate, but the cottontail has successfully evolved a second round of digestion to solve the problem: it eats its own feces. The cottontail typically likes to occupy border areas between grass patches and shrub brakes, where it can quickly hide from eagles, which, when not soaring the thermals, use the upper cliffs and juniper snags on Symbol Rock as vantage points for spotting cottontail far below. The eagle's eye is of course well made for this work. In brooding season, I have seen these great raptors perched high on the precipitous edge of a rock fault where they make their aeries—easily detectable by the white stains of guano. Their wings are broad and untapered, with a span of more than six feet. These features enable quick takeoffs and the sustained lift needed to carry a rabbit back to the nest—food for the female and eaglet.

The dependence of meat eaters on grass eaters is part of an ancient cycle. During the ice ages, the savannahs twelve miles east of the Middle Rabbit were habitat to megagrazers: enormous *Bison antiquus*, mammoths, and mastodons, some individuals weighing thirteen tons. Camels, horses, pronghorns, and giant sloths (eighteen feet long and weighing three tons) also fed on the grasses of the plains and foothills valleys. The herbivorous mammals were preyed upon in turn by a ferocious host of saber-tooths, scimitar cats, dire wolves, short-faced bears, and cheetahs. Most of these grazers and carnivores became extinct around thirteen thousand years ago, or earlier, as the ice ages came to an end. The first human beings in North America, the Clovis hunters, who preceded the Folsom people and were active in Colorado, likely contributed to their demise. Among the survivors of these extinctions were elk, mule deer, black bears, and pronghorns, all of which frequent our valley to this day.

However much the grasses of that time differed from the grasses of the post–ice age, this remarkable form of vegetation provided in both

periods the foundation of life for large mammals in the valley. In semiarid environments like this, grass is the most abundant and efficient means of storing the sun's energy. The trillions of leaves covering the land are like solar cells, but in this case the process is photosynthetic. Out of organic matter, minerals, water, and the nitrogen and carbon dioxide of the air, the grasses generate a huge biomass of carbohydrates. Because of its superb adaptability to dry, wind-swept conditions, grass is the most numerous of the higher plants of North America. Pollinated by wind and producing seed, some grasses also spread by means of vegetative growth, sending out runners and rhizomes that take root in new ground. The narrow leaves of the plant decrease water loss, and the large, deep root systems capture soil moisture. During drought, many grasses can go dormant.

In the Middle Rabbit and Lone Pine district, grasses grow in several communities adapted to particular conditions of exposure and moisture. Today, the native species found in the area—among them needlegrass, blue grama, western wheatgrass, Canada wildrye, basin wildrye, and prairie sandreed grass—intermingle with exotic species such as crested wheatgrass, orchardgrass, and bluegrass, introduced in the Euro-American settlement period.

John Elliott, like many other Livermore ranchers, sowed crested wheatgrass (originally from Eurasia) on his native meadows, where it flourished. Other exotics grasses found in the area are cheatgrass, smooth brome, and Japanese brome. Wild and domestic ungulates consume different grasses at different times of year in accordance with the plants' tastiness, nutritional value, and curative properties—hence, the desirability of a wide variety of grass species.

Elk and bighorn sheep were the great grazers of the Middle Rabbit and Lone Pine area in the post–ice age period. Also present were mule deer in numbers and a few pronghorns. All of them are ruminants, able to assimilate the cellulose-rich grass, which many other animals and humans cannot do. This ability is due to a special stomach, the rumen, where half-digested grass is stored before being regurgitated and chewed a second time. Grazing by mammals stimulates grass growth and prevents the plants from becoming stagnant. The hoof action breaks down and works old plant litter into the soil, adding organic matter. Because grasses in their vegetative phase put new growth out at the base rather than at the tip of the leaf, they can regenerate after grazing, though the

process is slow in semiarid conditions. Wild grazers, unlike domestic cattle, do not stay in one place until they have eaten everything down, so the grasses recover quickly.

An elk, which may stand five feet high and weigh 750 pounds, eats a lot of grass. These animals migrate in the fall down to the valley from their summer range in the high country—to escape the heavy snows and gelid temperatures of the alpine winter. They roam the foothills in herds, browsing shrubs and cropping the winter grass. The elk seen today are not originally from this part of the mountains. The last of the native elk in Larimer County disappeared in the late nineteenth century, shot by professional hunters for the meat market, but in the early twentieth century animals from the Tetons were shipped down to northern Colorado. The present-day elk that frequent Middle Rabbit valley—as of this writing, around 160 head—are the descendants of these imported animals. The story of the Rocky Mountain bighorn is similar. In the early 1800s, there were an estimated two million of them in the West. Today there are seven thousand left in Colorado. The ones in Larimer County were reintroduced in 1946. The number of bighorn that frequent the Middle Rabbit, as of this writing, range from seven to nineteen. They usually form one herd, but sometimes divide into two.

It is March 2002. I am walking above the site of the Elliott ranch house on the Lone Pine. A large pronghorn buck suddenly comes over the crest of the grassy ridge. He is as surprised to see me as I him. He has large horns. He looks at me, then hops away, showing me the great white puff on his rear end. This patch is an adaptation for signaling danger and a marker that helps keep a swift-moving herd together, which is useful because pronghorns are the fastest wild mammals in North America, able to reach speeds up to sixty miles per hour in short bursts. Today, none of their predators runs nearly that fast. The pronghorns' speed is a trait resulting from natural selection: fifteen million years ago they had to outrun cheetahs and swift short-faced bears. In a later age, however, they were not fast enough to outrun the bullets of white settlers, and the population of pronghorns, whose family in North America goes back nineteen million years, was reduced to thirteen thousand animals. Today, their numbers have begun to recover.

Pronghorn are prairie grazers, and Rocky Mountain bighorns are grazers of alpine meadows. That such different animals meet in the Rabbit Creek and Lone Pine country reflects the variety of wildlife in the foothills where montane and plains zones overlap.

Wolves no longer lope through the valley in search of grass eaters such as elk, mice, and rabbit. In Colorado, the gray wolf is extinct, eradicated by the Euro-American settlers. The native Utes venerated this creature as a culture hero. White settlers, however, feared and hated the wolf. After the Euro-American invaders had killed off the bison, wolves turned to the settlers' calves as a food source.

John Elliott doubtless heard and probably saw the last of the local wolves in the 1890s, when he was a young ranch hand in Livermore. It is possible he visited the fair grounds in Fort Collins in 1896 and saw the "coyote and wolf chase." The best hounds in the county were set loose on captured wolves. They pursued them around a course and eventually pulled them down in front of the audience.

Carrie Williams Darnell, the daughter of Elliott's first employer, John Williams, wrote how wolves killed her pet "weanling" calves on the Lone Pine. One night, she wrote, her little brother went out and heard them howl and "came back quickly, pale of face." Her father, perhaps with Elliott's help, built a tall corral of wood slabs to protect the weanlings. The kids called it Fort Wolf. Williams eventually hired Rattlesnake Jack, a renowned trapper, to kill the Lone Pine wolves, which had their den in a "hole" canyon just south of the source of the Middle Rabbit, about four and a half miles west of what was to become the Elliott ranch house. This was around 1900, a decade before Elliott bought the Middle Rabbit spread. These wolves were probably the last in the Livermore country. By 1965, only five hundred gray wolves were left in North America.

VI

When I visit the state wildlife preserve that is now the old Elliott ranch, I usually follow the dirt road leading in and out of the area. Sometimes, however, I like to leave the road and drop down the south-facing slopes of the Middle Rabbit—to examine several inverted cones of sand and gravel, some a foot high. They are the distinctive habitations of western

harvester ants, whose scientific name is *Pogonomyrmex occidentalis*, literally "grass-seed ant of the West."

The harvester ant is another creature of the valley that subsists on grass. Large amounts of grass seed are stored in underground chambers—in the course of a single day a colony can collect a whole pint. Like beavers and humans, though on a smaller scale, harvester ants reconfigure the terrain in which they live. Each mound is a parody of a mountain. The ants laboriously cover their hill with granite pebbles. Myrmicologists are not sure why. One explanation is that the gravelly sheath, which is held together and waterproofed with ant saliva, keeps the underlying sand of the mound from blowing away. The mound itself, as well as the meticulously cleared area surrounding it, are designed to catch and retain the sun's heat. Vegetation is cleared away so that the little hill does not lie in shadow. In the soil beneath the mound is another world, excavated by the ants. There they overwinter, store seed, hide from predators, and in summer "estivate" to escape the midday heat.

Harvester ants are a marker species of plains grasslands, one of the most populous. Their presence on the Middle Rabbit reflects the valley's prairielike feel. Indeed, the harvester ants here choose clearings and south-facing inclinations in order to re-create the warmth and openness of a prairie setting.

To spend a little time watching these ants going to and from their communal hill, repairing lilliputian landslides, venturing out to forage seeds, or reentering their nest—a subterranean system of tunnels, underground rooms, granaries, nurseries, middens, and refuse chambers—is to marvel at their industry. Among the environmental benefits of these ants' presence are the scattering and germination of seeds, the pollination of plants, the addition of organic matter to the soil, which increases its water retention, and the encouragement of plant diversity on the edges of the cleared "disks" surrounding their mounds.

Harvester ants are in their turn food sources for several birds (including the Gold-shafted Flickers on the Middle Rabbit), lizards, wasps, and spiders. The nasty stings they give incautious observers are one of several defenses. When attacked and eaten in quantity by predators, the ants retreat into their mound. The laborious storage of grass seed is an adaptation for those times when they must stop foraging due to heavy predation.

Another grass-seed eater at home on the Middle Rabbit is Preble's meadow jumping mouse. The scientific name for this rare and rarely seen creature is *Zapus hudsonius preblei*. It inhabits the bottomland meadows and shrub patches along the creek. For this particular ecosystem, Preble's mouse is in fact an "indicator species"—a barometer for the health and diversity of other plants and animals in its habitat. If Preble's is doing poorly, then the habitat is not doing well either—hence, the scientific interest in this inconspicuous mouse. It lacks the glamour of gray wolves, bighorn sheep, and elk, but for ecologists it is the canary in the coal mine.

The disappearance of its habitats in the foothill valleys of the Front Range in Colorado and Wyoming, where it is exclusively found, is due mainly to increased human settlement, especially to housing developments. Land improvements for these subdivisions alter and fragment the natural meadows and watercourses on which this mouse depends. The domestic cats that come with the house dwellers devastate wild rodent populations. As a result, this animal is not very numerous. In 1998, the United States declared *Zapus hudsonius preblei* a threatened species. The Middle Rabbit valley is one of the remaining habitats able to support it.

Paradise for Preble's is a moist native meadow near the kind of stream that is found on the Middle Rabbit and the Lone Pine. The mouse is almost certainly a survivor of the ice ages when the wetter habitat it prefers was more extensive than it is today. Preble's has managed to keep a toehold in a few remaining native meadows in the foothills and piedmont zone. It is adapted to survive in places that are not too high and dry, and where a wide array and dense growth of grasses and herbs provide seeds and cover.

Homo sapiens is also exceedingly fond of these foothill valleys, which are close to his cities and yet provide an easy escape into "nature." Weary of the urban scene, longing for the romance of country living, city dwellers by the droves have invaded the foothills along the eastern edge of the Colorado Front Range, where the valleys, ridges, and rolling meadows—mostly remnants of old ranches—offer stirring views of the mountains and plains. Much of this terrain has been given over to rural subdivisions.

A 1997 field study of Preble's mouse used live traps to inventory ten sites in the foothills and Piedmont along the Front Range between Colorado Springs and the Wyoming border, an area extending 180 miles. Only thirty-three specimens of Preble's mouse were captured. Nineteen of

them—more than half—came from the Rabbit and the Lone Pine, an area that contains two-thirds of the mouse's native habitat in Larimer County. The concentrations of Preble's mouse here demonstrate the exceptional character of the grassy bottomlands in the area formerly covered by the Elliott-Lamb ranch. *Zapus hudsonius preblei* is the totem animal of an ecosystem that is increasingly uncommon.

Preble's has a remarkable range of abilities, which have doubtless helped it survive difficult conditions. Though it is not a frog, it can leap through the air for great distances, up to six feet. A human being with the same weight-to-leap ratio would be able to jump three miles at a single bound. Preble's is not a muskrat, but it is a good swimmer and diver. It is not a gopher, but it burrows underground. It is not a squirrel, but it is a good climber. It is not a bear, yet it hibernates for eight months of the year. And though it is not a bird, it builds in summer a finely woven nest of dry grasses.

I have never seen a Preble's mouse. Few humans have. Not only is it rare, it is also tiny and nocturnal in habits, and it hibernates two-thirds of the year. If seen, Preble's is often mistaken for a frog because of its jumping. To make up for Preble's elusiveness, I narrate a little scene out of the life of this spunky mouse. The setting is a patch of ground near the south bank of the Middle Rabbit.

It is early autumn, late afternoon. Preble's mouse sleeps, curled up in a grassy nest, nose on his belly. He is three inches long, but his tail, wrapped around him, is five inches. His hind feet are big for a mouse. His fur is the color of dark gray clay touched with cinnamon, nearly black at the spine, and with a streak of buff running along the sides. The belly is white. The nest lies beneath a rotting willow log, felled by Beaver.

As the light of day declines, Preble's awakes. He is hungry. He pokes his nose out of an opening in the nest to test the air. He smells the scent of a Long-tailed Vole. He knows well the scent of other rodents living nearby, Prairie Vole and Meadow Vole and Deer Mouse—an abundance of them—as well as Mexican Woodrat and Masked Shrew. Lots of cousins, but there is still plenty to eat and cover for everybody.

Preble's makes a little hop away from his nest. He skips along toward the creek looking for grass seed. Getting ready for his winter sleep, he is gaining weight on the seeds and berries of fall. In the gloam of dusk, he makes his way through asters and musk thistles. Bushes of currant and

western snowberry offer cover. A canopy of mountain maple, alder, and willow spreads the safety of shadow as the harvest moon rises. Preble's hops along warily, the tips of his whiskers alert to signs of Weasel or Rattlesnake or Fox. Beneath the scrub, he feels that Owl, terror of the night, cannot see him. Still, he stops to look and listen. He goes on. In a damp place, he breathes in the scent of field mint. Next he stops to sniff a hill of Bear dung full of chokecherry seed. Thirsty, he cuts a blade of crested wheatgrass and uses his forepaws to run it through his teeth, pressing out the moisture. He stays in the shadows, hopping around the pools of lunar light.

Spotting a moth on a mullein stalk, he grabs it with his forelegs, and sitting up on his haunches he eats it, but fastidiously discards the wings. Preble's moves on. Not far from the creek, his eye catches the dark shape of low-hanging chokecherries silhouetted in the moon. He clambers up a woody shoot within reach of the berries and eats them one by one. Done, he hops down. At the very instant he hops, a moving shadow darkens everything, and he hears a whoosh. Owl strikes and misses, and Preble's leaps. He leaps three feet, over there where it is open. His powerful haunches and large hind feet send him into the air, and his long tail, trailing behind, steadies his flight.

Splash. The mouse lands in the creek. He dives beneath the cold water. When he comes up again, Owl is gone. Preble's swims to the other shore—only his snout and arched tail break the water. He knows a place on this side where grasses are dropping seed, a place where Fox is rarely seen.

VII

> There was no Indians here in '86, when my dad and mother come here. . . . Yeah, there was no Indians. I've always felt a little sorry for the Indians. I ain't any way proud of us for the way we done them. If they had had the war machine that we had, and the way of getting things we did, we'd never have whipped them either. But we just shoved them over and shot them and took their land. That's what we done.
>
> —Red Miller, Livermore cowboy, on the expulsion of Indians from the region, oral interview transcript (1974)

In 1911, the historian Ansel Watrous looked back on the days before the white settlement of Livermore when the only occupants were Ute

Indians. Livermore "was a vast unsurveyed and, save for the Overland stage road, an untracked wilderness. The smile of a white woman had never been seen." Watrous regarded Native Americans as "thieving bloodthirsty savages." He quoted with approval General Frank Hall, who said that in the face of "the surging tide of an irresistible movement"—that is, white settlement—the original inhabitants of the land were destined to become extinct. "The redmen stubbornly refused to accept the conditions held up to them by modern law, so they were plowed under and forgotten."

At least two decades before the explorer John Charles Fremont passed through the Livermore country in 1843, the first Euro-Americans entered the northern foothills of the Colorado Front Range. They came to trap beaver—the largest rodent of North America. They did not settle, but visited in the fall and winter when beaver fur grows thick. Many of these men were of French ancestry and married Native American women. Relations with the Indians were friendly. Rancher Evan Roberts, from one of the early Livermore families, preserved an oral tradition of meetings between Indians and trappers before the settlement period. "In the eighteen-thirties the Indians came in here and met the trappers and traders right over here at old Livermore . . . and they'd have their rendezvous there, swapping hides for beads and shells for their guns, or whatever else they could swap for. . . . For years in June, it had been going on, nobody knew how long—since there were first trappers and traders in here. . . . Dad said that these first ones that he knew about were eighteen-thirty-something."

The heyday of trapping, the 1830s, preceded any real settlement of the northern foothills. Trappers worked the watercourses intensively, including the Middle Rabbit and the Lone Pine. The European market for beaver had been large, but by 1850 the Livermore creeks were trapped out—the beaver gone. As early as 1843, Fremont encountered few trappers in the area.

The Colorado gold rush began in 1858. The major gold mining took place far to the south of our valley. In 1860, apart from a few trappers, hunters, and itinerant bands of Utes and Arapahos, the land was practically unoccupied. The gold rush put Colorado on the map, so to speak, and many more Euro-Americans came into the area. In the early 1860s, professional market hunters began invading the Native American

hunting grounds around Livermore. They killed off most of the wild game on which the Ute and Arapaho depended. These hunters sold the meat of elk, deer, bighorn sheep, and pronghorn to the markets of Denver and to the mining camps.

The establishment of a U.S. Cavalry post in Fort Collins in the early 1860s was reassuring not only to the thousands of newcomers passing through north on the Overland Trail, but also to the handful who were looking to settle in the foothills. The cavalry was there in case the Indians put up resistance to the invasion of their territory. Indeed, several violent confrontations did occur between 1865 and 1867 during the Indian uprisings of the period.

Wagon bosses on the Overland Trail noticed that oxen abandoned in the winter did not die, but thrived on the cured, nutritious native grasses, and the word got out. In the 1860s, a growing market for "fat cattle" in Denver set the stage for serious stockraising in Livermore. In the middle of the decade, two cattle outfits sent herds of Longhorns into the unsettled, unfenced valleys of Livermore, which were covered with free grass—a major intrusion into the Utes' traditional territory. In 1866, near Owl Canyon, Indians killed a young cowboy named Fackler, whose job was overseeing these cattle on the Lone Pine. Josephine Lamb, who wrote about the incident in her history of the Weber ranch, concluded: "The Indians were probably the Mountain Utes who had a difficult time keeping their hunting grounds for themselves." At this time, white stockmen treated virtually all the Livermore grasslands as "open range."

The Fackler incident marked the transition to Euro-American control of the Lone Pine and Rabbit Creek watersheds. Beginning in 1868, the Utes and other tribes were driven out of the northern Colorado mountains and forced onto reservations. By the time Red Miller's parents came to Livermore in 1886, at the beginning of the new wave of settlement, there were no Native Americans remaining in the region.

VIII

In the 1860s, emigrants traveling to Oregon on the Overland Trail passed northward along the eastern edge of Livermore country in covered wagons. I have seen the swales and wheel marks left by their heavy wagons in the dry soils of the Roberts ranch. Graffiti that they

carved into the soft rock of the mesas are still visible, though barely legible. One inscription, less-eroded than others, I wrote into my journal: W NELLMMWOW lip 18__. It is the ruts, not the names, that will persist in this landscape.

Some of these travelers, however, kept diaries and wrote down the first impressions they had of the Livermore country. After months of travel over the flat and treeless plains, they were overwhelmed by the sudden appearance of hills and dark evergreen forests. "The scenery around us is wild and grand beyond description," one of them wrote. Another observed that at night "purple, black and gray bluffs towered up in the clear dark sky." They called the uplands the "Black Hills"—the term used by Fremont and not to be confused with a different pine-clad range of hills in South Dakota. "The hills seem miles high and are covered with cedar and rocks as large as houses . . . we counted five differently colored rocks." Another wrote, "we crossed the summit of the Black Hills just at sun set and a more magnificent sight I never saw. We could look to the left and see the snowy range shrouded with perpetual snow. We saw an abundance of game such as antelope, deer and prairie dogs."

The earliest ranchers in the Livermore valley established themselves in the late 1860s. They recognized that winters, though windy, were not especially harsh and that the drastic decline of elk and bighorn sheep (from market hunting) opened the grasslands up to Longhorn cattle and domestic sheep. These settlers prospered, sending their livestock onto the unfenced, open rangeland. Fred Smith, who much later, in 1897, made young John Elliott his cowboy, was one of the first of these pioneers in the Westlake district.

The early Livermore ranching culture, which lasted from the 1860s through the early 1880s, arose after the Homestead Act of 1862, which allowed men and women to file claims for free land, up to 160 acres. Such small acreage was insignificant in these semiarid grasslands, yet due to the open-range system homesteaders and squatters such as Fred Smith did not need large parcels so long as they gained access to water for their livestock. It was easy to make money on the feral Longhorns that fed on

free grass and could survive the winter without hay. By the mid-1870s, Livermore's grasslands helped make Larimer County the main producer of livestock in the state. Toward the end of the decade, the Colorado Central Railroad was completed, linking Fort Collins to Denver and to the transcontinental railway running through Cheyenne—an efficient means of shipping animals to urban markets such as Chicago and Kansas City.

For the far-flung ranchers of Livermore, 1871 was a banner year. The fledgling community got a post office, had its first dance (in a log cabin), organized the first school district, and witnessed the opening of its first roadhouse, the Fisk Hotel. In 1875, the Roberts opened the Forks Hotel. In 1876, Colorado became a state.

By the 1890s, open rangeland in Livermore was fast disappearing because of a new wave of homesteaders. These emigrants settled up much of the remaining unclaimed land. To do this, a man or unmarried woman paid a small fee to set himself or herself up on 160 acres in the public domain (or in the early 1900s, either 320 or 640 acres). They built a "claim shack" and lived on the land for five years, after which they "proved up" and received clear title from the U.S. government. That is how Miss Josephine Lamb acquired her first holding on the South Rabbit. Many stockgrowers built up larger spreads by buying out clusters of small 160-acre holdings; it was the method John and Ida Elliott used to increase their holdings.

John and Ida Elliott belonged to the new system of land tenure in which private ownership of sizeable tracts by individuals (or in some instances by corporations) became the norm. The private holding of land exclusively for stockraising and the culture associated with it were to persist in northern Colorado until the 1990s, when changing economic circumstances began to make the old ways less viable.

The pattern of land tenure in Livermore that took hold around 1890 was shaped by the immigration of two categories of people. The larger of the two consisted of new homesteaders, many of whom were part of the mass exodus from the drought-ridden lands of Kansas, Nebraska, and other midwestern states. The second category was smaller but wealthier: they were the emigrants from England, the "remittance men," some of

whom, as we know, employed John Elliott and Ida Meyer, themselves emigrants of the 1890s.

The new influx of people into the Livermore valley was in its own right a major feature of the ranching culture to which the Elliotts belonged. The larger population led to the division and redimensioning of the natural landscape. Trespassing became a practical and legal issue. So, too, did the question of the ownership of water. In 1884, Livermore ranchers organized the Larimer County Stockgrowers Association to prevent cattle theft and enforce the cattle brands of the new wave of landowners. By 1900, fencing off the open rangelands became much cheaper and easier with the widespread availability of barbed wire, an invention of the 1870s.

Another feature of the new ranching culture was the replacement of the rangy Texas Longhorns with Shorthorns and Herefords. Related developments were, first, the extensive haying of Livermore meadows to make winter feed for the Shorthorns and Herefords, which were not as winter hardy as the near-native Longhorns, and, second, the digging of irrigation ditches to augment hay production.

Young John Elliott learned the new style of ranching from the stockmen he worked for in the late 1890s, among them John Williams and Fred Smith. The latter, though a founder of the older herding regime, developed some of the main features of the new culture. He was the first to buy up small holdings and stitch together a sizeable home ranch. He was also the first Livermore rancher to drive his cattle in the summer season to higher terrain, where the grass was greener.

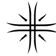
In 1908, the voting population of greater Livermore was 663. That was two years before John Elliott bought his Middle Rabbit spread. By that date, the best Livermore land in the public domain was already claimed, which is probably why Elliott paid a considerable sum of money for a holding with fine meadows rather than taking up a homestead on less-favorable terrain. The choice proved to a wise one.

In the year 1918, the Elliotts' ranch on the Middle Rabbit was prospering. The Elliotts' son, Buck, had reached school age. But how was the boy to get an education in the isolated valley of the Middle Rabbit?

◆ FIVE ◆

Miss Lamb

Mr. Elliott, I have come to stay.
—Josephine Lamb



The Elliotts' toddler had become a boy. Ida photographed him in various poses, wearing his cowboy hat, sitting on a pony, working the hay stacker. In one photo, he looks like little Lord Fauntleroy. He is dressed in a suit with knee breeches, worsted jacket, and matching cap, but incongruously stands next to the ranch house, framed by a wild growth of cottonwoods. The outfit is a gauge of Ida's hope that the ranch boy might someday feel at home in the larger world.

But how was Buck to find that world? Rabbit Creek Ranch was far from towns and city life. Where Buck was growing up, there were no people other than his parents and the hired hand. He had no brothers or sisters, and few other children lived in the district. There was no radio. When he was older, he said, "I growed up alone."

The way to bring the world to a mountain ranch child was through schooling. Such a child usually attended school from age six to fourteen. After the "eighth-grade graduation," they either went into town for high school, went out to work or to learn a trade, or, more rarely, went to Fort Collins for high school. When Buck was six, in the fall of 1917, the superintendent of Larimer County schools sent a teacher up to the Elliott ranch. Miss Ruth Richardson taught Buck at home in the first year and

Buck Elliott in suit at the Rabbit Creek house, circa 1917.
Photograph by Ida Elliott. Courtesy of Jim Elliott.

in the second year at a tiny one-room schoolhouse on the North Rabbit with one other pupil, Madeleine Sloan, who was six years ahead of him. Miss Richardson's photograph has been pasted in Buck's scrapbook for ninety years. This young woman, however, stayed only two years. Due to low pay and social isolation, a rapid turnover of teachers in the mountain schools was the norm. The children were left in the lurch.

So the Elliotts needed a new teacher. Ruth Richardson's successor was Miss Josephine Lamb—a young woman who grew up in the hills west of Fort Collins. Miss Lamb was qualified: she had two years teaching experience, was a high school graduate, and had taken college classes at Greeley. In an interview at the Livermore Hotel thirty-seven years later, she told in her own words how she first came to Livermore: "our county superintendent needed a teacher up here . . . and so she sent me. . . . I didn't know anyone. All I knew about the country was what my father had told me . . . he was an early prospector in Manhattan. And I did know a good bit about the topography of the country, but the people I did not know. And when she sent me here, it was right in this room I came first. I came up on the stage and the Elliotts met me and I went to the ranch and taught there." For Miss Lamb, the Livermore Hotel and its surroundings were new sights, but for the couple from Rabbit Creek it was home territory. Ida had worked in the hotel, and John had regularly stopped there as a freighter.

Would Miss Lamb be able to endure the hardships of mountain life? Would she see Buck through his eighth-grade graduation? At their first meeting, John is reported to have said to her, "I guess you'll leave too." Miss Lamb replied, "Mr. Elliott, I have come to stay" (BT).

She taught the winter term of 1919 at the schoolhouse on the North Rabbit. Buck was eight, and she was twenty-one. The year after her arrival the Sloan girl finished, so John Elliott built a schoolhouse on the ranch. It had a bedroom for the teacher.

Not only did Miss Lamb live on the Middle Rabbit and teach Buck, she herself took up ranching. Before the year was out, she filed a claim on 640 acres of rangeland bordering the Elliott spread. " I was old enough to take up a homestead," she said, "and at that time the section law had gone through, and so along with all the other boys who were taking up homesteads, I also took up a homestead. It sounds as if I might be a boy, but I didn't mean to say that."

I think she did. In any case, the "slip" is revealing. Jo Lamb did not hesitate to assume for herself a man's rights and freedom of action. There was a great deal of boyishness in her, which came in handy when she taught.

I

What was she like, the new teacher? Perhaps the best way to get a sense of who she was at this stage in her life is to recount two events that took place in 1916, three years before she came out to the Elliotts. At the time, she was eighteen, a senior in high school.

It was a banner year for Josephine Lamb. For one thing, she took first prize in the state Livestock Judging Contest, student division. Years later she told an interviewer how she found out the result. The story gives a picture of the young woman's homelife. "Our dad always had to have the *Denver Post*, so when we came home from church, why, we'd have to bring him the paper, and there I am reading the paper too, parts of it, . . . we five kids divided it . . . and we read the paper and I'd seen my picture. And I was just, I was just shocked. I didn't know it was going to be." With her photo, the paper ran an article with the headline "Colorado Girl of 17 Wins over 18 Boys Judging Beef Cattle." According to the *Denver Post*, Miss Lamb was "the first young woman to win such an honor in Colorado."

The *Post* interviewed the winner. "Determined to be a helpmeet in every sense of the word when her knight shall come to claim her, Miss Josephine Lamb, . . . when she entered high school . . . included in her studies stock judging and other branches of agriculture as well as the domestic science course, in order that she might have an intimate knowledge of the problems confronting her 'better half' when she has a farm of her own." At age eighteen, Josephine Lamb knew she wanted to marry a farmer or rancher and share in the work as a partner.

Her intention apparently was to become a real woman rancher, not just a ranch woman. The distinction is important. The wives of stockmen were mostly "ranch women": they managed the household and did sundry ranch chores, and though they often helped out during roundups and calving, the main work with cattle was left to their husbands. Mrs. Elliott was a ranch woman. A "woman rancher," in contrast, took on all the tasks

Photograph of Josephine Lamb reproduced in the *Denver Post,* 1916. Courtesy of Judy Cass.

the men did—roping, castrating, and staying out with the cattle—and she had an equal part in running the business, if, that is, she did not own it herself. Genuine women ranchers in the Livermore district were rare. The fact that Josephine studied stock judging, a male preserve, implied that she saw her future role as a woman rancher. She spoke to the reporter of having "a farm of her own." The interview raises a question: Was her primary motive for wanting to marry to get a husband or to get a ranch?

The expressions *helpmeet*, *knight*, and *better half* in the 1916 article may be the journalist's, not hers. As an older woman, she reminisced about this article: "it told about how I was . . . determined to be a helpmeet in every sense of the word." And then she said, "I hope," by which she clearly meant "I wish." The other people at this later interview broke into laughter. Josephine herself laughed. She was then in her seventies. Given the way her life turned out, the idea of her having once wanted to be "a helpmeet in every sense of the word" struck everyone as funny.

In the same interview, she recalled her feelings at the time of winning the contest. "So I won the beef judging over at least seventeen boys. And who didn't think I was proud of that. Oh boy, I loved to beat those boys. I always wanted to beat those boys." Again, she has a good laugh. In the newspaper article, Miss Lamb said she wanted to marry a man, but at the same time she delighted in putting men in their place. Her entry in a contest where she was the only girl is significant. It reveals a skeptical, nonchalant attitude toward the gender expectations of the time. It also shows a desire for distinction.

The second important event of 1916 was her graduation from high school. The highest-ranking student of her class, she was valedictorian. She spoke on a forward-looking topic: "The Call of the Twentieth Century." As a result of this honor, the University of Colorado granted her a four-year scholarship, usable at any time in her life. In those days, graduation from high school was a much rarer achievement than it is today. Josephine's outstanding academic record was remarkable considering that she missed two months of school every year in order to work with her family as a farm laborer. Given her humble circumstances, graduation must have been a grand occasion for her parents and siblings. Great expectations hovered around the new graduate.

It comes as a surprise, then, to learn that Josephine did not enter the University of Colorado in Boulder after her graduation, nor did she

marry a rancher or farmer, as she had intended. Instead, she became a grade school teacher. At that time, high school graduates were eligible for teaching jobs. Her first assignment was at Cactus Hill School on the plains east of Fort Collins. There, she taught the 1916–17 school year. Simultaneously, she enrolled in courses at the Colorado State Teachers College in Greeley, which was only sixteen miles away. She did not continue at Greeley, for in the next year she got a teaching job in Belle Fourche, South Dakota. Why she went so far afield is not known, but it may have been because her mother had relatives there. After the stint in South Dakota, she was sent up to Livermore to teach Buck Elliott—her first job in a mountain school, but not her last.

Josephine Lamb left high school with good prospects. She held a college scholarship. She was intelligent, well educated, and attractive. She had ambition. Why, then, did she become a grade school teacher? Asked this question in 1973, she replied, "Oh, well, that was, you might say, necessity"—by which she meant economic necessity. The implication is that teaching would not have been her first choice had it not been for "necessity." Was teaching a true vocation for her or only a job she took for lack of something better?

An intelligent woman of no means who wished to stay in the country had few alternatives in that period. Many rural girls went to the city to find work as waitresses, nurses, seamstresses, and so forth. They married, became mothers, and took part in the entertainment and shopping opportunities of town life. In the 1920s, the typical woman's magazine story told of a country girl going to the city and succeeding. Josephine did not want to live in the city.

It is true that she intended to marry, but a woman could not simply declare herself somebody's wife. Her matrimonial destiny hung on an actual proposal from a suitable man. If she had hoped to marry an eligible rancher through her work in the rural schools, it did not pan out. Bachelor landowners were not plentiful, and though some landowners' sons were single, a marriage with one of them did not happen. Perhaps Miss Lamb's attitude and her sense of herself as equal or superior to men were off-putting. Her low economic status may have made it harder for her to find a landowning spouse. In any case, she did not marry.

Why then did she not go to the university in Boulder? It was the most prestigious of the public universities in Colorado, and it had awarded

her a full-tuition scholarship. She told the interviewer, “Boulder to me was just too high class, more than I could afford, even with a scholarship.” Lack of money crimped her choices. Instead, she took courses, when she could, at the Colorado State Teachers College in Greeley. There she was able to make “arrangements” to work for her room and board. In between, she taught school in order to defray the costs.

Lack of money and being a woman stood in the way of her youthful dream of owning land. Given, though, the straitened conditions of her early life, she had not done badly so far.

Josephine Lamb was born in the quarry town of Stout, west of Fort Collins, among the ridges and hogbacks that divide the high plains from the mountains proper. Her father, Eugene Lamb, had spent his younger years wandering through the Colorado mountains as a gold prospector and itinerant miner. When he first came to Stout, he hired out as a stonecutter, but soon afterward filed a claim on a forty-acre homestead in nearby Soldier Canyon. There he started a quarry and built himself a stone house, which was later called “Old Home.” The family farmed, and Josephine’s mother, Effie, took in boarders to help make ends meet. They were not destitute. They had enough to eat. Soon, though, there were five children, with little left to spare.

Josephine grew up in the country. Fort Collins was only six miles away, but it was a long way by foot. Sundays, she walked the six miles with the family to church and then back again. Her father walked barefoot, carrying his shoes, either as an act of piety or to save shoe leather. On the farm, the Lambs had milk cows, chickens, and pigs. They grew potatoes and sold them to neighbors. Josephine’s sister Del remembered their mother being busy with gardening, sewing, and canning sausages, which she preserved in melted lard. After church, they treated themselves to homemade ice cream. Del remembered that on Saturday nights, “the neighbors took turns hosting dances in their Soldier Canyon homes. Each family brought a cake to share. A fiddler and a guitarist were hired from Fort Collins. Dances started at 8:30 PM and went until 2:00 or 3:00 AM.”

The stone house in which Josephine grew up stood near the quarry. Eugene let the children play with his stone-cutting tools, but when blasting occurred, the kids had to leave the house and take shelter. Dust

from the explosions drifted through the rooms. Josephine Lamb grew up with dynamite.

When she began first grade, she walked to the one-room school in Soldier Canyon, a mile from home. With the onset of winter, cold came into the stone house, and Josephine then studied in the "little room," which was easier to keep warm. In second grade, she had Miss Hettie Cattell, a formidable woman who later became a journalist in Denver and then in New York City. As an adult, Josephine admired successful women and made a point of mentioning Cattell in a newspaper interview. Her example probably inspired the young girl. Country schoolteachers like Miss Cattell had a disproportionate influence on the lives of their pupils, who, for lack of contact with educated people (or the larger world they represented), were highly receptive.

Josephine's parents, though not well educated, could read and write. They furthered their children's education as well as they could. Josephine's father read the paper, and he sometimes asked others to read books to him. Little is known about her mother, Effie. Josephine seldom mentioned her, perhaps because her mother was immersed in the domestic realm, whereas Josephine preferred the outdoors. She was, however, proud of the fact that her mother voted for school consolidation in 1912. Women in Colorado were among the first in the nation to gain the right to vote, and Effie used her right. Consolidation meant that the school district would transport rural children to more central schools, where they could continue their education beyond the eighth grade, the usual cut-off point. Had it not been for passage of this referendum, it is unlikely that Josephine would have gone to high school.

In 1913, Josephine became a member of the first class of a consolidated school on the Eastern Slope of the Colorado Front Range: Cache la Poudre High School in Laporte, Colorado. That was the winter of the great blizzard, and the school driver hitched his team of horses to a wagon box set on sled runners. The compartment had a roof and curtains on the sides, but there were no blankets. Josephine described it as "the coldest place in the world."

Every fall she missed two months of school when the Lamb family hired itself out as seasonal labor in the sugar beet harvest. A photograph taken around 1913 shows Josephine and her mother sitting in a field "topping" the beets.

Josephine Lamb and her mother, Effie, in a field topping sugar beets, circa 1914. Courtesy of Patty Wyant.

Josephine was her father's daughter, as a first-born girl often is. Eugene's youthful adventures in the West showed an independence of spirit that found an echo in his daughter. The fact that she was like him in this respect, yet was a woman, created tension between them.

Eugene Lamb's father, Owen, was a boy when he sailed from Kilkenny, Ireland, to New York around 1830. Even before the potato famine, conditions in Ireland were dismal. English rule in the colony was brutal. Overlords expelled Irish tenants from farms, and the law denied Roman Catholics fundamental rights such as voting, serving on a jury, teaching school, becoming a barrister, and taking part in government. Poverty (caused by religious discrimination and the seizure of land by the English) and the longing for a freer life were probably what drove the Lambs to America.

Owen grew up and became a "stone man." He married a French woman from Phelps, New York. Like the other families in our history—the Elliotts, Worthingtons, Meyers, Heidenreiches, and Biels—Eugene's parents pursued a westward course across the continent. They moved to Ohio, and there Josephine's father was born in 1854, the sixth of ten children. From his father, Eugene learned the stone cutter's trade. In his late twenties, he felt the urge to move farther west—he wanted to prospect gold in Colorado. He got off the emigrant train at the station in Cheyenne, Wyoming, and walked and ran all the way to Fort Collins, jumping irrigation ditches, mostly without falling in.

Eugene arrived in northern Colorado in 1882, earlier than Dan Elliott and Ida Meyer, also midwestern emigrants. Dan Elliott came out to freight and ranch, Ida Meyer to see the West, Eugene Lamb to strike it rich.

Gold fever possessed the young Irish American, as it did thousands of other men in the 1880s and 1890s. He was energetic and single, and from his father he knew the ways of stone. Wandering through the Colorado mountains, he tried his luck in the mining centers of Leadville and Central City. From 1890 to 1892, he prospected in the mountain gold-mining town (now ghost town) of Manhattan in the western reaches of the Livermore country, but the worth of the ore he found barely made up for the processing costs. Then he went to Cripple Creek, Colorado, the Eldorado of the 1890s, where he worked for the Stratton Independence Mine.

He did not become rich, but he found a wife—a cook from Iowa

whom he met in one of the restaurants for miners. Her name was Effie Wright. She was twenty-four; he was forty-two. They left Cripple Creek in 1896. If they were still there in April, they witnessed the great fire that started in the Red Light district and eventually burned down the town. Perhaps it was the devastating fire that drove them away or maybe the threat of labor unrest. They went to Denver and married there in September. In 1897, they moved to Stout, near Fort Collins, and on July 31 of that year Effie gave birth to Josephine Agnes Lamb, the first of five surviving children.

To provide for the growing family, Eugene Lamb set up his own quarry in Soldier Canyon, from which he extracted the beautiful red and light sandstones he sold to builders. He quarried for thirty years and made a living, but barely. If you divided the people of northern Colorado into the haves and the have-nots, the Lambs belonged more to the latter category than to the former.

Eugene left behind a durable legacy, though. His stone was used for the construction of many fine buildings in the region. One of the most delightful structures in Fort Collins is St. Joseph's Catholic School, built in 1927. The building itself was constructed of peach-colored brick, but the large theatrical portal of the raised entrance is a deep red sandstone. It is said that Eugene himself cut the stone and donated it to the church.

The donation may have been an act of defiance—a proclamation of Eugene's devotion to Catholicism in the face of persecution. According to a family story, the Ku Klux Klan set fire to his fields. If that is true, the incident would have taken place in the 1920s, when the Klan persecuted Catholics in Colorado. In northern Colorado, Catholics were a small minority, so they were easy targets. Josephine herself felt the lash of religious prejudice in this period.

Josephine's father was a lifelong Democrat. His oldest grandson, Ted Wetzler, told me that for the Lambs, "after baptism, the next thing was to be a Democrat." In New York, the Democratic Party had proven its worth by accepting Irish Catholics as full-fledged citizens and electing them to public office. The party professed to give the have-nots a political voice and worked to alleviate the poverty of new immigrants. Like her father, Josephine became a devoted member of the "Democracy," the party of Jefferson, of Al Smith (the Catholic governor of New York), and later of Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt.

In Josephine's words, her father was "a very small man." Some of his smallness passed on to her. He was light on his feet. Men in the saloons stood him drinks if he agreed to perform an Irish jig. He had the gift of staying airborne longer than seemed physically possible. This buoyancy complemented his levity of temperament. He was a merry man and convivial—a man about town.

The temperaments of father and daughter were not a perfect fit. His levity clashed with her gravity and cold civility. Ted Wetzler remembered that when Josephine came to the Old Home for Sunday dinner, the merriment died down a little. Perhaps in reaction to her father, who lived for the moment, Josephine was deeply serious and ambitious. Eugene had had his fling with getting rich, then gave it up. Josephine, in 1973, put it this way, "All he wanted was a few pennies in his pocket. . . . [H]e never cared, he never tried to make, you know, more than a living. He didn't care!"

She referred to him as "the old man," though not out of disrespect. "The old man, my father, was forty-two by the time I was born, and so we didn't know him as a young man." She could have been her father's granddaughter. This generational distance created a problem, for Josephine was a woman of her times, the Jazz Age.

The "old man" did not understand the "new woman." It was painful to see her change into something he could not fathom, she who had been his firstborn, his helper, his pride and joy. He did not accept her rebellious spirit, her wearing of pants. Had she been a man, it would have been different. Ted Wetzler put it this way, "He wasn't used to seeing complete independence in a female—he didn't like that."

Eugene Lamb was possessive about his oldest daughter and a little jealous of the men she liked. At one point, Josephine and a divorced man who was a boarder at their house showed interest in each other. According to family tradition, Eugene drove the man off at the point of a shotgun. Josephine and her father then had an argument. She challenged his dogmatic position on divorce. Don Lamb, a Catholic deacon at the time of writing, told me that the episode was the beginning of his aunt's ambivalence toward Catholicism. Her father's objection to the divorced man caused her to reexamine her beliefs. Ted Wetzler confirmed that Josephine was not a whole-hearted adherent of the church. A niece, Judy Cass, remembered that her aunt almost never went to Mass.

Josephine did, however, keep in touch with her Catholic heritage in college at Greeley, and in 1923 she was a member of the Newman Club, the national organization for Catholic students. A later episode showed that she remained attached to the church. During a roundup in the high country, she drove all the way down to Red Feather so that her niece, Judy Cass, would not miss Mass. Josephine told John Elliott she was going for supplies: she knew he would not have approved of the religious excursion.

If she had doubts about the religion of her parents, the normal questioning of youth and the free thinking of the 1920s probably contributed to them. The emotional trigger for these doubts, though, was a crisis brought on by her father, precipitated by her interest in another man.

Eugene did not like her close association with John Elliott. In the words of Ted Wetzler, Jo's father objected to her "taking off to live with the Elliotts." The quarryman had doubtless heard gossip about Josephine and John. The fact that Elliott was an older man probably made the situation especially irksome for the father. According to Ted, "he did not think much of John Elliott" and considered him "uncouth." "Granddad didn't say much, but he didn't approve." In the 1920s, relations between Josephine and her parents were put to the test when she brought her ranching mentor home with her. "John Elliott occasionally went to Sunday dinner at Grandma's with Jo, but never with Mrs. Elliott. It didn't bother anybody but Grandma and Granddad."

Eugene's possessiveness was a symptom of strong paternal love, and he did not reject his daughter. Except with the boarder, he exercised restraint. Ted characterized him as "a kind and patient man." In the fall of 1926, when Josephine was far away in the mountains, teaching in the Laramie River valley, Eugene wrote to her. He began, "I will surprise you by writing you a letter, my first." In the short letter, he mentioned an "Orwell," probably meaning Orville "Buck" Elliott, Josephine's former pupil. Fifteen and a student at Cache la Poudre High School, he had stayed overnight with Eugene and then left for home. This overnight stay is surprising considering Eugene's attitude to John Elliott, but Effie and Ida Elliott were on friendly terms, and the two families felt connected. Eugene ended the letter, "Come home as soon as you can we miss you From your dad Eugene Lamb."

In the 1973 interview, it is significant that Josephine talked about her

father at great length. "He was a good father and a good man." She was proud that as a prospector and miner he took part in the state's early history. She paid homage to his dancing skills and his quarry work. Candid as she was about his lack of ambition, she did not reproach him. She did, however, take to task Ansel Watrous, the early historian of the county, for leaving her father out of his book. In spite of the quarryman's importance, the historian refused to include a man who liked to drink and who was never a financial success.

Her father died in the fall of 1932, at age seventy-eight. When Josephine learned of his death, she, in the words of her nephew Ted, "came unzipped." Her father had been reading, seated in a straight back chair, outside his house, when he was struck down by a cerebral hemorrhage. He apparently died quickly. Josephine went to Old Home and was distraught. According to Ted, she asked those who had been with him: "How could you sit there and let him die?" She resented the fact that the priest at St. Joseph's had not arrived in time to give extreme unction.

The suddenness of the loss might explain her tantrum, but some of it may have expressed anger she felt toward herself. Ted Wetzler saw it that way. He believed his aunt felt "a fair amount of guilt" concerning her father. Because of his sudden death, "she didn't have a chance to ask his forgiveness." If that is so, what were the transgressions for which she needed a father's pardon? Her refusal to submit to his wishes?

II

When Josephine set off to teach at Cactus Hill School, she was the first of the Lambs' five children to leave home. It was a major event. It meant an expansion of her horizon and the beginnings of early adult life. For the first time, Josephine Lamb was on her own.

She taught, with some significant interruptions, for the next forty-four years in sixteen different schools, most of them in the mountains. All of them, she liked to say, were "north of the Poudre River." She was usually the only teacher.

After teaching Buck five years at the "Elliott School," she moved around a great deal among different country schools. When school was nearby, she lived with the Elliotts or stayed with them on weekends. In the 1930s and 1940s, during the Depression and the Second World War,

she took a total of seven years unpaid leave from teaching in order to help on the ranch. After the war, she taught mainly in Livermore schools until her retirement in 1960.

"She was everybody's teacher." Sometimes she taught the children of the children she had taught. Thirty-five years after Buck was her pupil, she taught two of Buck's sons.

Many of the years in which she taught Buck, he was the only pupil. The boy felt great affection for her, which comes out in the charming letter he wrote to her when he was ten years old. It is included as an addendum to this chapter. In each mountain school, there was usually only a handful of kids. For them, the one-room schoolhouse was not just the scene of instruction, but a magical meeting place. When school was out, they might not see other children, except siblings. School was a joyous occasion. Just getting to school, usually by horse, was an adventure. Jim Elliott, for instance, fell off his pony into cactus. When he got to school, Miss Lamb pulled his pants down, threw him over her lap, and pulled the spines out of his butt.

School gave Buck and other ranch kids a deeper understanding of their world. Miss Lamb introduced Buck to the natural history, geology, and biology of the mountains. He learned about Native Americans, the European settlement, and the importance of ranching, mining, and forestry in the larger scheme of things. He became aware of the populous world beyond the mountains, a world to which he and other kids had no easy access and that was markedly different from their own. He began to learn skills needed to enter modern society should he choose to do so. As the only pupil on a remote ranch, he did not find it easy to master these skills. They seemed abstract and inapplicable to ranch life, which was where his heart really lay.

The mountain ranchers respected Miss Lamb as a teacher. They placed a high value on education, in part because their community was isolated. In the Midwest, the first thing settlers built was a church; in the West, it was a schoolhouse. The western woman—Josephine's mother is a case in point—knew the importance of schooling and insisted that children be free of heavy farmwork for part of the year. It was a great sacrifice for many families.

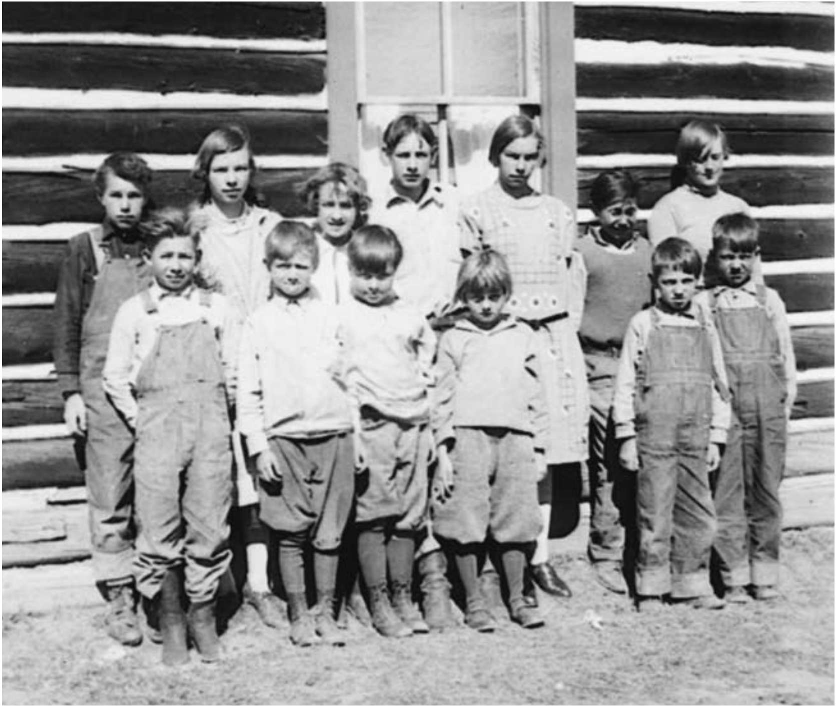
Ranchers routinely provided the teacher with room and board, which helped make up for the low salary. A woman teacher usually did not stay

long as teacher: money was one factor and the number of single men another. When a new teacher came to Livermore, they turned out to look her over. According to one Livermore ranch woman, "[M]ost of the local men got their wives that way; they married the schoolteacher. . . . [T]hey didn't keep teachers long, and they didn't want to because they wanted to import another and give another fellow a chance." Miss Lamb, however, did not marry.

Though many women teachers found the situation in the mountains hard to endure, Josephine managed well. She addressed this topic in the 1973 interview. "Miss Wilkins, why she was a very good superintendent . . . I would go teach wherever she said. And a lot of girls couldn't. Well, they were scared. All I had was a saddle horse in those days. It's . . . living in the sticks. That's the way I like to live anyway. . . . I rode horseback five miles. . . . A lot of girls couldn't get jobs because they wouldn't go out in the sticks. They cried, they were lonesome and homesick." Like her father, Jo had considerable pluck, something Miss Wilkins counted on. And like Ida Meyer, she packed a .22-caliber "powder puff" Derringer. She carried it to school with her in her purse (BPu).

A young woman schoolteacher faced daunting challenges in the mountains. One was just getting to the schoolhouse. Sometimes the only way was a five-mile ride cross-country on horseback. She might have to go through as many as five or six ranch gates. At each one, she would have to stop, dismount, open the gate, lead her horse through it, close it, and then remount.

Another challenge Miss Lamb faced was the "schoolhouse" itself, especially in winter. Typically, it was a one-room hut, the gaps between logs sometimes "unchinked." There might not be a chalkboard. The woodstove might smoke. Eva Degney Bradshaw, Miss Lamb's pupil at the Gleneyre School in the mid-1920s, told me there was a pump organ that didn't work and a wind-up phonograph that did. Gleneyre School, however, was not as badly equipped as others, and the logs of the building were well chinked. In her annual report for 1926, Josephine made a detailed inventory. The single room was heated by a woodstove. Besides a well for drinking and washing up, there were fourteen non-adjustable desks (for the fifteen pupils she had that year), slate and cloth chalkboards, eight wall maps, a national flag, four dictionaries, and a small globe "in very poor condition." Josephine took a snapshot of the



Gleneyre School and Josephine Lamb's pupils, Laramie River valley, 1925–26. Annice Link is standing in the back row, farthest to the right. Eva Degney is in the front row, second from the left. Photograph by Josephine Lamb. Courtesy of Eva Degney Bradshaw.

Gleneyre School and her pupils, among them Annice Link and Eva Degney, both of whom we interviewed more than seventy years later.

Miss Lamb taught "winter school" or "summer school" and sometimes both. In the high mountains, at Gleneyre on the Laramie River, for instance, there was only summer school because winter snows made the roads impassable. During the 1920s, Miss Lamb might teach summers on the Laramie and winters in the foothills. She earned more money that way, and it fitted in well with her ranching, for she and the Elliotts had their summer pasture on a tributary of the Laramie. During this time, she lived at the Elliott Cow Camp and rode down to

school on horseback. Eva Bradshaw remembers that Miss Lamb did not wear dresses, but came to school in pants and boots. She dressed like a cowboy. In hunting season, she once came to school in overalls stained with the blood of a deer she had shot earlier in the morning.

When Miss Lamb got to school, the first thing she did on a cold morning was build a fire in the stove. An indispensable tool for a mountain teacher was a sharp axe for splitting kindling. Then the pupils began to arrive, sometimes from quite a distance. On the Laramie, Annice Link and two other pupils came to school on snowy fall days in a bobsled, equipped with a boiler full of water to keep them warm. One summer day Annice rode a two-year-old bull to school, which caused such pandemonium that Miss Lamb begged her not to do it again.

Besides teaching, Miss Lamb was also responsible for cleanup and maintenance. Every morning before instruction began, she would have one pupil haul water from the well, while others raised the flag. After the Pledge of Allegiance, instruction began. On Friday afternoons before everybody went home, Miss Lamb made the kids sweep the floors and wash the chalkboards.

On the Laramie, in the summer of 1926, Miss Lamb had fifteen pupils, seven boys and eight girls, scattered through all the grades, from first to eighth. Besides the basic subjects, she taught agriculture and a health unit on the effects of alcohol and narcotics. The range of material and ages meant that Miss Lamb had to be a master of organization, and by all accounts she was.

After school, she returned to the ranch where she boarded, had supper with the family, and did schoolwork on the cleared kitchen table. At the Prairie Divide School, where she taught the children of loggers, Miss Lamb cooked for and watched over the children on Saturdays when the parents went to Fort Collins for supplies.

In her 1926 report on Gleneyre School, Miss Lamb wrote that there had been no instances of corporal punishment, which was permitted at the time. Keeping good classroom order could be difficult. A woman teacher sometimes resigned because she could not keep the older boys in line.

In the 1973 interview, Josephine herself told the story of a showdown she had in the 1920s with the older boys in a school on the plains. The superintendent had called her in with a special request:

JL: She said, "I'd like you to go over here to Fairmont." . . . [S]he said they'd had four teachers . . . and they've got to have another one, and there was some big boys there, they were Swedes, one of them was about as old as I was, and, and they were just running those teachers off.

Interviewer: On purpose?

JL: Well, on purpose! Just orneriness. And they'd brag what they could. And so she said, I want you to go out there. OK, so I went. And you know it rained. It started to rain out there. And that dirt is red dirt, and it's kind of like this dirt. The water stays on top. It's kind of hard, the soil. . . . [I]t's this big open country out there. . . . OK, there's these big holes the wind's scooped out and there's big water holes, and so recess time there was a plank there and so these boys, they put the plank across that hole, then [they jumped] and the more they jumped, the water splashed higher, so there I am in there, there's only one little girl in this group and there's about seventeen boys. . . . [H]ow in the world am I going to take care of this?—because if I don't, I'll be going down the road too. And so I let them go. . . . [T]he building had all glass windows—that's when they were building for the lighting—this big wall was all solid glass like the school over here at Livermore, and . . . they had got it so they got the water and mud all over those windows. And so then I rang the bell. I didn't say one word. I didn't say one word. . . . It was just silent. . . . But [then] I said, "Well, OK, here's two water buckets, get to the well out there—here's two water buckets—you take these water buckets, go out there, and splash it on these windows till you have them so we can see out of them." And they got up and they walked out and they did that. And they did a beautiful job, and that was all there was to it. We had school from then on. School from then on. Oh I tell you, I was lucky that I got out of that. [Laughs.] Because Miss Wilkins was counting on me.

Miss Lamb accepted tough assignments and went wherever she was sent. She showed determination and resourcefulness. And the schools welcomed her. Parents and pupils appreciated her dedication. In one

instance, though, during the late 1920s, in the heyday of the Ku Klux Klan and anti-Catholic feeling, a school board in a district on the plains refused to hire her because they feared she would try to convert the children to Catholicism. The case illustrates the kind of bias Josephine may have faced on a regular basis. In the end, the board did hire her, but only after its president persuaded them that Miss Lamb had no intention of proselytizing. She thus became the first Catholic schoolteacher in that district—one of several "firsts" in her life. I learned of the matter from Arlene Hinsey Davis, the daughter of the board president. She had had Josephine as teacher. Seventy years after the incident, Lamb's former pupil recalled, "I was quite impressed. That was the first time I came up against bigotry."

By today's standards, the salary Miss Lamb received from the state hardly seems commensurate with such difficult work. She was paid only for months in which she taught, which might be as few as six per year. In 1919 at the Elliott ranch, she earned only $360 for the whole year. Seven years later in 1926, she earned $700 a year, twice as much, but still only a little more than half of what the average U.S. public teacher was paid in 1925. Another telling comparison is that nurses' pay in Colorado in the early 1920s averaged between $1,200 and $2,000 a year. Let's consider the pair of galoshes Josephine wore in a 1928 photo. They would have cost $2.48 in 1927 had she ordered them from the Sears Roebuck catalog—a hefty chunk out of a monthly income of around $60. Things were no better in the 1930s. In the Depression, her salary slipped back to pre-1920 levels.

Nevertheless, she managed to make do. In the 1920s, she was swept up by the glamour of the Jazz Age, and she bought a few smart dresses and hats. In one photo, she wears riding boots with little hearts tooled into the leather. She was unable, however, to save enough to achieve two of her life goals: acquiring a self-sustaining ranch and finishing her college degree.

Yet go to college she must, if only for a year. The state required teachers to take college courses in education to renew their certification. There was good reason for this requirement: in 1924, less than half of all teachers in Colorado had two years of college work behind them.

At the end of the 1922–23 winter term, Buck completed grade school, and Josephine had no one else to teach at the Rabbit Creek Ranch. She had taken Buck through to the end, as she had promised. So in 1923, when Buck went off to high school in Laporte, Josephine herself left for college. She was twenty-six. John Elliott apparently helped finance her studies—perhaps his way of thanking her for Buck's education.

She was at Colorado State Teachers College in Greeley for the 1923–24 academic year. Since she had already done course work there, she enrolled as a sophomore, with a concentration in "intermediate" education. The 1924 yearbook listed her as a member of the Newman Club. The purpose of the club, according to the yearbook, "was to promote the Christian and social life of Catholic students." It cosponsored "open forums" with other campus religious societies, assisted at freshman orientation, organized social activities, and introduced Josephine to an intellectual and cultural side of Catholicism she had not encountered in the mountains.

She did not stay at the college to complete her degree. Throughout her long teaching career, she picked up individual courses here and there, at Greeley, Boulder, and Colorado State College of Agriculture in Fort Collins. In 1930–31, she spent another year in Greeley, again to renew certification. She did not complete her bachelor's in elementary education until 1960, the year she retired from teaching. She was sixty-three. A snapshot taken after the ceremony shows her in cap and gown. She stands next to John Elliott, who is wearing a sports jacket and cowboy hat. By then he was an old man of eighty, with one year left to live.

The mid-1920s were an exciting time to be in college. For Josephine, the experience was eye opening on several counts. First, the classes engaged and stimulated her mind as nothing else had done before. She had always been an eager student. Second, she witnessed the stirrings of an articulate and defiant youth culture intent on discarding the moral restrictiveness of the older generation.

Though Josephine, at twenty-six, was a little older than most of her classmates, she was part of a group of seasoned teachers who needed college credits. She was young, single, and susceptible to the ferment taking place around her. College students, especially at the public universities,

had become the vanguard and defenders of a new morality. Josephine heard the debates about the boundaries of sexual conduct and the need to cast off the proprieties of an earlier age. Such matters would have been discussed at the open forums of the religion clubs.

She heard about the controversy over some Greeley coeds who, two years before she came, had defied college rules by going off campus to a dance, without permission and without a chaperone, and had been punished. In the 1920s, unmarried college women began to claim the same right as men to leave campus without a chaperone, which became a bone of contention with college authorities. At the center of the dispute was the dean of women—none other than Helen Gilpin-Brown. This name was familiar to Josephine, for Gilpin-Brown and her husband (before his early demise) had been prominent in Livermore. John Elliott had managed and leased the Gilpin-Brown ranch after the family had moved to Fort Collins. In 1914, Helen, who had her bachelor's degree, became dean of women in Greeley. She was known for her zeal in monitoring the conduct of college women, and she chided them for using profanity. She also instituted a rule making coeds apply for special permission to ride in an automobile with a man.

The punishment imposed by the Student Council on the rebellious coeds who left campus without permission was expulsion. When Gilpin-Brown praised the council, there was an uproar as students and parents protested the decision. Finally, President Crabbe reinstated the fifteen girls. I think Josephine would have been of two minds about the episode. On the one hand, she probably respected Dean Gilpin-Brown as a strong woman who ran a tight ship—as she herself did in the mountain schools. On the other hand, Josephine, as we know her, would have sympathized with the college girls. They tried to claim for themselves a right that college boys took for granted: not to have to be chaperoned when going off campus. Josephine could not have supported a double standard for men and women, a double standard to which she herself would have been subjected had she not lived off campus.

It was in Greeley that Josephine experienced the Jazz Age firsthand. Even if she was not a participant, she was a keen observer. She saw college women "drinking, smoking, and petting"—as the new dean of women put it in 1926 in chastising coeds for engaging in these activities. She heard lively discussions about sex before marriage and the use of

Josephine Lamb with bobbed hair and in riding pants, 1926.
Courtesy of Eva Degney Bradshaw.

contraceptives. More and more college-age people questioned the taboos surrounding these practices. Her exceptional openness with young people about any question they wanted to ask may have been inculcated by the atmosphere of free inquiry at Greeley.

She may have tried out a new kind of close, fast dancing that many regarded as scandalous. She liked to dance and took a folk dance course at the college. She doubtless attended lectures given by controversial thinkers and writers who visited campus. One was Edna St. Vincent Millay, the first woman to win a Pulitzer Prize in poetry. In her erotic frankness and independent lifestyle, Millay embodied the new freedoms taken up by many women in this period.

What Josephine thought of these freedoms is hard to say. Her appearance in the 1924 yearbook photograph makes it clear she was behind the times, at least in terms of hairstyle. Of the thirty-eight women in the Newman Club, she is the only one who does not have bobbed hair! Hers is still long, gathered up in loose braids at the top of her head. What we do know is that after her return to Livermore, she took on the look of a "new woman." By 1926, she wore her hair short—that is, "bobbed." She dressed in knickers and pants, which the older generation considered unconventional and "unladylike." The youth culture had in some measure become her culture. Greeley was probably decisive in this transformation.

III

Gladly did she learn. Was she also happy to teach? Was her heart in it? The question has to be raised. She herself said she went into teaching because of necessity, which implies it was not her first choice.

I think the best way to approach these questions is to examine the impact Josephine Lamb had on young people. In college, her professors taught her new methods for achieving the objectives of elementary education. This was important. Ultimately, however, it was her personality that made her memorable as a teacher. Three characteristics of Miss Lamb stood out: a commanding presence, a strong didactic bent, and a deep regard for children, especially children who were "different."

Her character was endowed with strength, and the particular nature of that strength seems to have been especially suited to helping children learn and cross new thresholds in their growth. Miss Lamb held their attention with a natural authority so strong that they assimilated her expectations.

One niece, Virginia Robin, recounted in a letter an episode that

brings to life the kind of personal force her aunt exercised over the young: "She had a truck with many gears and a winch on the front. It was parked up at the cabin. . . . We were up there together and she told me to go out to move the truck. I told her I didn't know how to shift the gears. She told me that she did not want any excuses. She wanted me to move the truck. And I did. She had such a powerful personality. She made me feel like I could do anything. A great example for a young lady growing up at that time in history." A nephew, Don Lamb, told me about his aunt's strong effect on him: "She was instrumental in my life—she was instrumental. We often have somebody in our lives who seems to have some kind of control over us when we are younger. I had to struggle with her. I had to separate myself from her. I felt I had to act a certain way around her. Once I was digging, when I was younger, and I was Captain Marvel. And she said, 'Who are you?' And I said, 'Captain Marvel.' And she said, 'Well, isn't that amazing!' And I put aside Captain Marvel. That's the influence she had."

Miss Lamb's authority was balanced by an exceptional openness to inquiry. When Babe Boyle was young, she never had Miss Lamb as a teacher, yet she sought out the older woman. "I liked to talk to her. If you asked a question, you got an answer. My mother couldn't understand why I liked to talk to Jo. She never hesitated answering a question." One of her pupils, Ricky Swan, remembered, "You could talk to her about anything. . . . She had knowledge and was always able to share. . . . [S]he gave me an inspired inquisitiveness. She never did anything to quell your inquisitiveness." It was part of her philosophy not to shy away from controversial questions, but to bring them out in the open. She wrote the following into Arlene Hinsey's school album: "A statesman once remarked that the greatest of all rules for human happiness is to talk things over. Half the trouble in life comes from not understanding each other, and the other half from not trying." It was signed, "your loving teacher, Josephine Lamb, 1928."

Corresponding to the practice of open inquiry was the tolerance she showed for different kinds of people and lifestyles. As a woman and a Catholic, she had been the object of prejudice and bigotry. And because she was in some ways deeply unconventional, she respected the right of others to be so as well. Ricky Swan, who continued to see her after grade school, said of her, "She was never judgmental of me. . . . I was a

hippie, I was smoking dope. She never was judgmental." And she was curious about other lifestyles and unfamiliar points of view. She took Ted Wetzler to hear the presentation of a Hindu guru in Fort Collins in the 1930s.

In the classroom, she insisted on good behavior and attentiveness from her charges and was ready to enforce this rule with disciplinary measures, yet she was neither heavy-handed nor vindictive. As a mountain teacher, she had no school principal to back her up when dealing with troublemakers. She did, however, have her methods of maintaining classroom order. She asked older pupils to teach the younger ones, who then got more individual attention. She was also adept at exciting the interest of pupils for the subject at hand, which made them want to cooperate in the learning process.

One of her pupils at the Gleneyre School in the mid-1920s told me that Miss Lamb was patient and exercised great self-control when kids got out of line. This girl was Annice Link, the one who rode a bull to school. She was deaf and could not hear the sounds of a ruckus, but she was alert to visual detail when Miss Lamb taught: "I watched her. She held her pencil like this. When her hand got tight on the pen, some fighting was going on in the class." Annice told me about a child that came from a family living in a part of the mountains called Poverty Flats. He "was one of the most mischievous kids you ever heard of." He was always fighting. Miss Lamb had to discipline him, but Annice said that if Miss Lamb had a bad opinion of the boy, she never showed it. She treated him like the others.

Bonnie Cope was Miss Lamb's pupil at the Livermore School in the 1940s. One day the girl sat next to a boy carving his initials in the desk. He asked her to black them in, which she did. Miss Lamb caught them at it and made them sit under her desk. The desk was closed in at the front, so being under it was like being in a tiny dungeon. The two were crowded by the teacher's feet and legs, and it got stuffy under there—many pupils reported that Miss Lamb had body odor. The desk-dungeon punishment was one of her favorites. While they sat under the desk, the boy tied Miss Lamb's shoelaces together. When she stood up, she nearly fell over, so the boy was punished again. He was often unruly, and she gave him raps on the knuckles with a ruler or swats on the bottom with the paddle. When I called him up half a century later and asked him

how he felt about Miss Lamb, Lee Nauta said, "She was tough. She didn't pull her punches. I don't have a bad thing to say about her. I loved her to death." Overall, she had a reputation for fairness.

She was sensitive to her pupils' individual needs. Small class sizes in mountain schools allowed for this attention. Eva Degney Bradshaw, who was at Gleneyre in the 1920s, told me that the main thing about Jo Lamb was that she deeply cared about each of her pupils. To those who had problems or disabilities, she gave special attention. One was the deaf girl, Annice, who had lost her hearing when she fell from a horse. Miss Lamb worked intensively with Annice and succeeded in teaching her to read. "She cared about Annice," Eva Bradshaw said, "otherwise, she would have put her back in the corner."

The personal interest Josephine showed pupils is embodied in the little gifts she presented to them—gifts they kept and treasured and decades later brought out to show me. At one school, she gave every child an ornamental box on which she hand painted their initials. In another instance, she took a picture of a pupil standing in front of the schoolhouse and gave it to her. Eva Bradshaw received a snapshot of her class in front of the Gleneyre School (reproduced earlier in this chapter) and a small photo album with black covers. Buck received two pictures of his teacher for his school album.

She had the knack of making every pupil think he or she was her favorite. Arlene Hinsey Davis was one of several I spoke to who believed she was "teacher's pet." "There wasn't anyone else but me." Annice felt the same. Pupils enjoyed Miss Lamb's attentiveness. Buck Elliott, sometimes her only pupil, had her undivided attention. Yet this style of instruction, typical of mountain schools, had a down side, for it made it hard for some pupils, when they left the mountains, to adapt to the impersonal learning environment of large high school classes. This happened to Buck Elliott.

Miss Lamb was skillful at applying the principles of "active learning," which were emphasized at Greeley. The hands-on approach came easily to her. For nature study, she had children bring to class "collections of rocks, leaves, insects . . . fossils, etc." If they were studying trees, she invited a forester to class. If it was agriculture, she brought a calf to school in the trunk of her car. She was an enthusiastic director of plays, pageants, and songfests. She had them do crazy projects—to stir things

up, to make them see the world differently. At the Adams School, she taught five boys—no girls—and she had the boys put on a play where all the parts were for girls. Jim Elliott, Buck's son, played a grandmother. He wore a dress, but insisted on keeping his jeans on underneath.

One pupil remembered, "She loved field trips." The mountains were both playground and laboratory. Outdoors, she was another person. She turned into Jo Lamb, a woman with the alertness of a hunter, the knowledge of a naturalist, and the vision of an artist.

Like the pied piper, she led her raggle-taggle troop out of the schoolhouse into a magical world. They ice skated on the nearby creek. They climbed the cliff behind the school and collected "buckets full of flints." They piled into the trunk of her old Dodge coupe and took off. To the Roberts ranch, where prehistoric Indians had driven bison over a cliff. To her own ranch for a ten-mile nature hike. To a sandstone quarry. To a ridge lined with tepee rings—and all the kids stood in a circle on the stones. To the mysterious grove of pygmy pines above Owl Canyon. To the river tunnel at the mouth of Phantom Canyon, where they would walk through the tunnel. To a tie hackers' camp in the national forest, where each of them took a swing of the hacker's pick. Jim Elliott told me, "I learned more from Jo Lamb out of school than in school."

She did not neglect, however, the standard curriculum. One of Buck's early report cards, for example, shows the typical subjects: reading, writing, spelling, language, arithmetic, geography, and health. A former pupil remarked: "My cursive writing is good. She was deadly on penmanship. I can remember doing papers two or three times. We did that for hours."

Miss Lamb put her heart into subjects linked to her out-of-school hobbies and interests, including history, art, and nature study. Colorado's past was a major focus, in part because her father had been an historical figure. She herself wrote and published a workbook called *Colorado History and Geography* (1941) for eighth graders—in collaboration with Josephine McDowell, a teacher and mountaineer who had climbed all fifty of Colorado's fourteen-thousand-foot peaks. The text devoted one or two pages to each period of Colorado history. The exercises, many using blank maps, emphasized learning names: counties, towns, explorers, natural features, and so forth. Coloradoans today would be hard put to pass a test based on these materials.

Of special fascination to the authors and their pupils was the Native American past. The textbook discusses, for example, the background of the Sand Creek massacre of Indians by white troops commanded by militia colonel John Chivington. The approach is direct and nonjudgmental. Lamb and McDowell do not condemn the attackers, but they do write: "Men, women, and children were killed. Many were scalped and mutilated. No prisoners were taken. It is estimated that 600 Indians were killed."

Miss Lamb liked to sketch and paint outdoors, so she encouraged children to observe and study the actual forms of mountains and creeks and wildflowers. When they came back from excursions, she had them draw specimens of the plants they studied in the field. She used art to instill in pupils a fascination with history. They copied Indian designs and motifs, drew scenes of Native American life, and tried their hand at traditional weaving, beadwork, and pottery.

The south side of the Livermore School was nearly all glass. Large windows were sectioned into numerous panes. One former pupil remembered, "She'd ask students to pick a 'picture pane' and paint what you see. I painted the barn and the old bridge." Another pupil said, "She was a very good artist. We got up on cliffs west of school, and we had to draw the meadow along Rabbit Creek." Miss Lamb came over to help him. "She'd draw a few strokes of chalk and a picture would emerge. 'Here, you do this, this, and this,' she would say, and my drawing became a picture. It gave me insight into how to draw."

Former pupils reminisced about their teacher's personal eccentricities and the way she touched their lives. Two with whom I had longer conversations were Annice Link, the deaf girl Lamb taught in the 1920s, and Ricky Swan, her pupil in the 1950s. To gauge the depth of Lamb's commitment as teacher, it is helpful to hear their words, based on experiences of her that were widely separated in time.

In order to give the reader a glimpse of our interview practices, I report not only the substance of my conversation with Annice Link Roberts, but also the circumstances. She was eighty-seven and living in Loveland, Colorado, when we interviewed her in the year 2000. Finding her was a piece of good luck. When Deborah and I interviewed people,

we asked them if they could recommend others who knew our subjects. A chain of such recommendations led to Annice.

Before the interview, I made a list of questions, as I usually do, but this time, because of Annice's disability, I typed out the questions, using a large font, and sent them to her a week in advance of the appointment. I also did some preliminary research on her father, Wallis Link, a pioneer born in 1860 who was an early settler in the Laramie River valley. His ranch was not far from the Elliotts' summer range. Link Lakes and the Link Trail in the Medicine Bow Mountains were named after him. I found it hard to believe I would be talking to a woman living in the twenty-first century whose father had been born in the middle of the nineteenth.

On a sunny day, we drove down to Loveland, a Front Range city fourteen miles south of Fort Collins, and found the small ranch-style house. Annice and her husband, Ray, welcomed us. She looked younger than eighty-seven. She was alert and feisty. The living room resembled a doll museum. Dolls sat or lay on every shelf and table, in every nook, and even on the back of the sofa. Two thousand of them, she told me. A certificate of proficiency she earned from the Doll Hospital School in Los Angeles hung on the wall.

I kneel down in front of her chair so that she can see my face. She begins talking about her father, about how he met with Ute Indian leaders from the Western Slope of the Rockies and how the construction of the Laramie-Poudre Water Tunnel had been his idea.

I ask a question, hoping Annice can read my lips. She finds it difficult because of "the wool over my mouth"—a reference to my beard. "I shaved off my Dad's mustache when I was ten years old"—so she could read his lips, she explains. Her voice has the nasal-guttural overtones of someone who has been deaf many years. Soon, however, I am able to understand most of what she says. Sometimes Ray or Deborah interprets for me.

We rarely use a tape recorder. I myself am uneasy being taped, and I know many people who feel the same. We always let the people interviewed know that we would be incorporating their words in a book. The questions we asked were often delicate ones. Microphones do not encourage candid answers. One rancher spoke to me about his oral history interview for the Fort Collins Public Library: "that interview

is not good—I didn't like the tape recorder" (BH). Our usual method is to take notes and then compare them. I often call people back for clarification.

Annice stands up and leads us to a small sitting room where she has a magnifying viewer. She projects my written questions on the screen and responds to them. We show her an album of historic photos linked to the project, and Annice identifies people and places. We have found that photographs stimulate our interviewees' memories. Eva Bradshaw, who was in the same class as Annice, gave us an old photo to bring along; she wanted Annice to identify the people. We are often couriers and emissaries between friends and family members. We are bearers of photos, genealogical information, messages, and so forth.

Throughout the interview, Annice recounts episodes in her own life that are not relevant to our project, but people want to tell their own stories, and the interview becomes an occasion for life review. Interviewees often tell us they are grateful for the chance to reminisce. Hearing their stories, we come to know better who they are and how they frame the past.

Annice tells the story of how she lost her hearing. She was seven. Her mom and dad had come back from town. It was growing dark, and her dad told her to get on the horse and bring in the milk cows. When the horse stumbled in a badger hole, Annice flew over the top and landed on her head. She was unconscious for a day or so and afterward suffered earaches and then gradually lost her hearing. In spite of the disability, her life had been full. She studied at beauty school. She worked in a factory operating industrial sewing machines. She married several times. She became an expert on dolls.

Now and again I steer the conversation back to Josephine. Throughout the interview, she calls Josephine "Miss Lamb," as if she, Annice, were still in fourth grade. Her recollections of those days at Gleneyre School seventy-four years earlier are fresh and clear—as if she had been there the week before.

"How did you communicate with Miss Lamb in class?" we asked. "She was just a wonderful person. She could understand me so well. She would make her lips form the words, and she taught me lip reading. At school, when she wanted to get my attention, she touched me. Other kids were mad. They thought I was teacher's pet." How did Miss Lamb know

how to work with a deaf person? "One of her friends, Mr. Elliott, was hard of hearing, and so she knew how to talk to me. I knew he was hard of hearing. I was the favorite of Mr. Elliott. Because I was the favorite of Miss Lamb."

A short time after our interview, Annice Link Roberts passed away.

Twenty-five years after Annice was her pupil, Josephine became Ricky Swan's teacher. He was one of the five boys who dressed up like a girl for the play with all female characters. Josephine was in her midfifties when she began teaching Ricky in the 1950s. She taught him through all eight years of grade school, except for third grade, the year during which John Elliott was gravely ill and she took a leave of absence. For three years, Ricky was her only pupil, just as Buck had been. "It was just Jo Lamb and me," he recalled. Even as the single pupil, he had to salute the flag and recite the Pledge of Allegiance at Miss Lamb's insistence.

Ricky was an only child—the adopted child of two ranchers in their midforties who had never had children. As Ricky grew up, he felt estranged from the values and routines of ranch life. From an early age, he showed an artistic bent, encouraged by his musical mother. Josephine saw that Ricky needed a mentor.

He brought out a maternal strain in her she rarely showed. She was not emotionally demonstrative, and she disliked crying or whining children. Whatever maternal longings she had were sublimated in teaching. But with Ricky it was different. I think she sensed his vulnerability, and it moved her. Josephine could do anything a man could do on a ranch, yet she felt empathy for Ricky, who resisted the ranching ethos. She appreciated his artistic temperament. This was during a phase of her life when she herself turned to painting, drawing, and poetry as a release for her own emotions.

Josephine strove to give Ricky an audience among the community of women who, much more than their husbands, were receptive to his artistic precocity. At Livermore Woman's Club meetings, he sang, he performed on the piano, and one year he did a skit on Hansel and Gretel in which he played every one of the parts.

Theirs was an exceptional relationship. Looking back on those days, Richard Swan expressed it this way: "Josephine is . . . probably the only

person in my childhood that I feel really accepted me, for what I was . . . well, I was kind of a sissy, I wasn't a rough and ready kid. . . . Miss Lamb was an extremely important person in my life. My God, she was my mother for seven years of my life. I loved her, I loved her dearly." How did Josephine feel about him? "She loved me, I always felt very loved by her. I used to sit on her lap, and she would hug me. I think I may have been one of the very few with whom she was that way." In another recollection, Richard said that when they were in her car going on a field trip, "I'd pull her hair or tickle her neck—she took it very well. I'd pull her braid and try to undo it. We used to get her to take her hair down. It went way down to her backside."

What was she like as a teacher? "She had a brilliant mind." Her physical appearance, though, did not reflect this: "Miss Lamb was a cowboy. There was such a dichotomy between her presence and what she showed with her mind. I don't think she ever bathed." I asked Richard what the most crucial thing she instilled in him was. "That a good education was important . . . she gave me a very good education, particularly in reading. . . . My parents wanted me to have a college education. But Josephine prepared me for that. She expected that." In the 1960s, Richard Swan left Livermore, Colorado, and went to study at Berkeley, where he received his bachelor's degree.

Miss Lamb had a strong reputation for excellence. She altered the shape of many of her pupils' lives. According to Eva Degney Bradshaw, "She was as fine a teacher as I ever had. . . . [H]ere I was this little country kid, and I graduated from Colorado State University. She was one of the inspirations of my life."

In her fifth decade of teaching, however, Lamb slowed down considerably. There were complaints from parents. Don Lamb, one of her nephews, told me, "She had to struggle, towards her last years of teaching. She had taught country-style. And in Livermore, more modern teaching was wanted. And some parents didn't want her teaching."

Livermore paid Miss Lamb a great deal of attention—not all of it welcome. A mountain teacher's authority had its downside. People scrutinized her morals and manners. Women expected her to be the herald of the latest fashions. Everything she did or did not do was subject to

speculation, especially when it came to her relations with eligible men. If she was single—and mountain teachers mostly were—people expected she would soon marry.

Miss Lamb, however, did not marry. When she arrived in Livermore, she was nubile and attractive, yet she did not marry. People wondered about this omission. Miss Lamb and Mr. Elliott's closeness did not go unnoticed. Eva Bradshaw told me, "It was the talk of the country, he and Jo Lamb." People asked questions. When one boy and his dad were working at the Elliott summer ranch, the boy couldn't figure out why he and his dad slept out in the hay, while Mr. Elliott and Miss Lamb had the cabin to themselves (DwL). Another pupil asked her mother, "How come there's *two* women in that house?"

In spite of rumors, no formal action was taken against Miss Lamb as a teacher. She lived on and off with the Elliotts, yet there was no proof of an extramarital bond between her and John. The two were, after all, ranching partners, and the community valued Miss Lamb as a devoted teacher. It was difficult to keep good teachers in the mountains. Socially, however, the Elliotts and Josephine got the cold shoulder. Livermore was not like the Laramie River country, where Jo and John's close partnership was accepted.

When Josephine came to Livermore in 1919 to teach Buck, she was a young teacher with little money and uncertain prospects. By the mid-1920s, however, she had acquired a square mile of rangeland and a herd of cattle. She accomplished this at a time when a man of moderate means, not to speak of a woman schoolteacher, was unable to purchase a sizeable ranch. People with average incomes who wanted land had to inherit it or marry into it. Josephine Lamb did neither. She was a single woman with little money, yet she became a woman rancher, and she managed to do so without marrying, without becoming a "helpmeet."

She did it by hooking her star to the Elliotts. John became her mentor and ranching partner. A striking photograph of the two taken in 1919—the first year she taught Buck—shows their closeness. They are sitting side by side in a relaxed position. Josephine had told Mr. Elliott she would stay, and stay she did. Her connection with the Elliotts proved to be lasting, though not always easy.

John Elliott and Josephine Lamb, June 17, 1919. Photograph by Orville "Buck" Elliott. Courtesy of Phil Elliott.

Josephine Lamb was both teacher and rancher, a split that ran through most of her life. Later in the narrative, I recount her life as a rancher—as a woman in an occupation traditionally reserved to men. Here, I sketch out how she managed to combine two distinct callings.

Each one demanded different skills, attitudes, and personas. Ranch work brought out a side of her character that teaching did not. As a woman on male terrain, she felt she needed to exhibit toughness and indomitability. "Miss Lamb, teacher" became "Jo Lamb, cowboy." Ricky Swan knew her in both roles. When he was nine, he and another child went on a cattle drive. It was night, and they were trying to retrieve cows that had wandered into the timber at Deadman Gulch. The two kids drifted away from the others. Before they knew it, they were lost. Ricky Swan remembered, "Jo Lamb finally found us. I was expecting a mother

kind of reaction, but she, she said, 'Go over there and get those cattle'—I was ready to cry—she was fierce, not at all the warm cuddly teacher."

Her ranching and teaching personas were different, yet the two callings overlapped. She taught classes on "practical agriculture," and she founded a forestry club for her pupils in the Laramie River country. The knowledge of the earth she gained as a cowgirl enriched her classes. It was an advantage that she did the same kind of work as her pupils' parents. Her familiarity with the land and cattle raising lent to her instruction a liveliness and penetration other mountain teachers could not summon.

She did not neglect economic values in her instruction. She presented the mountains as resources to be used and managed. At the same time, however, she strove to instill in her pupils a land ethic, the idea that mountains were more than a means of fattening cattle. She believed the foothills terrain needed to be understood through a wide range of perspectives—geographical, ecological, historical, and aesthetic. She taught the ranch children to consider the intricate webs of life that the land supported and how to protect them. She helped her pupils to see the land in time by introducing them to its changing geology and ecology. Finally, she opened their eyes to the beauty of the landscapes and natural life forms surrounding them.

A black-and-white photograph from 1926, taken in the Laramie River valley, illustrates the intertwining of her passions for teaching and ranching. Miss Lamb and several children are sitting in a mountain pasture among the garlands of repose. One of the girls holds the stem of a plant and intently examines its large flowers.

Addendum: A Letter to Josephine Lamb from Orville "Buck" Elliott

Livermore Colo.

August 16, 1920

Dear Jo—

How are you Jo?

I reseived your letter and was glad to gett it.

Miss Lamb with Forestry Club members in a pasture on the Laramie, circa 1926. Photograph probably by the USFS. Courtesy of Phil Elliott.

Yes I helped in the hay. I forget when we finished. Eugene cam home on Sunday after noon about four o-clock.

No the cat hasn't come back yet.

Yes I liked it on the river. One day we went on top the hill fishing we saw seven or eight big dear and daddy found a little fawn. For dinner we were on the Makentire River. We fished about three hours fur of us fishing caught one hundred ninty-six all together. I caught thirty one, Daddy fifty-four. Eugene fifty-six, Harry fiffty-seven, Margret two and Dell one. We had fish then for a while.

Coming home from the river we stayed haf a day and night at Harrys camp the first day at noon.

That after noon Eugene and I went fishing that after noon we caught fifty-four.

We got two little red jigs.

The plants your mother gave me are growing fine

the holly hock are blooming and they sure are pretty

Mama has torn all the paper out of the little bed room and she is white washing it.

Frenchy has some spuds big as a tea cup.

Mama is baking bread to day.

Frenchy is gitting sick and tired of staying on his home stead he is getting home sick.

Margret called up and tawked to mother

Last satterday Mother went over to Mrs. Balairs to see Etta Parker.

Then Frenchy and I went fishing and caught three we had two for dinner and I brot one home for mother.

Secent cut will be reddy in about a week. Frenchy, Daddy and I put up the native hay.

Monday night Frenchy saw a big black bear shot at him once but mist he was up the creek.

We have a frish milk cow the little black heifer that Daddy brought up from Laport.

Daddy is not feelling good today.

Daddy is painding the barn roof red.

I reseived you last letter yester.

Thank you for the picture you sent me it is good picture of you.

Daddy and I are putting battens on the barn roof.

Your Lovingly,
Orville
Here is something for you

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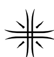
◆ SIX ◆

"Aspens and Backswarth"



It is a fall day of unusual clarity. I am headed up to the Laramie River valley. The road out of Fort Collins, where I live, passes the cemetery. I slow down. I want to look at the elms, a majestic variety now rare in the United States, and I want to see the final destination of so many people who pursued the American dream into the West. I inevitably think of John and Ida and Josephine. Their remains are buried here. I imagine the coffins, clasped in that clay earth. Involuntarily, I contemplate the state of their bodies, stationary, supine, shrunken in time—the mortal remnants of three people who once laid claim to a large share of the earth, who once galloped freely over mountain ranges.

The Laramie River, my destination, is where the Elliotts and Jo Lamb summered their cattle. Their ranch headquarters was in Livermore on Rabbit Creek—there, the cattle spent the winter and spring months—but the summer range was located in this high valley and on the lofty slopes of the Rawah Mountains that form the valley's western flank.

The group portrait of Miss Lamb and her pupils, sitting among flowers, was taken in one of the meadows of this valley (photograph on page 136). That summer, 1926, she was teaching at the Gleneyre School. The meadow flowers are blue columbine. Miss Lamb is teaching her charges about the plant. She may be explaining how the long spurs of the blossom hold hoards of nectar that can be reached only by the tongue of a hawkmoth or the long thin bill of a hummingbird.

The picture's monochromatic gradations do not convey the brilliant blues of the showy blooms. Blue columbine is a summer flower with a liking for the moist savannahs and aspen stands of the high country. The meadow in the photo is eight thousand feet above sea level. Between the Laramie valley and the Rabbit Creek ranch lay one mountain range, many hills, and several deep wooded valleys. Forty miles of rough unpaved roads led from the ranch through the mountains to the summer pastures. The meadow in the photograph is close to McIntyre Creek, a major affluent of the Laramie and the stream where Buck, his dad, and four others one day in 1920 caught 196 fish.

It was on the McIntyre that Elliott set up his summer cow camp. Josephine shared it with him. The little cabin stood close to the creek, five miles upstream from where it joins the Laramie. John and Josephine trailed their cattle into the high country in June and kept them there until midautumn—that is, until "the snow began to fly."

I pull into the parking lot for the McIntyre trailhead. Horse rigs and hunters' trucks take up most of the space. It is elk season for archers and muzzle loaders. I too would like to see an elk, but hope not to be taken for one. Throwing on my backpack and swinging my walking stick, I take off up the trail. It follows upper McIntyre Creek and ascends into the Rawah National Wilderness. There the stream has its source in an alpine lake that lies just below the Medicine Bow Ridge.

The air is crisp this September morning in 2005. Nearly eighty years have passed since Josephine allowed her picture to be taken in the meadow downstream. Lost in my thoughts, I am caught unawares when two hunters carrying bows suddenly appear out of the pine trees. They are twenty feet ahead of me. Their camouflaged attire makes them nearly invisible. They greet me in friendly fashion. It turns out they're from Texas. I ask about elk. They spotted fresh sign and the flattened grass where elk had bedded down, but they had seen no elk. The elk know it is hunting season and are hiding out in the high wooded ravines below the Rawah peaks. Hunters view the land in terms of game, just as the elk, this time of year, view the land in terms of hunters.

Before the trail joins the creek, an opening in the dense pines of the mountainside offers an unusual glimpse of the lower McIntyre valley

and its long meadows. The stream, after racing a rocky course down the mountain, slows as it enters the valley's level terrain and begins to undulate like a snake. In the far distance, I can make out a few black squares dotting the tawny expanses of meadowland: a small cabin and outbuildings. It is John Elliott's old cow camp.

I walk on through the pines and reach the rapid, foaming creek, the McIntyre. Going upstream, I follow it into the Rawah Wilderness. Wet-loving ferns and horsetails crowd the edge of the trail. At this time of year, the only flowers are late asters and pearly everlastings. Blue columbine season is long past. The air smells faintly of spices. I pass through an aspen grove and then another. The leaves of the sucker shoots poking out of the ground are bright yellow and quiver in the breeze, but on the trees themselves the foliage has not yet turned. The pattern of tall white trunks, the flutter of pale green leaves, and the stillness of the blue dome above make me feel that all is well with the world.

I imagine John Elliott on one of his rides. He is looking for strays. Stopping, he takes a break in this grove, lights a cigarette, still sitting on his horse. He scans the ground beneath the open canopy, which lets in abundant light, and notes that the floor of the grove is grassy, lush as a meadow. The aspen stand, he reflects, is a good place to fatten livestock.

Hunters and hikers now regard this terrain as nature at its wildest. And why shouldn't they? The area is officially designated a wilderness. In 1964, by act of Congress, the Rawahs, a mountainous region of seventy-four thousand acres, became one of the first national wilderness areas. Roads and vehicles are forbidden. The intention of the act is to keep "the imprint of man's work substantially unnoticeable." To that end, members of the Poudre Wilderness Volunteers, some of them friends of mine, patrol this region. They give helpful advice to hikers and horse riders about how to preserve the fragile environment.

Not only are the Rawah Mountains extensive; they are also unreachable by land except on foot or with horses. The terrain rises steadily up to twelve- and thirteen-thousand-foot peaks that jut out of the alpine tundra. Immediately to the south of the wilderness boundary is the Continental Divide.

The hunters I meet on the rocky trail have no idea they are walking on what was once a state road. Trail users are in general unaware of the history of this "wilderness." After all, a wilderness is not supposed

to have a history. They do not know that heavy wagons full of flour and molasses once passed this way or that Model T Fords chugged up here to Ute Pass on the Medicine Bow Ridge and onward to Steamboat Springs. It was on this very track that John Elliott ran his freight business. Today, all that is unimaginable: the path seems far too narrow to have been a road. I ask myself how Elliott got a wagon over these large stones. Traces of the old road are few. Because this area is officially wilderness, the historical plaques have been taken down. There are no markers to identify the silted-up ditches, fallen cabins, ruined cow camps, and crumbling bread ovens hidden in the landscape. The "imprint" of the past has become almost "unnoticeable."

Looking closely, though, I spot an embankment of the old road buttressed by a dry-stone wall. Later, in a clearing to my left, I notice three rotting logs on top of each other, the remains of a cabin where Model T tourists stopped to rest. Vegetation, erosion, and rock slides have obliterated evidence that this landscape was extensively altered by human beings. Today it is wilderness, but not so long ago it was the summer cattle range of John Elliott and other stockmen.

This landscape leads me to reflect on the harsh rule of time over place. I think of the wolves and grizzlies that once lived here but are now gone. One of the last and most wily of the wolves had a personality of its own. The locals called him Old Two Toes and considered him a wanton killer of livestock. In 1916, he was finally caught by Albert McIntyre, the son of Rattlesnake Jack, the man who trapped the last wolves in Livermore. I think of the herds of bison that grazed the mountain meadows above me and of the Utes who once hunted them. I think of the loggers who stripped these slopes of trees to supply ties for the Union Pacific Railroad. I think of the big Wyoming ranch outfits during the period when the Rawahs were open range. In the 1870s, these outfits sent forty thousand head of Longhorn cattle into this wilderness. Then around the turn of the twentieth century came the settlers who built ranches in the valley. Of all these old families, only one or two remain.

In the span of a century and a half, this land underwent profound changes. Now it is wilderness again, as it was for the Utes. In fact, *rawah* is the Ute word for "wilderness," so when we speak of the Rawah Wilderness, we are being redundant. For the Native Americans,

the Rawahs were a hunter's paradise—as they are for today's suburban archer. And yet, in spite of the fact that Utes hunted elk here with bow and arrow, it is not the same wilderness. Between the wilderness of the Utes and the wilderness of the twenty-first century, there intervened a hundred years of intensive land use and economic exploitation carried out by Euro-American settlers, loggers, and entrepreneurs. Among them were the Elliott family and Miss Josephine Lamb.

The trail I am climbing along the McIntyre leads into the Rawahs, the southern portion of the Medicine Bow range, which extends north into Wyoming. Native Americans valued the mountain ash growing along the streams for bow making. For them, "medicine" meant powerful or good—hence, the name of the range, the Medicine Bows. The trail I am taking goes up over the Medicine Bow Ridge at Ute Pass.

Place-names are a window into bygone times. I began my hike below the Rawahs in the broad Laramie River valley. Jacques LaRamie was a French Canadian trapper who came here in 1820, before the advent of white settlement. At that time, it was the hunting grounds of the Ute, Arapaho, and Shoshone. These tribes were hostile to one other and to outsiders as well. The story goes that LaRamie, against the advice of friends, went up to the valley to take beaver. Not long after, he disappeared, probably the victim of an Indian raid. The names of the valley, of a major Wyoming town, and of the geologic process that formed the Rocky Mountains (the Laramide Orogeny)—all derive from this obscure trapper. Chambers Lake, just above the head of the Laramie valley, is named after Robert Chambers, another trapper. Native Americans killed him as a trespasser around 1858. Several decades later, John and Dan Elliott freighted hay up to this lake after a major break in the dam. By then, no Indians were in the area. They had been confined to reservations.

When, during the second decade of the new century, John Elliott established his main summer cow camp in the valley, he sometimes met small bands of Utes. They had wandered off the reservation in Utah to visit their old hunting territory, from which they had been expelled. A photograph, now lost, showed tall John Elliott standing among a group of short, dark-skinned Utes. The picture was taken on the Laramie near Four Corners, not far from the flowery meadow where Josephine took her pupils. Elliott allowed the Utes to camp on his land on North Middle Mountain. Other ranchers were not so tolerant, so Elliott's hospitality is

noteworthy. It is ironic, though, that the Utes had to ask permission to camp on land that by rights they should still have had legal access to.

Climbing farther up the McIntyre, I come to a place where the gurgling stream unexpectedly spreads into a languid pond. Beaver have been at work. I marvel at the long dam they have constructed. Near it, rising from the pond, stands their lodge, a five-foot dome of sticks, branches, and mud. No professional engineer could have picked a better spot. An aspen grove descending to the stream has supplied the beaver with the logs and branches needed for their dam. Near the trail is a downed aspen log, ten inches thick. Long incisor marks show where a beaver made its conical cut. Along the trunk, the large rodent has gnawed the bark and eaten the sweet cambium layer beneath. Without these trees, the beaver would have no pond, no house, and no food. Aspen is his dinner and aspen his dessert.

Jo Lamb hired trappers to clear beaver out of that section along the Laramie where in later years she had her own summer cow camp, called the Water Hole. Beaver dams caused the spring runoff to back up and flood the camp. As of this writing, the abandoned cabins of Josephine's old place are still standing in the lush meadow on the east bank of the Laramie—but they won't be for long. One small cabin has lurched to the side. It looks as if it were kneeling. Roofs are falling in. On an autumn day, several years ago, I walked over to the old lodge. I wanted to see if there were beaver on the river. No beaver were visible, though I did find their little minarets: the stumps of trees they had cut down. Afterward, I went over to the lodge to inspect the magnificent riverstone fireplace where Jo and John warmed themselves in front of the embers on cold nights. A fat marmot was sunning itself on the roof. Locals call these western cousins of the ground hog "whistle pigs." As soon as the marmot saw me, it leaped onto some metal sheeting, slid to the ground, and scampered into a hole beneath the lodge.

Early pioneers noticed that marmots, bison, and elk grew wonderfully plump on the green meadow grasses of the high country, and they realized they could fatten their livestock the same way. Stockmen began trailing cattle and sheep up to the Laramie for three or four of the warm months of the year. This practice followed a prehistoric pattern of

land use that was global in extent and that probably began with the first domestication of wild animals in the ancient Near East. In Colorado, the seasonal transfer of livestock to high terrain in the hot dry months of the year mimicked the natural migrations of wild grazing animals. Every spring elk climb to the alpine meadows and at the onset of winter descend again to the warmer valleys of the foothills, such as that of Rabbit Creek, which are relatively free of snow.

Getting cattle to and from the summer range was a major undertaking. Every June, Jo Lamb and John Elliott herded their cattle the forty long miles from Livermore up to the Laramie. Through the warmer months, they or a "rider" they hired kept tabs on the cattle, until the drive back down to Livermore, which usually took place in late October. The cattle drive up to the valley lasted four to five days, depending on weather, and the fall roundup usually took a couple of weeks because John and Jo had to track down their cattle. Some would stray and hide out in the thick woods, bog lands, lost meadows, and deep ravines scattered through this vast mountain region. One Livermore rancher had such an awful time finding his cows among the trees that he vowed never to come to the valley again. Besides Elliott and Lamb, only one other Livermore rancher trailed cattle to the Laramie.

The effort, however, had its rewards. Livermore was semiarid, the summer forage dry. Twenty to forty acres were needed to sustain a single cow, and with that ratio a rancher needed more land than he could afford in order to maintain a sizeable herd. By the 1890s, unlimited open range in the Livermore area was getting "settled up." To make up for the loss of free grassland, Eastern Slope ranchers came to depend on access to high summer pastures in what had become national-forest reserves. By the second decade of the new century, John Elliott, for a small fee, was able to summer his herd on these national-forest lands in the high country. With this arrangement, he could maintain a larger herd than if he kept his cattle year round in the dry foothills. From the cows' viewpoint, the succulent grasses of aspen meadows were more filling and tasty. Cows like nothing better than to cluster around the alpine streams eating the grass and turning the stream habitat into muddy soup. A steer in the high country came out weighing more and bringing higher prices than livestock left in Livermore. As Jim Elliott expressed it, "That country put the bloom on a calf."

Farther up the McIntyre, I have to breathe harder in the thin air. My heart beats fast, and I feel it pounding in my ears. The "quakie patches" (the local term for aspen groves) are fewer, and dark pines now dominate the forest. The latter are lodgepole pines, used by Native Americans to hold up their tents. Here they grow thickly. There is little understory except for huckleberry bushes whose small leaves have turned buttery yellow. I eat a few of the rare red-and-blue berries. Their tangy sweetness on my tongue is the quintessential taste of a montane woods. Lodgepole stands do not offer good grazing. If cows find no other forage there, they will eat the pine needles, which cause them to abort their calves. Pine squirrels, or chickarees, though, thrive on the seeds and twigs. One of these little creatures chatters at me as I walk by. I wave and continue on through the unending ranks of pines whose shade I enjoy. Coming into the open meadow land of Housmer Park, though, I feel a palpable sense of relief.

In Colorado, large natural grasslands are called "parks." I sit down on a log in the park next to Housmer Creek, which is a two-foot-wide tributary of the McIntyre and flows through the park in meandering curves. I scan the meadow for elk. The elevation here is ninety-five hundred feet. The grasses are tall in places and stretches of low willow brush, now going yellow, stick out of the meadow. At this altitude, the air is cool enough that the sun feels good on my back. I admire a solitary blue gentian growing nearby, and I watch three Gray Jays, known as "camp robbers," hop around the meadow stalking insects. After three hours on the trail, I too am hungry, and I eat my sandwich, an apple, and some almonds. I try to imagine what Josephine and John packed in their saddlebags for lunch in this season, probably slabs of apple pie and sandwiches. They knew this park well, for their cattle strayed down here from Elliott's allotment farther up in Shipman Park. I lie down in the meadow, head against my rucksack, and fall asleep.

Shipman Park is my real destination. A high grassland just below timberline, it was here that Elliott and Lamb summered their cattle beginning in the mid-1930s. I had never visited Shipman before, had seen it only from a distance when hiking along the Medicine Bow Ridge. At

that time, it lay five or six miles to the north of me, a long grassland slung between two dark, tree-clad ridges. Only after some minutes did I figure out I was looking at Shipman Park. In the raking light of an autumn afternoon, the distant meadow looked like the fur of a cougar lying in the sun. The peak I was on gave me a bird's-eye view of the Laramie River valley. I was able to trace part of the river's course. It flows south to north, dropping from nine thousand feet near Chambers Lake to seventy-seven hundred feet where it enters Wyoming thirty miles downstream. It eventually flows into the North Platte, a tributary of the Missouri-Mississippi river system.

The Colorado portion of the Laramie runs along a fault zone between the Medicine Bow Mountains, on whose ridge I had been standing, and the Laramie Mountains to the east. The broad valley has the classic U shape of a landscape spooned out by glacier in the ice ages, about 130,000 years ago. From my vantage point, I was able to see, below Shipman Park, the valley of the lower McIntyre, but the Elliott Cow Camp was not visible. Just to the east, though, I saw a grassy eminence lying between the McIntyre and the Laramie. It is called North Middle Mountain. Elliott owned most of this hill and used it for spring and late fall pasturage. Looking farther north into Wyoming, I saw the white quartzite peaks of the Snowy Range. They appeared and disappeared in the milky sky. To the south and west were views of two other mountain chains: the Mummies and the (aptly named) Never Summer Range.

From the road, the valley does not offer tremendous vistas. Because of this lack and the long drive needed to reach the upper Laramie, it, unlike Estes Park, does not attract armies of tourists, which makes it especially appealing. It has also been spared houses built on ridgetops and ranchette developments. The main road along the river is not paved and during winter is closed to traffic because of deep snow. In 1911, the historian Ansel Watrous described this region as "one of the most attractive . . . in the state. . . . It is the fishermen's and hunters' paradise." So it was in Jo Lamb's time, and so it remains as I write.

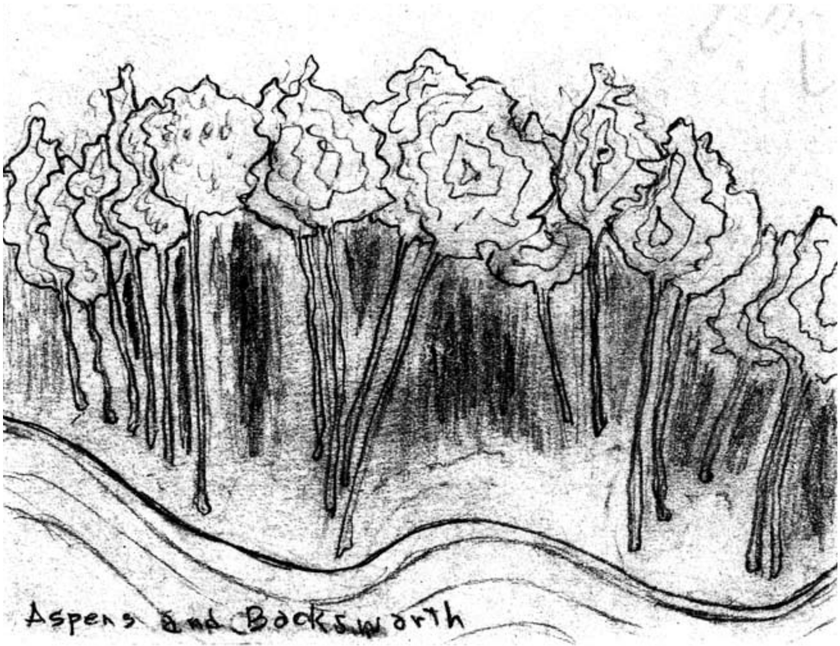
A handful of connoisseurs from the cities of the Front Range do drive up here to view the turning of the aspen. These trees are the only large "hardwoods" that grow in the montane zone, though their wood is actually quite soft. The evergreens far outnumber deciduous trees, yet this is aspen country at its best. In fall, the yellow and gold and

even vermilion tones of the "quakies" continually change in the shifting light, eclipsing the dark masses of pines and firs. As I drove up from Fort Collins, I observed a luminous stand of quakies hugging a high gray granite slope. When a cloud shadow briefly passed over, the grove shuddered and shimmered, like a tropical bird shaking water out of its plumes.

Josephine Lamb first came up to the Laramie in the 1920s, with John Elliott. It was a revelation for her. She fell in love with the shapes of the mountains and their ridgelines. She reveled in the abundance and variety of wildflowers. The trees, especially the large aspen groves, were nothing like what she had seen before. The lodgepole forests, clear-cut in the previous century, were second growth, but many of the aspen grew in virgin stands. It was this fascination with the high country woods that inspired her to found the Forestry Club when she taught in the valley in the mid-1920s.

She liked sketching landscapes with trees. One of her most bewitching drawings is *Aspens and Backswarth*. A backswarth is the track over which a horse or tractor has passed in cutting the first swath in a hay meadow. In Josephine's sketch, it is the sinuous line in the foreground. The drawing probably depicts the meadow behind the Elliott Cow Camp on the McIntyre. John and Josephine in fact mowed this meadow, which backed up to a stand of aspens, and put up the hay. One of Josephine's nephews, John Glass, described how they went about it. "Aunt Jo was one, when I came along, who drove teams of horses. Did all the sweeping in the hay field. I used to do all the raking with the horses. When dinner time came, I would water the horses, and Aunt Jo would start to get the meal. John Elliott did the stacking of the hay." I imagine Josephine taking a break after she notices the juxtaposition of the backswarth and the motion of aspens. She finds a scrap of paper and sits down on a log to sketch the scene.

How does one convey the motion and vibrant color of aspen in the frozen medium of a pencil sketch? To animate the scene, Josephine used expressionistic distortion. The trees lean dangerously to one side. The undulant line of the backswarth echoes the wavy dome of the trees' top edges. All this creates a feeling of agitation. The madly wavy concentric



Aspens and Backswarth, pencil drawing by Josephine Lamb, undated. Courtesy of Kay Quan.

lines of the aspen foliage shimmer with energy, and the dark shadows behind the wind-shaken trees suggest mystery.

The backswarth of the absent mower is a human trace that, in all the dizzy motion of the sketch, sets up a strange equilibrium between nature and agriculture. Josephine's powerful engagement with this landscape is palpable, as is her sensitivity to the lay of the land and its emotional reverberations.

Other sketches from the valley show her preference for mountain ridgelines. She liked to sketch when she was watching her herd. She usually drew on small sheets of notebook paper, three by five inches. One of the Laramie valley sketches, titled *Looking South from Reds,* depicts a high ridge, three

clouds all the same shape, and below in the middle ground a row of conifers. Unlike Ida Meyer, Josephine was fond of mountain grandeur.

Devoid of buildings and people, the mountain sketches are spare, and shading is minimal. Horizontal lines dominate. The style suggests that she wanted to capture, through deletion of detail, the essence of "mountain." Uninterested in giddy heights and verticality, she presents mountains in their horizontal reach as panoramic ensembles.

I believe mountain horizons were for her a marker of inaccessibility. They give the impression of inexhaustible, unreachable expanses of land. She loved the mountains because they were the "sticks," a wilderness where only hardy folks could bear to live.

It was as a consequence of John Elliott's need for a summer range that Josephine first came to the far-off Laramie. According to a chronology of Elliott's life and her own that Lamb constructed in her later years, Elliott began trailing cattle to the valley from Rabbit Creek around 1914, five years before he knew Buck's teacher. First, he leased Sam Shipp's meadow on the McIntyre. Then in 1917, or thereabouts, he bought the Shipp place and several native meadows adjacent to it. Sam Shipp had owned the land for a decade when he sold it to Elliott.

Around the time Elliott leased Shipp's ranch, he received a government permit to run cattle in the Rawahs, which had become a national forest. After the Forest Reserve Act of 1891, millions of acres of western forests were put under more stringent government control to save them from destruction because clear-cutting, overgrazing, and the attendant erosion were beginning to impair the forests' capacity to retain water (in the form of snow) and slowly release it through the summer months when it was most needed by farmers in the high plains and piedmont. Environmental degradation had been extensive: professional hunters had hunted native elk herds to extinction, and sawyers had cut whole forests down to produce railroad ties, mining props, lumber, and firewood.

The overgrazing of cattle and sheep added to the erosion problem. I talked to a man who was district forest ranger in the Laramie River region in the mid-1960s. Referring to the Rawahs, he said, "A lot of that country was abused, especially by sheep from North Park. Old sheep trails tend to unravel the countryside. Sheep eat the ice cream plants

[leafy plants], and other undesirable species come in. It might take land like that a century or more to recover" (WR).

The U.S. Forest Service (USFS) efforts to enforce conservation measures fell short: there were not enough rangers to oversee what the ranchers were doing. The retired ranger I talked to said that one year Shipman Park was overgrazed because there were no riders watching the cattle. The animals clustered by the water, ruining the banks and laying waste to the vegetation. Another problem was that ranchers typically tried to put more cows or sheep on the land than the USFS allowed.

John Elliott was no exception in this regard. One of his tricks was to bring up pregnant cows, which would be sent through the counting gate. Each rancher was allowed to graze a set number of cattle on public land. Once on the range, John's cows would drop their calves. That way he got to graze more cattle than his permit allowed. Usually about half of the cattle on the summer range were calves. Elliott tried to get around the rules, though the expense of keeping a cow on the Rawah range was low. In 1922, the cost of grazing one cow in the Rawahs for the whole warm season was $2.27. That sum included the hired range rider, allotment fees, and incidental expenses. It was a bargain, considering that in Colorado in 1922 the average selling price of one head of cattle was $29.40.

In 1919, Elliott added to his Laramie River holdings, buying out a half-dozen homesteads on North Middle Mountain—more of a hill than a mountain—across the road from his cow camp. This land was deeded and thus not controlled by the USFS. Elliott used it for fall pasture after the cattle had come down from the high mountain meadows in the Rawahs.

Stockmen who had home ranches on the Laramie—Louis Sholine was one of them—recalled that young John Elliott took his cattle into the valley earlier than anyone else, at the beginning of May before the snow had melted. They remembered that he slept out under the stars with his cows. These traditions preserve a commonly held belief that John Elliott was the boldest and most rugged among a class of men who prided themselves on these qualities.

When Elliott bought the Shipp meadow on the McIntyre, he acquired not only a pasture, but also a place of shelter for himself. The forty-acre ranch had a small cabin. John and Josephine would come up and stay for a week or two at a time. Buck too came up, but Ida stayed at Rabbit Creek.

The man who had owned the little ranch before Sam Shipp was a sawyer named David Usher. He had settled there with his family in 1907, but they did not stay long and sold out to Shipp in 1908. Their seven-year-old son had drowned in the creek that runs near the cabin, and Rosa Usher, the mother, could not bear to live there any longer.

Buck was about the same age as the Usher boy when the Elliotts bought the Shipp place. The Usher boy's river-stone-marked grave lay within fifty feet of the cabin. For Buck, the grave marker of the drowned boy must have made an impression. The Elliotts doubtless warned Buck about the danger of the rushing waters, especially during spring runoff.

On an earlier expedition to the Laramie River in August, I am in the company of my research assistant Deborah. The sky over the Laramie is deep blue. Three white clouds look like they escaped from one of Josephine's sketches. Brightness flashes in the aspens edging the McIntyre meadows. We pull off the side of the dirt road at the old Elliott Cow Camp. The cabin and corrals are still used. The owner is Phil Elliott, Buck's son, but his main residence is a ranch in Wyoming, not here. These forty acres are the last piece still owned by Elliotts of the large ranch John put together in Livermore and in the Laramie valley. I get out. How good to stretch after the two and a half hour drive from Fort Collins.

We have driven up from Fort Collins specifically to look for the Usher boy's grave. I comb the area between the road and the cabin. There, beside a utility pole, where Phil Elliott said it would be, partly overgrown with grass, lies the obscure memorial, a circle of seven stones.

We walk over to the McIntyre, a short distance. Here are the waters of life, here are the waters of death. Tame enough in this season, the creek is easy to cross. We walk through John Elliott's native meadows. They are boggy near the river. No backswarth is visible, but the yellow aspens are aflutter. Along the edge of the woods at the top of the meadow runs a narrow irrigation ditch, probably dug by John with a shovel. All at once there is an uncanny sound. Walking around some willow brakes to investigate, we surprise three Sandhill Cranes, grazing. They look gigantic in the small meadow. Seeing us, they cry *gru*, *gru*, *gru*, and rising into the air, extending their long necks, they fly south. I regret that we disturbed their lunch.

Back at the Elliott Cow Camp, I examine the small, unoccupied log cabin. This was not the original Usher-Shipp cabin. Elliott burned that one down because it was infested with fleas, and he built a new two-room cabin in 1920. Nine-year-old Buck helped his dad. The second cabin, too, was replaced in the early 1950s, so the cabin I'm looking at is the third one. I peer into the back window, feeling like a Peeping Tom. I see two small bedrooms and below, in the basement, which has a window, a kitchen and a living area. Behind the cabin are a corral and loafing shed. Off to the side abandoned pieces of old farm equipment are going to rust, a 1950s Farmall tractor, a horse-drawn manure spreader, a buck rake, and a horse-drawn mower. Later, I learned from Phil Elliott that the buck rake and mower belonged to his grandfather.

If the Usher child had not drowned, John Elliott might never have acquired this place. The tiny grave makes me ponder the unforeseeable contingencies of life, those twists of fate that displace us, that send us away from our homes to other regions and habitations so that others may occupy what we left behind. Two writers enter a meadow; three cranes take off for Mexico.

As a boy, Buck spent part of every summer at the cow camp. On the McIntyre, he once caught thirty-one fish in a day. He saw deer and bears, and he could shoot his .22 rifle to his heart's content. The ride to the valley was an adventure. When he was nine, he wrote to Josephine: "I went up with the cattle. You know dad's old black shaps. He cut them off to fit me and I wore them to the river. They saved my life, the first day it was awful cold. On the way up we saw two bear, a big brown bear split the cattle. Harry had Carl's sixshooter, he shot at the bear but didn't kill him." Harry was John Elliott's pal, Harry Holden, and Carl Moan worked as Elliott's rider on the summer range in those years. Buck, as an only child, spent a great deal of time with such men, and he felt like a grown-up. He helped them with chores and shared in their pastimes of hunting and fishing. It is probably why, in the letters of his boyhood, he sometimes sounds like a little adult.

By the time Buck was fourteen, John thought his son old enough to take care of the cattle by himself in the high country. Fall, winter, and spring Buck was in high school in Laporte, Colorado, but come summer

John kept him on the McIntyre and in the Rawahs with the herd. That began in 1925. Eva Degney Bradshaw, Josephine's pupil, lived in the valley and knew Buck from an early age. She told me that for company "all he had were his dogs and his horses. He was a sad young man and lonely." Buck would ride his horse down to the Degneys for some home cooking and a little company. I asked Eva why Buck agreed to stay up there all alone. She said that was how it was in those days. You didn't question what you were told. "When you worked for old John, you did what John wanted you to do." John probably thought that as summer rider his son would master the terrain, become self-reliant, and learn to use dogs and horses to control cattle in that vast and rugged country. Indeed, that happened. John himself had done the same at an early age.

As it turned out, Buck spent most of his life on the Laramie, not as a stockman, but as an outfitter and as a proprietor of a dude ranch. His years as summer range rider gave him an unrivaled knowledge of the geography, weather, and wildlife of the Rawahs. In 1941, the year after he married, he acquired the Glendevey Lodge from its owner, Josephine Lamb. This large ramshackle building, located a mile down the road from the Elliott Cow Camp, served as a hunting and fishing resort. Why Buck never became a major landowner and rancher is a topic I take up in a later chapter.

During the Depression, John Elliott expanded his summer operations in the high country. In 1932, he built a new camp in the Rawahs, the Elliott East Bog Camp, elevation ten thousand feet. The camp was in a lush but inaccessible area, just below timberline. Josephine described the purpose and construction of the camp. It was, she wrote, "about nine miles from any road. The logs were cut near the spot. All of the other materials needed for building and fencing, horse pasture, and household use were packed in on packhorses. This cabin with pasture gave a rider a chance to make the ten mile ride from McIntyre Cow Camp, stay overnight and make his branch rides from the East Bog Camp."

These "line shacks" offered a summer "rider" only the most basic shelter. They had a primitive sleeping platform and maybe a small stone hearth. A photograph, probably from the mid-1920s, shows Buck (in a ten-gallon hat), Del and Margaret Lamb (Josephine's sisters), a man named Johnnie McCusker, and Josephine herself resting in front of a typical line shack. It is the Suddeth Cow Camp, situated near the top of the Medicine Bow Ridge in the Rawahs, close to Elliott's summer range.

Suddeth Cow Camp in the Rawahs, probably mid-1920s. *Left to right:* Buck Elliott, Jo's sisters Del and Margaret, Johnnie McCusker, and Jo Lamb. Courtesy of Jim Elliott.

In 1936, Elliott received permission from the USFS to summer his herd in Shipman Park. This was the grassland in the Rawahs I mentioned earlier, the one I had seen only from afar. It was ninety-five hundred feet in elevation and seven torturous miles from the main Elliott Cow Camp on the McIntyre. This high grazing allotment was not easy to use, but that did not stop Elliott. Josephine wrote, "When John Elliott acquired the Shipman Park Range, he wanted a short cut to the range and with the sanction of the forest ranger, he blazed and cut a rugged trail up Pine Creek, across from the McIntyre Cow Camp. . . . The Elliott Cow Trail saved many hours of trailing but it was still a hard trip on horse, man, and dog, so John Elliott carried materials by packhorse into Shipman Park and moved usable materials taken from the old Shipman cabin south of the drift fence to a sheltered spot on Monte Blevin's Creek, north of the drift fence." This spot became the Elliott-Blevin Cow Camp.

Elliott East Bog Camp, Elliott Cow Trail, Elliott-Blevin Cow Camp.

These names have disappeared from maps, from common usage, and mostly from the memory of the living. They have been lost in the wilderness of time.

Through the 1920s and 1930s, Josephine gained an intimate knowledge of the Rawahs. For five summers in the 1930s, she was Elliott's main rider and helped him watch over their combined herd. The distances she had to cover on horse were long. The cattle roamed and strayed over sixty square miles of mountain terrain. Though the Elliott-Lamb grazing allotment was much smaller than this expanse, the cows showed little respect for USFS boundaries, and the "drift fences" to keep them from drifting out of their allotment were not extensive enough or always effective.

I am lying in the grass of Housmer Park where I fell asleep. A noise wakes me. I look up. Fifty feet away a bull moose with large antlers strides out of the trees and calmly crosses the park. He pretends not to notice me. I pretend not to be afraid. He shambles across the meadow and through the willow brakes, disappearing into the woods on the other side. Moose are a species introduced into the Rawahs after it became a wilderness. John and Josephine would have marveled at the sight of this alien creature passing through a native meadow.

I stand up, stretch, and scramble back up onto the McIntyre Trail. Within an hour, I reach Shipman Park, my goal. Only glimpses of it are visible from the trail, which winds through thick stands of conifers above the park. I have to do a little bushwhacking to get down to the grassland. I follow a game trail leading into the light, all the while praying that no lurking hunter mistakes me for an elk.

Stepping out gingerly, I walk into the open parkland. More impressive than beautiful, Shipman has a different character from Housmer Park, lower down. Shipman's unlikely location and elevation, its extraordinary length, and its enclosure by dark conifer-covered slopes create an unsettling atmosphere. It is boggy, and large patches of scrub willow grow here and there. The grasses come halfway up my calf. I imagine the time 150 years ago when a herd of bison grazed the enormous meadow—the perfect denizens of this place. Once in a while, a hiker finds a bleached skull. The bison were killed off by white hunters, and then, not long after, cattle were sent up here. Now that Shipman is part

of the Rawah Wilderness, the cattle too have departed. Fifty years ago, I say to myself, John and Josephine's herd would have spread out here, the cows mooing and the calves gamboling. The only grazers left are elk, but they cannot keep the grasses down. Jim Elliott told me that this is unhealthy for the native meadow, which, to maintain its natural state, needs to be well grazed. Scrub willow and undesirable grasses are taking over. I think of these matters as I move out into the meadow. I want to get a long view of the park, all five miles of it.

I am sloshing through six inches of bog water. To get out of the water I hop onto a hummock of bunchgrass. Looking up, I notice, half a mile away, a solitary man walking with long steps down the length of the park. His back is to me. He wears a wide-brimmed hat and tall boots, and a long loose coat trails behind him. Through binoculars, I see he carries a high-tech bow and case of arrows. Striding down the long, empty meadow, he looks like a postmodern Aragorn.

Returning to the woods, I notice patches of matted-down grass where elk bedded down in the meadow last night. There is fresh elk sign, wet and glistening, but the elk themselves are elusive.

Back in the trees, I keep an eye peeled for the remains of the old Shipman cabin. Next to it, John Shipman himself is buried. He fished, trapped, and camped for many years in the park that was named after him and died around the beginning of the First World War. I think of these extinct trappers of the valley and how their names, unlike some, persisted: LaRamie, Chambers, and Shipman. It is just possible that Elliott knew Shipman. Even if that was not the case, John and Josephine knew the story of his death and bizarre resurrection. It was a favorite of old-timers in the Laramie River valley. Buck liked to tell the legend, and Helen, his wife, retold it in an interview.

> My husband tells a story about Shipman. He got real sick, you know. They got into Shipman Park, and they were on their way out, and then they were trapped by the snow and had to stay there and he got sick and sent his partner out for medical supplies, down La Garde Canyon. Before the guy could get back with medical supplies, he [Shipman] had died. And then my husband tells me this story, that every spring Shipman's buddies would go up there and dig up his skull and put it on the table and have a big party.

In another version I heard, his friends drank whiskey out of the skull, toasting the memory of their departed companion.

I do not find the old Shipman cabin. According to Buck's wife, a plaque once stood near the grave, which was marked by buffalo skulls. When the park became wilderness, the USFS took the sign down. What happened to the buffalo skulls is not known.

Somewhere not far from where I am walking—in the trees on the west side of Shipman—are the ruins of the old Elliott-Blevin Cow Camp. Here John and Josephine stayed. At other times, Buck was there or another summer rider, hired for the purpose. By midautumn, the rider had to start getting the cattle out of Shipman. Josephine, who knew this work well, wrote about the rider's job.

> When it is gathering time, in the fall, a good rider brings in all brands that come his way. When the cattle are grazing in the five-mile long and a mile wide park with no man-made interference, each brand will be grouped alone and on many occasions, the writer has come up on the ridge at any spot that afforded an open view of the very flat and open Shipman Park and has seen the old Z hook brand, and the Lazy Three, and the UT Bar and the 3X, each grouped by themselves and a rider needed only to ride each bunch, cut out a very few that would be going his way and pick up his own brand, put them to the top of any trail, as suited his outfit, and they would trail down to the fall range. When a cow twisted first one ear and then the other and set her head at the homing angle, the rider would know that she was headed home.

Here, she makes the job sound easy. It took weeks, however, to pick up all the strays. Some wandered south into Housmer Park, and some west over the Medicine Bow Ridge into North Park, where the Monte Blevin family had their ranch.

In another narrative, Josephine wrote about an incident that occurred while she and John were herding strays. Her words convey not only the adventure of the roundup, but also a good view of her and John working together. The Two Lazy Six brand she mentions in the text was her own.

John Elliott and I had ridden up the seven miles to Shipman Park across the iced La Guarde, the one mile or two crossing the Park, due west over the Medicine Bow Ridge at Ute Pass, and down the Old State Road to the Monte Blevin Ranch. We inquired about drifting cattle, made arrangements to spend the night, rode out and cut all cattle that should get back to Larimer County. We corral the cut, do the necessary chores, go to the cook house for the evening meal and listen to "Old Monte" tell about the experiences of his own father and of his mother's father "Mendenhall" who worked through the Virginia Dale area and on down to the west entrance of Mendenhall Canyon north of Ute Pass. The story of Shipman was always told at this occasion.

The following morning was clear and sunny, promising us a good day's drag with about fifteen head of Larimer County cattle. Everything went lovely, but I was always remembering that patch of ice that we had to . . . lead these cattle across, and about the time we are crossing this lovely flat and open Park a swirl of crystal ice particles swished through us, upsetting our whole little scheme of getting those cattle across. So in trying to swing the bunch to the tracks that we had made the day before, we managed very well, but for two yearling heifers who nosed to one side and fell through the ice, breaking an opening large enough to accommodate the two of them. John Elliott, having had cattle in similar predicaments, pulled down his rope, threw a loop, and while taking his dally, hollared to me, "Let your rope out, they're both Two Lazy Six's," and indeed they were! I had been watching the performance as tho it was a rodeo act.

So, I too put out a loop, and caught the other heifer as she came up for air. The other heifer was heading for the timber, icy rope curling and twisting in the air as she took it along. John Elliott dashed between my horse and my roped heifer, picked off my dally and drug her out throwing the loose end of the rope to the four winds as the second heifer bore to the patch of timber near by. When we reached the timber where our trail to the east rises too abruptly for cattle or man to attend without taking a second breath, we found all of the cattle huddled in its shelter and the two lariats at a stand still. The ropes had to be taken off, so with instruction I slumped off

> my horse, gingerly picked up the loose end of one rope, took a dally around a scrub conifer and handed John Elliott the rope. He took a saddle horn dally and pulled the heifer to the tree. I took a holder dally. John Elliott climbed off his horse and took the rope off. The same procedure worked on the next heifer and everything was back to normal except me. I bent into a huddle and in a most dramatic way uttered "Oh my heart!" and I think any one who ever worked with John Elliott, especially in a tight spot, would know just what I meant.
>
> We pushed the cattle up the very short steep grade and dropped to the Pine Creek drainage basin on our way down Elliott Cow trail to Elliott Cow Camp on McIntyre Creek. Here a warm breeze hit us. Our horses and cattle were all soon dried off and our levi clothes were steaming dry in no time.

This account offers us a double portrait of Jo Lamb: as rider and as writer. The storyteller is spare with words, though she clearly relishes the vocabulary of herding. Sentence rhythm conveys the rapid succession of events, and the reader gets a little out of breath, just as Josephine herself does in the story. When the calves fall through the ice, she becomes entranced by what John is doing. She becomes a pure observer, an outsider to the scene. Once she acts, though, she acts effectively. She is both the artist-observer and the woman of action. These two sides existed in a state of tension. They are what made her an intriguing woman.

Her narrative is an encomium to John, here seen as an expert cowboy. The depiction is consistent with what we know of him and seems true to life. At the end of the story, Josephine is relieved to get back to the warmth and safety of the valley, yet it is clear that she counted as precious the time she spent with John.

In the Rawahs, a world of magical landscapes and memorable people, like Monte Blevin, opened up to her. The valley was not only a place of beauty, but like another realm of being, the far side of the moon. On the river, she was free to be who she was, and people respected her privacy. On the river, she had another identity. People addressed her differently. Here she was "Josie."

It is true that the ranchers on the river gossiped about her and John, yet the Laramie people accepted them. According to Eva Bradshaw, the

valley did not consider the bond uniting John and Josephine scandalous. Livermore's holier-than-thou attitude was missing. "People on the river saw her differently, in a different light." For one thing, she was there only summers. For another, Mrs. Elliott was not a presence in the valley.

In 1940, Josephine bought Glendevey Lodge and Summer Resort. Her purpose in doing so remains unclear. The year after she bought the lodge, she traded it to Buck for his share of the land (and cattle) on the Rabbit Creek ranch. This share was worth considerably more than the lodge. Elliott's son then became a permanent resident of the valley. Josephine's attachment to the Laramie, however, did not diminish, and she later came to own a holding there that was even larger than Glendevey.

John Elliott sold most of his North Middle Mountain parcels across the road from his cow camp in 1943. Seven years later he bought a nine-hundred-acre spread on the Laramie, ten miles south of his main cow camp. It was the old Hillen ranch, situated in a magnificent setting where the valley widens out. The view of the Rawahs was unimpeded, and in fall the loden green forests were streaked with aspen fire. Around the time that John made these transactions, the USFS had ruled that John and Josephine needed to divide their herds. John leased the lodge, cabins, and stable of the Hillen ranch to a man named Red Vernon, who set up as an outfitter and fishing guide there. According to Don Lamb, Red " knew how to dude—he was demanding, but he knew how to show the dudes the beauty of the mountains." The property became known as "Red's Place." The pasture land, however, was for Josephine's herd, not only Red's trail horses. In effect, Red's Place became her cow camp. She and Elliott stayed overnight there together. Red was a good friend of John's, and the lodge with its river-rock fireplace was charming. The structure itself was made with large unsquared logs chinked with cement and boards. It had a kitchen in the back and a sleeping loft upstairs.

Several of Josephine's nieces shared their memories of the place. Jo and John seemed to enjoy themselves there, even though Josephine disapproved of Red. She didn't like it that he sometimes brought "hookers" up to the lodge for his fishing guests. One niece remembered that Red's girlfriend served "platters full of trout for breakfast." Another niece, Judy Cass, remembered that the kitchen had a good wood-burning stove and that behind the lodge was a separate washhouse. There was

no running water, but inside the lodge, immediately to the right of the back door, was a towel, dipper, and pail of water for washing up.

John, knowing Jo's fondness for the place, bequeathed the Hillen ranch to her in his will. At some point before John's death, Red Vernon left, and Jo changed the name from "Red's Place" to "the Water Hole." Like Red, she took in fishing guests. In her later years, after John's death, she and her sister Margaret made short visits to the lodge in the summer months.

When John was still alive, he and Jo made outings to the north Laramie country, which extended into Wyoming and included the ranch communities of Jelm and Woods Landing. This area is twenty-five miles north of the main Elliott Cow Camp and twenty miles north of Gleneyre School, where Lamb taught in the mid-1920s. Some of the children in these border communities had been her pupils. Woods Landing was locally famous for its raucous bar and dance hall. Two landmarks of the district are Jelm Mountain and Ring Mountain, the latter being the site of a "medicine ring," a monumental circle of stone built by Native Americans. According to one source, John and Jo visited the site (GK).

The dance hall drew (and still draws) a good country crowd looking for Saturday night entertainment. There was not much else around. Because the floor of the hall rested on boxcar springs, it swayed as people danced. According to local tradition, John and Josephine joined in the fun. Fort Collins songwriter Gary Kuzniar captures the scene in his "Ballad of Josephine Lamb":

> Saturday night at Woods Landing, and the Do Se Do.
> Dancing through the drunks, the Two Step, and some slow.
> Elliott with Jo, they stole the show.

Josephine was attracted to the distinctive landscape of the Jelm district in Wyoming. The openness of the land, the lakes and the ridgelines of the Laramie Plains offered a contrast to the Laramie River country in Colorado.

In most walks of life, outside of teaching, Josephine did not let out her inner feelings directly. She exercised great self-control and was circumspect with words. Yet landscape art, perhaps because of its reassuring impersonality, was a medium in which she occasionally let herself go emotionally.

Lake Trees near Jelm Mountain, pencil drawing by Josephine Lamb, undated. Courtesy of Kay Quan.

One of her most expressive drawings is entitled *Lake Trees near Jelm Mountain*. Done in pencil, this image of two conifers in a treeless landscape is charged with feeling. The trees are the heart of the drawing, in every sense. Because of the open situation, they are distressed, bent from exposure to the harsh wind characteristic of this region. Their twisted forms seem entwined, and they lean in the same direction. Josephine's depiction evokes feelings of pathos and heroic endurance. She brings out the humanlike qualities of the trees. Her drawing is a tribute to companionship in the midst of isolation.

I am coming back down the trail from Shipman Park. Weary to the bone, I say a few words of thanks to my walking stick. The arch of one foot throbs after the eight-hour trek. Late afternoon light rakes through the pines. Now I catch a whiff of pine smoke from hunters' fires. This fragrant smell tells me the trailhead is not far off. When I reach the bottom of the valley, I feel the same pleasure Josephine did on her return.

I climb into the car and head back to Fort Collins. The road follows

the Laramie upstream. When I reach the Water Hole, previously known as Red's Place and as the Hillen ranch before that, I pull off to the side for a last look. The desolation of the old lodge and the splendor of the aspen form an allegory of time. On the gate to the dirt track that leads up to the abandoned lodge, now owned by people from out of state, I notice a sign that reads, "The Josephine Ranch."

More than the mutability of place or the unknown history of wilderness, at this moment it is the delirious succession of names that makes my heart contract.

Part Two

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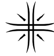
◆ SEVEN ◆

John Elliott



Margaret Ann McLean visited the Rabbit Creek ranch as a girl. That was in the 1930s. Later in life, she shared with me her memory of a little incident concerning the owner. "John Elliott had a doll, in Levis, shirt, and bandana—a cowboy—and he had it in his room. I was in his room and spotted that doll on his dresser and I fell in love with it." Margaret explained that on visits for several years she admired the doll so much that Elliott broke down and gave it to her.

That a big rugged man like John Elliott kept a cowboy doll on top of his dresser tells us something about the second part of his life, which is the subject of this chapter. In youth and early manhood, John himself had been a cowboy—for seventeen years. Yet now he called himself a *cowman*, the term he liked to use instead of *rancher* or *landowner* (DL). The word choice is significant. A cowboy was a hired hand and, no matter how old, still "a boy," for he did not own land and cattle. The cowboy was wild and impetuous like an adolescent, especially if he was single. He did not knuckle under to the responsibilities and moral codes of the adult world. A cowman, in contrast, was a cowboy who had grown up and come into his own. John's usage suggests not only difference, but also continuity between the two stations, which may explain why this cowman kept a doll on his dresser. It was not so much a toy as a household idol that represented his past. It stood for a particular character ideal. John was a cowman, but he never entirely let go of the cowboy.

He lived long, to the age of eighty-two. Up to this point, we have tracked his boyhood on a Kansas farm, his youth and schooling in

Fort Collins. We followed him into the Livermore country, where he hired out as a ranch hand and ran a freight line. We witnessed his marriage, his purchase of the Middle Rabbit ranch, and his hiring of Miss Lamb to teach his son. Now it is time to look at the second part of his life, for it is in the second part that the character of a man is laid bare. The English word *character* ultimately goes back to the Greek word *kharakter*, meaning "brand" or "engraved mark." The metaphorical root of our word, from the ancient practice of animal branding, seems singularly suited to John Elliott the cowman.

In the year before he died, Elliott came back to live in Fort Collins. Seriously ill, he stayed at the house of Jo's sister Del, who was a nurse. There, he liked to watch the cowboy shows on the family's TV, something he could not do in Livermore. It was 1961, the golden age of the westerns—*Gunsmoke*, *Wagon Train*, and *Bonanza*—and he found them absorbing. All that said, Elliott did not fully subscribe to the myth of the cowboy—perhaps because he had been one himself. In reply to a question about whether he had carried pistols, he said, "We didn't carry guns. No, if you'd carry guns, there'd be some young stupid kid to see if you could use 'em" (BK). John Elliott was a crack shot. At Rabbit Creek, he shot ducks on the wing, with a rifle, not a shotgun. Jim Elliott says he owned a matched set of Colt .45 revolvers with pearl handles. On the trail, though, he carried a bull whip rather than pistols.

Livermore was cattle country, but not Dodge City; it was by and large peaceful. There had been several Indian raids in the 1860s. There had been rustling, a few stagecoach robberies, and some fence cutting, but no shootouts, vigilantes, or hanging trees, no saloons or brothels. John was a hard-working stockraiser. Unlike screen cowboys, he was not a drifter, not a Texas Ranger. He didn't sing or play the guitar. He wasn't bashful around women, and his manners were not gentlemanly. He smoked and drank whisky. In short, he was no Gene Autry. Nor was he an Alan Ladd or even a John Wayne, to whom he might most easily have been compared because of his size and presence.

Many people we talked to, however, thought of Elliott as the exemplary cowboy—not the TV version, but the early Livermore type, born to the saddle, reclusive, and cavalier in his ways. John Elliott was a large man

John Elliott and dog with Symbol Rock in the background, 1928. Photograph by Josephine Lamb. Courtesy of Jim Elliott.

and at six foot three inches maybe the largest rancher in those parts. He was clean shaven and handsome. His demeanor resembled people's idea of the cowboy. An air of backwoods grandeur hung about him.

As a cowman, he retained the rough ways of the cowboy. The fine manners of his upper-class English employers did not rub off. He never tried to be genteel, which set him apart from other Livermore ranchers and made it difficult for the community to embrace him. Elliott seemed to stand outside Livermore's social norms. Local people explained or in some cases justified his conduct by invoking his irrevocable cowboy nature.

Elliott himself had a flair for playing the role. A good example is the picture he had taken of himself on Rabbit Creek in 1928, when he was fifty. At the time, he was in good health and a prosperous cattle man. And he looks the part. This photo became a kind of icon, reproduced more than any other image of John Elliott. Behind him rises the most impressive mountain in the Rabbit Creek drainage. So often was he photographed with this peak in the background that his grandson Phil Elliott called it his symbol. Elliott wears the clothes of a stockman of the day: an enormous hat shadowing his eyes, a leather jacket, a shirt, beneath that a sweater, and a pair of jeans with large cuffs (they were his ashtray). A cattle dog stands on its hind legs, reaching for its master's arm. It is a potent image. John wears what looks like a gun holster, but it is actually the leather case for the camera, not a pistol. The camera was Ida's Kodak, and Josephine took the picture.

John Elliott had a colorful reputation, shaped in part by the community's needs and biases. The images people have of us can be revealing about the effect we have on others. They may see aspects of our selves we do not acknowledge. A man may not be wholly responsible for his reputation or even entitled to it, yet he is in some measure complicit in it. And John Elliott did project a certain image.

The young man we saw in an earlier chapter—the new landowner on Rabbit Creek—grew into middle age. Who did he become in later years? Defining a man's character requires mapping out the many parts of his life. For that purpose, we contacted people who worked for Elliott, and we talked to many of his relatives. A few early memories came from people who knew John in the 1920s: they were children at the time, and

he was in his midforties. Most people we talked to knew him in the 1930s, 1940s, and 1950s. Their memories were of a man in his later years. People referred to him variously as "old John" or "the old man" or "old John Elliott." Two people referred to him as "the old devil," another as "a salty old cuss"—epithets that conveyed the community perception that Elliott was unscrupulous and ornery.

Apart from oral testimonies, other sources we found for documenting the second half of Elliott's life were public records, family photos, and an interview he gave in 1956. In addition, Josephine wrote a history of his ranch, a chronology of his life, and two short memoirs of him. None of these sources, though, gave us direct access to John Elliott's inner feelings. The question of "who he was" would be easier to answer if we knew more about his motivations and desires, but there are no diaries or letters. Lacking them, we have had to search for his character in his actions and spoken words.

He was not a man of many words. "Granddad never talked," said his grandson John Lee Elliott. This reflected his culture as much as his character. Author Gretel Ehrlich concludes that the solitude surrounding rural westerners makes them quiet. They have feelings, but they lack, according to Ehrlich, an adequate vocabulary for expressing them. Their language is painfully compressed. "Sentence structure is shortened to the skin and bones of a thought." This description applied to John Elliott. To men of his stamp, talk about emotion signified weakness. The mawkishness of country and western song arose as a compensation for the emotional reserve of everyday life in the rural West.

Cussing was a different matter. One time John Lee Elliott rode behind his grandfather on horse through difficult brushy terrain south of Red Vernon's place. It was pitch black, but the boy could follow because of the steady stream of curses he heard up ahead. This grandson also told me how when he discovered a secret drawer in the old man's desk where the latter kept valuables and arrowheads, John caught him, and "he gave me hell with good cussing." Girls were not exempt from such tongue lashings. On a cattle drive, Mary Clare Wetzler saw two bulls fighting. "I was just heading into the bulls to break them up, and John Elliott yelled at me and called me every name in the book, and I was shocked."

Otherwise, his words were few, which is perhaps what made him good at turning a phrase. He was known for that. The words that have passed down in his name are witty and memorable. It is usually, in fact, the remarkable phrase a man utters that becomes part of oral tradition. For Elliott, there are quite a few. And yet there is no certainty that the words attributed to him are exactly the ones he spoke. That is the way with oral traditions. One of his sayings, for example, we collected in three versions. Elliott was giving instructions on putting fuel in his gas-guzzling truck and said, "Well, boys, be sure and shut it off when you pull it up to the filling station, or you'll never get it full." Another version: "You never want to leave the motor running or you'll never get it filled with gas." The wording is a little different, but the gist is the same. The existence of several versions suggests that Elliott said something to that effect.

Not every word that passed down may be his, yet the ones we have are consistent with what we know about him, and they convey the flavor of his personality. They also give insight into his character. His wit was acerbic. Buck's second son, John Lee Elliott, was born premature and small. The boy was named "John" in honor of his grandfather, who quipped, "So you named the runt after me!" Once on a cattle drive, Elliott shouted at a cowhand, "Sit up on that horse straight. You're ridin' like a sack of shit." Another time, he was not happy eating the pancakes Helen Elliott served for dinner, and he told her, "This is just like trying to fill a gunny sack with rabbit fur."

He spoke an English rarely heard today, terse, pungent, and careless of school grammar. We can be sure of that because his speech was recorded in an interview he gave in 1956, when he was seventy-seven. The voice is deep and a little hollow, as is often so with old men. At one point, he tells about the sons of a neighbor who took over their father's ranch. "They went broke on it. They couldn't run it the way the old man done. Gonna show us all how to run cattle. And they went broke." The short rhythmic sentences and the pithy judgment are characteristic.

I

If his words were few, his deeds were many. He was incessantly active, building cabins and barns, digging ditches, cutting trails, stringing fences, laying new roads, haying meadows, feeding cattle (in drought

and blizzard), trailing them to summer pasture, trailing them back down again in the fall. The middle years were a period of steady expansion for his ranch. By 1940, when he turned sixty-two, Elliott owned twelve thousand acres of deeded property, which made him one of the great landowners of Larimer County. At the height of his success, his herd numbered five hundred cow-calf pairs.

As a large landowner in the county, he attained a measure of status, and yet his social standing was not high because he did not fit in. It did not seem to matter to him. He had reached a station in life his father had not. He had carved out a domain of his own, a small empire, where he held sway over Ida, Buck, Josephine, and the men he hired.

Buck grew up and became a valued partner. John and Ida gave their son a good start in life and a secure livelihood on the large ranch. After Buck finished high school in the late 1920s, he chose to live with his parents and work on the ranch rather than study to become a veterinarian. When Buck turned twenty-one, John deeded over to him fourteen hundred acres of the Rabbit Creek and Lone Pine range. John encouraged Buck to court "Babe" Boyle, daughter of the Elliotts' neighbor John Boyle, who owned the old Williams ranch where John had worked as a teenager. John liked Babe and was keen on Buck marrying her, in part so that the two ranches could be joined together. When the arrangement did not work out, John was disappointed. The problem was that Babe wanted to get away from country life, whereas Buck wanted to remain a rancher.

Jo Lamb's role in the ranch operation grew in the 1930s as she took more time off from teaching. She continued as John's business partner, range rider, and trail companion. She essentially became a member of the family. Her presence in the household, however, weighed heavily on Ida. There were serious tensions, but John kept everybody in line and managed to live the life that pleased him.

How do you get to know a cowman's character? The way the locals do: by observing how he handles horses. For John Elliott, horses were destiny. It was, after all, a wild horse chase, according to family tradition, that had led the Elliotts into Colorado in the first place.

John and Buck Elliott in front of a barn door, Rabbit Creek, probably late 1930s. Courtesy of Jim Elliott.

Horses were essential to a mountain rancher. They were his transportation and his means of tracking and herding cattle. In the high country, they were the only means for carrying out these tasks. A stockman of those days spent his life on horseback. How he sat a horse, how he cared for it, how he controlled it—all expressed his character.

When Owen Lamb was nine, he went out riding with John Elliott and his dad, Eugene Lamb. The two men stopped at a gate and dismounted. John rolled a cigarette. Owen was sitting on top of a big mare called Twinklebells. At home, he was used to his Shetland pony, which he had no trouble getting on and off of. Now he wanted to dismount the big mare, so he stepped off, but his foot couldn't reach the ground—the other foot caught in the stirrup, and the horse took off, dragging the boy, his head bouncing in the dirt. John Elliott hollered out, "Roll over on your stomach!" Owen did it, and his foot slipped out of the stirrup. He was free of the horse and he wasn't hurt. "That was my first experience of John Elliott."

Half of John Elliott's sayings, as they have come down to us, involve horses. This connection speaks volumes about him and about the kind of ties he had to other men. We found that most who knew Elliott had a horse story about him. Visions of horses gather round the memory of him like phantoms from another world, favorite mares long dead, old accidents and injuries, horse trades, the busting of broncs.

Not only was he an expert rider, but he also possessed an understanding of every aspect of the animal. "John Elliott knew horses." He could tame them when wild, cure them when sick, and shoe them when unshod. He was farrier, veterinarian, and horse breaker, all rolled into one. Horseshoes he forged in his own smithy. He could shoe a half-wild horse single-handed. Don Lamb remembered how he once came upon Elliott in the Rawahs. Elliott was alone, but he "had this big old white horse on the ground putting shoes on. It took some doing to do that, all by himself." More than anything, he had an intuitive ability to read a horse's character and feelings.

On the ranch, he kept a sizeable herd, up to fifty horses (JiE). The numbers varied. When he supplied "remount horses" to the U.S. Army in the 1920s, he may well have had hundreds scattered in different herds over his Rabbit Creek holdings. On cattle drives, he typically took a personal "remuda" of eight to ten horses (DL).

At Lone Pine ranch, he had a barn for saddle horses, and he rode at least three regularly (DL). The barn had a "bucking stall" with a "snubbing post" for taming green animals. Elliott kept quarterhorses, Appaloosas, and a special breed that crossed draft animals with thoroughbreds. People I talked to remembered the names of his horses, names that suggest Elliott had an affectionate, playful attitude to his mounts. Don Lamb remembered a trio named Jerky, Twinkles, and Creepy. Twinkles had "four stocking feet—riding at night the feet would twinkle," Jim Elliott told me. Creepy was "a big old rawboned gelding, a quarter horse, a fantastic cutting horse," Don remembered. A rancher was judged by the acumen of his cutting horses: they had to be quick, intelligent, and deft in their movements as they "cut" a calf or cow out of a herd and stopped it from going back. John's size meant he used large saddle horses. Margaret Ann McLean remembered one named Stockings, a red horse with white "stockings." "Once in a while it would try to buck him, but he controlled it, and he made it go into difficult areas." His last horse was a piebald named "Baldy," which John rode when he was eighty years old (JiE).

Much of his daily life was spent on the back of a horse. The inseparability of man and beast was centaurlike, and the horse's animality and spiritedness infused the man's character.

Like the centaur Chiron who taught Achilles, John mentored young men. Dwayne Lauridsen cowboyed for John when the latter was in his seventies. "I always remember what John told me." Elliott instilled his knowledge of horses into the youth, who passed it on to his children. Dwayne knew how to ride when he came to Elliott, but knew little about horses. "John taught me how to handle a horse. How to figure a horse out. You've just got to feel 'em out. And you teach them what you want them to do. Training the roping horses, John always told me, 'You have to learn the individual horse.' And I've taught my kids that. He could take a horse nobody could get along with and he could get along with it."

Bill Knox was another youth who rode the summer range with Elliott. He said, "Old John Elliott showed us how to put a horse in a strait jacket so it couldn't move. He just knew how to handle a horse so it wouldn't hurt you."

For John, the horse was an animal for work, not for show or recreation (except at rodeos). A ranch ran on pure horsepower. These animals

were the internal combustion engines of the time, burning grass and oats instead of gasoline. They were essential for getting from place to place. They were hitched up to wagons, buckboards, and fine buggies. In summer, they bore cowboys through rough pasture riddled with prairie dog holes and up and down the treacherous rocky trails of the high country. In winter, in teams, they pulled wagons or sledges through deep snow to bring hay to the cattle. They pulled freight wagons of dynamite, salt, molasses, and victuals from Fort Collins to Steamboat Springs. Through the fields, they dragged mowers, hay rakes, binders, slips, and manure spreaders, and their horsepower ran hay stackers. At roundup, cowhands rode cutting horses to separate cows with different brands. The horse was indispensable.

Jacques Rieux knows horses as well as anybody in Larimer County. He and Donna Bathory own a ranch in Livermore, where they keep a small herd. One day I lamented the consequences of our addiction to cars—war, global warming, foul air, the ruin of wilderness, obesity, and so forth. Yes, said Jacques, but the coming of the automobile was a godsend to the horse. Before the mechanization of transport, horses were the engines of the economy. People neglected them in the same ways people neglect the maintenance of their cars—but whereas machines don't suffer, horses do. Horses were beaten, underfed, and worked to death. Today, they have it good. They graze most of the time, are given hay in winter, and every so often somebody comes out to ride them for fun.

The life of a horse on the Elliotts' ranch was not idyllic. When Ida's brother Charlie came out to visit from Nebraska, he was upset that Elliott beat his horses, a common practice of the time. If beating did not make the horse comply, it might be shot or sold for dog food. Harry Holden, John's friend, shot a horse one day when it didn't come after he whistled for it, or so the story goes. Of one horse that was a kicker and biter, Elliott said, "A little kindness won't go far with this horse." Ominous words. According to one ranch hand, Elliott's method with horses went like this: "If you couldn't ride 'em, you worked 'em—if you couldn't work 'em, you got rid of 'em." Getting rid of a horse meant selling it to the horse butchers: "You shipped it out to the killers in North Platte, Nebraska," Bill Knox told me.

"The horses in those days were tough. Otherwise they didn't survive" (BK). Except for his best saddle horses, Elliott left the animals to

fend for themselves in the open, and he did not feed them. Horses in Livermore were better able than cattle to survive the winter by foraging: their hooves could break the ice or clear away thick snow to get down to grass. They did not need much caring for. Living on their own, not working, made them half wild.

These "green" horses were what the Elliotts then had to work with. If a horse survived winter, it was then broken or "topped off" when somebody needed to ride it on a cattle drive. A ranch neighbor described the minimal kind of training Elliott gave his horses. "He'd castrate a horse at one year and let them go till they were four. He'd then saddle it and choke it down and head for Red Feather Road on those green horses" (EH). Bill Cass told me that Elliott's attitude was, "If you didn't have to break your horse every morning, then your horse wasn't worth a lot." It was, however, not efficient on cattle drives to have most of the people mounted on green horses. Bill Knox complained to Elliott, "No wonder it takes so many cowboys; eight of you are on bucking horses, two on broken horses."

Elliott believed that the practice of mastering a green horse was a beneficial regimen for a man. Dwayne Lauridsen told me the following story. "I was riding a colt on the Lone Pine with John Elliott and that horse blew up, and I ran into his horse and it damn near knocked him off in the washout. I thought I was going to get it. I was waiting for a good ass chewing—here we almost had a hell of a wreck—and he said, 'You're gittin' him broke, ain't you?'" On cattle drives, there was always a passel of young hands and adolescent helpers, and Elliott felt that putting them on green horses was a good way to sharpen their skills. If he saw a kid standing around with his horse tied to a fence, he would come up and say, "You can't teach that horse nothing tied to a fence"—as if the purpose of life was to educate your horse. What he really meant was, "That horse can't teach you nothing tied to a fence."

Breaking a spirited bronco could be cruel. Whips and chains might be used, or the horse might be "three-legged" for several days in order to break its will. The idea was to conquer the animal. John Elliott shared this mindset, which was dominant. This way is at odds with the "natural horseman" method, in which the animal is not "broken," but "started." Kind words and actions are used to "gentle" the horse so that it voluntarily accepts the rider. It is a nurturing method, and women excel at it. In Elliott's day, however, men did not often "gentle" untamed horses.

Elliott did not approve of gentling. One of Jo Lamb's nephews tried to "gentle break" a horse, and his father said that "John would have had a fit" had he known it. For John, the struggle with a horse was a test of character, and horse breaking was a rite of passage not only for the animal, but also for the rider. Bill Knox told me, " I learned to ride bucking horses riding for John Elliott. You grew up with the idea that the horse is going to kill you if it gets a chance."

Every Fourth of July Livermore held a one-day rodeo. Riding broncs was a big part of it, and John was an enthusiast. He loved doing it, and he also loved the spectacle. Dwayne, whom Elliott taught, went on to win top honors in local rodeos. In his advanced years, Elliott could no longer compete, but he still went. Dwayne told how "Old John would pay my entry fees at Cheyenne Frontier Days so I would drive him up there. I'd ride them wild horses."

A horse's life on the Elliott ranch was no bed of roses. John made it pull its load. He subjected it to hard work and left it out in harsh weather. Yet within these parameters, dictated by tradition and economics, he looked after the horses that served him well. It was in his interest to do so. Don Lamb, who as a young man rode with Elliott, said, "I can remember him waking me up on a cattle drive. He'd come in and wake us up. His first word was, 'Get up and take care of your horse.' A matter of dishonor for him was getting a saddle sore on your horse. You took care of your horse first, then you." He told another hand, "Never push a horse farther than a horse can go." It was a favorite saying of his.

Don Lamb believed that if Elliott had a religion, it was not Christianity; it was "the stewardship of animals." The care he gave horses went beyond maintaining their usefulness. Jim Elliott said to me, "He treated horses better than he would a man." He showed loyalty to a good horse after it was too old to be of use. He did not, for example, send it away to the "killers," but let it die a natural death on the range. He showed affection for his favorite animals. Don Lamb remembers, "He would stroke them the way you did a woman you loved."

Many Elliott stories tell of horse accidents. Memory is selective, and people recall the dramatic moments. I once asked a rancher, "If John was such a skilled horseman, why did he get thrown so often?" The reply: "Everybody has a round ass once in a while" (JGo). The horse is an animal that is easily spooked, a green one especially. The following

story we heard several times. Elliott was out riding on Rabbit Creek, and his horse bucked him off. The fall broke his leg. He couldn't walk and couldn't ride, so he crawled two miles, all the way back to his ranch house (JLE). Not long after this incident, he was riding again, carrying a crutch—his leg still on the mend. As Jack Goodwin remembered the incident, "His dog, confused by the crutch, heeled John's horse, and the horse bucked him off. The dog licked his face. John Elliott was madder than hell at the dog. He told me, 'And then that son of a bitch come and licked my face.'" On another occasion, his mount bucked him off, and his stomach got ripped open on the saddle horn. Elliott simply wrapped a sheet around his belly to stanch the bleeding and rode on.

He liked pitting his will against a green horse. His approach to people was not that different. An element of wildness ran through Elliott that made him want to engage the wildness in a horse. In the end, it was his own wildness he was wrestling.

In the Mountain West, a man's dogs were as much an appendage of his character as his horses. The cattle dogs Elliott bred were locally renowned for their intelligence, endurance, and belligerence. People spoke of a "John Elliott dog" as if he had fathered it himself. A dog not only serves its master, but also expresses his character. Things the master dare not do himself because of etiquette or inhibition will erupt in his dog's behavior.

Ranch dogs are work animals more than pets. They are trail companions and guardians of ranch and home, but above all they are herders of cattle. Dogs were a vital part of John's operation. As the owner of thousands of acres and hundreds of cattle, he relied on them. A rider and three or four dogs could cover as much territory as several cowhands. And dogs cost much less than a cowhand.

Elliott kept "scotch shepherds" as well as mixed breeds, but he was known for his border collies. These canines have an uncanny ability to know a master's mind and to obey voice and sign commands. They establish in their work an intricate rapport with humans. Elliott's choice of this intelligent breed is in itself revealing. Local ranchers found John's border collies unusual, first, because they lacked tails and, second, because he bred them down in size so he could carry a pack of them in his car.

The prowess of an Elliott dog was legendary. Local ranchers vied for the privilege of breeding their bitches with his collies. Elliott trained them to understand sign language. On the trail, he found hand motions more practical than voice commands. It fit his style and needs: he was laconic and hard of hearing. Grandson John Elliott told me that one day when on a rise above Lone Pine Creek, his grandfather noticed that the dogs couldn't see over the brush. He picked one up and held it above him in the air so that it could see the location of the cows in the valley below. Then the dog ran down and got the cattle. On another occasion, when the hired man tried to pocket some gold watch lids that Elliott melted down in his forge for use in decorative inlays on spurs, the dogs would not let him leave the shop. They knew he had taken something. The man put the gold back, and the dogs let him out.

The names of some Elliott dogs have passed down. Bear, Babe, and Buttons were well-known. Buttons was friendly, a rare trait in the Elliott kennel. Josephine also had Elliott dogs, one named Captain, another Minnie. Elliott had a habit of calling boys he respected "Captain." It was the closest thing in his vocabulary to a term of endearment. "Minnie" was the name of one of his sisters.

Babe was a favorite. She was not pure bred, but an "old yellow bitch" of unknown race. She liked to growl and attack. Jim Elliott remembered she hid beneath the stove, then charged out at unsuspecting guests. When Patty Lamb as a girl visited the Elliotts, she moved her leg the wrong way under the dinner table, and Babe bit her hard. Mr. Elliott smeared blue horse disinfectant over the wound. Owen Lamb remembered how Babe sassed her master. "Babe growled at John Elliott, and he'd be mad at her and he'd be cussing her, but she never attacked him." Babe got away with a great deal because she was a favorite, but normally "if a dog didn't obey, then it was all over for the dog."

Elliott dogs had a reputation for meanness. They were working dogs, not cuddly house pets, and they had been bred to nip at sheep and cattle. John did not show sympathy if a child got bit. Owen Lamb remembered the following incident. "We were on the Laramie River. Cousins from Nebraska, the Wetzlers, were there. We were fishing on the McIntyre. John Elliott's dogs were out. 'Oh no,' I said. 'They are mean.' Billie Wetzler said, 'I'll show you how to handle dogs.' Billie stuck his hand out, and the dog bit him. John Elliott came along and said, 'That'll teach

you to keep your hands off another man's dogs.'" Mary Clare Wetzler remembered a particularly nasty dog. "John Elliott would sit and gloat and laugh because we were afraid of that dog."

Judy Cass told me, "The meaner his dogs were, the better he liked them." He sicced them on door-to-door salesmen. He sicced them on a grandson when the lad was slow to get on a horse. Another grandson, John, told me that when he was seven or eight, and the family was putting up hay, "Granddad was sitting on a bale with his goddamn dogs around him. He set the dogs on me. I went up to Granddad and said if he ever did that again, I'd shoot his dogs."

Framed photos of Elliott dogs (probably taken by Ida) hung on the wall of the parlor at the Elliott ranch house. One photo I have seen shows John putting Buck, a toddler, on a dog's back. In the evenings, John read in his armchair, one dog on his lap and two at his feet. This scene brings to mind the photograph of John reading with his infant son on his arm. At times, he put dogs on a par with humans. Rather than dog food, he fed them loaves of corn bread (baked by Ida) with a little meat gravy or a single pancake. It wasn't enough, and the dogs ate mice and rabbits they caught. When the Elliotts and Josephine had supper, the dogs lay under the kitchen table. Once, when a stockman-neighbor came to dinner at the Rabbit Creek ranch, Elliott let a dog paw food off his own plate. The rancher did not approve (JSM).

For other people's dogs, Elliott showed less affection. When he recounted the death of Kate Moon's dog, he seemed cruelly indifferent. Cecil Moon, her husband, had decided to put the dog down when Kate was gone. He did not tell her, and Elliott helped. Here is the story in Elliott's words:

> And Moon, he says to me there one morning . . . he says, "Hurry up here." He says, "We'll chloroform this old dog." And he did it. We just got him chloroformed, and got the scent out of the house pretty much. When she [Kate] come in she hollared at the old dog, and of course he didn't pay no attention to her. [Laughs.] . . . And she cried and hollared around about it and made me build a coffin for him, and I had to dig a hole—and that devil, I had to put him in the ground, down too. It wasn't just on top of the ground, had to be buried down. And she put up a marble headstone. It still stands there. Yea.

You know a man by his friends. John Elliott had few. Besides his family, Josephine, his dogs and horses, he showed little need of company. That is another aspect of his character. “He didn’t try to make any friends. He was quite a self-sufficient man” (JGo). Friendship is a relation of equals, and John Elliott preferred dominance. The friends he had were young or dependent on him or both. To them, he was as much mentor or boss as friend. Even the two ranchers to whom he was closest were younger men. With women, he liked to flirt, and he liked Babe Boyle, his neighbor’s daughter and Buck’s “girl,” but the only real friend he had among women was Josephine.

Outside the family circle, he was closest to the men he hired. They were cowpokes. They owned no land and eked out a living by moving from job to job. Their lives typically were restless and reckless: if they had an aptitude for settling down or staying married, it was not evident. One might argue they lacked the means, and yet they did not go out of their way to find the means. In many regards, Elliott shared their carefree spirit. To look into who they were is to gain greater insight into John’s background and where his values came from.

You can tell a rancher’s character by the hands he hires—in Elliott’s case, you can hardly do otherwise. Much of what we learned of his life came from the testimonies of men he worked with. Local histories barely mention the hired men, the ones who did the heavy, dirty, underpaid work. They most often get left out of the story. Yet they are part of our history of John Elliott, for it rests on these men’s stories and memories.

The writer of lives is a collector of names. Over time, we gathered up the names of the hands he hired. It went like this: somebody told us that old So-and-so had worked for John. We wrote down the name and gave that person a ring.

One day in October I call up Hugh Moss. I get his voice on the machine, unmistakably the voice of a man easy with ranching life. The accent is “country.” The voice says they aren’t home, they’re out “chasing dogies.” I call two more times, and it’s always the same: they aren’t home, they’re out chasing dogies. I leave messages, but nobody returns my call. Finally, I reach Mrs. Moss, Mrs. Opal Moss. “Could I talk to Hugh?” “Hugh was my husband,” she says. “He died in June. He would have just loved talking to you about John Elliott. He liked John Elliott and loved working on the ranch.”

I learn from her that Hugh worked for Elliott six winter months on the Rabbit Creek ranch in 1941. He was twenty-one. I am astonished to learn that she and Hugh actually lived in a little cabin on the ranch. She tells me about Mrs. Elliott and the elk roast she served them. "Ida, she was a sweetheart." She tells me Josephine was "pretty bossy." Her words pull me into the everyday life of sixty years ago. I tell her she is the only person I have talked to who actually lived on the Rabbit Creek homestead. It is her turn to be astonished. I tell her I am sad that I just missed talking to her husband.

The old cowhands are passing away. I am in a race against time. A culture disappears as I rush to collect the remnants. I will never hear the living voice of Hugh Moss, a man who liked John Elliott, who was one of the last to know life on Rabbit Creek ranch, where nobody lived after 1943.

I am a collector of names. Here are some of the men John Elliott hired early on: Gail Woods, Lynn Ames, Bert Elliott (his brother), Carl Moan, Harry Karns, Buck Elliott (when he was not in school), and Harry Holden. Here are the names of people he hired or who helped him in the last decades of his life: Hugh Moss, Red Vernon, Red Miller, Harry Harbeson, Tex Allen, John Anderson, Buck Elliott, Francis Lamb, John Glass, Dwayne Lauridsen, Jack Goodwin, Bill Knox, Babe Boyle, Don Lamb, Owen Lamb, Jim Elliott, John Lee Elliott, Phil Elliott, Judy Glass, Joannie Lamb, and Patty Lamb. Some worked for him for several years; others went on only a cattle drive or two. Many names are missing from these lists, drifters he hired and convicts from the county jail.

Of John Elliott it can justifiably be said that he lived in order to work, more than that he worked in order to live. He immersed himself in the labors of ranching. The pastor at the funeral service spoke truly when he said, "This man was a hard worker. In fact, he worked too hard." What John demanded of himself in the way of work, he demanded of others—of Buck, of Ida, of Jo, and of the men he hired. John's activities, unlike Jo's, were not divided between two callings and a variety of interests. He was a master of many trades and skills, but all in the service of ranching.

He had large hands. You can tell a rancher's character by his hands. Elliott's fingers were so large he couldn't find gloves big enough to fit them, so in winter he wore mittens. Big as his hands were, though, they

weren't enough to accomplish all that needed to be done. His operation was simply too extensive. He was an independent rancher and felt himself beholden to no one. He was nevertheless dependent on the labor of others. Buck from the age of fourteen worked like a man for John. "Buck said his dad just worked the hell out of him." Josephine worked. And her numerous nephews and nieces were a short-term labor pool, especially for cattle drives. John was "happy as a clam" to have all these young people along. Several Lamb nephews worked for him as ranch hands. And later his three grandsons helped out.

John still needed to employ a full-time hand year round. The man watched the cattle on the summer range and helped feed them on the home ranch during winter.

In the mid-1920s, a cowhand in Livermore made between $20 and $30 a month, less than $360 per annum—not much considering that in 1925 an adult living in the United States spent on average $620 a year. Teachers were not well paid, yet they made twice as much as cowboys. Even with free room and board, a cowboy's wages were meager. If, for instance, a ranch hand needed a Winchester Model 94 rifle from Sears, Roebuck, he paid $31.98, more than a month's wages. A felt brim hat from the same company cost $3.45 (in 1927) and a wool overcoat $29.95. A hired hand may not have needed such clothes, yet their prices give an idea of his poverty. Red Miller told how he tried to save enough for a down payment to buy rangeland of his own, but could never do it. In one story I heard, Red, a cowboy through and through, told his boss how much he hated sheep herding. The rancher told Red that it was sheep that paid his wages: "What would you have done without sheep?" he asked. Red replied, "I guess, just going on working for nothing, like I always done" (DM).

The hired man worked long hours. The conditions were often miserable and dangerous, the sleeping arrangements squalid. Red Miller told of riding in rain, soaked to the bone, no shelter in sight. He told of sleeping out with the cattle on cold nights. At Rabbit Creek, Elliott provided the hired man and his family with a two-room log bunkhouse, but the cabin was poorly chinked. Opal Moss remembered the winter wind blowing the linoleum up from the floor, even with all the doors and windows shut. It was so cold her baby had to sleep in the couple's bed rather than in the crib.

Elliott knew the life of a hired hand. He had been one for seventeen years, which may account for one of his sayings: "You don't ask a hired man to do something you wouldn't do yourself" (BK). The corollary, though, was that he expected his hired men to do everything he did, to have the same fanatical devotion to work. "He worked the hell out of them people." John insisted they get the job done, no excuses. On one roundup, a niece of Jo's saw a bear and came back off the range to tell him, and he said, "Don't worry about those bears, get those cows!" A rancher told me he once asked a man what it was like working for Elliott, and the man said, "You don't need a bed, you need a lantern." Another man said, "If you came back before sunset, he'd have you put in a fence post—you had to put in a full day" (BK). When I told Phil Elliott, John's grandson, about the discovery of the little cemetery on the Elliott ranch, Phil thought it was where his granddad's hired hands were buried, the ones he worked to death.

With his hired men, as with others, John Elliott was the boss. It was "his way or the highway." Slackers were fired right away. John brooked no opposition. Buck wrote in a letter to Josephine that his dad and a hired man named Carl were building a cabin on the McIntyre: "before the cabin was done Carl played possum when dad called him. Then dad jerked the covers off of him and asked him if he thought he was his own boss. Then after breakfast Carl quits. But we went on building it, the cabin." Another time when John fired a hand, the man went up to Buck, who was a boy, yanked at him, and dislocated his arm (JLE). Elliott went after the man and gave him a good pounding.

To some of the cowboys who helped him, John was fairly close. One longstanding hand, Harry Holden, was the boyfriend of Josephine's sister Margaret. He rode for the Elliotts in the Rawahs in the 1920s. In token of friendship, John forged for Harry a silver-mounted bit, along with a matching set of silver-inlaid spurs, into which he set a pair of diamonds. For the inlays, John melted down silver dollars.

The hired hands were usually younger than John. Harry Holden was born in 1892, Red Vernon in 1897, Red Miller in 1903. Miller told how he was born too late to get free acreage in the public domain. Harry Holden sold his homestead parcel to John. None of them had any land to speak of. They went from job to job, and in hard times they rode the "grub lines." To John's grandkids and Jo's nieces and nephews, the hired

hands stood for an older tradition of cowboying. They were remembered, sometimes fondly, sometimes uneasily, for their eccentricity and carefree manner. Their flamboyant ways lent a special flavor to ranch life in the first half of the twentieth century.

Phil Elliott told me Red Miller owned three things: a beat-up saddle, a .30-.30 Winchester carbine, and a brand-new Stetson hat, which he kept in a wooden box. The Stetson had a bullet hole through it. I asked Phil about the Stetson. Red told Phil that he and Buck Elliott had gone to a dance, where Red took up with a married woman. They galloped out of town on horseback—the woman on the front of Red's horse, the husband hot on their trail. When Red got home, he found a bullet hole through the crown of the hat. "Red put the hat back in the box and never used it again."

The stories and legends surrounding Red Miller reflect these cowboys' prodigal way of life. John understood them. He spoke their language and shared their inclinations.

They were loners, and in this they resembled their boss. A taste for solitude was a qualification for the kind of work they did. Red Miller told an interviewer, "I'd rather be out here with a campfire than in a city." A man had to be a out of the ordinary to prefer cold nights on hard ground to a soft bed in Fort Collins, but mountains have always been the refuge of mavericks.

The saying that an old-time cowboy was closer to his horse than to his woman seemed true for men such as Holden and the two Reds. Charming they were, but the women who knew them disapproved of their skirt chasing and heavy drinking. Their values were inimical to the disciplines needed to build families, schools, and churches. Red Miller was married seven times, or so people say. Red Vernon was married, but he also had an affair with the wife of an Elliott neighbor. Handsome Harry Holden was a lady's man. He had a fling with Lady Moon after her divorce, and he tried to seduce a Livermore rancher's wife, who promptly told her husband. He once made a pass at a young niece of Jo's. People say he had several girlfriends at the same time. Margaret Lamb was a steady friend, but she refused to marry him, evidently because he was divorced.

The silence of the local histories about the cowhands of Livermore is explained by their wildness as much as by their low status. Never broken in to domestic life, they lived on the margins of mainstream culture. Yet

the ranching operations of the day depended on them. They led hard lives with low wages so that city people could eat inexpensive beef.

Rough as they were, the men John hired showed a surprising delicacy toward younger men and calves. Toward calves in particular they had a soft place in their hearts. They loved to break a horse, but they also possessed a streak of what Gretel Ehrlich calls "maternalism." The old hands had a nurturing attitude to the boys on the ranch. Don Lamb told me: "Harry Holden, Harry Harbeson, Red Vernon. They were great teachers to the younger men." By the time I met some of these "younger men," they had grown old themselves. They looked back fondly on their old mentors. Typical is one rancher's memory of Red Miller: "A very charming man, very witty. I was just a kid in grade school. To me he was a hero" (DM).

John too had a special way with the boys he liked, the ones he honored with the nickname "Captain." Ted Wetzler told me, "John Elliott had a little bit in my formation. I liked him. His huge ten-gallon hat, creased in the Texas style, made him look taller. He was a big guy with a big voice. There was no uncertainty about him." Elliott took the boy out on the ranch to look for arrowheads. Dwayne Lauridsen described John as "one helluva nice man. That guy helped me a bunch."

John Elliott had much in common with cowboys such as Red Miller and Harry Holden. A mountain trapper told me that John Elliott was "just an old cowboy," and it is true that John, like Harry Holden and the two Reds, was a loner who never fully accepted the norms of domesticity. Yet John was more than "just an old cowboy." He called himself a "cowman." The cowman ruled over a large domain, and he ruled over the men he hired; the cowboy ruled only over cows. John Elliott, driven to succeed where his father had not, was more ambitious than the old-time cowboys. He had more initiative and discipline than they did, which enabled him, step by step, to build up a large ranch operation.

Through enterprise and a good measure of luck, he accumulated more resources than his peers. He was rich in land and livestock, if not in cash, rich in what the cowboy lacked. John was not unwilling to share his resources, even though he inclined more to thrift than to liberality. When he did give, it was usually in his own interest to do so. With his family,

though, he was tightfisted. “He’d give a perfect stranger money to eat, but if [you were] a relative, you had to work eighteen hours a day” (BK).

How and when he bestowed his favor reveals something about his character. Much depended on the way he was approached. Frankness and lack of pretense were traits in himself that he valued in others. He repulsed people who flattered him or put on airs. “If you treated him like John Elliott, nothing special, you got on with him, but if you tried to butter him up . . .” (JGo).

The preacher at his funeral said of Elliott that “his life was filled with acts of kindness.” This compliment did not encompass the whole truth, but it was not entirely mistaken either. John was evidently a good neighbor. He put up money to help a Laramie River rancher save his ranch. He started Josephine in the cattle business and probably sent her to college. He deeded ranch land over to Buck and offered to send him to vet school. He lent money to people in need who were unable to pay him back. Maybe he was predisposed to bankroll others because he himself needed to borrow to get his start. He was capable of the grand gesture. One day a younger rancher admired a horse Elliott owned. “I said, ‘That’s a good-looking mare.’ John said, ‘I’ll give it to you.’” A companion story illustrates another side of his character. The same rancher once bought a large sorrel horse. “The horse was a little goosey. John Elliott said, ‘I’ll trade you these two horses for it.’ I said no. He said, ‘I hope he bucks you off’” (JGo).

John possessed an array of personal qualities that served him well in carrying through his projects and achieving his aspirations. Among these qualities were stoic endurance, personal charm, keen intelligence, and a readiness to use physical force.

His ability to endure long hours of physical labor and his imperturbability in the face of discomfort are keys to his character and attainments. His stoicism came from an austere pioneer upbringing. According to Jim Elliott, his grandfather’s view was that “if you hurt, you didn’t complain. You went on.” Jim added, “He never acknowledged pain himself. And he had no sympathy for anybody who did.” This point is crucial for understanding his harshness toward others and his indifference to their suffering. Once he was out with his grandsons “bucking” bales on his McIntyre meadows. John Lee Elliott remembered that they

saw Josephine Lamb leaning out a window waving her arms, and they heard the hired man Briggs yelling in distress. The man was driving the tractor with the baler, had seen blue grouse and gotten off to shoot them, but the tractor, still moving, rolled onto his foot and stopped. He lay on the ground, yelling. "Granddad walked slowly over to this guy, hands behind his back, and a hundred feet from him stopped and bent forward." John's whole demeanor seemed to say, "If you let the baler run over you, then you deserve it." Then he calmly told his grandson, John, barely ten, to get on the tractor and drive it off the man's foot.

Another character trait was his taste for violence. People sensed it and were intimidated. Elliott was a calm man. Unlike his father, he did not lose his temper, yet there hung about him an aura of danger. "You didn't mess around with John Elliott." A former boy pupil of Josephine's said to me, "I found him scary." A Livermore rancher in his nineties—a stroke victim—called Elliott "a good man." Then, unable to say more, he made a gesture. He pointed his index finger at me like a gun, his thumb raised, ready to fire. A grandson remembered Elliott cutting the nose of an ornery cow to ribbons with his bull whip. The conditions of early ranch life hardened a man to the effects of violence. There was the killing of game and predators, the slaughter of cattle, the butchering of carcasses. The application of brutal force became an ingrained habit.

To gain his ends, the mere threat of violence often sufficed. A rustling incident on the Laramie gives a glimpse of Elliott's style when he chose to pull rank. Told to us by Eva Bradshaw, the episode involved two brothers from a holding on Poverty Flats. The boys, who were "wild and handy with ropes," stole ten slick calves from Elliott and branded them with their own irons. When the calves eventually wandered back to the Elliotts and John saw the brand, he knew who had stolen them, so he rode over to Poverty Flats to give the boys a little lesson. "He scared the crap out of them." He might have had the boys arrested, but he didn't. Perhaps his thoughts went back to his youth when he himself had grabbed a slick calf.

John could be charming and humorous, traits that won over some people. One woman told me, "John Elliott was my dancing partner." She was ten years old, and during a festivity at the Livermore Community Hall, old John came up to her and said, "You stand on my feet and we'll

dance." He gave Mary Clare Wetzler the singular honor of licking the paper for him when he rolled a cigarette. He teased the girls and ruffled the young women's feathers.

Jim Elliott told me that John Elliott "got the attention of the starry-eyed younger women." He added that his grandfather "liked younger women, but he didn't like to be attached. Like with Josephine." Margaret Ann McLean remembered, "He wasn't too fond of men . . . he liked girls." Like his cowhands, he had the looks and manner of a man ready for an amorous adventure. Photos from the 1920s and 1930s capture his confidence and masculine authority. There is a bit of swagger in the set of the hips. Even in his fifties, he had a supple grace and youthful bearing.

Country girls, such as Josephine, Annice Link, and Eva Degney, found him appealing. With them, he had good rapport. Growing up with seven sisters, he knew a little about young women. Of his neighbor's daughter, Babe Boyle, he was especially fond. She was a bit of a brat (she confessed to us), but she could outride any man. When we interviewed Babe, she said John would ride with her, and they would talk. At the time, she was in her teens, he in his early fifties. He liked her forthrightness. "He talked a lot to me. On cattle drives. You had to yell—till he got his hearing aid. You had to use your hands." She asked pointed questions, like why he didn't help Mrs. Elliott with the chores. And he answered her. Josephine, too, had this quality of directness, as did John's favorite sister, Ruby.

He was also a practical joker. This was an expression of his wiliness, his pleasure in putting others in awkward positions. A typical example is the prank he played on Jo's sister Rose. John caught Rose up by the waist "as if he was going to spin her around—she was a good dancer—and instead he grabbed her apron and pulled his false teeth out and wiped them on her apron" (TW). One time he told Margaret Ann Wetzler and Jeannie Lamb that they were not "real cowgirls" until they drank mare's milk. They wanted to be the real thing. "He milked out a mare and we drank it . . . and we thought we were cowgirls." Another prank originated in a boundary dispute between Elliott and his neighbors, the Hansens. The Hansens' ranch manager, Lowell Cope, had his men put up a four-wire fence to guarantee the common boundary. After the fence was up and nobody was around, Elliott opened up a gate and let four of his own horses onto the Hansens' property. When Lowell returned them, John

quipped, "You know, a fence is no better than the guy on the other side of it." Cope realized that he had been worsted (BT).

Charm and humor were important traits, but it was above all a keen intelligence that enabled Elliott to shape the world around him according to his will. He was a thinker. He had foresight and the ability to plan for the long term, as shown in the expansion of his home ranch in Livermore and of the summer range on the Laramie. And he cleverly managed the financial side of his operation, keeping the ranch afloat through hard times. Unlike the average cowboy, Elliott had a grasp of the bigger picture, which allowed him to sniff out and seize new opportunities.

One side of his intelligence consisted of perceptiveness, the other cunning. Locals we talked to sometimes referred to Elliott as "the old devil." It was their way of acknowledging his craftiness.

He was good at taking advantage of others, especially fellow ranchers. He found ingenious ways to make use of their resources or to get them to do his work. One rancher remembered that "John Elliott would kick his cattle through the fence and leave, so others would have to drive his cattle up over to Shipman Park." We heard this complaint more than once. Another rancher told me a story about the fall roundup on the Laramie. "He let us take his cattle down. After they got 'em on the road and they were all mixed, he knew you weren't going to sort them out." Bonnie Hebbert, Lowell Cope's daughter, told me the following: "John Elliott 'borrowed' our bulls and they'd breed with his cattle. Or he'd take a calf. Dad knew what was going on." Up on the Laramie, stockman Louis Sholine got angry when Elliott took cattle over the Sholine ranch on the spring drive and let them go slow and graze down the pasture.

Whether Elliott's midlife achievements depended on such tactics is debatable. I suspect he took a certain pleasure in deviousness, apart from any gain. In old age, however, when he desperately needed help, his cunning became a way of making up for failing strength.

II

To get at the heart of a man's character it is necessary to map out the terrible things that happened to him: the calamities, betrayals, bitter defeats, and life-sapping diseases. How did he act in response to heart-breaking

adversity? Misfortune, for those who undergo it, is a crucible. For the writer of lives who documents misfortune, it is a powerful lens that magnifies and reveals.

The years 1941 to 1943 were a crisis period for John Elliott and a major turning point of his life.

At the end of 1940, he was sixty-two, at the pinnacle of his achievement, though at the time he had no way of knowing it. He had held on to his twelve thousand acres through the hard times, and the Depression was winding down. Then in 1941, his health began to fail, and, at the same time, his son and heir left home. During the next two years, John's condition became grave, and in 1943 he decided to sell off half of the ranch.

It was a harsh test for a man whose whole life illusion revolved around the molding of his own destiny. Raw contingency now foiled his will, thwarted his purposes. Character is destiny, said an ancient Greek philosopher. This utterance is mysterious. I think Heraclitus meant, among other things, that those events of our life that seem to be pure contingency are in fact evoked by our character. Something at the core of our being calls down upon us good and bad fortune. A less disturbing variant of this idea says that the unexpected twists and turns of a life are the external form of who we are. I think it is useful to look at the occurrences of 1941 to 1943 in this light. If they were not wholly caused by Elliott, they grew out of and mirrored the extremes in his nature, extremes that altered his life in ways he never anticipated. The inordinate demands he placed on people, including himself, were one extreme. The extraordinary zeal he showed in mastering his own fate was another. The painful events of the years from 1941 to 1943 appear as a correction of these excesses.

It is difficult at this point in time to establish beyond doubt what afflicted Elliott in his early sixties. We know that it was serious and debilitating and that he thought he was going to die. Oral testimonies say he had a heart attack in the high country. His lips turned blue, and Jo drove him down to the hospital in Fort Collins. This incident may have occurred later. Nevertheless, it is likely the illness was heart disease. The death certificate states that Elliott had suffered from arteriosclerosis since the mid-1940s. Though he enjoyed a partial recovery and lived twenty more years, he had relapses. He never fully regained his health and vigor.

Illness made John more dependent on Josephine and Buck, but Buck and his wife moved away in 1941. The large ranch operation was more than John could manage. He was sick enough that he felt compelled to sell half of his holdings, including the Middle Rabbit parcel. This major setback must have caused him anguish. He was giving up the land that he had labored hard to acquire, the land that he had shaped and developed for his own purposes over a period of thirty years. The Rabbit Creek range was his home and the place Buck had been born and grown up. It was his first holding. It was the center and headquarters of his operation.

Buck's decision to leave at this time compounded John's difficulties. Buck was thirty and still very much attached to his mother and father and to the ranch when he married Helen Jones in 1940. Soon after the wedding, they set up house on Rabbit Creek with his parents. They lived in the old bunkhouse that had been the Elliott school back when Josephine taught Buck. The younger Elliotts stayed about a year, but in 1941, after John's first bout of illness, they moved to the Laramie River country to run the outfitter's business and resort at Glendevey.

Why did they go? Helen did not approve of Josephine and did not get along with her father-in-law. She adored Mrs. Elliott, but she rebelled against John's imperious ways. One person who was close to Helen told me: "John Elliott was very strict and expected everybody to do what he said. He expected Helen to do things she didn't have time to do. He told Helen to wash the dishes, do laundry, the ironing and everything. He was a hard-hearted man. Helen, bless her heart, she learned to stand on two feet and not to take any guff" (GD). John's heavy-handed attempt to impose his will on Helen was a factor in the young couple's decision to leave the ranch. It grieved the older man and Buck as well. The decision had far-reaching consequences.

The son's departure dissolved in effect the partnership he had with his father. In exchange for the hunting lodge at Glendevey, owned by Josephine at the time, Buck offered his former teacher the fourteen hundred acres of the Elliott ranch his father had deeded over to him in 1931. Here is an account by Josephine's nephew John Glass of what then transpired: "Aunt Jo just couldn't believe he was doing this, so she confronted John Elliott and told him what Buck wanted to do. After hearing it, John Elliott said, 'Here's where two fools meet.' She didn't understand, so she

asked him to repeat it. John Elliott's reply was: 'He's a fool for offering you such a deal, and you're a fool if you don't take it.'"

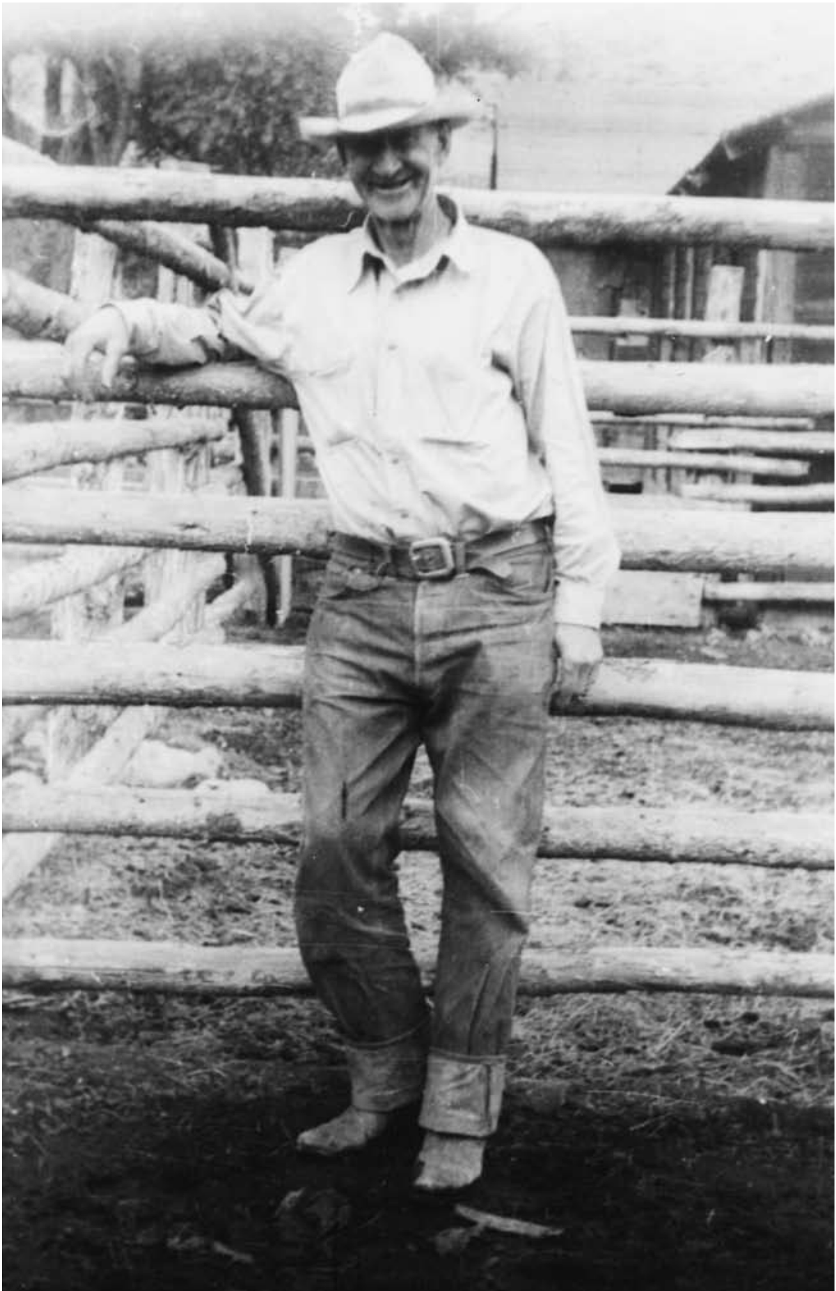
John believed his son was making a serious mistake. Later events show that John felt betrayed. His only child left him in sickness and need. The son's urge to make a life of his own, away from his overbearing father, is something John did not understand. To top things off, the same year Buck left, John's ranch hand, Hugh Moss, also quit. The man's widow told me, "John just begged him with almost tears in his eyes not to leave."

John came to the realization in 1942 that he needed to cut back and create a more manageable operation. Josephine asked him to let her buy the land he wanted to sell, but he refused. He wanted cash. According to John Glass, he did not want to carry her note. Why did he insist on cash? He may have had debts to pay. He also needed money to build a new house and outbuildings, and he probably wanted to leave money for Ida in case he should die, so she would have something to live on and the wherewithal to hire help.

In 1943, he sold seven thousand acres of his Livermore and Laramie River holdings to the Hansens, his ranching neighbor to the east. With the sale of the Rabbit Creek parcel and ranch house, he moved his headquarters to the old Ismert homestead on Lone Pine Creek on the south half of his ranch. The Elliotts and Josephine took up residence there.

When John's health improved a little in the mid-1940s, he tried to buy back the Rabbit Creek holding, according to Ed Hansen. The Hansens declined. This incident showed how much that part of the ranch still meant to him and how grievous its loss must have been. When the Hansens refused, he doubtless regretted he had not sold the land to Jo and carried her note. There is little doubt she would have given it back. In any case, he was sensible of his debt to her. Buck had left, but she stood by him. From 1942 to 1945, she gave up teaching in order to give all her energies to the ranch.

After his illness and the sale of half his ranch, the flesh of John Elliott's body melted away. He no longer looked himself. He was toothless and as thin as the corral rail he leans on in a photo from the 1940s, taken after the onset of his illness. Already hard of hearing in the 1920s, he was now



John Elliott in a corral after his illness, 1940s. Courtesy of Judy Cass.

nearly deaf. He took to wearing a hearing aid, but rarely kept it on. Judy Cass remembered: "If John wanted to tune you out, he'd say his battery wasn't working." On cattle drives, people used hand language with him, just as he did with his dogs.

In the corral photo, he stands in the muck, his boots dirty from the work. Before the crisis of the early 1940s, he rarely smiled in snapshots. Yet in this snapshot he is grinning. His look is merry, a little mischief in his eye. It is the picture of an old man unwilling to admit defeat. In that smile one may read the triumph of character over biology.

Elliott did manage to recoup some of his losses. The urge to strive and command persisted through his last twenty years. He made strategic retreats. He made concessions. Unwilling to let go, struggling to hold on to the earlier pattern of his life, he grew more irascible.

Bouts of illness continued to put him out of action. He was hospitalized for heart trouble twice in the early 1950s. Ida was chronically ill in this period and required care. John's heart disease precipitated a painful condition called ascites—or, in popular parlance, "water on the stomach." Fluids backed up into his liver. Jim Elliott remembers: "He'd swell up like a poisoned pup. Never once did I hear that man complain when I was around. I could see he wasn't feeling good. He'd sit in a rocking chair, and he'd sit there with a knife, spinning the knife, and he put a hole in the arm of that chair." That was how he dealt with the pain. Jo periodically drove him to the doctor, who drained the fluid from his abdomen.

Jim Elliott remembered the way his grandfather dressed in this period. In winter, John still wore the same type of leather jacket seen in the iconic photo of 1928, but now he wore wool pants, not jeans. He walked bent over, his shirt askew from the weight of hearing-aid batteries and pierced with holes made by glowing cigarette ash. In the coldest weather, he wore his stockman's hat, but around the hat he tied a wool muffler five or six feet long that pulled the brim down over the ears to keep them warm. The tails of the muffler he threw around his neck. Young Jim Elliott had to help him rig up the muffler.

Dressed in this fashion, John continued to ride, even into his eighties, even in bad weather. On one occasion—it was a winter day in Livermore—Don Lamb was riding with Elliott. "He rode everywhere.

He rode across the icy road. He slipped and went down with his horse. I tried to help him. He was short with me. He didn't need any help."

One of Elliott's neighbors and friends recounted how the old man continued working even in the last year of his life, when he was eighty-two. This neighbor accused John of taking one of his slick calves on a cattle drive. John told the neighbor that if he didn't trust him, then he should ride with him, and they arranged to meet at sunup. When the neighbor arrived, John was not there, and the neighbor rounded up all the cattle by himself. Several hours after daybreak, Elliott appeared. The neighbor complained that sunup was long gone. The aging trickster replied, "When you're eighty-two, it's sunup now!" The neighbor did not take it amiss: "I liked the old devil" (JGo).

As this episode shows, Elliott's main challenge now was getting people to help him. The ranch began to deteriorate. It was hard to find reliable workers. "A lot of the cowboys he knew were getting old," Don Lamb told me. Harry Holden had died in 1951.

John did all he could to find hands. He put Red Vernon up in the old Ismert cabin on the Lone Pine. He persuaded Buck to come down from the Laramie and feed his cattle in the winter. Josephine was again busy with teaching. She had also become active in community affairs, but she still gave him much of her time. He hired kids and trained them. One of them, for example, had no idea how to shoe a horse, so John said, "I'll set here on this stump and tell you how." He drew on the good will of Jo Lamb's nieces and nephews. He went to the county jail and hired convicts. He tried to hire his auto mechanic, telling him, "You come up here and work for me. Everybody's running cattle on my place. You come up and we'll straighten them out. Why don't you come work for me?" (LS).

III

Personality is the outer husk of character, the mask we present to the world, to others. With age, the husk wears thin, and our character shows itself more flagrantly. So it was with John Elliott. As his muscle and bone wasted and his body shrank, the bedrock of his character was laid bare. His determination became more explicit, and he made sure it would reverberate into the future long after he was dead—hence, the articles of his last will and testament.

In old age, his antagonism to people who showed weakness was more pronounced. This attitude is ironic considering that he himself was visibly weaker. It was as if he wanted to punish in others the frailty in himself that he could not vanquish.

You can tell a great deal about an old rancher by what makes him laugh. In the recorded interview he gave when he was seventy-seven, he showed an unashamed pleasure in the misfortunes of others. He laughed at the tears Lady Moon shed over the death of her dog. He laughed over the rancher and his wife who quarreled and divorced. He laughed in telling about the freighter who plunged thirty feet into the river with his rig and broke two ribs. These reactions go back to an old western mindset: the imperative of hanging tough. A rancher friend remarked, "He acted like he was mean, but he wasn't." Then he added, "To be a rancher you had to have a mean streak" (JGo).

In age, John's desire to bully others reached a new level, as seen in the way the old man treated his grandsons. One rancher told me: "He'd tell them to do something, and they'd say no and start to run, and he'd flick that bull whip on their feet and they'd fall down." In old age, the freighter's whip became something of an emblem. However slow he had become, the whip gave him control at a distance. He called it his "blacksnake." According to his grandson Jim, it had a whalebone stock and a shot-loaded belly. It was sixteen feet long.

John's grandsons remembered the blacksnake as an implement of instruction when he taught them horsemanship. He "burned" one boy's hand with the whip when the boy grabbed the saddle horn at the wrong time. When another grandson was ten and had never ridden a bronco, John encouraged the hesitant boy to mount the horse by threatening him with the whip.

His motto for himself (and for others too) might have been "better a wrong will than a wavering." He wanted to instill in his grandkids the resoluteness needed to deal with extreme situations like those the cowmen of his generation faced in the mountains on a daily basis. He did not mind exposing them to pain and danger. When his cattle dog grabbed a toddler grandson by the arm, John took it as a matter of course. Buck did not, and they had words. He enjoyed inventing scenarios to test the boys' mettle. He promised to give one grandson a particular horse, but told the boy he would have to go out on the range and catch it himself. The lad did it, but

it took him two weeks. The boy never forgot the experience. By modern standards, John's methods were excessive. In the end, they were neither necessary or effective. They did demonstrate, however, his willingness to impose on others the pitiless demands he placed upon himself.

Elliott's later reputation in the community was affected by his advanced years and by the fact that he had lived so long in Livermore. The domestic situation with Jo and Ida remained a source of gossip, and many people considered him a crusty, irritable old man. Yet longevity endowed him with a patina of venerability. In spite of his trickery, other stockmen respected him for his achievements and his ranch lore. They admired him as a cowboy who succeeded in becoming a landowner. And they came to understand that if John never bonded with the community, it was because he resolutely refused to cast off the old cowboy ways.

The 1950s was the last decade of his life and the heyday of the TV Western. The coincidence helped people assimilate John Elliott into the myth of the Old West. Because Livermore was moving rapidly away from the values of the early settlement period, the community began to look back with nostalgia. The Livermore Woman's Club was the group mainly responsible for recovering and disseminating this past to the greater community. Through its historical publications and programs, the club presented the pioneer days as an heroic age. Jo Lamb played a leading role in this effort. She was the one who organized the 1956 interview for her old friend and partner. The interviewer is a younger rancher who at one point states his purpose: "What we would like to get . . . is some of the colorful history of this rough and rugged John Elliott." And so it happened that during his life, John Elliott came to be seen as a man from another time—a man able to speak with authority about the settlement period because he had been part of it. Through the living voice of John Elliott, one can still hear the accent, the intonations, and the idioms of a bygone age.

At the taping, he is seventy-seven years old and has trouble hearing the questions. Josephine repeats them for him. He understands her. She addresses him as "John Elliott." She coaxes him. "They want a good story, John Elliott." He speaks, and the voice is a deep chesty drone. You hear his breathing, heavy, almost wheezy. He slurs his *th*'s and *s*'s. He coughs. He laughs. He tells stories.

The language he speaks is of another time. In talking about Lady

Moon's divorce settlement and what she did with the money, he says, "Yea, she done all right. But she lost it all. She got to running horses, and they were just fast enough to lose. And took all her money. She died a pauper." He does not laugh after he says this. The interviewer asks him when she died. John says, "I couldn't give a date. I can't remember dates. Hell, if I died myself, I wouldn't know what date it was!"

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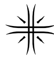
◆ EIGHT ◆

Cattle on the Land



My first hike to the abandoned ranch house took place in 1997. Since then, for a decade now, I have walked and explored Rabbit Creek country. I carry with me USGS topo maps. On them, I pencil in the derelict buildings and homesteads I encounter, and trace with a marker my paths up granite outcroppings and along the creeks.

When I am walking, I sometimes have an absurd fantasy: that there exists a map of the Middle Rabbit district on a 1:1 scale. Everything on the map is the same size it is in the real world. Users of this map can find the beaver lodge in the creek, as well as a piece of John Elliott's rusting farm equipment in the south meadow. They can see every stone and clump of grass, every ant hill and cow pie. Old bottles, bits of horse wire, and cartridge casings are there as well. The map spreads out over the landscape it represents. To read it, the user treads on the tough Tyvek fabric upon which it is drawn. But beneath its expanse, little animals smother, and the grasses and bushes wither and die. By changing the landscape, the map itself becomes inaccurate.

Maps do in fact alter the landscapes they chart. USFS maps, for example, funnel recreationists into certain areas simply by labeling them "wilderness," thus ironically making the areas less wilderness-like. The maps that Charles Preuss made on the Fremont expedition lured and guided people into the West. Property maps became instruments for the homesteading and acquisition of land; they showed where land in

the public domain could be claimed. The land was then settled up and transformed. Thus, "the wild and barren west" came to be, in the words of one nineteenth-century history, "subdued and civilized."

The legal boundaries of John Elliott's original thousand-acre holding on Rabbit Creek were defined by the coordinates of the national grid system, which, then as now, were included on many local and regional maps. This system, passed into law in 1785, divided the new western territories of the United States into "township" units of thirty-six square miles each. Surveyors, hired by the U.S. government, began plotting out the nation's new territories (almost everything west of Pennsylvania) in square-mile "sections," each comprising 640 acres. Every square-mile section in every township was given a number (one through thirty-six) and then subdivided into quarter sections of 160 acres. John Elliott's original Middle Rabbit property was in Township 10 north and Range 71 west, and it included parcels in sections 17, 20, 21, and 28. When Sitting Bull said of the white settlers, "with them, possession is a disease," it was doubtless this meticulous fragmentation of communal land that he had in mind.

Private ownership of land inspired a heightened awareness of property lines. A large portion of the fences in Rabbit Creek country followed the section lines of the township and range system because that system was the basis for mapping legal ownership. Like other settlers in the northern Colorado foothills, John Elliott was protective of his boundaries. He sicced dogs on intruders. Josephine Lamb got out her .30-.30.

Barbed wire is the perfect icon of the later Euro-American settlement of Livermore. Invented in the mid-1870s and widely available after 1900, it helped the new wave of homesteaders and ranchers secure their property lines. The act of trespass that led to my discovery of the Middle Rabbit house occurred when I slipped carefully through two strands of this prickly deterrent to free movement. The earliest white settlers, in contrast, had found it in their interest to preserve the communal use of land—that is, the " open range"—and they were notorious for cutting the wire fences of the later homesteaders. In Livermore, so the story goes, two of these early ranchers—brothers—were convicted of fence cutting and served time in Leavenworth, each brother in alternate years so that the other could keep the ranch going.

Fencing, of course, also served to regulate grazing. One thinks of the tall horse fence the Harden boys used on their Middle Rabbit operation. A rancher not only fenced in his own livestock, but fenced out the animals of his "fence neighbor." By Colorado law, then and now, a neighbor's livestock has to be "fenced out" or else it can trespass and eat one's grass with legal impunity.

Every decade saw John Elliott buying up new range land to add to his ranch. In the 1956 interview, he put it this way: "When there was anything to buy and I could borrow the money, I bought it." Because he bought so many parcels of land, he found it useful to learn the art of surveying. Before he put in a fence along a boundary, he surveyed the line himself (JiE). The boundaries that Elliott established are no longer current, and over time his fences came unstrung, but the old surveyor's compass is still extant—an object of history that has not yet disappeared.

Another object of history that remains is John Elliott's grain binder. On my first visit to the Middle Rabbit, I noticed a dark blemish among the tan winter grasses in the meadow south of the house. I went over to take a look. Protruding from the vegetation was this piece of farm machinery. In my journal, I described it as "the beautiful old hay cutter with the bush growing through it." The bush was wild currant. This machine, incorporating an intricate array of gears, sprockets, and wheels, was a dinosaur of early mechanization. Later, Ed Hansen, a local rancher who knew about this rusting apparatus, told me it was not a hay cutter, but a "binder . . . what they used before combines" not to cut grass, but grain. The binder is evidence that Elliott reserved part of the meadow near the house to grow oats for feeding his saddle horses.

The rancher who told me about the binder was the same one on whose land I trespassed in 1997. In the year 2000, he sold the old Elliott property, which he owned, to the Colorado Division of Wildlife, which has dedicated the land for use as a hunting and wildlife preserve. It is possible that the presence of the threatened Preble's meadow jumping mouse on the Middle Rabbit was a factor in the rancher's decision. However that may be, this range is no longer in private hands, and no stockman lives there or owns it.

For me, the fact that the Elliott ranch is now wildland adds greater poignancy to the traces and relics of human occupation found there.

Settlers left their signatures on the land in a number of ways. Mrs. Elliott's lilac bushes, iris, and matrimony vine still bloom, though no one has tended them for sixty years. Along with the natural lines of the terrain—ridges, wildlife trails, and streams—are those other lines that ranchers and their livestock imprinted on the semiarid landscape. Path lines made by Elliott and Lamb's cows. Ancient two-tracks, some made by the horse-drawn wagons of the first pioneers. The faint lines of irrigation ditches dug by John Elliott and now silted up. Two tall poles bear witness to the direct telephone line that came to the ranch house in 1898. A broken row of Elliott's "pitch pine" fence posts, no longer strung with wire, march up a hillside.

It is a commonplace to say that time is like a river. Its flow seems irreversible, sweeping away the past. Yet time can also be like a tide, reversing itself and bringing back something left behind. Once again the Middle Rabbit has become a communal hunting ground, which is what it was for thousands of years before white settlement changed the pattern of Native American land use. Private ownership of this land lasted only 130 years. During the half century in which John Elliott called the Lone Pine and Rabbit Creek ranches his own, he found and collected arrowheads there—a reminder of the land's ancient communal heritage. Today, John Elliott's binder stands rusting in the field—a reminder that these native meadows were once private land and part of an agricultural enterprise.

I

For John Elliott, the grazing of range cattle was a business, the basis of his livelihood. The semiarid pastures above the Middle Rabbit were not profitably arable. Except for hay, alfalfa, oats, and the produce of the kitchen garden, few, if any, crops were grown. The place was far from town, the vortex of commerce. From an economic standpoint, the only practicable use of his holding was pasturing livestock, and even this use often had marginal results. Few ranchers expected to have an opulent lifestyle. They ranched not so much for the money, as for love of the land, the outdoors, and the work with cows. And they felt part of a venerable tradition. Even so, to keep their ranches going, they needed to keep an eye on the markets. They had to sell beef at a profit. John Elliott was

no exception. To support a herd of beef cattle large enough to gain a livelihood, Elliott needed more range than he originally purchased. A ranch holding of 1,040 acres seems like a great deal of land, and in Iowa it would have made a handsome farm, but in the dry foothills it did not sustain many cattle. He required more like 5,000 to 10,000 acres.

Over a period of thirty years, he steadily increased his holdings. By 1940, according to the *Larimer County Atlas*, his Livermore ranch—extending from the Middle Rabbit south to the Red Feather Lakes Road—comprised 6,640 acres. It was one large parcel, encompassing both the Rabbit Creek ranch and the Lone Pine ranch, which was farther to the south. In 1940, his son Buck owned 1,440 adjacent acres in the Lone Pine Creek area, and Josephine Lamb owned 640 acres (her original homestead) on the South Rabbit. Elliott at this time owned or controlled a sizeable portion of Livermore country. (See the map in the introduction.)

Elliott began enlarging the ranch in the first decade after his original purchase. Veterans back home from the First World War had priority in claiming land under the Section Homestead Act, which allowed them 640 acres. In the foothills, this amount of acreage was not economically viable. Buck Elliott told how his father took advantage of this situation. "A lot of fellows took up a section wherever they could take it, with the idea of selling it. In three years when they got it proved up on, they would sell, like to my Dad. Dad bought many homesteads—small ranches. . . . A lot of Dad's ranch he bought for three or four dollars an acre." John Glass, a nephew of Josephine Lamb, explained how Elliott accomplished this. "John Elliott told me he would find different people to take a homestead. . . . 'You take this homestead and then that one, and then I'll buy you out later on.'" In the late 1910s and early 1920s, Elliott bought out at least seven other homesteads around his Middle Rabbit holding, including one proved up by a young cowboy and First World War veteran named Harry Holden, Elliott's friend. Josephine Lamb was another one who took up a section homestead; it was just south of the Elliotts' spread and contiguous to it. Much of her holding was upland, with stands of Ponderosa pine, though part of it included native meadows along the South Rabbit. Josephine proved up her claim and took title to the land in 1923. Unlike others whom John Elliott persuaded to take a homestead, she did not sell out to him.

Instead, they went into business together. Over time, Elliott extended his Rabbit Creek ranch even farther south, buying up homesteads and ranches along Lone Pine Creek.

In the same period, beginning in the late 1910s, Elliott purchased parcels in the Laramie River valley, the extreme northwestern part of the county. This valley and the Rawah Mountains to the west became his summer and fall pasture. When Elliott bought his summer range, the Rawah forests flanking the valley were already part of the national-forest system. The deeded properties Elliott bought in the valley gave him good access to these public lands, where, for small fees, he was able to graze his cattle. The Rawahs had a few "drift fences" to discourage cattle from wandering, but the territory was largely unfenced. These mountains served Elliott and other northern Colorado ranchers as a kind of open range.

In forty years as a stockgrower, Elliott experienced the ups and downs of the volatile ranching economy. Like everyone else, he was subject to the demands and vagaries of the market. In bad years, when beef prices were low, ranchers like Elliott tried to make up for declining revenues by increasing herd size, which put pressure on the ranch's grasslands. To the same end, Elliott increased irrigation and haying and introduced exotic grasses. In its first decade, the Rabbit Creek ranch was buffeted by capricious weather and fluctuating markets. In 1912, they experienced drought. Then the blizzard of 1913 brought large losses of cattle. Jo Lamb wrote that Elliott worked "that winter" full time for himself, not for others—by which she meant he had plenty of work rescuing calves and feeding cows.

With the onset of a world war in Europe in 1914, surging demand for beef inflated meat prices. Elliott's business profited. In 1920, though, with the war over, prices fell sharply, and the next three years were tough. The period from 1926 to 1929 was a more prosperous time for the Elliotts as beef prices went up again. In this period, Colorado became a net exporter of beef. Nationwide demand increased, yet periods of low prices due to overproduction persisted.

The next decade brought the Depression and an extended drought that lasted from 1934 to 1939. In dry years, meadows wither, and cattle

grub down the grass to nothing. Hay becomes so dear that a rancher cannot afford enough for the winter, and cattle have to be sold for slaughter. Everybody's doing the same thing, and the market is glutted with beef. By the mid-1930s, Colorado's beef herd shrank to one-third of what it was in the 1920s. From 1936 to 1939, because of the deeply depressed economy, people ate less meat; they could not afford it, even at reduced prices.

The Elliotts struggled to keep going. According to Phil Elliott, his grandparents fed their cows straw and sugar beet tops. They shot their own meat—deer and elk on the ranch—and they had a huge vegetable garden for their other needs. Josephine Lamb quit teaching for much of this period to lend a hand, but when she did teach, her salary, meager as it was, helped keep the Elliotts afloat (BT). It is not known whether they took advantage of New Deal programs that gave ranchers above-market prices for beef and paid them not to raise cattle. According to several sources, Civilian Conservation Corps men did come to the ranch to build and repair fences.

The beginning of a second world war in 1939 again pushed beef prices higher. This shift coincided with the end of the 1930s drought. The relative prosperity of the 1940s, though limited by wartime price controls, allowed ranchers to expand their holdings and production. John Elliott, as we know, could not take full advantage of this situation because of illness and his son's departure from the family ranch. Due to war, it was also difficult to find ranch hands. Even after the sale of his Middle Rabbit holdings in 1943, though, he still retained substantial range on the Lone Pine and the Laramie. When he recovered, he bought more land. From 1945 to 1952, beef prices continued to climb, and with the profits Josephine and John jointly purchased two new landholdings in the heart of historic Livermore: the old Livermore Hotel with 120 acres (1952) and the old Fisk Hotel with 400 acres (1955). In 1952, Lamb also purchased 300 acres of farmland north of Fort Collins, where she grew alfalfa. The mid-1950s was another difficult period for the ranchers. The blizzard of 1949 was followed by the severe drought of 1953–54. From 1952 to 1957, cattle prices declined, and costs rose. The recurrence of Elliott's illness in 1952, in combination with the large number of cattle he had to manage, led to deterioration of both his herd and his grazing lands.

II

> The cow opens her meaty wet lips, curls her sandpaper tongue around the bunched clover like a fat rope, and with the pleasing sound of tearing foliage, rips the mouthful of tender leaves from its crown. She'll get to the fescue eventually, and the orchard grass, and even to quite a few of the weeds, but not before she's eaten all the clover ice cream she can find.
>
> —Michael Pollan, *Omnivore's Dilemma*

The sale of range cattle to meat markets was the core business of the ranch, though it was not the Elliotts' only grass-based source of income. Mrs. Elliott owned several milk cows and sent butter to local markets. In the 1920s, John evidently ran between one hundred and two hundred horses, which he sold on a regular basis to the U.S. Army Remount Service. After the 1920s, however, that market dried up.

The Elliotts' and Josephine Lamb's cattle were valuable property, but they were also highly mobile. In spite of barbed wire, cattle got through the fences of the home ranch. On the summer range, they strayed, and some inevitably mingled with other stockgrowers' mobile property—hence, the usefulness of the rancher's brand, a unique mark of individual ownership. The brand discouraged rustling and permitted the identification of stolen livestock and strays. Elliott himself told how as a young man he and some friends found a bunch of "slick" calves, and he took one for his own. A principal reason the Stockgrowers' Association formed in Livermore in the 1880s was to systematize the brands. The state of Colorado eventually established in each "roundup district" an official brand inspector. One such inspector was rancher Bob Hohnholtz, who counted and inspected Elliott's cattle when they were trailed into the Laramie River country.

When Elliott bought the Rabbit Creek ranch in 1910, he acquired Charles Bush's brand, the 3X. Before that, he had his own brand, the KCB, which he used on the herd of forty "southern heifers" he brought to Middle Rabbit Creek. These "southern" cows were most likely Longhorns or Corrientes, without a well-defined pedigree. Elliott did, however, breed them with a registered Hereford bull to improve the quality of his herd.

Josephine Lamb acquired her brand from a woman rancher in the

Westlake district of Livermore. It was the Two Lazy Six—the 6 lying on its belly. In the 1950s, Josephine did much of the major research on brands for *Ranch Histories of Livermore and Vicinity*, which the locals usually called the "Brand Book." This informal title reflected the paramount importance of the brands as property markers and historical signatures.

An oil painting of Rabbit Creek Ranch that tradition ascribes to Josephine highlights the brand as the emblem of ownership (see the frontispiece). At the center of the picture is a "loafing shed," the red roof of which is conspicuous against the dun colors of the winter landscape. In the middle of the roof, the artist painted a large 3X in white. Elliott's brand stands out like a proclamation, if not an object of worship. Oddly, there are no cattle (or horses or people, for that matter), only the outsized brand—a metonym for the missing herd.

The Elliotts did their branding at Easter, after the spring roundup of calves (BiC). Young people and old were invited to help or to watch. Branding days were festive, and at many ranches they culminated in a raucous party where the liquor flowed. The Easter branding was indeed a rite of passage—a symbolic death and resurrection of the calf. Getting burned with the proprietary mark, the calf ceased to be what it had been: "slick" and up for grabs. Instead, it became the personal property of John Elliott or Josephine Lamb.

Before branding, the unwitting calf knew little about people. It might be anywhere from two weeks to a year old. All of a sudden, it was roped and dragged away from its mother. There was a lot of bawling and bellowing. Elliott or a cowhand threw the calf on the ground, knocking the wind out of it. The calf was held down. The red-hot iron burned the symbols into its hide. Elliott's grandson Phil showed me an old photo of his grandfather in the act of branding. John is placing the 3 iron of his 3X brand, while Eugene Lamb, Josephine's brother, grips the calf's back legs. If the calf was male, it was usually castrated, the testicles collected in a bucket so Mrs. Elliott could cook them up as Rocky Mountain oysters. The calf then got back up on its gangly legs and ran back to its mother, a little wary of further human contact. The photograph on page 274 in chapter 10 shows John castrating and Buck branding.

At its height, the combined herd of John Elliott and Josephine Lamb apparently comprised around five hundred cow-calf pairs. Like many

another rancher in the early 1900s, Elliott phased out the "southern heifers" he started with and began to run purebred Herefords, using Ross breeding bulls. These English cattle prefer succulent leafy plants to dry grass. Because of their metabolism, they store more fat than Longhorn or southern cattle, and as a result are more profitably fed than Longhorns on feedlot corn, a domesticated annual that had been planted to replace the native perennial grasses of the eastern prairie. If left on their own, most English cattle (though Herefords less so) will stay in one place and grub down the leafy forbs—the "ice cream plants"—until they disappear. As a result, the diversity and health of the grasslands suffer. Poorly adapted to dry pasturage, Herefords are drawn to water and nearby patches of succulent forbs—the parts of a range that most resemble England. They "bunch up" around creeks unless ranch hands, too often in short supply, move them around. The bunched-up cows' trampling and overgrazing degrade a riparian habitat. Unlike Longhorns, the British breeds also need to be fed in the winter on hay. For all their disadvantages, however, they were and are prized by both western ranchers and meatpackers. People in the United States prefer the taste of their tender marbled meat.

Some Livermore ranchers sold calves, others yearlings. Elliott was in the latter group. In the early days of the Elliott ranch, the "beef herd" (the cattle to be sold at market) would be trailed down in the fall from the Elliott Cow Camp in the high country—to the rail head at Owl Canyon. From there, it would be shipped to Denver, which, by 1910, had extensive meatpacking facilities. There the yearlings would be "finished" with grain and corn, sold at auction, slaughtered, and butchered.

Later, with the introduction of trucks, buyers picked up the beef cattle at the Elliott summer-range cow camp on the McIntyre. That they drove so far to acquire Elliott beef attested to the quality of his herd. The rest of the cattle, the "breeding herd," then remained on deeded land near the cow camp until the snow got too deep or there was no pasture left. Then they were trailed back down to the home ranch in Livermore. A week or two after the beef herd was shipped, Elliott got a check in the mail, the money he lived on for the rest of the year. If money ran out, he borrowed from the bank or waited to pay his bills until the next sale of the beef herd.

What was the calf's view of all this? Broco the calf did not like getting branded and castrated. He liked sucking milk from his mother and being licked by her. He liked horsing around, so to speak, with the other yearlings. The previous winter in Livermore was cold, and the dry hay the men fed him was not to his taste. In late spring, everybody left the familiar pastures and were put on the trail, which was mostly uphill. He did not have time to fill his belly, and he got "bullied" around by the horse riders. He enjoyed getting out of line and playing hide-and-seek in the timber. Broco was a playful steer. On the high summer range, he rarely saw men, roamed freely, and gathered with his friends by the streams. He ruminated in meadows of lush grasses or cooled off in the shade of the trees. There, he felt well indeed. One day he smelled snow in the air and felt the chill. Watching his mother, he knew it was time to leave. The horse rider put him, his mother, and his friends at the top of the trail. His mother "twisted first one ear and then the other and set her head at the homing angle." Broco followed the herd back to the home ranch, and after a time he was loaded onto a train.

He did not like the ride in the crowded railcar. When they arrived, he didn't like being herded up ramps and through the narrow chutes of the big building. Inside, he smelled blood and guts. He saw raw pieces of cow hanging from the ceiling. There was a man with the sledge hammer and a man with a big knife. The presence of death terrified Broco out of his senses. He had no way of grasping that the whole purpose of his life was to become steaks and prime rib.

Broco's end was not happy. Even so, his short life on the Elliott ranch included pleasurable days suited to his bovine nature and needs. Like other Elliott beef cattle, he was raised on the open grasslands of Livermore and the Laramie River valley. He pastured on grass and was able to move around outdoors in the fresh air.

After the sale of Elliott's yearlings, Broco was fattened up on corn before he was slaughtered. Modern calves and yearlings also graze out on pasture for part of their lives. But today, more than in Elliott's era, calf-fattening operations depend on corn, and corn is more costly, monetarily and environmentally, because it requires large quantities of artificial fertilizers, which are oil based.

The Rabbit Creek ranch was essentially a grass outfit with only modest hay production. Elliott did run superior meat-producing breeds, yet many of his methods, harking back to another era, were neither modern nor efficient, even though they seemed to make economic sense to him. Later, when advanced techniques were available, Elliott tended to ignore them, and Josephine followed suit.

The treatment of livestock on the Middle Rabbit was based on the values of traditional pastoralism—as is still the case on Livermore ranches today. Though devoted to the business side of his operation, Elliott did not treat a calf only as a machine for converting grass into meat. He did not share the agribusiness mentality. This does not mean his methods were necessarily more humane, but like the pastoralists of old, he did have close physical and emotional relations to his animals. That he knew each one of his cows is an example of such relations. Dwayne Lauridsen, who worked for John, told me, "He'd not see his cows for a month, and he'd come back and he'd recognize when even one cow was missing." Don Lamb told me, "He would carry veterinary supplies—his thread and needle and antiseptic—in his saddle bags, and if a cow lost her womb, he'd sew it back in right on the pasture." Elliott was also one of the old-time ranchers who permitted "open calving." His bulls always stayed with the breeding herd. He did not use a system of timed breeding to assure that his calves were born in a convenient two- or three-month window, during which they could be closely monitored and protected. Open calving was perhaps more natural, but also costly: the mortality rate for calves and cows was considerably higher. It is no wonder, then, that Elliott always carried a veterinary sewing kit when he rode the range.

His treatment of old cows also harked back to a previous era. Modern ranchers have them slaughtered for meat and other products, a practice called "culling the gummers," or cows whose teeth have worn down to the gum. Elliott's gummers eventually grew thin and feeble, finally collapsing in the field or getting stuck in a bog, where they would be eaten (sometimes alive) by coyotes, vultures, or other carnivores. One ecological benefit of letting them die in the pasture was the enrichment of the soil.

For the past seven thousand years—since the spread of animal domestication—humans have lived close to their food animals. People watched when livestock mated and gave birth, and they watched and participated in the killing of animals. In the past hundred years, this practice has changed, at least in the western world. Few people today have first-hand experience of the animals they eat, which is a fundamental shift in human culture, in human-animal relations. It has had far-reaching effects on how we think of food and how we treat the animals that supply it. In the United States, each person consumes an average of two hundred pounds of meat a year—an enormous amount by global standards. Yet only 2 percent of us live on farms or ranches. Our knowledge of the basics—where meat cuts come from on an animal and the methods by which an animal is raised, fed, and slaughtered—is sketchy. The procedures used in the slaughtering plants are hidden from most of us. Hamburger sells well not only because it is easy to chew, but also because ground-up meat disguises the fact that we are eating dead animals.

III

> Done irrigating, Lyle heads home across the shining field. He has a shovel on his shoulder that looks like a single wing.
>
> —James Galvin, *The Meadow*

The essence of Elliott's ranching philosophy was to let the land itself support the cattle, with as little human intervention as possible. Changeable weather and markets, however, necessitated a great deal of work. Droughts made grass and hay scarce. Blizzards came, and more hay was needed to feed the herd. If hay ran out, the Elliotts then had to pay out money for cottonseed cake to feed the animals.

Each cow needed on average between twenty and forty acres in the Rabbit Creek country. A cow had to eat ninety-five pounds of grass to produce five pounds of meat. A cow needed grass, summer and winter. Elliott cut hay on his Rabbit Creek and McIntyre cow camp meadows, trucking the hay from the latter down to Rabbit Creek for winter fodder. The haying areas were mostly "native meadows," wetter terrain where the water table was high and grass more abundant. When the grass got high enough, he would cut, windrow, and stack it. Many years he got two cuttings. After

haying, he pastured the cows on the short grass, and the next spring went over it with a harrow to break up cow pies so they would disintegrate and enrich the meadow. He never used chemical fertilizers. In summer, the herd fed exclusively on grass. In winter, if thick snow covered the ground, cows, unlike horses, were unable to paw through it to get at the winter grass. To survive they needed to be fed hay.

Elliott worked hard to improve the capacity of his meadows to yield grass and hay. He redirected creek water through ditches. When necessary, he got rid of beaver and their dams to increase stream flow into the irrigation channels. On the Middle Rabbit, he diverted water into his meadows from a half-mile upstream. He dug the narrow ditches with shovels and horse-drawn slips. George Stewart says that where boulders were in the way, Elliott built "flumes," little wooden aqueducts, to carry the water around them. According to Johnnie Boyle, Elliott ran one ditch along the dry upper edge of a meadow to make it wetter. He also put in a second ditch to drain the meadow when he wanted to hay it. When he and Josephine Lamb bought the Bollin-Fisk place in the early 1950s, he put in a labyrinthine series of channels to irrigate fields of alfalfa with water from the North Poudre. The system did not work well, but it showed how eager Elliott was to get winter fodder for his large herd.

Another means by which Elliott tried to step up yield in his meadows was to sow crested wheatgrass, another nonnative species from Eurasia. Unlike alfalfa, it grew well in dry conditions. This exotic, which still grows prolifically on the Middle Rabbit, became available to ranchers in the late 1920s. According to one northern Colorado stockman of the period, crested wheatgrass was the rage because it greened up earlier than native grasses and had a second growing season in the fall. Not only was it drought resistant, but when grubbed down by cattle, it grew back quickly. However, unlike native grasses, which it easily supplanted, it did not "cure" well: when it dried out in winter, it lost many of its nutrients, which also made it less nutritious to wildlife in the winter months. Ed Hansen told me that Elliott introduced crested wheatgrass on the Middle Rabbit because it burgeoned in the spring runoff, but that this species was one of the "least desirable" grasses.

In dry years, when hay and grass were in short supply, Elliott and Lamb fed the cows cottonseed cake, a by-product of the cotton industry that was inexpensive, yet highly nutritious when combined with winter grass.

Elliott's range enhancements ushered in changes to the ecology of the area, many of which persist. Although the Rabbit Creek ranch is today a state wildlife area, and the landscape at first sight appears natural and wild, a closer examination reveals that much of what we see is the result of human endeavor. One hundred thirty years of Euro-American industriousness have altered the soil, vegetation, and habitat in ways that are evident to the inquisitive eye.

A reminder of this alteration is the rusting binder lying in the meadow. Closer examination of this relic reveals it was originally designed to be drawn by a horse. At some point, adjustments were made so it could be pulled by a tractor. The conversion is emblematic of the two epochs that John Elliott's life spanned, the first in which transport vehicles and farm machinery were powered by horses, the second in which they were powered by internal combustion engines. His adoption of trucks and mechanized equipment for ranch work had an impact on the native meadows and dry pastures of Rabbit Creek country. Their "two-tracks" still mark the land, and some remain in use.

Trucks and tractors gave an expanded ability to manage the rolling natural terrain and to adapt it to human purposes. Already by the 1920s, Elliott had an automobile, an open touring car. In the late 1940s and in the 1950s, he had a Dodge Power Wagon, a 1947 John Deere tractor, a ton-and-a-half truck, a 1949 Bede tractor, and a John Deere mechanized baler (JiE). When Elliott and Jo Lamb trailed their herds to the high country, the Power Wagon did duty as chuck wagon. In one of her manuscripts, Jo underlines the superior reliability of the packhorse in adverse conditions. She wrote that "the chuck wagon–pick up outfit has been left in huge banks of snow down on Deadman Creek and the camp tender has been known to be afoot on several occasions." As a result, the cowhands went without dinner and bedrolls. She herself was the camp tender.

Elliott flirted with modernity, but he never fully embraced it. His neighbors noted that he did not invest much in equipment. He did not buy fertilizer and rarely purchased hay. He preferred to put his money in more land and cows. Jo Lamb had a saying, "Don't buy hay, buy more land," which reflected John's ranching philosophy. He never stopped using draft animals. Bill Knox, one of his helpers, remembered his saying, "If you can't do it with a horse, then there's no reason to do it." Elliott always had a

"Buck, raking hay, June 1940," Rabbit Creek ranch, with Twin Mountain in the background. Courtesy of Phil Elliott.

team ready, and he regularly used horse-drawn buck rakes and mowers. A striking photo from 1940 shows his son on a "buck rake" in front of Twin Mountain, just above the ranch house on the Middle Rabbit. Elliott loved horses and was not wholly comfortable with mechanization, yet old age compelled him to depend increasingly on automobiles and trucks.

As a rancher, John Elliott was held in respect by his peers. Evan Roberts, Wesley Swan, George Williams, Jack Goodwin, James Wagner, Duane McMurray, Sidney Tibbets, and John Boyle appreciated his skills as stockman, horseman, blacksmith, and entrepreneur. People acknowledged that he succeeded in keeping his ranch going through many adversities, personal, economic, and atmospheric.

Was John Elliott also a good steward of his land? This question is hard to answer. His range practices were shaped by the values of his era, the earlier half of the twentieth century. They were also dictated by weather, markets, and the state of his health. In good times, he was probably a reasonable steward. In bad times, he abused the land.

During the last decade of his life, local observers who had close dealings with Elliott noticed a decline in the quality of his herd and in the condition of his grasslands. Two reasons for these changes were the drought of 1953–54 and the heart trouble that afflicted him in those years. Another factor was his indifference to the principles of modern range science. Related to that indifference was his reliance, probably excessive, on range grass to feed his cattle in droughts when he should have been buying more hay for the herd. To do the work he had previously done himself, he was forced to pay ranch hands. Johnnie Boyle, who rode for him, told me that because Elliott feared running out of money, he did not hire the labor needed to maintain the ditches and flumes of his hay meadows. He may not have had enough help to rotate his herd between pastures and thus to allow adequate recovery of the grasses. "He didn't take care of the cattle. He had to hire a lot of help. One winter they were feeding them straw. Buck went up and said, 'You better feed them hay.' John said, 'Work for me.' Buck said, 'I won't unless you feed them hay.' He got to the point where he didn't put up much hay. . . . He should have been irrigating the hay meadows, but the ditches were not kept up."

Did the methods of early-twentieth-century ranching lead in the long term to overuse of the land? Some researchers claim this was the case. Because the range cattle business was marginal, stockgrowers attempted to increase profits by enlarging herd size. Combined with fickle weather and markets, this practice resulted in periods of overgrazing, a cycle to which the Elliott ranch was also subject. Terry Jordan, an authority on historical range practices, concludes that "herd size, almost invariably, soon surpassed the carrying capacity of the range in traditional ranching. By trampling, soil compaction, selective foraging, repeated close cropping of the grasses, and seriously overgrazing near sources of water and salt, cattle in excessive numbers typically eliminated the more palatable, accessible perennial floral species and diminished the growth and size of roots, reducing the variety and volume of the native vegetative growth." Because domestic stock stayed close to water, they caused erosion of stream banks, which speeded up water flow to the detriment of surrounding vegetation. Numerous studies have shown that the grazing of cattle on public grasslands in semiarid regions has turned them into deserts.

IV

The 1990s witnessed a major shift in land use in Livermore. This shift helps account for the present-day status of the former Elliott-Lamb rangelands on the Middle Rabbit, South Rabbit, and Lone Pine. The culture of the early-twentieth-century settlement to which the Elliotts belonged was based almost exclusively on stockraising by resident ranchers, who owned most of the land in Livermore. This ranching culture went through various phases after it achieved dominance in the late 1880s. In the twentieth century, for example, it took on a more modern aspect with increased mechanization and the use of range science.

In the latter part of the twentieth century, a newer wave of settlement in Livermore undermined the supremacy of the earlier ranching culture and began to supersede it. The newcomers were largely city people who had become affluent in the "new economy" of the 1990s. They came into the foothills intent on purchasing land and building houses. Many wanted vacation homes or second homes or acreage for a few horses. Taking advantage of the new demand, some Livermore ranchers sold their land to developers. The old ranches were cut up into rural subdivisions, scores of forty-acre "ranchettes." As a result, large pieces of Livermore ceased to be cattle range.

Unlike ranching settlers, the new emigrants do not make their living from the land as stockgrowers, which creates a very different way of holding, using, and perceiving the land. The confrontation between the old cattle culture and the new recreational culture has often been tense. Ranchers express their disdain of the new residents in a variety of colorful ways. A country and western song I heard on the radio depicts one nouveau settler as "all hat, all hat and no cattle, he can't ride a horse, he can't sit a saddle, he isn't at home on the range." A second example is less playful. The first part of James Galvin's novel *Fencing the Sky* (1999) is partly set in Livermore country. When a cowboy witnesses a developer chasing and harassing cattle on his all-terrain vehicle, he lassos the developer, accidentally killing him.

Tom Bragg is a man whose heritage goes back through a long line of mountain ranchers. I asked him why the new "rancheteers" have come. He answered: "They want to hide out in the pretty country . . . the people with money want beauty." Jacques Rieux, who first led me up the Middle Rabbit, confirmed this observation. Jacques runs horses on a small ranch

in Livermore. Concerning the new settlers, he said: "In the ranchette culture, though perhaps a result of a robust economy, the main impulse is not economic or agricultural, but aesthetic—the desire is to be away from cities, suburbs, and out in the middle of nature with no neighbors—so you own to enjoy a kind of hermitude and being away from man-made infrastructure, other houses, traffic, etc. The ranchette is not a mainstay, or usually even a part of making a living for the owner. With the big ranch, it is your livelihood. Lots of those who live in the ranchettes have a romanticized view of living out there, but end up resenting the distance from shopping and work."

These nouveau settlers are indeed heirs of a romantic nature aesthetic instilled by American painters and photographers of the Rockies, such as Thomas Moran, Albert Bierstadt, William Henry Hunt, Ansel Adams, and, in our own time, John Fielder. Enthralled by the panoramic West, the rancheteers build homes in places that offer expansive views. They revel in the nonurban landscape. They adore "wilderness."

Are these nature-loving settlers making a lighter footprint on the land than the traditional ranchers they are supplanting? Is a rural subdivision or ranchette community a more sustainable use of the land than stockgrazing? Once again, I asked Jacques Rieux. "Many rancheteers," he said, "know little about land management, and some end up trying to plant suburban grasses or they kill off a half-acre of prairie with Roundup. With roads, foundations, houses, etc. there is much more human tampering with the terrain and habitat. But the adverse effects of livestock overgrazing are much less. All things being equal . . . the large ranch that is well managed without overgrazing, affords less destruction than the ranchette subdivision."

What does the future hold in store for the land and landscapes of Livermore? The long-term environmental consequences of dissecting foothills terrain into ranchette parcels cannot be entirely foreseen, yet several effects are already noticeable. The invasion of people and their structures seem to favor the survival of "generalist" species—robins, magpies, dogs, and cats. These species thrive in the proximity of humans or come to depend on man-made changes in the natural world. The domestic cats that roam freely in ranchette subdivisions take a high toll

on the young of native bird and small-mammal species. These effects in turn result in the decline and disappearance of animals especially adapted to particular foothills habitats, such as bobcats, Preble's meadow jumping mice, Rufous-sided Towhees, and Blue-gray Gnatcatchers.

Another effect of rural housing sprawl is the suppression of wildfires: people fear for their houses, many of which are scattered through mountain forests. Prevention of the natural fire cycle, however, leads to overcrowding in the pine stands. Trees lose their vigor and become more susceptible to the destructive mountain pine beetle. All over the Eastern Slope, large stands of pine trees are dead or dying. The pretty forests people came to see end up being changed by the influx of people moving in to see them. The paradox of the observer again comes into play: the land is transformed by the way we look at it.

Wildfire suppression causes the unnatural buildup of biomass in woodland, enough to fuel megafires such as the Hayman conflagration west of Denver in 2002, which burned 138,000 acres. During severe summer droughts, catastrophic fires become more likely in forested uplands, especially where there are large dead stands of beetle-killed pine. Had recurrent wildfires been permitted to take their natural course, it is doubtful the Hayman megafire would have happened. In its ferocious intensity, a megafire destroys the deep organic substance of the land, sterilizing the soil. Whole ecosystems are locally destroyed and may not recover for decades, if ever.

Two other human encroachments on the foothills environment are evidently beyond local residents' control. First are the plans, currently afoot, to flood much of the valley of the North Poudre and a neighboring glade in order to create new reservoirs and expand old ones. This action is being taken to meet the water needs not only of agriculture, but of the burgeoning populations in Fort Collins and other Front Range cities.

Second is the inexorable warming of the Rocky Mountains—on average two degrees of Fahrenheit since the mid-1970s. This warming trend is almost certainly a result of the greenhouse gasses caused by human consumption of fossil fuels. If warming intensifies, as it apparently will, the northern foothills will become hotter and more arid. The native meadows of the Middle Rabbit will likely die out. The pine groves in the uplands of Rabbit Creek country will become more vulnerable to beetle kill, which up until now they have been spared. Another effect

of warming temperatures is that the snow pack in the high country melts so quickly that the water, rather than being stored and gradually released into the creeks and rivers, runs off with violence, not only causing serious erosion, but depriving meadows of the slow, steady moisture they need. The result is that more drought-resistant shrublands will supplant grasslands. The greater weather extremes associated with global warming can also be expected to affect Livermore. Longer droughts, on the one hand, and more frequent blizzards, on the other, will further damage the delicate habitats of the foothills and their wildlife. The record-breaking blizzards of 2003 and 2006 and the long drought that began in 2000 may be harbingers of things to come.

Apart from ecological changes, the latest wave of settlement has made a noticeable imprint on Livermore's once visually pristine landscapes.

Jo Lamb died in 1973, before the new settlements had visibly affected Livermore landscapes. We know she felt a strong attachment to the local terrain. Her pencil sketches of the scenery show that she was haunted by the beauty of ridgelines. What might she have thought of the changes in the landscape wrought in the past twenty years? To answer that question, I took the liberty of resurrecting her.

She appears in denim overalls. She is in her midsixties, looking quite vigorous and ready for an adventure. When I tell her about my project, she is intensely interested, but seems also a little uneasy. She asks me several searching questions—for example, who my informants are—and she inquires about the health of a close friend who is still alive.

I invite her to take a drive with me through Livermore country. Not used to being in the passenger seat, she asks me, politely enough, if she can drive. After some discussion, I convince her that she can better observe the changes in Livermore if she doesn't have to focus on the road.

We climb into my car and proceed up U.S. 287, through the glades and hogbacks of eastern Livermore. It is late autumn. Josephine immediately notices the two- and three-story trophy homes perched on ridges. She is astonished. In her day, there were no roads up to those points. I explain that people build houses there for the sake of the nature views, which have become as much of a commodity in Livermore as cattle. She finds this situation grimly ironic. "The placement of the houses," she

exclaims, "spoils the natural view." As we drive on, she notices several towers on the crests of hills. I explain they are for radio and cell phone transmission. I tell her what a cell phone is. As we drive farther, she comments on the lattice of roads cutting through the hills and overlaying an old Livermore ranch she knew.

V

People don't even ranch up there anymore—
it's just a big park for them to play in.

—Ray Roberts

Josephine looks bewildered, and she asks me what made so many Livermore ranchers give up their rangelands.

I explain how it became more difficult to earn a living on a medium-size grass outfit. "Even in your day," I remind her, "net earnings were meager. Since then, beef production costs and taxes have steadily risen." I quote a man who described cattle ranching in the foothills as "a continuous treadmill—you live off a line of credit." I remind her that the rangeland itself is worth millions. Some older ranchers want to give up the struggle. They want to sell out to a developer and enjoy a worry-free retirement.

If a landowner resists this temptation, he needs to figure out how to pass the ranch on to the next generation. The situation becomes difficult when one or two heirs who do not want a ranch insist on being bought out, which is typically the case. Even a sole heir who wants to continue must pay off the high inheritance taxes by selling a big chunk of the land, thus reducing the economic viability of the ranch as a family operation. Josephine nods in agreement. The likelihood of a Livermore ranch staying in the family has become small. Between 1990 and 2007 (the date of this writing), lower beef consumption in the nation further undercut ranchers' profits. At the same time, prices for rangeland rose steeply because of demand by ranchette buyers. This situation, which made it impossible for stockgrowers to increase earnings by expanding their operation, encouraged the sell-off of old ranches to developers. In the past twenty-five years, I tell her, one and a half million acres of rangeland in Colorado have been lost in this way.

I tell Jo that one day I was talking to an old rancher who grew up in Livermore and knew her and John Elliott. I asked him why he wanted to ranch when he might become an instant millionaire by selling to a developer. Duane McMurray replied: "I never did have much money. I really loved ranching. I could sell out, but it's my life. I don't care to travel. I'm trying to get my son . . . I'm hoping. . . . maybe they'll get by without having to sell the ranch. . . . To me this is my life. . . . I climbed these hills like a mountain goat for all these years."

The sale of the old ranches in Livermore, I tell Jo, marks the end of a way of life. She nods. Some of those lands have been in the same family three and four generations. They are places of memory and the center of family tradition, not only for those who live there, but also for relatives who moved away and yet remember the reunions, cattle drives, roundups, and dances of their youth. We drive on in silence.

The Elliott and Lamb ranches have also passed out of the hands of their immediate families. The possession of land laboriously acquired over decades turned out to be short-lived. As we already know, John Elliott sold the Middle Rabbit parcel in 1943 to the Hansens. The new owners eventually renamed it the Circle Ranch. When Elliott died in 1961, he did not leave the rest of his Livermore holdings to his son—for reasons I take up in a later chapter. He left them to his wife, Ida, but in an estate trust. He named Josephine Lamb and a local bank the cotrustees of the estate, and he put her, not his son, in charge of day-to-day ranch operations. Before the end of the year in which Elliott died, Lamb bought from the estate the Lone Pine ranch and other Livermore parcels she had co-owned with John Elliott.

Josephine died suddenly in 1973, leaving no will. She did, however, leave behind dozens of heirs, which meant the ranch had to be sold. In 1975, the Colorado Division of Wildlife bought the Josephine Lamb Ranch, formerly the Elliotts' Lone Pine holding, and made it into a public game reserve. Twenty-five years later, in the year 2000, the Hansens also sold to the Division of Wildlife the part of their Circle Ranch that was formerly the Elliotts' Rabbit Creek range. As a result of these Division of Wildlife purchases, the original Elliott-Lamb holdings in Livermore were joined together again as a single entity, comprising

a large expanse of hills and meadows between the Cherokee Park and Red Feather Lakes roads. In this way, the rangelands of the old Elliott ranch were spared the fate of becoming a rural subdivision.

The return of the old Elliott-Lamb holdings to the public domain is not an isolated event, but reflects a growing citizens' movement in Larimer County to protect the integrity of the foothills environment and the beauty of its landscapes and "sight lines." The push by developers to buy up rangeland in Livermore in the 1990s became the inspiration for private and government-sponsored initiatives to save the remaining foothills from development. The rescue efforts, taking many forms, have had a significant and lasting impact. Many wide meadows and scenic uplands of the Livermore valley have been preserved. The Division of Wildlife's purchase of the old Middle Rabbit and Lone Pine holdings are only two examples of such preservation. The Nature Conservancy acquired Phantom Canyon, a former rangeland that lies along the North Poudre, four miles northeast of the Middle Rabbit. Between 1996 and the time of writing, the Larimer County Open Lands program has bought several former rangelands and protected them from development. In addition, various private groups, land trusts, and governmental bodies have crafted "conservation easements" to help maintain local stockgrowing operations, such as the Roberts Ranch. These agreements allow ranches to claim extensive tax credits based on the size of their holdings. In exchange, the owners and later buyers agree never to sell to developers, but to maintain the land for stockgrowing. The use of conservation easements in Colorado has received international attention because it is an effective and innovative means of land preservation in the face of rampant development. Northern Colorado is in the vanguard of this movement.

Back on our imaginary drive, Josephine asks me to take her to the Middle Rabbit valley, where she lived so many years. Turning west on Cherokee Park Road—miraculously still a dirt road—we cross the North Poudre half a mile downstream from where it pours out of a deep romantic chasm, Phantom Canyon. Then the curving lane takes us up

Calloway Hill. At the summit, we stop to admire the sweeping view that opens before our eyes—a country of hills, granite outcrops, and creeks, and, farther away, the "Baldies" and the snow-crested, high moraine of Prairie Divide. Directly below us curves the beautiful valley of the North Rabbit.

We take the steep road down into the North Rabbit valley. Of the hamlet of Alford, nothing remains. At the parking lot for the Cherokee State Wildlife Area, Rabbit Creek Unit, we get out of the car. Signs at the trailhead give opening times and the rules and restrictions of access for hunters and nonhunters. We begin the two-mile amble to the ranch house on the Middle Rabbit. Near the trailhead, we get an unlikely view of Twin Mountain.

Josephine notes that the old two-track that followed the North Rabbit has been turned into a graded dirt road with sturdy culverts. I explain that one branch of this road extends all the way to the Lone Pine, and the other one, which we will take, leads to the old Elliott ranch house. In the distance we catch sight of a small herd of bighorns climbing the saddle behind Symbol Rock. We drop down to the Middle Rabbit, where I want to show Josephine the carcass of an ancient pickup truck, probably from the 1920s, half-buried in the alluvial sands. On the way down, Josephine bends over a large anthill to look for Indian beads.

As we move on, she tells me she is relieved that the valley has not become a housing development, yet she regrets that there is no longer a ranching operation here. She brightens up, however, when we see a small bunch of Longhorns moving down the meadow southwest of the old ranch house. I explain that the Division of Wildlife allows limited grazing by local stockgrowers to keep the meadows from being taken over by brush and woody plants. Just east of the old ranch house that she knew so well, we come upon a tree nursery—the sign reads "Elliott Homestead Habitat Planting 2006."

We approach the house. The wood fences have been pulled down and, along with the remains of collapsed sheds, have been bulldozed into a large pile. Yet the old building still stands. Josephine ponders the scene in silence. We go indoors—cow pies cover the floor of Ida's parlor. Back outside, I point to a wood armrest and other fragments of furniture lying on the ground next to a clump of matrimony vine. Josephine says, "Why, that is a remnant of John Elliott's favorite chair—those

Close-up of the Elliott ranch house on Rabbit Creek, August 2006, now part of the Cherokee State Wildlife Area. Pieces of the old chair, seen intact in photo on page 66, are in the foreground. The shrubs are matrimony vine. Photograph by Jon Thiem.

cows are no respecters of furniture." It was the same chair that had been sitting upright and intact in the doorway when I first came to the ranch in 1997.

The wood pieces on the ground will take a long time to rot. Eventually, though, they will become humus and then grass, and the grass seed will feed the ants that still have their mounds on land that once was the Rabbit Creek ranch.

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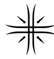
◆ NINE ◆

A Livermore Home Companion

[M]y dear Mrs. Casaubon . . . character is not cut in marble—it is not something solid and unalterable.

—George Eliot, *Middlemarch*



John's death in 1961 brought to an end a marriage that had lasted fifty-two years. When he died, Mrs. Elliott was eighty-six and bedridden. It is doubtful she attended the funeral. In any case, she was in no condition to stay at the old Livermore Hotel, where the three ranchers were by then living. Josephine tried to take care of her, but the two women could not get along. So, like her husband, Ida was taken to Fort Collins to stay with Jo's sister Del Glass, who gave her nursing care. Then Buck and Helen took her in. Helen had also trained as a nurse, and she doted on her mother-in-law. Ida was soon out of bed and moving around with a walker. She grieved deeply for her husband in spite of all she had been through. In her bedroom, she kept a framed photograph of John, the one with the dog and Symbol Rock in the background. Was it a sign that she loved him to the last?

After his death, the hair on her chin grew into a small goatee. One person remembered her as "a tiny little lady, quiet," another as "always retreating into the background." When Buck and Helen threw a birthday party for her in old age—it was probably her ninetieth—some of those

invited were surprised to learn she was still alive. Diminished as she was, Ida was a survivor.

Marriage was the great divide for her. Before marriage, she had been a traveler, a photographer of the West, a woman who went out of her way to see people. After marriage, the last two-thirds of her life, a transformation occurred in her character. Except for trips to Nebraska to visit family, she no longer traveled. Her photographer's gift went into family record keeping. She had much less contact with people. When Virginia Robin, a Lamb niece, visited in 1951, Ida told her she had not been to town in twenty years. As to Livermore social gatherings, an acquaintance summed it up this way: "Elliotts just plain didn't go anywhere." Ida was isolated. This same woman, who visited Ida on the Lone Pine, said, "I knew she needed company" (SN).

With Ida's marriage and especially with her move to Rabbit Creek, the fundamental conditions of her existence changed. She became a ranch woman. She became a mother and a matron, the overseer of her own domestic establishment. All of these things tied her to one place, which partly explains her isolation, a chronic situation of ranch women in the mountains. Ida had chosen to define herself—or let herself be defined—almost exclusively as a homemaker. As a result, she became increasingly homebound.

This chapter concentrates on Ida's houses, on her homemaking from her middle years to old age. It calls attention to the interiors of the past. Although Ida's housekeeping reflects to some extent the domestic practices of the rural mountain culture in the early twentieth century, it is also a revelation of her character in married life. Domesticity is almost the only lens we have for understanding Ida's preoccupations and distinctive responses to her situation in the last two-thirds of her life. In the Elliotts' first two Livermore houses, Ida created a personal world of her own through the choices she made in decorating, gardening, preparing food, cooking, and other daily routines.

The conquest of the West gets a great deal of print, but home life little. Yet to reach the heart of the West, one needs to know what mountain ranchers were doing under their roofs, not just under the open sky. Mountain life was not only rodeos, cattle drives, bear hunting, and romances of the summer range. The real story of the West was the completion of a thousand mundane tasks that slowly built up and became

the substance of daily lives. To present these tasks is to recognize Ida for who she was and what she did.

I call her "Ida" because I am searching for the woman behind the mask of "Mrs. Elliott." It is easier to find the rancher's wife, though, than to find Ida herself.

How did Ida Meyer imagine Mrs. Elliott? What assumptions about wifehood and motherhood did she bring to marriage? It is possible to make an educated guess based on Ida's upbringing, the prevalent beliefs of her time, and what we know of the role she actually played in the home.

As a girl, Ida was exposed to the conceptions of home life that prevailed in late Victorian America. Her upbringing was both rural and urban, so she knew different kinds of domestic settings. Her farm background and position as eldest daughter (helping raise the younger children) were excellent preparation for becoming a mother. "Country-bred," she knew the gritty side of the barnyard: the breeding, feeding, and slaughter of farm animals. From her mother, she learned cooking, sewing, cleaning, washing, and canning. As a young woman, she moved to Lincoln, where her family's lifestyle and milieu became urban middle class, with an emphasis on domestic civility and comfort. From a photograph of her mother's dining room in Lincoln, one can infer that meals took place in a clean and decorous setting and that careful food preparation was paramount. The pattern of Ida's life in the West suggests that her domestic values were midwestern, agrarian, and middle class—a complex mix of experiences and ideals.

When Ida came of age, the married woman's life purpose, as presented by social commentators of the time, was to be a "civilizer": to make a respectable home for her husband and to ensure the moral education of her children. Enjoyment of love and companionship were not the main goals of marriage. Ida's late entry into married life indicates she may have had doubts about the Victorian role model of a wife. Nevertheless, once she did marry, she conformed to it—in most ways, that is.

It is likely that Ida's domestic tastes and her self-image as wife and housekeeper were influenced by women's magazines devoted to home life. These magazines were immensely popular in the late 1800s and early 1900s. The oldest and most widely read of them was the *Woman's*

Home Companion. It inspired the title of this chapter and was the precursor of the *Ladies' Home Journal*. Begun in 1873, the year before Ida was born, it continued until 1957, making it almost coextensive with her life. In the early decades, the magazine's editors targeted an audience of rural women. *Woman's Home Companion* offered recipes, fashion plates, and advice on housekeeping, thrift, and domestic hygiene. Through its advertisements and articles, the magazine would have introduced Ida to the latest labor-saving devices and to an emerging consumer culture for women. In its pages, she would have encountered divergent images of a woman's role. Should the homemaker emulate the Victorian ideal of "angel of the house"? Or should she be more of a "helpmate"? Or should she become a "new woman," devoted to women's rights and acting as her husband's companion rather than as his servant?

Ida chose the Victorian pattern. She was her own home companion more than she ever was John's. The two of them lived in separate worlds. If Ida endeavored to "civilize" John and make him a devotee of home life, she had no easy time of it. One of Ida's early Rabbit Creek photographs is moving because it celebrates a domestic John Elliott—comfortably seated in the parlor, reading. But the habits of the bachelor cowboy were ingrained in him. It was only in his last days, when he was fatally ill and staying in Fort Collins, that he made some sort of peace with domestic decorum, quietly watching TV, being polite, not cursing. Even then, he chose to eat alone rather than with Del Glass and her family (JC).

John and Jo did not easily adapt to the ethos and conventions of genteel indoor life. After a visit to Ida at the Lone Pine in 1945, the immaculate Helen Elliott wrote in her diary that Josephine walked into the room with "dirty stinking bare feet." In those days, Jo did not exhibit a parlor-room persona. She was earthy, rooted in the soil, and she didn't mind flaunting it, even at age forty-seven. Her torn dresses and John's snarling dogs under the table gave the household a wild aura.

Only Buck shared in some measure Ida's domestic concerns. He was raised a cowboy, and he was rough, yet mother and son were close. In two letters of his boyhood, he writes about flowers and about his mother's gardening and hanging new wallpaper. In character, if not looks, he was like her and considerate in his manners. As with her, there hung about him an air of quiet resignation. It is probably not an accident that

the woman he finally married proved to be, in the realm of homemaking, a perfectionist.

Houses

To understand Ida's domestic world it is important to locate and picture her physical habitations. The Elliotts and Miss Lamb lived in three different houses successively; they are identified on the Livermore map in the introduction. All were built by other people. The decisions about where they lived were most likely John's, not Ida's, yet she worked hard to make these places her own, especially the first house on Rabbit Creek, where the Elliotts lived for thirty-three years, until 1943. After they moved out, no one lived there again as permanent residents, which meant that when I stumbled on the abandoned building in 1997, vestiges of Ida's interior decoration were still visible.

When Ida, John, and Jo left Rabbit Creek in 1943, they moved down to Lone Pine Creek on the southern part of their Livermore ranch. There they lived for ten years. The house was six miles (by rough track) south of the Rabbit Creek house, but only a mile off the main road—the Red Feather Lakes Road—and only six miles from Livermore proper. In 1953, they moved again, this time into the old Livermore Hotel, which had long ceased to be a hotel. John lived there almost up to his death in 1961. Ida left the hotel shortly thereafter, but Josephine stayed until 1973, the year of her death. The former hotel, the last residence where the three lived together, was the heart of "new Livermore," established in 1890 with the building of the roadhouse and general store/post office. These buildings still stand where the main road crosses the North Poudre, two miles west of the small population center of modern Livermore.

As Ida, John, and Jo grew older and changed houses, they moved closer to civilization. From the former hotel, John and Josephine drove a mere two miles down the road to the Forks Hotel to buy ice cream in the summer.

At Rabbit Creek and on the Lone Pine, the physical amenities were spare. Between 1900 and 1920 in urban America, labor-saving devices such as gas stoves, hot and cold running water, indoor bathrooms, iceboxes, and vacuum cleaners became familiar household items. But there were none of these things at the Elliotts. For forty-three years, they lived

in houses without electricity, central heating, or indoor plumbing. To relieve themselves, they braved the cold and went to the outhouse. A Lamb niece told me that in winter on the Lone Pine, that walk was indeed long. On Rabbit Creek, Ida hauled water in buckets from the well. The construction and setting of their houses made their lives more elemental than ours. They lived closer to the earth and stars. City lights did not wash out the night sky, and the Milky Way seemed closer than their next neighbor.

The Rabbit Creek house stood a hundred feet south of a slight bend in the stream and so was protected on the north by cottonwoods. Viola Moore, who as a little girl visited Ida in the 1920s, fondly recalled the siting of the house, "a beautiful place, everything was beautiful—lots of trees." The wood-framed house was one story, a ranch house in every sense. (The frontispiece and the photograph on page 68 in chapter 3 offer a view of the building then; the photograph on page 228 in chapter 8 shows it in August 2006.) The L-shaped structure with its gabled roofs was probably built by Charles Bush around the turn of the century. The south side of the house, dramatically breached by two doors and three large windows, captured the warmth of the sun in winter. For Ida, it was like living in a picture gallery, with each window or doorway offering a slightly different view of the striking southern landscape, five views that shifted depending on which room she was in, changing with the seasons, winter, spring, summer, and fall, changing every hour with the time of day, morning or afternoon, twilight or moonlight.

Compared to the Rabbit Creek dwelling, the one-story house on the Lone Pine into which they moved in 1943 was a make-shift affair, cramped, poorly built, and porchless. The building site was the old Ismert ranch that John had purchased years earlier. Low granite cliffs cut by the creek sheltered the site on the north, but there was no place to live, only a dugout and a one-room log cabin. There was also a handsome old horse barn with calving shed, hay loft, and adjacent corrals. To remedy the situation, John bought two disused buildings in Wyoming and moved them to a plot just east of the barn and corral. He cut doorways between them for an interior passage. Cracks in the walls gaped half-an-inch wide. A hummingbird could have flown in one end of the house and out the other even with all the doors and windows closed. Each half of the house had a stove, but the bedrooms were unheated.

On a cold winter morning, a pot of water left on the stove in the living room was covered with a skin of ice. “Mrs. Elliott had a rough time that way,” Owen Lamb remembered. There was no fence around the house. As a boy, Owen feared that an enormous bull walking nearby was going to come right through the window.

The Elliott house on the Lone Pine was torn down in the 1970s by the Division of Wildlife after it purchased the Lone Pine ranch from Jo Lamb’s estate. In the early 2000s, the beautiful historic barn burned down. In 2006, John Elliott’s cattle-loading chute, a mile up from the house site, was razed. As of this writing, the old cabin is the only structure that remains standing on the Ismert-Elliott site. A small miracle.

The way to the Elliotts’ Lone Pine home from the main road was down a steep mile-long dirt track. In snow or heavy rain, the track became impassible, and Josephine could not get her car out to drive to school—one reason our three residents decided to move to the old Livermore Hotel, which lay directly on the main road. The same road that young John Elliott plied as a freighter between Fort Collins and the high country, including the Laramie River valley, North Park, and Steamboat Springs. The same road that Ida, when she worked at the hotel, kept her eye on, ready to run inside and put her pies in the oven when she saw the next stage coach come over the hill.

The three ranchers moved into the old hotel building in 1953. They kept the Lone Pine house and surrounding rangeland, but the new address now became official headquarters of their “home ranch.”

The old Livermore Hotel had not been used as a hotel since the mid-1920s. The two-story, Victorian-style structure was situated among large shade trees on the west bank of the North Poudre River. Ida had taken a photograph of the hotel in 1897, when it was still relatively new (see photograph on page 45 in chapter 2). Wide, covered verandahs on each story shaded the south-facing facade and offered fine views of Greyrock Mountain. These great porches make the structure immediately recognizable. When the Elliotts and Josephine moved in, the building had five bedrooms upstairs and a spacious dining room—where Ida once waited tables—a large kitchen, and two sizeable front rooms downstairs. After the cramped quarters on the Lone Pine, Ida probably felt awash in all this space, four thousand square feet of it. But now she could barely walk, so the abundance of living area was of little

use to her, or to John and Josephine either, for the building lacked central heat. As a result, the ranchers closed off the old dining hall and the southeast front room where Josephine stored her numerous collections. The large kitchen, heated by a wood-burning cookstove, became their parlor and dining room.

To outsiders, the old house and its three odd residents seemed like something out of a Gothic novel. The place was run-down, the paint peeling, the porches sagging. Inside it was spooky. Richard Swan remembered going there as a boy to see Miss Lamb. "They didn't want to let you in—they'd let you in the kitchen at the most—it was curious." He remembered the darkness of the interior and how Mrs. Elliott sat in the shadows. A trapper whom Josephine regularly employed said, "It was at least two years before I got to see the kitchen." Apart from the kitchen, the other common rooms of the old hotel became mausoleums of the household objects of bygone years. Jo's niece Kay Quan remembered a "jumble of old saddles, books, papers, antique lamps, brass beds and furniture, a collection of arrowheads, and underneath the lot, the old Wheelock piano."

Yet all was not gloom for Ida. To her delight, Jo's nieces and nephews often visited, and sometimes the whole Lamb clan descended on the house. These merry young Lambs adored Ida. She talked to them, baked them cookies, played card games, and told stories. Mothering them was a pleasure.

Of the three Livermore homes that were in some sense Ida's, the first became a ruin, and the second was bulldozed by the Division of Wildlife after it bought the property. Her third and last residence in Livermore had a happier fate. Kay and Tom Quan bought the decaying hotel in 1989 and have restored it. Inside it, Kay has displayed memorabilia from the lives of her aunt Josephine Lamb and the Elliotts, including an ornate English serving platter from the roadhouse days and Ida's "creamer," a heavy stoneware pitcher that kept its contents cool.

In 2001, after a lengthy effort by the Quans, the hotel was placed on the National Register of Historic Places. I believe that Ida and Josephine would have been pleased. After the ceremony, in the old dining room of the hotel where Ida Meyer had worked, Deborah and I gave a slide lecture to the Livermore Woman's Club that we called "Ida's Domestic World." That talk was the seed out of which the following inquiry grew.

The rest of this chapter is a little tour of Ida's world, organized around the rooms of her home on Rabbit Creek. Before stepping into her house, however, we need to walk around the ranch yard and garden, which were important parts of her domain.

Yard and Garden

The oil painting of Rabbit Creek Ranch reproduced in the frontispiece is attributed to Jo Lamb. Probably made in the late 1910s or in the early 1920s, it has passed down from generation to generation in the Elliott family. The picture offers an exceptionally serene view of the ranch yard. There is no activity at all, a result of the artist's decision to exclude people and animals from the scene. The effect is uncanny given the actual purposes of the house, corrals, and stalls. The upper section depicts Symbol Rock. When I compared the painting to a photograph I took from about the same angle, it was clear that the artist exaggerated the immensity of the rock formation, thereby making the human structures seem smaller. The lower part of the painting focuses on the house and yard, which lie along the Rabbit. The creek itself, invisible yet evident in the curving line of bare winter cottonwoods, is the boundary between the natural and human worlds. The house, a plank bridge, the outbuildings, the red-roofed loafing shed displaying Elliott's 3X brand, and the corral form the border of the ranch yard. A visible path curves through the yard. The embracing semicircle of the yard contrasts with the wild juniper slope and the forbidding naked rock that holds sway in the upper regions. The composition seems to explore the precarious balance that existed between the natural world and the domestic side of the ranch.

Ida's early photos give us a more vital account of the ranch yard at Rabbit Creek. In one of the earliest, from the summer of 1911, baby Buck sits in a perambulator in the yard, close to the porch. Near a shed one can make out a bevy of Ida's hens. For a child, the ranch yard was an exciting place. In another photo, little Buck and a goose are watching seven cats bunched up together eating from a pan. Yet another yard shot shows a flock of geese, the wood pile, and a clothes line hung with laundry. All sorts of things happened in the yard. The baby deer that Buck's father tamed might come around. Buck's mother might milk a cow. Owen Lamb remembered that when he was a boy, Ida would "call

the milk cows . . . she'd take her little stool . . . she'd milk the cow out in the open." Don Lamb remembered that "she didn't use a stanchion in milking. She placed her head in the hollow of the flank. She strip milked. She spit on her hand—it's got to be slick or the cow'll kick you out. She'd talk to them."

There was plenty to watch: horse shoeing, wood splitting, butter churning, the hitching of horse to wagon. Big tubs of steaming water would sometimes be brought out, turning the yard into a laundry room, and Ida would wash and rinse. If you were lucky, you might see the guinea fowl gather round a hapless rattlesnake and peck it to death. Margaret Ann McLean remembered that "Mrs. Elliott said the guinea hens were better than a watch dog." They screamed at rattlers and coyotes. "She had a great respect for the guinea hen." Ida also let the "little bannie chickens" run free in the yard to keep the insect population down.

Her "yard" was nothing like the verdant lawns of suburbia. There was no Kentucky bluegrass. Instead, tough grasses and weeds covered the ground where it was not hardpack. The yard was the place where buggies, wagons, or cars pulled in close to the house and where visitors' horses were hitched. It smelled richly of horse manure and cow pies, especially after spring rains.

The shape of the yard was determined by the arrangement of outbuildings and fences: cow stall, horse barn, corral, loafing shed, root cellar, hen coop, meat house, smokehouse, and privy. Over time, the layout changed: old buildings were moved into different positions or torn down, and new ones went up. This change is evident from historic photographs. By the 1930s, the Elliotts' barns and corrals covered, in the words of Mary Clare Wetzler, "the length of a city block."

Although the yard lay outdoors, it was an integral part of the domestic realm. "Mrs. Elliott did all the labor around the ranch house and yard," remembered Mary Ann McLean. The space between house and outbuildings was the arena of "back and forth." If Jo's nieces visited Rabbit Creek, Ida enjoyed taking them to the root cellar, to the spring-fed well to get buckets of water, to the henhouse to feed the chickens and gather eggs, and to the pasture when it was time to bring in the cows. She walked ahead of them because of rattlesnakes. If she saw one, she beat it to death with a staff she always carried with her (MCW). There was not a day in which she did not cross the yard, fetching wood, water, spuds, ice, mason jars, a deer

Ida Elliott seated on a log in a ranch yard, probably Rabbit Creek in the 1920s. Photograph by John Elliott. Courtesy of Phil Elliott.

haunch, eggs, what you will. The hens produced many more eggs than the family could eat, so on occasion Ida gave Jo the excess, usually ten dozen, to sell to the Poudre Valley Dairy in Fort Collins.

A photo from the 1920s gives us a rare view of Ida in the ranch yard, seated on a log in front of an outbuilding (the smokehouse?). The photographer, whose shadow can be seen, is her husband. Ida is wearing a plain, loose dress, well suited for working in the yard and garden. Her hair is

unkempt and her expression disgruntled, perhaps because the sun is in her eyes. Don Lamb remembered that in the 1940s Ida always wore the same practical outfit when she did chores: a long calico dress and First World War leather army boots, the laces of which she left untied.

The things that took place in the yard are a reminder of the essential rawness of domestic life on a ranch of that period. Buck might see a bull mounting a cow there or a yearling steer being butchered or a dead deer hanging under the eaves to cure. The apprehension of death formed part of the Elliotts' daily experience. Calves froze in blizzards or came out of the womb stillborn. The elk they shot was dressed out on the spot, and the parts were lugged back to the meat house. An old cow died in the near pasture. John Elliott hung a cow skull on the side of a shed facing the yard. Memento mori, Livermore style.

Ida was in intimate contact with the animals that became her family's food. Just as the rancher had to have maternal qualities to raise calves, so the ranch woman had to be tough as nails to feed her family. Ida was known for her gentle ways, yet she was not one to faint at the sight of blood. She shot raccoons that threatened her chickens. To make Sunday dinner she wrung a chicken's neck and plucked the feathers by hand. She knew what she was eating.

The yard was by no means all dust, gore, and hung meat. Flowers bloomed in their season, and the intense blue sky of Livermore formed a dome over the ranch. Yet the contrast of the somber animal skulls hung on stalls and the sparkling blossoms bordering the yard sharply evokes the extremes that made up Ida's world.

She was fond of flowers. Country women in the arid West found them consoling. The first crocus broke winter's spell, and soon the native spring beauties and pasqueflowers came, scattering their pinks and lavenders over the dreary tans and grays of the countryside.

In front of the Rabbit Creek house, Ida fenced a piece of ground for a lawn and flowers; it was a safe place for Buck to play in. The wood poles and wire fencing are visible in the oil painting and early photos. Here, Ida grew purple iris and fragrant lilacs. They were still blossoming in the years after I discovered Rabbit Creek. Petunias and pansies were also popular among Livermore ranch women. A Lamb nephew remembered four o'clocks—which Ida favored for their pink, red, and white flowers and their large, easily stored seeds—as well as Iceland poppies and

Chinese asters. Middle Rabbit Creek was in the sticks, but the flower patch had a cosmopolitan air. As a boy, Buck himself planted fuchsia. Of his mother's hollyhocks he wrote, "they sure are pretty."

On a warm day in August, I hike in to the Rabbit Creek house. Close to the southeast corner is a shrub I had not seen before, the spiny stalks bending in a graceful arc. Delicate flowers, lavender and five petaled, peek out of the leaf axils like little stars. The plant looks like an ornamental rather than a native, yet the flowers resemble those of the tomato. In my shrub book, the plant most resembling it is "the Duke of Argyll's tea tree." The botanical name, *Lycium barbarum*, literally means "the foreign plant from Lycia" (in Turkey). How had Ida gotten a hold of a Turkish shrub? The Duke of Argyll probably introduced it to Great Britain, and from there it followed immigrants to North America. Donna Bathory keyed the plant out for me in another book, and we learned that in the West the shrub is called matrimony vine (or sometimes wolfberry). I wondered about the name "matrimony vine," so I called Don Hazlett, a local ethnobotanist. The plant, he said, flourishes around abandoned homesteads. When the settlers came west, they did not know what might grow. They scattered around their houses a variety of exotic seeds, hoping some would thrive. Matrimony vine was one of them. Newlyweds may have planted it for good luck. The Elliotts moved to Rabbit Creek ranch a little more than a year after their wedding. Did Ida plant this flower to bless her new household? In the photograph on page 228 (chapter 8), the plant's distinctive stalks can be seen.

Unlike the flowerbed, Ida's kitchen garden did not abut the ranch yard, but was situated a quarter-mile east of the house on level ground that adjoined the south side of the creek. There it received plenty of sun and water. The garden covered a quarter-acre. Buck helped his mother with the watering and weeding; otherwise, Ida did all the work herself. She was a zealous gardener. It was a good thing, too: her vegetables sustained the family in hard times.

Because of the altitude, sixty-three hundred feet, the growing season was not long. Ida planted after Memorial Day, and first frost struck in

mid-September or earlier. Nevertheless, she succeeded in growing red beets, carrots, turnips, parsnips, onions, cabbages, chard, green beans, and peas. On one side of the kitchen garden, she grew sweet corn, and on the other she planted her potato patch. In a letter, Buck mentioned "spuds big as a tea cup." The short season made it difficult for tomatoes, so Ida looked for varieties that ripened early.

I talked to a ranch woman who at age ten with her father and sister had visited Mrs. Elliott in the mid-1920s. They came to help Mrs. Elliott harvest potatoes. Mr. Elliott was not around. Her father, the ranch woman told me, hated farming. He was a diehard cowman, but he wanted to help Mrs. Elliott. He and Ida used a horse-drawn plow to bring the potatoes up out of the earth. He guided the plow while she walked beside the horse and led it. The girl and her sister collected the potatoes. Mrs. Elliott gave the rancher several sacks of spuds, and he put them on the running board of his car. One of the sacks fell off during the drive home. Louis Munz, another Elliott neighbor, found the sack and accused the rancher of having become a farmer.

After the seasons of planting, weeding, and harvest, Ida needed to store the produce so that the family could enjoy her bounty through winter and spring. Apples and potatoes were carefully placed in barrels and sacks and stowed in the root cellar, and other tubers were buried in sand. Fruits and vegetables were cooked and put up in mason jars. The development of home canning in the mid–nineteenth century was a boon to anyone who lived from their garden. Ranchers' diet became more nutritious, even exotic, which is an apt word for the experience of eating a sweet ripe peach in midwinter. Yet canning was a sticky, sweaty, tedious business, and Ida did it all herself. A contemporary of Ida's wrote in 1909 to a Wyoming friend, "I've jellied, jammed, pickled and spiced until I'm tired, but it's a satisfaction to have it all in the cellar."

When I first visited the abandoned ranch in 1997, I found two root cellars. One, farther from the house, had a caved-in roof and may have been the potato cellar. The other, with roof more or less intact, bordered the ranch yard. It was a rectangular excavation, five feet by twelve, that had a wooden roof covered with soil. I had to slide down into the cellar. The dirt floor was littered with the shattered glass of Ida's mason jars. Only one or two were still unbroken.

The purpose of another structure I found on Rabbit Creek was at

first glance a mystery to me. It was above ground: a windowless chamber eight feet long, six feet wide. A thin layer of cement coated the thick interior walls, and the heavy door was stuffed with dried vegetation. Everything was intact, and the building, which joined the henhouse, abutted the ranch yard. Then I noticed a little sawdust, and it dawned on me that this was the Elliotts' icehouse, usually called the "meat house," where, in effect, they "refrigerated" their meat. In its day, the room was stacked with ice "cakes," each one roughly two feet square. To slow the melting, the cakes were covered with sawdust so they would last through summer and fall. Above the ice, quarters of venison and beef hung from hooks that slid along rails on the ceiling. The meat house stood thirty feet from the kitchen, a convenient location for Ida. John probably cut and hauled the ice cakes out of the beaver pools downstream from the house. From his freighting days, he knew ice—how to cut, haul, and store it.

Some meat was treated in the smokehouse, the site of which I have not found. As for Ida's cheeses, she kept them fresh in summertime by wrapping them in cloth and lowering them in buckets into the cold creek.

Not all of their food came from the ranch. Staples such as flour, beans, sugar, salt, bacon, and coffee were hauled up from town, as were assorted canned goods. Unlike many ranchers, the Elliotts did not keep a pig, but bought their pork in town. In the age of horse transportation, it took three days to get supplies in Fort Collins: a day getting there, a day of shopping, and a day getting back. The Elliotts, like other ranchers, made the excursion once a year, usually after the sale of beef cattle in the fall. With the advent of the automobile, it all could be done in a day. Bill Cass remembered that when he worked as a bagger at Safeway in Fort Collins in the 1950s, Jo and John would drive down from Livermore. Jo always drove. She came in and bought enough groceries, four or five cartloads, to last half the winter. John sat out in the car waiting for her. Ida never came along.

Babe Boyle recalled a conversation she had with John in the 1930s: "Mrs. Elliott always did the chores. I asked John Elliott about it. 'Cause other ranchers back from drives helped their wives with chores. And he says, 'Well, when I came back from trips from the high country, she

wasn't satisfied with the way I did chores, so I said, 'Hell, if you aren't satisfied, then do them yourself.'" Jim Elliott told me that during a visit to his grandparents at the old hotel, he saw Ida go into the yard to chop firewood for the stove. She was in her eighties, hardly able to walk. Jim and his brother John felt sorry for her and offered to split the wood, but John Elliott overheard them and threatened to punish them if they did.

Kitchen

I never saw her other than in the kitchen or out working.

—Mary Clare Wetzler

We leave the ranch yard now and enter an east-facing side door that leads into Ida's kitchen. She and her family usually came into the Rabbit Creek house this way rather than through the front entrance. Similarly, at the old Livermore Hotel, they came and went through the kitchen door. These back doorways are leaks in time—they take us into the interior life of the past.

For the Elliotts and Jo Lamb, the kitchen was the hub of home life, and the stove its heart. It was a place of warmth, of sweet and savory smells, of bread and pies baking, and of pot roasts simmering. The Elliotts rarely were in the parlor. They seldom ate in the separate dining rooms they had on the Rabbit and at the old hotel. A Livermore ranch woman put it this way, "When you didn't have company, you ate in the kitchen."

At Rabbit Creek, the kitchen was the largest room in the house—twelve feet by eighteen. In the middle stood the long wooden dinner table, and under it lay the dogs. After supper, Josephine graded homework on the table. John sat and read in a rocker near the kitchen window with his tin coffee cup in hand and a dog on his lap. Here, on Saturdays, a tub was filled with hot water from the stove, and everyone took their weekly bath. Ida stood working or sat in a chair near the large wood-burning stove.

"Everybody bragged about her cooking," a friend of hers told me. Local praise for a ranch woman's cooking is not unusual, so I did not fully appreciate Ida's abilities until I talked to Jo Lamb's oldest nephew, Ted Wetzler. In a series of telephone conversations that took place not long before he died, Ted shared with me his memories of Mrs. Elliott.

During his youth in the 1930s and early 1940s, he often visited Rabbit Creek. After college (Josephine attended his graduation), he earned a doctorate in epidemiology and became a university professor. He was also a gourmet cook and avid gardener, which lends special authority to his observations. It was Ida's example that awoke in him the passion for cookery, unusual for a boy of that time. "If anyone had an influence on me, it was her. Mrs. Elliott, I adored." From her and his grandmother Effie he learned the art of cooking on a woodstove. Most of what we know of Ida's culinary practice comes from his testimony. It must have been a pleasure for Ida to have had Ted as her culinary apprentice.

The way Ida ate a tomato fascinated him. "She was always looking for a tomato that would ripen in the shortest possible season, and she would look for aroma and taste, so as she ate a tomato, and she found it good, she would push seeds over to the side of her plate and let them dry and plant them in spring in the garden."

Ida's preparation of certain dishes on a woodstove was a tour de force. One such was Devonshire clotted cream, which is rarely found outside of southern England. A rich golden cream softer than butter, but firmer than whipped cream, it can be cut, but it will not hold a slice. Ida made a summer salad with it, spooning the clotted cream over red ripe tomato slices. The cooking required spotlessly clean utensils and a very low, even heat, difficult to achieve on a woodstove.

Her excellence as a cook was a demonstration to others of her sovereignty in the domestic realm, where even John Elliott was given no say. Jo Lamb was a rival, but at the stove she could not hold a candle to Ida, nor did she wish to. About Jo's cooking, Ted said, "It was painful to be any place where she could get near a kitchen." Other nieces and nephews agreed.

Above all, however, Ida's cookery was an act of love—not only for Buck and John, but for visitors, especially Jo's nephews and nieces. They remembered her kindness. Don Lamb, summing up her life, believed that Ida "was much more of a character than Mr. Elliott. She had real humanness in her." He added that Ida, though not a churchgoer, had "a sense of God's presence that was unique." Patty Wyant remembered her sweetness. Ida, she said, was able to "reach out and

visit with us kids." Margaret Ann Wetzler fondly remembered Ida's homemade fizzy root beer.

They remembered the taste of the baked goods she lavished on them—the butter cookies, the sour cream cookies, and the rhubarb and fruit pies. Don Lamb told me, "That woman could make a sugar cookie that wouldn't look back—it was the size of a dollar pancake. Her bread was heavenly."

Praise of her food came in part from the fact that the older style of cooking had become a lost art. The wood-burning stoves were dirty and labor intensive, and they required lots of space for storing logs and kindling, yet the gentle slow cooking on these ranges gave food a different taste. This was genuine "slow food." With the new electric ranges, finer temperature gradations were lost, and due to the expense of gas or electric, quick-cooking cuts such as steaks and chops won out over the slower pot roasts and stews. Ida was also of that pre-1900 generation in which it was a woman's pride to make bread at home and to despise the store-bought article.

The Elliotts did not of course subsist on cookies and clotted cream. Most of what Ida prepared was typical ranch fare of the time, and it changed with the seasons. A look at the foodstuffs she used helps fill in our picture of the family's daily sustenance. Year round they consumed lots of beans and corn bread. Buying dried beans by the hundred-pound sack was cheaper than growing them. The Elliotts and Jo also ate plenty of wheat bread. They brought the flour from town in heavy sacks, which they saved and remade into useful items such as tablecloths. Ida baked mainly white bread, and her baked goods were made with bread flour.

The Elliotts and Jo shot their own meat, deer and elk, especially in the Depression when they had little else except what they harvested from Ida's huge garden. They caught trout from the streams. As a boy, Buck caught them with his fishing rod and brought them home to his mother to fry. One time, he, his dad, and three others caught 196 fish. "We had fish then for a while," Buck wrote. They shot wild duck and dined on domestic duck and geese as well.

Ida's hens supplied fresh eggs. On special occasions, she roasted a turkey, probably one she raised. During spring roundup and the cutting of the bulls, she collected the testicles in a three-pound coffee can in order to make Rocky Mountain oysters. She rolled them in flour and

deep fried them until they were crispy. Buck shot squirrel and rabbit, the latter plentiful on Rabbit Creek, but if Ida served either, John pushed it to the side of his plate when he realized what it was. In spring, they always bought a set of a hundred chicks in Fort Collins, which supplied them with fresh fried chicken throughout the summer months. They occasionally slaughtered a steer. Deer and elk were free, but beef was worth cash, so they tried to save the beef for market. Even so, meat was always available, not only home-grown steaks, but sides of bacon and hams brought from town.

From Ida's three dairy cows, fresh milk was always plentiful, kept cool in the root cellar. Oddly enough, the Elliotts often drank condensed milk from cans. Ida also converted fresh milk into buttermilk, cottage cheese, and farmer's cheese. She was renowned for her cheesecakes. John Glass chopped wood for her all day in exchange for one. Heavy cream, skimmed off the fresh milk, was a key ingredient in her cooking. She also churned lots of butter, some of which she sent to market for "pin money."

Ida's produce, whether fresh or canned, made up a substantial part of their diet. Carrots, potatoes, and onions were principal ingredients in her cooking. She prized the tomato for its versatility, and, according to Ted Wetzler, she used it as a vegetable, a fruit, and a dessert. Her sweet tomato preserves were exceptional. Rhubarb, though not native, grew well on the ranch, and Ida made it live up to its nickname, "pie plant." She gathered wild berries in season, including currants and gooseberries. Chokecherries, which grew along the creek, were a favorite. Sarah Nauta remembered picking them with Ida along the Lone Pine. "We made jelly out of the chokecherries—the best jelly ever made." Bears eat so much of it that their scat turns red from the undigested seeds. On pancakes, chokecherry sauce rivals maple syrup. In the summer months, Ida baked fruit cobblers. In every season, the former pie lady never failed to serve at least one dessert a day, often more.

In all three of her houses, the kitchen stoves were wood burning, and they were used not only to cook on, but also to heat the living environs. Ida split and carried a great deal of wood in her day. At the Lone Pine, she had a Majestic stove, with a warming oven above and a reservoir for hot water. On Rabbit Creek, she had a pressure cooker that she used on top of the woodstove, a detail Ted Wetzler remembered because Ida made him stay away from it when it was in use.

A day at the Elliotts began when John got out of bed and made a pot of coffee. "He'd grab coffee in his hand and throw it in the pot, and it stayed on the stove all day long, and if you came in at night, you had to drink from it," remembered Judy Cass. This is what Coloradoans call "cowboy coffee." Lots of cowboy coffee was consumed, and if children were around, they drank it, too, diluted with condensed milk.

Ida made a hearty breakfast that included a cooked cereal—rolled wheat, rolled oats, or cornmeal mush—and biscuits made with "leaf lard." Before cattle drives or branding, she cooked a four-course breakfast for the hands and the kids: hot cereal, then pancakes, then eggs and bacon, and finally biscuits and gravy. That kept everybody going most of the day.

The Elliotts called the midday meal " dinner" and the evening meal "supper." Unlike supper, the midday repast was not a sit-down affair. John might be at work in the corral. Ida or Buck would take a slab of pie or a sandwich out to him, or if he was in the pastures, he would ride in on his horse, grab something to eat, and ride back out with it.

Supper was a sit-down meal, and the main dish might be simple or sumptuous, depending on the occasion and what was available. Two different accounts by guests who were at the Elliotts' in the 1940s reflect the range of possibilities. Opal Moss told me about a supper Mrs. Elliott prepared for her and her husband their first night on Rabbit Creek. "I'll never forget the first evening. His wife had the best supper for us, we had the best . . . I tell you, we had the best, most delicious elk roast. Thanks to Mrs. Elliott, I could really cook it. It was a vinegar solution you marinated it in, and an onion on top and bacon grease. Apple pie and green beans—home canned—and spuds, mashed. She was a wonderful cook. It meant so much for us."

In 1946, Helen Elliott dropped by the Lone Pine to see her in-laws. The month was December. The evening meal Ida prepared then was more modest. According to Helen's diary, they ate potatoes, bread and butter, and fruit, and they drank tea with sugar. About the quality of the food Helen said nothing, but she remarked on the "vicious dogs," the "filth," and "that woman," a reference to Josephine.

The evening meal was the major domestic ritual for the Elliotts. The table customs and pattern of conversation during this daily communion

can be revealing. Though the Elliotts had fewer visitors than other ranchers did, ranch hands and Elliott or Lamb relations occasionally came to supper. It is from them that we have learned a little about the Elliotts' table routines.

Supper began right after Mrs. Elliott called to her husband to say it was ready. Mr. Elliott sat down at the head of the long table, remembered Owen Lamb. The legs of the table were placed in old shoes to prevent the dogs from chewing the wood away. Next to John's plate on the table was "a bowl with his false teeth—a tin bowl. He only used them when he ate." Before John began eating, he turned off his hearing aid and put in his false teeth. Now and then he fed the dogs scraps from his plate.

During the meal, no one spoke. The people we interviewed often remarked on this silence. Babe Boyle said that when she ate at the Elliotts, they all were too hungry and tired to talk. According to Patty Wyant, the young people were shy about speaking for fear of Mr. Elliott and the touchy dogs lying under the table. Visitors knew that ranchers could be short of words, yet they still found the complete absence of conversation remarkable.

Supper over, Mr. Elliott extricated his false teeth and put them back in the tin bowl. Then he would speak. Don Lamb told me, "He was very talkative after dinner. He'd tell a story, stories about a big snow, about what happened, what he did with the cows. We had to sit there and listen. . . . You had to sit there and listen respectfully to him till you were excused." A Lamb niece remembered that "he'd make little jokes. He liked to make little jokes on people."

In the last decade of John's life, Ida and her husband usually did not eat together. At the hotel, Jim Elliott remembered that his grandfather "fed his dogs first and ate with them, and Grandma ate afterwards." Concerning Ida in this situation, Judy Cass said, "I've always felt a terrible sadness for her. I thought she always felt excluded. We'd sit down at table, Mr. Elliott, me, and Aunt Jo. Mrs. Elliott sat by the window on the right side of the stove, as you're looking out of the window north. She had a chair and would look out the window. . . . [T]hey acted like she just wasn't there."

A rare photograph of Ida in old age shows her sitting in the kitchen of the old hotel. She claimed the chair by the cookstove for herself, and she rarely left it.

Ida Elliott seated at her place by the cookstove in the kitchen at the old Livermore Hotel, 1950s. Josephine is in dungarees and plaid shirt. Between Jo and Ida are John Glass and Jo's sister Del Glass (John's mother). Courtesy of Judy Cass.

Parlor

Throughout a long life, Ida served others: as a girl, her younger siblings; as a nanny, the Horsley children; as a waitress, the hotel guests; as a wife and mother, her husband and son. She was forever dancing attendance on people who needed her. A person might ask: Was she so focused on others that she had no life for herself? Another person might answer: a life lived for others is still a life. But is it a life of one's own?

If Ida had another life beyond her activities as Giver, Mother, and Helper, the parlor was where it took place. The parlor was where the character of Ida Meyer possibly preempted the persona of Mrs. Elliott. There Ida occasionally met with people outside her immediate domestic circle—with a woman friend, with Jo's nieces and nephews, with her sisters from the Midwest, with sundry visitors. From late middle life on, she was less and less able to leave the ranch, but the telephone, which was in the parlor, afforded her an important, if tenuous, connection to the larger community.

There are fewer testimonies about Ida's parlor than about her kitchen, where she spent most of her time. The Rabbit Creek and Lone Pine houses had a parlor or sitting room. On Rabbit Creek, it was the middle south room, second largest in the house. A little porch covered by a tin roof protected the outside entrance, and a small fenced-in lawn and flower garden, discussed earlier, came up to the porch. These transition zones helped to define the parlor as an enclave of refinement protected from the dirty, dusty ranch yard.

If Ida used the vocabulary of the early century, she probably called the room in question either the *parlor* or the *sitting room*. We do not know which term she used. Technically speaking, the parlor was a room reserved for the formal reception of guests: it was more restricted in use than what Ida had. In contrast to a parlor, a sitting room was more casual and better adapted to everyday use. As far as we can tell, Ida's room was a blend of the two.

We know that in the first half of her life, Ida enjoyed wearing handsome outfits and headgear. Parlor visits were an opportunity for ranch women to dress up. A photo of Ida on a visit to her parents in Lincoln in the 1920s allows us to imagine how she may have appeared to lady visitors in her parlor on Rabbit Creek (see photograph on page 258). In this shot, among her Nebraska kin, she has recovered the stylishness and demeanor of the Ida Meyer she once was.

There is only one extant photograph of the Rabbit Creek parlor, the picture showing John reading in a chair with baby Buck on his arm (see photograph on page 69 in chapter 3). The historical significance of this photo is twofold. First of all, it gives a rare glimpse of an early-twentieth-century

ranch house interior. Second, we can identify the people in the photo, its location, and the year it was taken. The picture tells us one other important thing: that in 1910 Ida possessed a telephone.

She herself is not in the picture. She stands behind the camera, choosing and framing the scene. Yet to study this picture is to feel Ida's immediate presence. It is as if she had picked up the telephone on the wall and spoken to us directly. The Eastman Kodak camera captured some of the essential features of the world she had created for herself—her child, her wallpaper, her framed photographs on the wall.

The image provides a fascinating archive of the parlor's decor and uses. The objects of history are made manifest to the viewer, not as in a museum, but in the context of their real use: pictures on the wall, John's armchair, a second chair, a magneto telephone, an empty crib and its disturbed sheets, cloth piled on a wooden fruit crate with "Colorado" printed on the side, a large south-facing window, wide floorboards. The image documents the activities that took place in Ida's parlor: resting, reading, watching the baby. A spool of thread hangs from the window. The light from the window allowed John to read and Ida to sew.

When I first walked into this room in 1997, I had no idea who had lived in the house or who the Elliotts were. The room was a mess. A bed frame and an overturned cookstove pierced with bullet holes lay on a floor littered with shards of broken window glass. Parts of the three-inch tongue-and-groove flooring had broken through. In places, the dull tan paint of the walls was peeling away. I noticed that the paint covered an ornate wallpaper: I took a few samples home.

In 1999, Deborah and I visited John Elliott's grandson Phil and his wife, Chris, on the Flying Horseshoe ranch in Centennial, Wyoming. At one point, Phil showed us the photograph of his grandfather as a young man, sitting in a chair, a baby on his arm. When Deborah and I noticed the wallpaper in the picture, we began laughing and clapping. We were jubilant because the wallpaper in the photograph was identical to the patches of paper I had found at the abandoned house on Rabbit Creek. Ida's parlor photo was a turning point in our investigation—the first palpable proof that the Elliotts had actually lived in the abandoned ranch house. The picture also identified their use of the middle south room as a parlor or sitting room and nursery as well. This was the real beginning of the Rabbit Creek project.

Beneath the tan paint of the abandoned parlor were two different layers of wallpaper. Fragments of the lower and earlier paper showed a design of creamy delicate blossoms. Deborah named it the "wild geranium" pattern. Ida chose to cover this paper over with a strikingly different one, a blue gentian and silver arabesque pattern—her way of claiming the Rabbit Creek house as her own.

The paper she chose incorporated powdered mica, which made the surface of the wall sparkle when sunlight came through the large south window, one of the parlor's glories. Six feet tall and nearly three feet wide, this window was divided into eight panes. The window brought abundant natural light into the room. It also opened out onto a haunting landscape: wide native meadows and, rising above them, the enigmatic rock formation called Twin Mountain (see photograph on page 66 in chapter 3).

Traditionally, the parlor was a venue for display. In Ida's, there were framed pictures and cut flowers—lilacs in spring, hollyhocks in summer. On the floor, serving as a rug, lay an enormous black bearskin, head and all. Josephine had shot the bruin. Visiting children enjoyed lying on it or sticking their heads into the bear's skull (MMc).

Ida owned a small glass cabinet that she used as a display case. It was two feet high and sat on a table in the parlor. Three sides were glass, and the back was a mirror, which allowed her curios to be seen from all sides. This case was like a miniature museum or Cabinet of Wonder. According to testimonies we heard, one shelf was filled with arrowheads and another with the rattles of snakes she had killed. A third shelf held keepsakes: porcelain dolls and miniature teacups and plates. Ida also displayed a small pair of horseshoes, tied together with a blue ribbon, on which she had written: "Orville's first pony shoes, 1917." Her photograph album would also have been in the parlor, on a table or shelf. It is easy to imagine her showing a lady visitor pictures of the Livermore Hotel in 1897 and her 1910 photo of John and baby Buck in the very parlor where she and the lady were now seated.

The parlor, as its name implies, was a place for conversation and sociality. Ida Meyer was, as we know, gregarious. Mrs. Elliott was no less so, but she had little opportunity to fulfill these social needs.

When ranch women managed to see each other, they had plenty to

talk about. Conversation was a more important form of self-expression for them than for the reticent cowmen. In the 1910s and 1920s, we know Ida had contact with other women through home visits and telephone conversations. Among them were Josephine's mother (Effie), Miss Etta Parker, Mrs. Bellairs, Mrs. Laura Sloan, whose ranch was upstream, and Mrs. Alice Walters Kluver, who lived at the bottom of Calloway Hill. Mrs. Kluver, who came from the East and had a college education, drove her horse and buggy up to the Middle Rabbit. Ida paid return visits, riding sidesaddle down to the Kluver ranch. Alice's daughter, Viola Moore, told me that her mother was happy to see Ida. "Mother felt sorry for her. She felt she was very lonesome."

Middle Rabbit Creek was on the margin of the thinly scattered community. Livermore, to counteract its residents' isolation, put on an endless round of dances, suppers, and community picnics at the hotel and at the Community Hall. But the Elliotts were outside the social swirl. Unlike her friend Alice Kluver or, later, Jo Lamb, Ida never joined the Livermore Woman's Club, a social organization devoted to intellectual pursuits and women's causes. The club met regularly, sometimes at the Community Hall next to the Livermore Hotel and sometimes in members' parlors. Ida was not very literary, nor was she a "bluestocking." Yet it may have been local gossip about her situation, more than lack of interest, that discouraged her from applying for membership. Acceptance required a unanimous vote.

By the mid-1930s, Ida—in her sixties now—had few means of going off the ranch. She walked with a cane. She no longer rode a horse. Later, she gave her riding habit and sidesaddle to her daughter-in-law. She never learned to drive a car, and John did not take her with him when he visited other ranches or went on trips to town. If women friends wanted to see her, they had to come up to the ranch, not an easy trip. Around this time, Babe Boyle, when watching the cattle in the rugged country west of the Elliott's house, sometimes visited Ida on Rabbit Creek. "I could get on the east side of the Bush place and look down on the house. Every once in a while, I'd visit Mrs. Elliott. She was lonely. When I was up on the Bush, I might drift down the hill and talk to her. I was lonely." Using similar words, another woman who visited Ida to chat and pick chokecherries said to me, "She was lonely, and I was too" (SN).

In Ida's later years, the telephone alleviated her solitude to some degree. As we know, a magneto telephone hung in the parlor at Rabbit Creek. Livermore received a telephone exchange in 1898, one of the first ranching communities in Colorado to do so. The English immigrants lobbied hard for telephone service and got it—a half century before electricity came to the community. The first phone transmissions ran along the barbed wire of the fences that connected the far-flung ranches. The telephone exchange was put in the post office/general store next to the Livermore Hotel.

Ida loved using the phone. The Elliotts were on a party line connecting sixteen households. Every household had a series of rings, and when anybody's phone on the line rang, all the phones rang. Ida knew who was being called because she knew their series of rings. On the Lone Pine, the Elliotts' ring was two shorts and one long. The Boyles, the next ranch up the creek, had three shorts and one long. Anyone could pick up the phone and surreptitiously listen in on other people's conversations. It was a common pastime.

Although Ida was not invited to parties, she made up for it by having a grand time on the party line. In Livermore, she was known for her eavesdropping. Don Lamb told me, "Her recreation was the telephone—if that phone rang, she got on it, she'd listen in." One ranch woman remembered being engaged in conversation on the party line and then hearing a click. Mrs. Elliott was listening in. If an Elliott neighbor heard an unusual noise on the phone, he would say, "Hello, Ida, are you listening?" and then he would hear her click off. As Ida eavesdropped, she got so wrapped up in the conversation, she would sometimes forget herself and start saying "uh huh."

Bedroom

Bedroom walls generate a powerful sense of interiority. Within them, people hide their secret things, their underwear, their toupees. That bedrooms in those days did not have an outside door is significant, for this is the part of the house to which the outsider had least access. The activities of the bed—lovemaking, dreaming, dying—expose the mysteries of our innermost being, mysteries that typically lie beyond the reach of the writer of lives.

Ida Elliott dressed up with her parents, brothers, and sisters in Lincoln, Nebraska, circa 1927. *Left to right:* Charlie Biel, Lillie (née Biel), Christian Biel (Ida's stepfather), Henry Meyer, Louise Biel (Ida's mother), Sarah (née Meyer), Mary (née Meyer), and Ida. Courtesy of Adella Freitag.

The parlor was where Ida showed off her better clothes. In the bedroom, she put them on, took them off, and stored them. None of her houses had built-in closets, so dresses, corsets, riding clothes, work clothes, and so forth were hung in a wardrobe. Other articles went into the chest of drawers. For Ida, as for all of us, the bedroom is the storehouse of alternate identities—the place where we deck ourselves out in one or another of our several personas.

There Ida began the day. What should she wear? When there were no female guests, she usually put on a worn calico dress in which she felt comfortable doing chores. The older she got, the less her interest in clothes became. Indoors, she wore old house dresses and went around in stockings (JiE). One day Ida saw her daughter-in-law Helen putting on a nice outfit

and asked her, “What is the point in getting dressed up?” Confinement to the ranch took a toll on Ida’s personal appearance, as can be seen in the photo of her sitting on a log in the ranch yard (page 241).

When she traveled back to Nebraska in the 1920s, the first thing her sister Sarah did when she got off the train was march her down to the hairdresser to make her presentable. A photo of Ida visiting her parents and siblings in Lincoln around 1927 shows her dressed up for the occasion.

“Mrs. Elliott had her own bedroom.” After Buck was born, Ida no longer shared a bedroom with her husband. As a girl, Margaret Ann McLean remembered visiting Ida’s room. It was large enough to hold two double beds, although it didn’t. At the foot of the bed in which Ida slept was a “steamer trunk” full of blankets. On the dresser, she kept a framed photograph of herself in riding gear, leather boots up to the knee, and pantaloons. Mrs. Elliott was no longer able to ride, yet she felt nostalgia for her younger, more mobile self, Ida Meyer.

Where did the Elliotts sleep in the Middle Rabbit house? At this point in time, it is difficult to say with absolute certainty. In the 1930s, there were, according to Babe Boyle, only three bedrooms. The floor plan and remnant fixtures in the house at the end of the twentieth century confirm this observation. According to testimonies, Buck, John, and Ida each had his or her own room. Margaret Ann McLean remembered that John occupied a small room (probably on the north side of the house) with a bed that was covered by a homemade patchwork quilt. There was a dresser—with the cowboy doll on it—a water pitcher and basin, and a bootjack by the bed.

The southwest room, much larger than the two north bedrooms, was likely to have been John and Ida’s master bedroom, before Ida reserved it for herself (after Buck’s birth). It had no outside door and, like the smaller bedrooms, was without a stove. The south and west windows made it light and airy. When I first saw it in 1997, several walls were intact, though much of the plaster lay in fragments on the wooden floor. It had been painted what I call juniper-berry blue after the fruit of the little trees that grow on the slopes north of the house. It may have been in this room that Ida gave birth to Buck.

About sleeping arrangements on the Lone Pine ranch, where the Elliotts and Josephine Lamb lived from 1943 to 1953, there is more certainty. Both Judy Cass and Margaret Ann McLean explained them to me. There were three bedrooms, all facing north. In the west wing were the living room and two adjacent bedrooms. Mr. Elliott had one of these bedrooms, and Josephine the other. Margaret Ann remembered seeing in Jo's room a butterfly collection, artworks on the wall, a dresser. Another visitor remembered that in John's room containers of preserves and vegetables were stacked up behind the bed—an unusual use of bedroom space. John slept with Ida's Mason jars. In the east wing was another bedroom, where Mrs. Elliott slept by herself, next to the kitchen.

The old Livermore Hotel, where the three ranchers next moved, had five upstairs bedrooms, each with a brick chimney running through it. John and Josephine slept upstairs until his heart condition grew worse. Then he slept downstairs in the southwest corner room—the old "library"—in a hospital bed. Ida had a room of her own on the ground floor, between the southwest room John occupied and the kitchen. She could not manage the stairs up to the second-story bedrooms.

Porch

Mrs. Elliott was seventy-nine when she moved with her husband and Josephine into the old Livermore Hotel in 1953. Her health was shaky after a serious bout with heart disease. The swelling in her legs made walking difficult. As she struggled up the steps of the hotel's porch, did she remember the time Ida Meyer briskly climbed these same steps in the mid-1890s—a girl just off the stage? The hotel was nearly new then, and she was young. The owners hired Miss Meyer as waitress and pie lady.

Perhaps the steps reminded Mrs. Elliott of the Ida who once sat here to look out for the stagecoach that was to come over Kahler Hill so she could then dash inside to get her pies in the oven for the passengers. The pie lady was single. Men took a lively interest in her. Perhaps Mrs. Elliott recalled the time a young cowhand rode his horse onto this porch to impress Miss Ida Meyer.

A Lamb nephew, John Glass, said Mrs. Elliott often reminisced about the early days of the Livermore Hotel. "She used to tell me how she could hear the horses and the stagecoach coming over the hills. There was an old

river bridge down here, and she said they'd be a-hollering and a-yelling, and the dust would be by it and that old stagecoach would roll in and passengers would get out. . . . [S]he used to tell me stories, Mrs. Elliott did, and you could almost feel like it was happening right then."

On a spring day in 1999, Deborah and I walk up the steps of the porch of the Livermore Hotel. We are there to visit the Quans. The air is mild and April clear—enormous cottonwoods arching over the river. Kay and her husband, Tom, had graciously invited us to come up and see the hotel.

We take afternoon tea together in the Great Room, the dining room of the former hotel. During the tour, the Quans show us the large kitchen and a shiny-blue wood-burning cookstove. We go upstairs and inspect the bedrooms, each one with a chimney and the original pinewood floors, some of the boards fifteen inches wide. We visit the southwest room, John's bedroom in his latter days and later Josephine's study. We visit the room near the kitchen where Ida slept. The Quans tell of incidents in our subjects' lives. Before we leave, we lift Ida's thick-sided cream jug and marvel at its weight—the cream in it would have stayed cool a long time. We say our thanks and good-byes, walk over the porch and down the steps to the car. The Quans wave as we pull out of the driveway.

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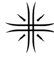
TEN

Woman Rancher



The ranch men of Livermore belonged to the Larimer County Stockgrowers Association. The ranch wives had a sister organization called the Cow Belles. Jo Lamb was a little out of place in both groups, but in the 1950s she was one of two women members of the Stockgrowers Association and, although single, was also a member of the Cow Belles. Jo Lamb's unusual status in both organizations reflects her character and her anomalous position in the Livermore community.

Each organization met at the Livermore Community Hall, the men upstairs, the women in the basement. The Cow Belles sponsored fundraisers and put on dinners for their ranching husbands. Jo Lamb began the evening with the Cow Belles. When the Stockgrowers Association gathered, she ran upstairs to attend that meeting. She was keen on hearing the guest speakers—veterinarians, county extension agents, professors of agriculture. The ranch men made her secretary.

Josephine learned how to move between the disparate worlds of Livermore: the cattle range, the school, and, in later years, the Livermore Woman's Club (the subject of chapter 11). Her persona altered accordingly, as did her names and nicknames, which epitomized the varied roles, professions, and avocations of her life.

To pupils she was "Miss Lamb." She was "Josephine" to her parents

and to many others as well, including the informant who, referring to her youthful persona, called her "pretty little Josephine." To John Elliott, she was simply "Jo," a name he called out in old age, summoning her help. On the Laramie, she was "Josie"—a nickname and diminutive that reflected the acceptance and affection she gained among the people of that district.

Some names were derogatory or misnomers. Pupils behind her back called her "Old Maid Josephine," and her nephews "the Old Woman." Helen Elliott once referred to her as "Joe" in a diary entry. This spelling may have been an error, but more likely it was a jibe at Lamb's cowboy airs. When Gary Kuzniar, not knowing her well, politely called her "Mrs. Lamb," she nearly exploded. "I'm not married. I never have been. And I never will."

As a single woman managing a sizeable chunk of rangeland, Josephine had created, in fact, an exceptional situation. A ranch woman who knew her well said, "There were women who rode and branded, but the women didn't usurp the man's position as ranch owner—they helped the man. Josephine Lamb was the only woman I knew who did the whole thing. Usually the business all belonged to the men." A rancher's son put it this way, "Those were pretty old-fashioned men up there, and she was running the ranch." Don Lamb underscored the difficulties a woman rancher faced: "The mindset was that it was a man's thing—you had to show yourself to be pretty tough to be a cow woman."

She worked liked a man and with men. She branded, she castrated, she dehorned cattle. People remembered seeing her out in the pasture during a blizzard feeding her herd. When she was in high school, her stated life goal was to do the same work as her prospective farmer-husband. As the only girl at the State Beef Judging Contest, she was already intruding into a male preserve. When she was twenty-one, she homesteaded 640 acres in her own name. She acquired cattle and her own brand, the Two Lazy Six—the old brand of pioneer stockwoman Anna Yockey. In her *Ranch Histories* file, I found her notes about earlier women ranchers of Livermore, with whom she must have felt a sense of solidarity.

Through Jo's early and middle womanhood, prevailing attitudes toward women's work in the agrarian West were narrow and changed

only slowly. It was said that women had more freedom in the West, and they did gain the right to vote earlier there than elsewhere, yet attitudes toward men's and women's roles were shaped largely by the conservative values of the emigrants from the Midwest who settled the land. It is true that the exigencies of pioneer life meant that, in practice, the restrictions separating men's and women's work were ignored. Women helped with haying, and men with milking cows or caring for sick children. Yet the norm still dictated separate roles, and, with more prosperous conditions, women were expected to go back to homemaking and men to do the heavy outdoor work. On the business side of a ranch or farm, men made the major decisions, and women's authority was limited.

Old attitudes persisted in rural areas, yet in the first and second decades of the new century when Josephine Lamb came of age, things began to change. Many rural women tried to participate as equals in men's activities. The new trend was already evident in some of the dime novels of the 1880s, which celebrated cowgirls and "rawhide heroines"—Calamity Jane and Bowie Knife Bess—women who rode, shot, drank, and held their own against any man. The turn of the new century saw the rise of "rodeo girls," who, though feminine in looks, rode the circuit, broke broncos, and showed off their shooting and roping skills. In the same decades, a new social movement called for women to become "helpmates" to their men, sharing their work. That a teenage Josephine herself used the term showed her awareness of current thinking. New ideas about women's possibilities arose in the new century. Women had more opportunities to get out of the house through paid jobs, and they gained new rights: to vote, to control their own property, and to hold office. When Jo won the beef-judging contest in 1916, she met with acclaim instead of ridicule—at least in Denver.

At Rabbit Creek, Jo took on a cowboy persona—one of several at her command. Her reasons for doing so were in part psychological. She had a deep-seated need to show men she was their equal. I suspect that in many ways she felt more in touch with her male than her female side. She certainly enjoyed ruffling women's feathers by her brusqueness and male demeanor. There were also practical reasons for her cowboy ways. To get her work done, she had to do the jobs of a cowboy. She labored long hours out of doors. Bill Knox told me, "She worked hard as a man . . . she never had time to stop and carry on a conversation." A woman rancher

who knew her well said, “She worked like a dog and expected the people who worked for her to do the same.” Don Lamb said, “She looked like an Indian, she was in the sun so much.”

Like the “rawhide heroines” who may have inspired her, Jo honed her cowboy skills. One rancher on the Laramie who knew her said, “She could put a lot of people to shame as far as cowboying” (BH). She was a good hand with cattle—even though she told an interviewer in 1966 that she never fully mastered throwing a lariat. She sat a horse well. “She could ride about as good as anyone I’ve ever seen,” her nephew John Glass said. That was in any case true in her middle years. A snapshot, probably from the 1930s or early 1940s, shows her on an Appaloosa, a horse named Sox. Another horse of hers was named Blister. She also had a big old buckskin, Smokey Joe, and a Palomino called Cream Puff (DL). An excellent marksman, she enjoyed target shooting with rancher Clarence Currie. She was an accomplished deer hunter, and she shot the bear whose skin became Ida’s parlor rug.

Like Annie Oakley, she might have said, “Anything you can do, I can do better.” Ranchers resented this attitude. A friend of hers emphasized to me, “In those days, men didn’t like women who could do anything better than they could.”

Along with cowboy skills, Jo adopted the mannerisms—in the way she talked, for example. Men of her time spoke differently than women, if they spoke at all. Men were permitted to curse and did so profusely, though usually not around women. Women were not supposed to curse at all. Yet Jo Lamb was, in Ted Wetzler’s words, a “brilliant swearer.” Judy Cass remembered that “she could cuss like a man,” and it was with a “goddamn you, you son of a bitch” that she told off Babe Boyle’s brother Fred. The lash of her tongue warned men not to push her around. Bill Cass, who worked for her, told me, “She could castrate a man without touching him.” In the classroom, though, her language was impeccable.

Among nineteenth-century emigrants to the West, girls or women who excelled at men’s work were often “tarred with the brush of unwomanliness.” In Livermore, such attitudes persisted into the second half of the twentieth century. Jo Lamb was indeed tarred with this brush, especially by those she offended. They focused on her “unladylike” character and her poor housekeeping skills.

In midlife, she showed little regard for the conventions of women's dress and hygiene. Many people remarked to us that she must not have bathed frequently, and she may not have. There is evidence, however, that in regard to body odor she suffered from a medical condition. School kids dreaded the famous punishment of sitting under her desk, less for the confinement than for the odor they had to endure. A close friend of hers admitted she was not "well groomed." Another woman who had been her pupil and was fond of her told me, "She had a funny mustache. We just didn't understand why she didn't do something about it."

The way she dressed drew people's attention. "She wore long pants long before any woman ever thought of wearing pants. My mother thought it was just awful," Mary Margaret Moore told me. In the middle of summer she might wear an old winter coat or show up in a dress made of recycled flour sacks. Her tennis shoes were full of holes, and to keep the front of a ripped dress together she used a big safety pin. She liked wearing jeans. When she went to the Woman's Club, though, she put on a dress. As a younger woman, she had been quite stylish—her mother, Effie, had made attractive clothes for her. When Jo was older, however, she spent little money on her appearance, and the dresses she wore came off the racks of a secondhand clothing store (MMc).

A fascinating precursor of Jo Lamb was the woman rancher Kate Moon, whom we met as young John Elliott's boss. A lively Irish woman of little means, she came to Livermore from Iowa and, like Ida Meyer, worked as waitress in a country hotel. She married a Livermore prospector, but divorced him to marry the Englishman Cecil Moon—later Sir Cecil. "Lord Moon" was not an experienced cowman, so Lady Moon ran the outfit, and she continued to do so after they divorced in 1909. Like Jo Lamb, Kate Moon was a strong-willed, independent woman who never had children. She was an excellent rider, loved the outdoors, and was passionately devoted to animals, especially her horses and her dog Dash. Because of her strong language, people called her "Cussin' Kate."

Kate Moon was twice divorced, yet in spite of her notoriety Livermore men accepted her. They did not by and large accept Jo Lamb, however. There were reasons for this inconsistency, and I believe they shed light on Jo's character and local men's perception of her. Kate Moon had one especially endearing quality: she did men's tasks the way men expected a woman would. According to tradition, when she went riding, she forgot

to close gates—something Jo Lamb did not do. In addition, John Elliott and other men appreciated Kate's impulsive generosity. Red Miller put it this way: "Kate was a loud-spoken, profane, hard-drinkin' woman, but she had a big heart." Jo, in contrast, was not renowned for kindness (except to children and young people) or openhandedness—at least in the ranching business. Her actions and words thus struck ranch men as threatening rather than whimsical.

Josephine got her start in ranching through John Elliott. They ran their cattle together. Local people believed that Josephine became close to John in order to get land. I asked one Livermore woman, "What did Jo Lamb see in John Elliott?" The answer was, "She saw gettin' into the cattle ranch" (SN). This response was typical and the most common way of explaining their unusual bond.

Why did she want to ranch in the first place? Her rural upbringing is part of the explanation. The oldest child in a country family usually found an aptitude for animal husbandry and outdoor living. From an early age, a first-born child like Josephine was encouraged to take on ranch chores. She brought in the milk cows, nursed the "potty calf," and fed the chickens. Such activities shaped Jo's feelings toward domestic animals. Later, as a senior in high school, she took a course in cattle judging, which was what awakened her interest in ranching as a business.

Jo was part of the last wave of homesteaders who after the First World War staked claims on land in northern Colorado. She received clear title to her homestead in 1923. It was luck that allowed her to do so. She was single, which allowed her to claim the land in her own name, and she had been born at the right time. Red Miller, six years Jo's junior, was born too late: he was still under twenty-one by the time the good range land had all been claimed up. As a result, he spent his whole life as a cowboy, never got to run his own cattle, and died a poor man.

As for cows, she began with a herd of two. This is how she put it: "Then one of my old neighbors under the dam gave me a heifer and my mother gave me a heifer, and I just taught school and had some heifers and soon I got more." Another time, she told one of her nieces, Virginia Robin, that she started her herd with the "gift of a cow" from John. Her first heifer had red patches over its face, and she called it "Broco." The parcel she owned

was not enough to make a living on, but with access to the Elliotts' range she was able to build up a larger herd than the holding would support. In any case, she had become a landowner and a woman rancher.

Her homestead section extended over a range called "the Bushfield." It was and still is beautiful, rugged country, three miles from the closest road—probably the reason it had not been claimed. The parcel was largely upland covered with pines and junipers and creased with gulches and steep ravines. Below the upland along the South Rabbit, she had a string of good grazing meadows. The highest point of her holding was a 6,840-foot knoll, which I climbed in January 2002. I imagined Jo standing on this eminence surveying her land—the groups of ponderosa pine trees, the granite outcroppings, and, beyond, the endless grasslands stretching out to the north and south below her.

By 1961, thirty-eight years after Jo Lamb proved up her claim, she was a large landowner. Her Livermore holdings included the Lone Pine ranch of 6,820 acres (most of which had been the Elliotts') as well as 500 acres in Livermore proper, including the old Livermore Hotel, where she lived. On the Laramie River, she owned the Water Hole, 900 acres. Northwest of Fort Collins she owned 360 acres of good farmland. Besides these holdings, she had grazing rights to thousands of acres of USFS allotments in the Laramie River country. She ran between 160 and 200 cow-calf pairs and owned half a dozen bulls.

Among her surviving papers, I found a rough map she had drawn of Livermore, detailing names of ranch owners. At one point, she updated the map. Over the Lone Pine holding, she had unceremoniously crossed out John Elliott's name and written in her own. In fact, she called her spread the "Josephine Lamb Ranch." At the time, it was the only local ranch denoted by a woman's name. She was proud of that fact. Indeed, for an unmarried woman and schoolteacher, it was an achievement. She had begun with a high school diploma and two heifers. By 1966, the land she owned was worth more than a million dollars—a fortune in those days.

Her becoming a large-scale landowner, however, did not translate directly into high social status or a luxurious lifestyle. The same situation, as I noted earlier, held true for the Elliotts. She did not present herself as a wealthy woman, as the following incident shows. She liked attending the annual National Stock Show in Denver, which took place in January. Ruth Loper remembered that her aunt and two nephews

once had reservations at the Brown Palace, an elegant hotel in downtown Denver. When Jo went in looking like an old cowhand just off the range, the hotel personnel became alarmed and tried to make her leave. The nephews were embarrassed.

A class system existed in Livermore. In the words of one ranch woman, there was the "upper crust," and there was the "lower crust." The dividing line was mainly, though not exclusively, determined by land ownership. This line created tensions and lifetime resentments in the community.

These divisions are important for understanding the complexity of Josephine's position in Livermore. Becoming a "have" did not confer on her the status she had earned. One prominent ranch woman I talked to regretted the way things were. "Ida Elliott," she said, "was in the lower crust. Ida and Josephine were at the bottom." Livermore discriminated against them socially, she said, because of rumors about Josephine and John. Local people also felt John and Josephine lacked the social graces needed for participation in the upper crust. Though Josephine eventually overcame much of this discrimination through her work in the Livermore Woman's Club, she never was fully accepted by the men.

I believe her active commitment to the Democratic Party owed something to her background as a "have-not" and to the discrimination she felt. Jo's financial worth was considerable, yet her lifestyle resembled that of a "have-not" rather than a "have." She did not, however, choose to live this way in order to show solidarity with "the lower crust." The richest ranchers in Livermore tended to live modestly in any case. Their homes were not large, and they did not involve themselves in conspicuous display or consumption. The food they ate was more plain than fancy. Their wealth was locked into the land and not readily available as cash. They did not spend a great deal on consumer goods because they didn't make much money.

Josephine's thrift, however, went further than this. "Every cent she ever made went into her ranching," one of her friends told me. She wanted land, not nice clothes, fine food, or modern conveniences—the main exception being the automobile.

Stories of her parsimony abounded. I found a curious confirmation of them when examining the 1949 dues list for the Rural Teachers Association. Of the fifty-three members that year, all but one paid the one-dollar dues. Josephine put in only fifty cents. "She never took vacations; she never spent

money on herself," said a niece. Don Lamb, speaking of his aunt and the Elliotts, put it this way, "They were very frugal. They didn't believe in fertilizer." A ranching neighbor who visited in the 1960s, described her living conditions as "almost poverty level." He learned that she refused to spend money to maintain her teeth, some of which she lost to gum disease. "It amazed me. . . . Where did she get that ethic?" (AJ).

Her attitude to money was premodern. She either hoarded it or invested it. She did not spend it. Her impecunious youth and the exigencies of two wars and a depression probably shaped her attitude in this regard. She owned a motor car and a camera, but she was not a modern consumer. She could have turned some of her land into cash, and that cash might have bought her pretty things and modern gadgets, but she didn't do it. Land was what she valued above all. I sometimes believe that for her, land possession was an end unto itself, and cattle grazing only a justification.

In the first decades of the twentieth century, when Josephine came of age, the nation had undergone an economic revolution, the birth of modern consumerism, but she turned her back on it. She went to live in the "sticks," far from cities and their emporia. Premodern workers labored in order to subsist; their pleasure came from the practice and results of their craft. This was essentially Josephine's outlook. The modern worker, in contrast, labored not only to live, but to enjoy a wide array of consumer products, whose styles, colors, and brand names came to be seen as significant markers of personal identity.

That Josephine Lamb lived largely outside of this consumer world is part of her fascination. She represented an archaic form of individuality, one so remote from modern consumer values that it is hard to fathom. I contemplate her life, and I wonder if her simplicity was a kind of poverty or a form of inner wealth. She didn't "believe in fertilizer."

The best images we have of Jo Lamb as a rancher come from accounts of the cattle drives up to the Laramie that she and John made in late spring. A bunch of her nieces and nephews usually came along. Interviewing these people decades later gave us a vivid picture of an annual event that was central to Jo's ranching.

Jo and John liked having young people along on the trail, and Jo felt

strong ties to the children of her brother and two sisters. The kids were given horses so they could help trail the cattle. Don Lamb remembers that he got five dollars a day. "We always got a new pair of jeans, a work shirt, and a straw hat as part of the deal—the straw hat was from Aunt Jo—and all the dried apricots you could eat." The drive was an adventure. Danger and hardship etch an experience into human memory. There were the long rides on horseback, camping under the stars, the clamor, the smell, the thrill of moving four hundred cows and calves up narrow canyons and through dense woodlands, and the fording of roaring streams during spring runoff.

Except for several road trips in the 1950s and 1960s to visit relatives in the Midwest, Jo Lamb did not travel extensively in the United States. Don Lamb once asked her why. She said she didn't have the desire; she was happy where she was. The trip that meant most to her was local: trailing the herd up to her summer range on the Laramie.

In the earlier days, the 1920s and 1930s, she rode horseback with the cattle. Food and bedding for the trail crew were carried on packhorses. Later, in the 1940s, she drove a Dodge Power Wagon (the ranch pickup) ahead of the herd in order to set up camp and prepare food. The pickup was their "chuck wagon."

Jo spent several weeks before the drive gathering provisions needed to feed the hands and helpers. That completed, John fitted the pantry into the back of the truck, and she loaded the victuals. As she described it, the Power Wagon was "rigged out with cupboard and bedrolls, hay and grain, and ax and shovel." Writing in 1955, she said that because of recent droughts she also packed water for human use. The Power Wagon, less reliable than packhorses, sometimes got stuck in snow, and "the riders missed both bed and meals."

Jo did not cook at the ranch, but on the trail she did. One rancher told me that she was "a helluva good cook over a wood fire" (JGo). It was a special skill and different from cooking on a stove. She knew exactly the kind of wood she wanted and gathered it herself. She fried steaks and potatoes. At the Deadman camp, Owen Lamb caught a mess of little fish, and she deep-fried them. Other times, she served her signature bean-and-venison stew.

Some of the food was less appetizing. Two staples were lunch meat and Clabber Girl biscuits that usually turned out, to quote Tom Quan, "solid as rock." Most trail hands heartily disliked the Carnation condensed milk she put into almost everything. And she had a passion for fruit. She gave the trail crew grapefruit juice, lemonade, dried apricots, and prunes. When she turned her back, Owen Lamb remembered, some poured the sour juice out on the ground. Don Lamb never forgot her dried apricot sandwiches: "we'd dig a hole in the ground with a spoon for the food or give it to the camp robbers [Gray Jays]." Owen Lamb remembered a meal on a cold day that consisted of "a frozen blob of peas and butter." They could not have steak and venison all the time—after all, the cattle drive from the Lone Pine to the Laramie lasted five days.

The Elliott-Lamb drive usually took place in early June, four to six weeks after the branding of calves and the "cutting" of the young bulls at Easter. A photo from 1940 at Rabbit Creek shows our ranchers working together at the spring roundup. Buck is branding, and John in the ten-gallon hat is castrating. Jo, with a striped scarf around her head, holds a container for the bulls' testicles, the Rocky Mountain oysters that Ida would fry up for dinner.

After the sale of Rabbit Creek in 1943, the drives began from the Lone Pine ranch, six miles to the south. Riders went out and gathered the herd, which took up half the day. In the afternoon, the cattle were made to ford the creek. Jo described the crossing, the first move in the drive.

> The Lone Pine Creek was often a mad and rushing torrent of water in the late spring, about the time the cattle were on the move to the high ranges. . . . Fording these cattle was an arduous task. The bawling calves would float downstream with the current; often a rider would need to jump off his horse and fight the water or drag a drowning calf from under the willows and alder bushes. The mothers would follow along the bank and hold up the line. A steep ascent from the Lone Pine Creek to the top of Kahler Hill followed the fording and the whole deal often took the best part of a day. This day on the trail usually gave every horse in the trailstring a good workout. Often the rider was completely doused and many times, everything, even the bulls had to swim.

Jo Lamb in striped scarf, holding the container of bull testicles. John Elliott is at the center, castrating a calf. Buck Elliott is on the far right with the branding iron. Babe Boyle's back is visible to the right of John. At spring roundup and branding, Rabbit Creek, 1940. Courtesy of Phil Elliott.

With the crossing behind them, John rode point—at the head of the herd—keeping the leaders (the cows in the front) moving in the right direction. "The kids" brought up the drag where the baby calves gamboled along. Babe Boyle described this position on a drive as "eatin' a lot of dust." Plenty of things went wrong. The cattle got lost, the kids got lost. Virginia Robin, a niece of Jo's from Chicago remembered her first drive: "It was tough for a city girl . . . to ride many hours the first night in darkness, in the mountains, with a group who got lost in a rainstorm. I had no raincoat or change of clothing . . . On that night . . . we ended up on a country road, and a car moving in the same direction as we were hit the horse I was riding."

When they reached the camp Jo had set up, they ate supper. Then they got the bedrolls out of the Power Wagon. A bedroll was a couple

of blankets wrapped up in a waterproof tarpaulin. They slept on the ground. They saw the sky at night, the stars undimmed by city lights and fouled air, and they got to know the Universe. Unless it rained. In Colorado, June is often wet. Asked about the cattle drives, Buck Elliott said, "Well, sometimes they was fun, and sometimes they was hell. . . . [W]eather had all the effects, either with you or against you." His friend Red Miller put it this way, "If your bread stayed dry, we done pretty good." Judy Cass went as a girl: "I'd have to sleep with Aunt Jo, on the ground. . . . It was terrible. She snored. She had at least one of the Elliott dogs climb in with you. I was scared to death to move for fear of the dog biting."

Owen Lamb described to me the first few days of a typical drive in the 1940s and 1950s. "I was always in the back, with the dust. All those cows bawling at their calves. We'd stay overnight at Log Cabin. Second day was easy. Most of the cows would go up to Red Feather Lakes through the night. Next day we'd bring up the stragglers. Then we'd hold them up at Red Feather. Up by Deadman there were lots of willows. Dogs came in handy. John Elliott would be up in front. Then we hit Deadman Park, a big open area."

After going over Deadman Pass, they trailed the cows down Deadman Canyon to the Sholine ranch in the Laramie River valley. Judy Cass remembered that the canyon "was very rocky and narrow. It was stressed to us to be quiet and take it very slow. It was kind of a dangerous situation in that canyon, and the cows could drop off the side."

Jo Lamb wrote about an incident that conveys the perils of this last stretch of the drive. "The old state road through Deadman Canyon had become hazardous. . . . The cattle shied the wrecked bridges and swam the fords close by and soon had new detour trails established. However two yearlings were curious and stepped out on a remaining cat walk of the largest wrecked bridge and fell into the upper side of the structure and due to planks and bridge piling, were trapped by the rushing water and penned under the bridge." One of yearlings drowned. As a result, the trail riders "did not get the usual joy of threading through the roaring mad Deadman Canyon that every rider looked forward to, because that yearling bobbed along on top of the water like a feather! So the little ones told me, when I saw them next, at Sholine's Bridge where the chuck wagon had pulled up for dinner."

When they finally reached the Sholine ranch in the Laramie River valley, the brand inspector counted the cows and checked the brands, making sure that Jo's and John's herds did not exceed their USFS limits. After that, according to Judy Cass, "they'd take the cattle to Middle Mountain. That's when Buck Elliott would come down from Glendevey, and he and his dad would separate the cattle, Aunt Jo's and John Elliott's. The kids would be on the outer perimeter of the herd keeping them bunched. John's cows would go up to Shipman Park and Jo's up in the Rawahs behind the 'Water Hole.'" That's the way it was done in the 1950s.

Increased automobile traffic complicated the job of moving cattle up Red Feather Lakes Road to the Laramie. In 1974, Buck Elliott lamented, "There's too goddamn many people—too many houses—too many summer homes. . . . Now there's an automobile every fifteen seconds. . . . You can't drive cattle that way." Many ranchers started using trucks to transfer cattle to the summer range.

Jo Lamb belonged to the generation that witnessed the ascendancy of the automobile and the paving of many rural roads. She grew up in a world of horses. She died in a world of self-propelled vehicles constructed of heavy steel, glass, and rubber, and powered by the internal combustion engine. The spread of motorized transport in the West beginning in the early 1920s transformed Jo's relations to the land on many levels. Her use of the pickup as a chuck wagon is one example. For her and other women in the mountains, the automobile meant greater mobility: they could visit town and see neighbors more often. With the introduction of tractors and mechanized mowers, balers, and stackers, haying became less labor intensive. Finally, the automobile gave millions of urban Americans easy access to the Colorado mountains and national forests, and ranchers felt these visitors' presence and pressure in various ways.

Jo was a good driver, although, according to Kay Quan, she had a reputation for driving down the middle of the road in hilly country. When she and John were together, she drove. John, bred to the horse, had trouble with cars and drove too fast. His mechanic, Leon Schurr, remembered how John wrecked the Power Wagon: "He hit a tree and flipped it over. He had two steers in the back and they ran away. He should have been driving horses, not a car."

By the 1940s and 1950s, Jo had grown stout. She now preferred driving to horseback riding. Making fun of her own weight, she liked to tell how she once overheard a little boy say, "This is a strong little car—why it could even carry Miss Lamb," remembered Joyce Glass. When on one cattle drive Jo's niece Virginia Robin got sick, Jo put her in the truck and rode the girl's horse. Virginia recalled, "Aunt Jo was red with anger because she would have to ride, while I stayed ahead of the drive with the truck with all the gear. I can still remember her attempting to get on the horse and after failing many times and being aggravated that she could not mount without help, she finally accepted the help of the trail boss and a huge boulder that she climbed onto to get onto the horse. No one would have had the nerve to laugh or even smile or comment on that event."

Jo owned a 1940 black Dodge Coupe, which became a familiar sight around Livermore. It was her school bus: she packed the school kids in the open trunk and took off on a field trip. It was her artist's studio: she sat inside and sketched the landscape while watching her cattle. It was her mobile veterinary clinic: when she drove out to her pastures, she always took a kettle of hot water and a baby bottle of milk along in case she came across a newborn calf.

She enjoyed the visual possibilities opened up by local car travel. Her essay "The Livermore Valley" begins: "Many cow trails and all of our highways lift to a position, sometime in their course, to offer beautiful and complete views of Livermore Valley. This valley is much more than a pastoral scene. It is the confluence of streams and highways."

In 1960, in a move that astonished all who knew her frugality, she went out and bought a brand-new blue-and-gray Dodge Polara. The model had large tail fins. Those fins, more than any other feature of the time, symbolized the exuberance of postwar consumerism. Jo's purchase created a minor sensation. Her former pupil Lee Nauta, by then a young man, teased her mercilessly about spending money for a new car. She did not take this teasing kindly. Lee said, "She gave me a good cussing." Bonnie Hebbert, another former pupil, told me, "We were all tickled for her." Their old pinchpenny teacher had suddenly entered the modern world on the fins of a Dodge Polara.

Before long, though, she had turned the car into a truck to serve her ranching needs, driving it around with "the trunk lid off, with three

bales of hay in the trunk and two calves in the back seat." She drove it like a saddle horse over fields. On one occasion, she hit a rock and tore out the transmission.

In the 1950s, she and John Elliott herded cattle from pasture to pasture using Jo's old Dodge Coupe—she at the wheel and John in the passenger seat. They drove at a crawl behind a bunch of cows, and John whacked the side of the car with his cane to keep the cattle moving (MH). The sound of John Elliott's cane striking the side of Jo Lamb's car stayed in people's memories.

John's death in 1961 turned Jo into a full-fledged woman rancher. Before he died, he told her, "Jo, you're in charge now" (JC). In his will, he gave her, not Buck, control of the ranch. Ida was to receive income from the estate, but otherwise had no say in running the operation.

The will was made in 1953 and remained in effect at his death. John provided for "his good friend, Josephine A. Lamb," in three ways. He named her, along with his bank, coexecutor and cotrustee of the estate with full discretionary powers. He bequeathed her a large part of his summer range on the Laramie: the "Water Hole" and the surrounding 960 acres. Finally, he designated her "manager, supervisor and co-user with her own cattle" of the Livermore ranch, from whose receipts she was to be paid a minimum of a hundred dollars a month, a good income at that time.

Seven months after John's death, Josephine, as executor and partial heir, borrowed enough money to purchase the Livermore ranch from the estate. In this way, ownership passed out of the hands of the Elliott family. Had the will been framed otherwise, it is doubtful Josephine could have purchased the land. By law, Ida Elliott had had the right to reject the will and take ownership of one-half of the ranch, but she never exercised that right, and neither she nor Buck contested the will.

Buck began adult life as a "have," the only child of a large ranch owner and the heir apparent. When he turned thirty, John deeded over to him two square miles of good grazing land. He set Buck up with a brand and gave him a herd of cattle. It seemed certain Buck would inherit the ranch. Instead, he got virtually no land (though he did receive money from Jo's payout after Ida Elliott died in 1967). Jo, who began with nothing, came away with a large landholding.

These reversals of fortune, especially their symmetry, convinced Livermore people that blame for the unnatural succession lay with Jo. "She pushed herself in there" (SN). One man who knew the parties involved saw it like this: "She came in as a young pretty schoolteacher, and she came away with the whole works. Josephine's the one who took Buck's place, you know" (TC).

It was John himself, however, who made the 1953 will, and he did not see fit to change it before he died seven years later. Jim Elliott believed his grandfather cut Buck out of the inheritance because Buck gave up his stake in the ranch when he traded it to Josephine for Glendevey. According to Jim, his grandfather's thinking went like this: "Well, if the kid don't want the land—he fiddled it away—by God, he's done. I'll give it the other way." The "other way" was Jo. She had stood by John when he was ill and had quit teaching to keep the ranch going.

Although John passed away, he remained a presence. Jo's cattle dogs were "John Elliott dogs"—as capable as ever and no less fierce. The dogs stood for a kind of continuity. They made her feel safe, and they were of great help to her in running the ranch. As she grew older, she relied on them more and more. Don Lamb remembered: "She'd take the dogs in her car. Say we were moving a bunch of cattle uproad. She'd let 'em out. She'd come out with the dogs when we brought cattle out in the fall." She felt real affection for them, especially Captain, a black border collie who lived to be twenty years old. When the dog died, Jo asked Don Lamb to bury him beneath a cairn on the slope above the house. Don felt his aunt should have put the dog to sleep long before it died, but she was unable to do so. "She had to struggle—she had a connectedness with that dog through John Elliott."

Jo was an independent woman, but she and John got along with each other only because she agreed to tow the line. Many witnesses attest to this aspect of their relationship. "If John Elliott was there, she wouldn't tell anybody what to do—if he wasn't there, she would tell people what to do," said Bill Knox. Of their ranch operation, a neighbor said, "John run it and she did it" (JGo).

If she went against his will, he resorted to violence. Margaret Ann McLean, visiting on the Laramie in the early 1940s, remembered an

argument between the two ranchers. "I saw John Elliott slap her one time—they were having words. He hauled off and hit her across the cheek." The niece said that Jo was visibly shaken, but pretended nothing out of the ordinary had happened.

While John was alive, he wanted Jo to be dependent on him, and he gave her little say in the operation, which did not help prepare her for her future role. With John's death, a great responsibility fell on her shoulders. She had never been in charge before. She knew how to "cowboy," but that was not enough. Now she needed to make effective decisions in two crucial areas: ranch finances and the cattle operation itself. Did she have the wisdom and experience to run the outfit successfully? John's death had been a personal blow to her, and the sense of loss she felt was compounded by insecurity about running the ranch alone. Her uncertainty in leadership was evident in the cattle drives she directed after John's death. Judy Cass remembered that in 1963, when Jo Lamb was the leader, things were chaotic and disorganized.

Jo was more at home with the financial side of the business than with the actual cattle operation. She excelled as a land investor. One valuable property she bought for a song at a tax sale. She was good at leveraging her assets, as when she borrowed from a Greeley bank to buy out the Elliott estate. According to her nephew John Glass, after the Greeley transaction she was financially strapped. The debt she had to pay back explains in part why she scrimped and saved at every turn.

Many people spoke of her business expertise. "She was a business lady" (BH). "She was nobody's fool—she had a business head" (AH). "She was a shrewd businesswoman," a close friend of hers said. When a rancher wanted to use the Community Hall, he was surprised that Josephine made him pay (AH). Yet the fact that she bargained hard and kept a tight grip on her money caused friction between her and other ranchers. According to one source, a neighbor never forgave Jo because she got the better of him in a cattle deal (MMM). A close friend of hers explained to me that "the men resented her because she was in competition with them. She bought a piece of property others were intending to buy but hadn't yet. The other ranchers didn't give her any help." What people called "business ability" in a man was considered "greediness" in a woman.

If Livermore concurred that she was clever in business, it also agreed that she was not always scrupulous and fair. One ranch woman told me, "She was famous for branding anything that walked across her land. If a cow with a calf walked across her land, you got the cow back" (CW). According to Babe Boyle, when Jo traded Glendevey for Buck's land and cattle, she took more of his cows than she should have. Buck counted them and called her on it.

In the family, she had a reputation for miserliness. For day-to-day running of the ranch—heavy chores, moving cattle, and so forth—she relied on several nephews and her brother Eugene. Don Lamb, his son, told me, "My mom had a hard time with Aunt Jo because Dad did a lot of work and wasn't compensated for it." Jo's nephew Francis Lamb managed the ranch for many years. Jo promised in return that she would deed over to him the old Fisk house and the surrounding four hundred acres, but she kept putting it off. He finally had to take her to court to get the land. Three other nephews who worked for her were less fortunate and felt they never received their just deserts.

Her purchase of the Elliott ranch was a brilliant move, but managing it proved to be a real challenge. In the decade before John's death, the operation was already going downhill. As Jo got older, she was less and less able to do the heavy work. The tasks facing her as ranch manager and owner were daunting. Decisions had to be made about "how much and when and what next." Bill Cass, who was her ranch hand, had an insider's view of the operation. I asked him if Jo was an effective rancher. "On her own, she wasn't successful: she got what she had through John Elliott—she kept the ranch because of Francis Lamb."

She did not possess John's intuitive sense in decision making. Jo tried to do things the Elliott way. This made economic sense sometimes, but sometimes not. She often acted against the advice of her experienced ranch hands. One year she kept her pregnant cows, the "heavies," in an open field a mile away from the calving barn, which stood empty. Many calves perished because the cows were too far out and exposed, Bill Cass remembered. Another time she ordered the irrigation of the hay meadows even though John's ditches had long since washed out.

Large mortgage payments limited her choices and resources. She spent as little as possible. A car and pickup on the ranch and a tractor on the farm were her concessions to modernity. Her brother Eugene

worked the Taft Hill farm for her, but when he asked for a grain drill, she refused (DL). She could not afford to buy feed for her herd except in dire winter conditions. She advised a younger neighbor: "Do not waste money buying hay. It is much wiser to run only as many cattle as the land will hold. Do not buy hay. Buy land—land will always grow in value. Don't get more cattle than the land will hold. Let the resource support the cattle. All they need is sunshine and grass" (AJ). Don Lamb put it in a nutshell, "She believed in land. . . . She grazed out a lot."

Many saw her economies as penny wise, pound foolish. She once gave a ranch hand a horse so old it could barely walk, and the man had trouble completing the job (BiC). In another instance, she used bulls out of her own herd to breed her cows. When John was alive, she used his Ross bulls. To use the bulls born of her own herd caused in-breeding. It was a little cheaper than trading off with other people's bulls, but it undermined the quality of the herd.

An air of neglect hung over the ranch. The siding of the old hotel peeled and needed paint. Fences were in disrepair. Jo seemed unconcerned if her cows got out and grazed on other people's land. When a neighbor told her ranch hand that one of her cows had strayed onto his land, and the hand reported it to Jo, she said, "Let Evan feed it" (BiC).

Her ranching drew the attention of Livermore—first, because she was a woman and, second, because she held to an older model of stockraising. Though she attended agricultural lectures at the Stockgrowers Association meetings, she thought of modern methods and scientific management as "foolishness" (AH). Bill Cass maintained that she was "thirty years behind the times." Her insistence on open calving, for example, resulted in high losses, up to 25 percent (AH). She accepted the loss because her investment in time and money were minimal.

Although the inefficiency of her operation owed much to lack of ready cash and haphazard management, some of it came from her intuitive sense of how domestic animals should be treated. The most startling aspect of Jo's ranching, from today's perspective, was her personal bond with the cattle. In this, she followed her mentor. She did not hesitate to carry a young heifer in the back seat of her car, and she kept "potty calves" in the kitchen. She was not unique in this approach: many Livermore stockgrowers to this day know their cows. Even so, feedlot farms and modern truck transport had begun to change the way

stockgrowers viewed and handled animals. The final destination of Jo's beef herd was the disassembly line of the packing house, yet she clearly did not treat her cows exclusively as mechanisms for producing beef.

Jo's conduct and demeanor as a woman rancher did not conform to local notions of how a woman should present herself or relate to men. She was usually stern, and, except with children, she eschewed the softness expected of her gender. A man who knew her on the Laramie in the 1960s described her to me this way: "What a character . . . [a]lways cordial, a little rough around the edges. Her language was a little strong at times. She had to run the chickens out of the house. What always impressed me about Josie was the concentration in her steely blue eyes" (SB). One of her nephews found it daunting that "she didn't smile or say much." Another nephew said: "She was in control . . . we were scared to death of her" (DW).

Several men I talked to felt she was unreasonably suspicious. Bill Cass observed, "She always thought men were trying to take advantage of her—some neighbors would try to help, and she'd chop 'em off at the knees." He remembered that when part of a fence she shared with a neighbor came down, the neighbor offered to pay for barbed wire and have his men help her put the fence back up, but Jo said to him: "If you want to keep your cows in, put up your own damn fence."

Yet she went to great lengths to guard the boundaries of her land against human, if not bovine, intruders. Unlike John, she had no tolerance of hunters who did not ask permission. If they asked, she might be agreeable. She usually charged five dollars. Anglers also had to ask if they wanted to try the trout streams and rivers that ran through her land. In one instance that Kay Quan remembered, a man who had met her before came with his son to ask if they could fish in the river, and she said, "I don't allow strangers." The man replied, "I am no more a stranger now than I was before," and he reminded her that she knew him. She was mollified and brought the man and his boy milk and cookies while they fished. On another occasion, she let a Boy Scout troop have the run of her ranch for one of their outings.

To trespassers, though, she was a menace. Many stories tell of her pointing her rifle to warn off hunters, anglers, realtors, intruders, and

even neighbors. “She always had a .30-.30 in her car,” Jack Goodwin said. Owen Lamb told me, “I’ve seen her out there with her .30-.30, running people off.” John Glass witnessed one such confrontation. “She’d stand up to any man. I remember one time that she caught this guy on her land, and she got out and started cussing this guy. It was so bad that I even had to walk away. And he said, ‘Lady, you can’t talk to me like that!’ And she was just going right on, ‘You so-and-so, I’m telling you. . . . ’ He just stood there and took it.”

A feud arose between her and the Boyles over road “rights of way” and cattle rights. The Boyles were friends of the Elliotts, but after John’s death Jo fell out with them and tried to prevent them from passing through her gates to get to their ranch. One day when old John Boyle drove up and got out to open the gate, Jo fired a shot into the back of his truck. According to Boyle’s granddaughter, Patricia Boyle Maxwell, he said, “‘Jo Lamb can’t get away with that,’ and he took a shot at her chimney.”

Jo Lamb was combative toward men who treated her unfairly or condescendingly. It can be argued that she had to be. Don Lamb told me that “she believed in the rights of women, and she made it happen in her own life.” When she acted as she did, she had not only her own interests at heart, but those of other women as well. Her niece Virginia Robin wrote: “Aunt Jo expected girls/women to be independent.” She was committed to women’s equality. What locals saw as eccentricities were in many ways anticipations of the life choices and attitudes of mainstream women (and many men) today.

Did Jo’s conduct and example as a woman rancher expand the possibilities for women in Livermore? Among local men, probably not. They made fun of her behind her back and criticized her relations with John Elliott, blaming her for what they saw as John’s poor treatment of Buck and Ida.

The women of the community saw Jo in a different light because they knew another side of her. In the 1950s, she became a leader of the Livermore Woman’s Club. She thus managed to break out of the social isolation that surrounded her in the 1930s and 1940s. The women of Livermore welcomed her into their organization. From the 1950s until her death, community causes gave her life an alternative focus.

Livermore women by and large spoke of Jo with respect. Many who did so were the wives of the very men who reviled her. An unmistakable note of satisfaction crept into the voice of one ranch woman when she described Jo as “fiercely independent.” Many women admired her courage in the face of the men’s bias. I also sensed that women vicariously enjoyed Jo’s various transgressions, which does not mean that they or their daughters followed her lead, but that accepting her was a way for them to channel or displace some of their own resentments. One ranch woman whose husband took Jo amiss said, “I really enjoyed Josephine.” Another ranch woman declared: “She wanted land, cattle, to run a ranch. Men resented her—maybe because she was a woman. I resented that she was resented.”

When Josephine died in 1973, she was seventy-five. She owned a ranch worth more than a million dollars, yet she had not made a will. Her lawyer, William Allen, wrote to the probate judge: “I have known and represented Josephine Lamb since 1949. I have always found her to be a very pleasant, business-like woman. We had discussed many times the fact that she should make a Will, but she never did.” Lack of a will meant the estate went into probate court. Because of the number of heirs, the ranch had to be sold, and it passed out of the family.

Why didn’t Josephine write a will? She was a smart businesswoman and well knew the consequences of dying intestate. She also knew how much she personally gained through John Elliott’s carefully crafted testament. Those close to her assured me she would have hated to see the ranch pass out of the family. When it came to the Lamb family, she was a strong loyalist and the family’s historian. She organized the annual family picnics, for which she supplied the hams.

The same possessive spirit that drove her to own land probably prevented her from passing it on. “It was very hard for her to give up her land. She had her sweat and blood in it,” a friend of hers told me. For land, she had submitted to John’s rule and compromised her reputation. For land, she had put herself out on a limb borrowing money. Unwilling even to entertain the idea of letting go of it, she procrastinated about making a will. She was unable to imagine surrendering her property, even in death.

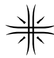
Margaret Ann McLean told me that she once overheard her aunt say that she would never make a will. She would let her thirty-two nieces and nephews fight it out—doubtless a jest, yet I believe she felt a real reluctance to pass on her land.

The ranch should have gone to her nephews Francis and Donald Lamb. Jo had promised them land in exchange for years of back pay. She signed a contract to that effect. Each was to get one-third of the ranch with first option to buy the rest. In that way, the Josephine Lamb Ranch would have stayed in the family. Unfortunately, the contract could not be validated because there was no testament to back it up.

After Probate Court, the estate—in order to pay out the heirs—put the Livermore land on the market. As we know, the Colorado Division of Wildlife then bought the Josephine Lamb Ranch. When the purchase was completed, Margaret Ann McLean wrote a letter to state officials urging them to name the land after Josephine Lamb. The suggestion was not accepted, and the former ranch became the Lone Pine Creek State Wildlife Area, the name it bears as of this writing.

ELEVEN

Citizen Lamb



Eleanor Roosevelt visited Fort Collins in August 1958 to receive an honorary doctorate from Colorado State University. Josephine Lamb drove down from Livermore with a woman friend to hear the former First Lady. They met Mrs. Roosevelt and shook her hand. A crowd of five thousand was gathered under the shade of the trees on the Oval, the heart of the old campus and the most splendid historical landscape in Fort Collins. There were not enough seats, and many sat on a grassy lawn surrounded by American elms. These trees form one of the last stands in the nation, survivors of Dutch elm disease. Josephine, the naturalist, doubtless enjoyed sitting under them on that summer day.

She and her friend admired the speech, which was on "the responsibilities of world leadership." Mrs. Roosevelt criticized the incoherence of U.S. foreign policy in the Middle East and the national overemphasis on material progress as opposed to "cultural and intellectual achievement." I asked the woman who went with Josephine how her friend responded to the event. She said, "Josephine never showed excitement, but I know she got a thrill out of it."

That Josephine wanted to shake Mrs. Roosevelt's hand is understandable, for she could closely identify with a woman who had achieved a public presence in a world dominated by men. From 1950 onward, Jo herself had become involved in civic affairs. She was the Democratic Party committee woman for her voting precinct and at one point considered running for county commissioner. Ted Wetzler said his aunt

"took her politics seriously." Her friend told me that Jo Lamb, who was otherwise so independent, always "followed the party line."

As woman rancher, Jo had a reputation of being grasping and possessive. As Citizen Lamb, however, she gave herself unselfishly to public causes. There is no doubt she had a strong social conscience. Aggressive as she was in business, Jo at some level felt that ownership and personal gain must not be at the expense of public welfare. It was why she was a Rooseveltian Democrat in Republican Livermore.

During the last third of her life, Jo emerged as a public person of note. She joined the Livermore Woman's Club and then became a leader in that prestigious organization. She published historical research and became an activist in nature conservation.

When one looks back on Josephine Lamb's life in the 1930s and 1940s, her sudden interest in civic affairs comes as a surprise. Previously, her teaching and ranching activities had left little time for community involvement, but now she became an eager committee woman, and her presence was felt everywhere.

Her nephew Jack Glass told of an incident on the Laramie that illustrated Jo's new role and what John Elliott thought of it. The two ranchers were at work in a meadow.

> Sometimes it seemed that Aunt Jo had places to go. But the hay had to be put up. . . . Well I remember a time or two when Aunt Jo would be pretty upset because she didn't get to go to these meetings wherever she was going. . . . Mr. Elliott would make fun of her, for he thought it was funny. She didn't! She'd take that old pickup to raise the stacker, and take off with that pickup and hit the end of the cable and bust it. . . . Then he would say: "Well, Jo, you'd just as well go to town. Jack and I have to fix this stacker up, so we can go tomorrow. So I should have let you go to town this morning—saved us all this work."

The autumn of 1948 was momentous for the community. The grand opening of the new Livermore Community Hall took place, and for the first time the Rural Electric Association brought power to the region. Livermore joined the modern world. One by one the scattered ranch houses began to glow with incandescent light and hum with new appliances.

If 1948 was momentous, 1949, when Jo joined the Livermore Woman's Club, was tumultuous. On the first day of that year, Livermore found itself in the middle of a blizzard. "The Blizzard of '49" made it a year people never forgot. Nature showed what it thought of rural electrification. Lights went out, fridges stopped humming. Snow forced the Woman's Club to cancel two monthly meetings in a row. Calves smothered in the drifts. A family northeast of Fort Collins froze to death. The blizzard became a marker in the flow of time. All over northern and eastern Colorado and in other western states, people remembered that year. Later on, they would say an event happened either before or after the Blizzard of '49.

In the summer of 1949, as the century stood poised to turn the corner into its second half, Jo's life took an extraordinary turn of its own. She came out as a citizen. At the same time, she began to rediscover her own womanly side.

When the snow was gone, and thick dust again covered the country lanes of summer, Miss Josephine Lamb was inducted into the Livermore Woman's Club. It was July 30, 1949—the day before her fifty-second birthday. With admission to the club, she began to build for herself another kind of life. She did not quit ranching—on the contrary, she continued to acquire land. She did not give up teaching, and she did not stop living with the Elliotts. But ranching, teaching, and the aging Elliotts were no longer sufficient for her. There is no denying that in the 1950s she came out of the woods.

What lay behind Josephine's decision to change course, to become active in the community? One factor may have been a shift in her relations with John, who, in old age, was more confined to the indoors. A second factor was that she herself had begun to feel the effects of age.

Her interest in joining the Woman's Club had, I believe, its emotional roots in her early years—before she became involved with the Elliotts. As a young woman, she liked being in the public eye. She liked being honored in the *Denver Post* for her beef-judging prize, and she liked being class valedictorian and speaking on "the call of the twentieth century" at commencement. But then, after high school, her life took a different direction, and she pursued other dreams. In 1949, however, she did respond to the call of the twentieth century—to the call of becoming a woman of her times.

Her desire to become a member of the Woman's Club evidently outweighed her fear that the organization might reject her, which raises a question: How *did* Jo manage to get accepted into this distinguished club? Admission was not automatic. A prospective member had to be nominated and after that recommended by the club's board. Then she had to be approved by the whole membership in a *unanimous* vote. One member told me, "It was a wonder she wasn't blackballed." In Livermore, Josephine was a maverick: a spinster among wives, a Catholic among Protestants, a Democrat among Republicans. And she was a woman with a reputation. Nevertheless, the club membership showed its mettle and brought this unorthodox woman into its ranks.

Open-mindedness had a long tradition in the Livermore Woman's Club and generally in the woman's club movement. The local group allowed men to sit in and admitted not only ranch women, the upper crust, but also the wives of ranch hands. The woman's club movement had begun at the end of the nineteenth century because women were not admitted to men's clubs. In their own organizations, women discussed alternative (and controversial) views of womanhood, life issues, and world events. Intellectual discussion played a major role. In 1909, the Livermore Woman's Club endorsed universal women's suffrage, which was strongly opposed by many men and women across the nation (though Colorado women already had the right to vote). The club's early motto was "Woman is Power." As an independent woman, Josephine fit the mold—her intelligence and intellectual curiosity were good qualifications for membership.

In a word, Jo Lamb became "clubbable." The Livermore Woman's Club was the most important organization for her, but she participated in others as well: the Homeboosters, the Highland Club, the Farm Bureau, the Beef Promotion Campaign, the Stockgrowers Association (of which she was member and secretary), its women's auxiliary the Cow Belles, and the 4H Club. She had gone public with a will.

There was a certain piquancy about Josephine's membership. Livermore thought she was a fine teacher, but did not see her as a lady. She did not entirely match the community's image of a Woman's Club member. Neither mother nor homemaker, she had masculine traits and wore pants. The transition from cowboy to club woman must have been challenging. In her "American Women Poets" presentation in 1953, there

are hints of this challenge. The first poem Jo picked to read was Amy Lowell's "Patterns," an exploration of female sexual desire in relation to formal dress. The poem's speaker finds her prescribed clothes uncomfortable and restrictive. "My passion wars against the stiff brocade." When Josephine read the lines "What is summer in a fine brocaded gown!/I should like to see it lying in a heap upon the ground" to the club members, they and she must have had a good laugh. In any case, for club meetings and events she put on clothes that were more feminine and formal than her usual attire.

This change in attire may have affected how she saw herself. Over time, Jo's new persona settled in—she got back in touch with her womanly side. Photos from the second and third decades of the century bear witness to the femininity of her youth. In the late 1920s, however, a visible alteration took place in her, an alteration that was partly, though not entirely, physiological. Snapshots show that her features and figure grew less delicate. The few photos of her from the 1930s and early 1940s show how in that period the cowboy persona was dominant.

From the 1950s on, club photos show her wearing the dresses she bought in secondhand shops (MMc). In a formal portrait from the late 1960s or early 1970s, now displayed in the old Livermore Hotel, she wears a dark dress adorned with a brooch. The fact that in 1962 she attended the Vogue Style Fashion Show signals how far she went in this direction.

As a new member of the Woman's Club, Jo kept a low profile. Records show she attended all the meetings, but in the first two years she is rarely mentioned in the minutes, and she did not hold major office. Then in the early 1950s, she took on new responsibilities. In recognition of her knowledge of trees and natural history, she was made secretary of the Pinyon Grove Committee. Its purpose was to save from destruction an unusual stand of pine trees in Owl Canyon. Her writing ability made her a good choice for this position. In the same period, she was put in charge of the annual Wildflower Day in June. It was as a naturalist, then, that she profiled herself in the early years, but not exclusively.

For her, as for other Livermore women, the club was an important venue for cultivating the arts. Josephine had a good understanding of poetry. In her 1953 program, she endeavored to present not only

Fig. 33. Studio portrait of Josephine Lamb in dark dress with brooch, late 1960s or early 1970s. Courtesy of Judy Cass.

canonical women poets, but also local and regional ones, as well as, most interestingly, modernist writers such as Marianne Moore and Hilda Doolittle—adventurous choices for provincial Livermore. An intriguing entry in the club minutes of 1967 states, "Jo Lamb read poems written by Livermore school children when she was their teacher, also a poem she had written about early life at Virginia Dale, about Jack Slade and [about] Virginia Dale being named for his wife." This poem is now lost.

Virginia Dale, a small settlement in the northern Livermore region, lies not far from the Wyoming border and was named after the free-spirited wife of the stage line station master, Jack Slade, in the early 1860s. Slade had the reputation of a drinker, a bully, and a killer. He was eventually fired and went to Montana, where, in 1864, a vigilante committee condemned him to death and hanged him from the crossbar of a corral. His wife rushed into town to rescue him, but arrived too late.

The story of Slade and Virginia Dale has the makings of a ballad, perhaps the form of Lamb's lost poem. Of Slade's murderous conduct she would not have approved, yet his colorful character doubtless fascinated her. He was a John Elliott type, but out of control.

Through the 1950s, Jo became increasingly engaged in club activities and projects. Her knowledge and organizational ability won other members' respect. In 1955, they elected her to a two-year term as president. For Jo Lamb, it was a personal triumph.

The club scrapbook for 1955 includes photographs of the newly elected officers. They look out at us in their 1950s coiffures and dresses, with their young children, in front of their houses. Not Jo Lamb. She stands dressed in a trench coat and cloche hat beside Rabbit Creek among winter trees—Symbol Rock rising in the background. The photograph was taken by John in 1928. Why did she pick for her presidential picture an image twenty-seven years out of date? Probably because she liked to see herself framed by the natural world, an important part of her self-image. The conjunction of city chic and wild landscape in the picture is almost surreal, yet it is a fitting emblem of who she had become.

Jo Lamb with Symbol Rock in the background, Rabbit Creek, 1928. The companion piece to this photograph is on page 169. Photograph by John Elliott. Courtesy of the Fort Collins Museum Local History Archive.

Lamb's tenure as president marked a period of great endeavors in the Livermore Woman's Club. Under her leadership, the organization pursued three major objectives: the restoration of graves in the old Livermore Cemetery; the preservation of the unique pine grove in Owl Canyon; and the publication in book form of the ranch histories collected over the years by club members. This book remains the fundamental text for early Livermore history. During Lamb's tenure, the club also received statewide recognition for its programs on international affairs.

In the last third of her life, Jo Lamb frequently made the journey between the backwoods and "genteel Livermore," a journey whose distance was psychological as much as physical. Crossing this divide gave her a larger view of her ambiance than her peers could attain. This view benefited not only herself, but the community as a whole. Through her, social Livermore gained a fresh perspective and a renewed purpose. Coming out of the backwoods to lead Livermore's efforts to recover its pioneer history and protect its threatened habitats, Jo Lamb did not surrender, but sublimated her own wildness.

The Woman's Club she came to lead was the foremost social and cultural institution in the region. Its founding in 1896 was inspired by a women's movement that swept through the West and the whole nation in the late decades of the nineteenth century. The Livermore group affiliated itself with both the Colorado Woman's Club and the National Federation of Woman's Clubs. In spite of its small size and remoteness, it gained recognition throughout the state for its longevity and influence.

A closer look at the work this group accomplished in the 1950s helps us understand Josephine's new life in the Livermore of women. These women endeavored to come to terms with the world that lay beyond the foothills and beyond the seas—a damaged postwar world quickened and stirred up by the military and economic might of the United States. In her second meeting as a member in 1949, Josephine underwent a little immersion in international affairs: she participated in a forum on the United Nations.

"Mutual Improvement by Study and Discussion" was the club's motto in the 1950s, replacing the club's earlier clarion call "Woman is Power." International topics were still important, but in the 1950s the emphasis shifted from political debate (favored by the early club) to charitable

action. There were no programs on the Korean War, McCarthyism, or U.S. foreign policy, but there was great concern about world hunger.

An article in club scrapbooks from Jo Lamb's presidency describes a postwar Japan on the brink of starvation. Leaflets predict famine in the "the dark continent" of Africa, and pictures show hunger in India and starving Korean leper children. It was the era of the emaciated poster child. Added to the club's humanitarian concerns were fears that poor countries might become Communist in order to feed their people—a theme that Eleanor Roosevelt addressed in her talks and articles of the 1950s. In the United States, farms and ranches produced abundant meat and grain, enough to feed other countries. The government established programs to distribute surplus foods, such as peanut butter, soya beans, and wheat, to the world's needy. At the same time, in a period of world hunger, farmers were paid not to plant all of their fields because overproduction had lowered agricultural prices. The irony of this situation was not lost on club members, who were, after all, food producers.

Under Jo Lamb, the club raised money for a California company that distributed "Meals for Millions." They consisted of a dried substance called Multi-Purpose Food, or MPF. Two ounces of MPF powder mixed with water produced an eight-ounce serving that met one-third of a person's daily nutrition requirement. Each meal cost three cents. When Lamb was president, the club prepared and served samples of MPF at its annual "Husbands Day" meeting—a covered-dish supper for the spouses. Miss Lamb pitched in as well. The program that year had a hidden agenda—introducing its international projects to the men, who were expected to make donations. Everybody was invited to taste the hunger rations. No one recorded if Livermore ranchers liked MPF as well as the baked ham and scalloped potatoes the women served, but one person, quoted in a scrapbook article, said of it, "not bad if you are starving."

Although international affairs were an important focus, the club also undertook local projects. Besides Husbands Days, there were Christmas programs and pageants, usually with a visit from Santa. Josephine was one of the main organizers. There was Wildflower Day in June. There were March of Dimes campaigns to combat polio. During Lamb's tenure, programs on local issues included "History of Voting," "Picture Framing," "Community Economics—Beef and Lamb," and presentations on the histories of individual Livermore ranches—all subjects dear to her heart.

Her writing ability put Josephine in positions of authority in the community. She became the secretary of organizations. She became the transcriber of stories. The written word was essential to her major civic initiatives, especially the ranch histories project and the campaign to save the pinyon grove.

The writing materials she used are evidence of her personal habits and character as a writer. She jotted things down on whatever lay at hand. For letters, she used legal paper or note stock adorned with cowboys. She also wrote on butcher paper, old cards, advertisements, and used envelopes. She didn't like to waste paper and was an inveterate recycler many years before the term came into vogue.

The script is that of a woman who taught penmanship—its legibility a benediction to the biographer. The minutes she wrote as secretary of the Woman's Club are in a school hand, not fancy, but straightforward, like her character. The letters are well formed, the capitals correct, the flow confident, almost elegant.

The scenes of her writing were various and makeshift. At Rabbit Creek, it was the kitchen table. Later in life, however, in the public phase when she lived in the old Livermore Hotel, she had a study. It was the southwest room, which was called "the Library" when the hotel was still a hotel.

On an afternoon in May, I drive out to the old hotel to visit Jo's niece, Kay Quan. I want to get a closer look at the study, now Tom Quan's study. Kay tells me that when her aunt had the room, the walls were an apple green. I find the atmosphere bright and mildly euphoric. The room, Kay says, stays cool in summer. Her sister, Judy Cass, said Jo preferred this room to all the others because of the light: she kept house plants in the large bay window facing south. She worked on a desk the size of a card table, covered with "a clutter of books and papers." There were probably dictionaries, school texts, a university extension manual, poem anthologies, field guides, and a few favorite books—such as Gene Stratton Porter's novel *A Girl of the Limberlost* and the *Ranch Histories of Livermore*. An oil-burning stove took the chill off in cold weather, and Jo closed the doors to make the room cozy. I take note of the high

ceiling and the rustic flooring that consists of wide, buff-colored boards laid down in uneven widths, some a foot and a half wide. Jo would have admired their swirling grain and the odd geometry of knots. The boards were milled from the Ponderosa pines that grew in stands on the hills surrounding the valley. Josephine knew these trees well and wrote about them—they were abundant on her original homestead claim.

Kay invites me to pull up a chair to see what her aunt saw when looking out the window.

I imagine Jo sitting here, writing her essay on the Livermore valley. She puts her pencil down and looks out onto the dry-grass vistas to the south. She gazes beyond the meadows toward Greyrock, which juts out from a range of low hills, an unexpected mass of granite on the southern frontier of Livermore. Her eye then follows the ridgeline up to the summit of Livermore Mountain and back down to the berm of the Red Feather Lakes Road. To her left are sandstone cliffs on the North Fork of the Poudre River. It sweeps by, close to the house—too close for comfort in times of flood. To the east, large cottonwoods shade the valley bottom.

Josephine returns to her manuscript. She thinks about the abundance of water courses in Livermore, a defining feature of the landscape. She writes down the names of all the major streams and gives their sources. She writes: "[T]he stories of the ranches will, as nearly as possible, follow the streams and come in to the heart of the valley with the confluence of streams." The heart of the valley is the North Poudre, the river that flowed along her property line.

She had the gift of living in many times at once. As a "new woman," she embodied the future. In the daily routines of teaching and herding, she was focused on the present. She lived a great deal in the past, avidly collecting objects of local history and researching the early history of Livermore. In doing so, she brought the past into the present and made it available to the future. She made it part of my future.

The greatest achievement of her presidency at the Woman's Club was the publication in 1956 of *Ranch Histories of Livermore and Vicinity 1884–1956*, an initiative to preserve for future generations the memory of the community's past. The book is a landmark in the cultural history of

northern Colorado and the foundation for all later historical research in this region. For me, it was indispensable for understanding the history and operations of the Rabbit Creek and Lone Pine ranches.

Jo played a crucial role as organizer and publicist in order to get this publication off the ground. She also collected oral histories from old-timers and served as both a writer and editor. None of these efforts is acknowledged in the book itself, so it is important here to give a record of the crucial part she played.

The last interview she gave, in 1973, revealed her engagement with the community's past and gives us a sense of her historical approach. This approach was not simply antiquarian, but informed by a searching, critical perspective. In discussing Ansel Watrous's *History of Larimer County* (1911), she takes the author to task for writing a vanity book rather than a real history: people who paid got into the book, others didn't. She explains how Watrous excluded the biographies of important people if he disapproved of them. He was also biased against people who drank or who were lower class. Josephine's father, a prominent settler, is an example. "I couldn't stand that book," she says. "I would not have that book around if it did not have a lot of good information in it, because, because, well, . . . my father's name isn't in that book and all kinds of people's names aren't in that book. My father . . . he drank some . . . he wasn't a drunkard, but he drank some and this man . . . this man always talks, when he writes up a man, he always ends up by what a good citizen he was, and how temperate he was and everything and so then he always mentions . . . the other riff-raff. They don't even have names. They don't even have names. He doesn't name them." For Josephine, the historian was obligated to represent important people, even if they are working class, even if their personal morals are disagreeable to the writer. The historian's task is to name the names.

Josephine's own history of the Elliott ranch occupies two and a half pages of *Ranch Histories*, an account from which I have already extensively quoted. Her prose is lucid and forceful. With incisive detail, she charts the early settlement of the lands that would become the Elliotts' range. She records the names of the homesteaders from whom Elliott bought land, and she describes the trails and cow camps he built in the high country. In her account, she draws her readers in with vivid pictures of early livestock management. The authority of personal experience

imbues her prose. Within the short space of her narrative, she attains a level of insight unusual in local histories.

Her naturalist's curiosity about the land led her to sketch out the environmental history of the Elliott ranch. Few other contributors pursued this direction. One example is her discussion of the Ponderosa pine woods in the Rabbit Creek uplands. After wildfires, many of these stands became "pitch pine," trees that were burned, but not entirely. She wrote: "all of this top grassland had once been a pitch pine forest and the dead trunks were chopped into posts. Men chopped and hauled posts to the Livermore Valley ranchers and supported families by doing so."

Her history of the John William Elliott ranch conveys to the reader the changes in the land over time. She wrote of the first Euro-American settlers and how they grazed horses on meadows sown with alfalfa. Fascinated by the remaining traces of earlier settlers on Rabbit Creek, she wrote, "The alfalfa fields have reverted back to sod but a few of the old deep tap-rooted alfalfa plants still remain." She also described the bits of unbarbed horse wire left on the ranch. I have found clumps of remnant alfalfa and a few scraps of that ancient horse wire. It was through Josephine Lamb's account that I learned the significance of these things.

Among her papers is a worn folder—an old manila envelope she slit down one side. That is very Jo Lamb. On the outside of it she wrote in big letters, "My own history of Ranches JAL 1956." It is an amazing assemblage of items from her desk, containing research, final drafts, and works in progress, as well as shopping lists and notes to herself about heifers, stray cattle, and rents on her properties. Some sheets are fastened by a rusty pin. There are pages and pages of cattle brands with their past and present owners, evidence of her work on brands for *Ranch Histories*. There is a map she drew of Livermore. The contents of the folder document the effort she put into the ranch histories project. Here one finds the essay titled "The Livermore Valley"; a double-columned chronology of hers and John's lives; the original drafts of the essay on the Elliott ranch; and the histories of six other ranches she collected and edited.

When Josephine became president of the Woman's Club in 1955, she realized that the time was ripe to publish a history of ranching in north-central Colorado. She had come of age in the 1920s, when the last homesteading took place and when people had little time to focus on the past. In the 1930s and 1940s, hardships and great national endeavors absorbed Livermore's attention. Then in the wake of depression and war, people experienced a pent-up thirst for culture and education. In this period, Jo used her club positions to satisfy that thirst.

The ranch histories project had begun as a special club activity in the mid-1940s, five years before Josephine joined. A club member would agree to research the history of a local ranch, sometimes her own, and share her findings at the monthly meeting. The president at that time raised the question of whether the group should "reserve the rights" to the histories so that they might eventually be published. By 1950, there were so many histories that the club had to buy a special file in which to keep them, and there was continued talk of publication.

Nothing happened, however. Then Lamb took over the project. She realized that the older settlers were getting very old indeed and that it was imperative to save their memories of the past before they passed on. In 1956, when she was both club president and chair of the histories committee, she announced a public meeting and called on "residents and ranchers at Livermore and adjacent areas . . . to attend the meeting . . . and bring with them any information regarding the early history of their ranches or . . . of the livestock industry." She asked the club to consider a proposal from the Larimer County Stockgrowers Association to underwrite production of the book. The club approved, and the project moved quickly toward publication. The finished work was an impressive effort of historical recovery based on the oral testimonies of ranchers and ranch women.

In the summer of 1956, the Stockgrowers Association sponsored a gala barbecue and picnic to celebrate publication of the book. The gathering took place in a pine grove at Buck Elliott's guest ranch in Glendevey, a little upstream from his father's summer camp on the McIntyre. The event was written up in *Cattle Guard*, the magazine of the Colorado Cattlemen's Association. In the article are close-up shots of ten ranchers—all now deceased. Among them is Babe Boyle's father, John Boyle, neighbor and friend of John Elliott. He wears a ten-gallon

hat and a Hawaiian shirt decorated with palm trees. In the photos, some ranchers smile, and others look bewildered as they examine a book that includes their names and retells their stories. There is no picture of John Elliott, whose son hosted the gathering, nor of Josephine, who did as much as anyone to get the book published.

The book itself does not name the women who collected the histories and wrote them up. Acknowledgment is a single general statement: that the Cattlemen are indebted to "the Livermore Woman's Club and the Larimer County Cow Belles for their foresight in recording the story of many early ranches." Why didn't the women identify themselves? Why didn't the Stockgrowers Association give them individual acknowledgment? It is ironic that a work whose purport was to name names neglected to name its own authors.

Apart from presiding over the community's major history project, Lamb oversaw club initiatives in nature study and wildland preservation. Her activities as rancher, hunter, and amateur naturalist gave her extensive knowledge of the natural world. In the Woman's Club, she put her knowledge to public use. She became an important bridge between the community and the natural world.

What was her idea of nature? We know she was a keen observer. The close attention she paid to her mountain ambiance went far beyond what was needed to assure the welfare of her cattle. She liked to record her observations, not only in wildflower ledgers (now lost), but also in poems and drawings. Her artistic endeavors speak to us with immediacy, and they give us a sense of how she saw the natural world.

A large number of the poems she chose for her "American Women Poets" program focus on nature, including the three poems of her own that she read. Two of her poems had been published in 1943, six years before she joined the club. They were accepted for an anthology of poems written by the schoolteachers of America. She was forty-six then. *Wings over the Classroom* is handsomely bound in dark blue cloth. I examined the copy owned by Kay Quan. Among its pages I found a dried maple leaf (Jo's bookmark?), two local news articles on Jo and her sister Margaret, a poem about a magpie copied out of a magazine in Jo's hand, and slips of paper with notes on historical cattle brands and the earliest

school in Livermore. Jo inscribed this volume to the Glass family (her sister Del had married Herman Glass): "Dear Glass family: My writing is on pages 182–183, Josephine A. Lamb, 1943." Below that, in another hand, somebody transcribed her only other extant poem "Pinedrops." In the book itself, a biographical notice precedes Jo's two entries: "Miss Lamb is a native of Colorado. She studied at the Colorado State College of Education. Miss Lamb is now working on a ranch." The conciseness is characteristic. Her self-description as a ranch hand with a college education is a little paradoxical. The book is a collection of teachers' poems. She does not mention her teaching because in this period she worked exclusively on the ranch.

Jo's anthology poems are representative of their time. "Last Notes of Day" is a nocturne.

> Wild ducks swimming on a beaver pool,
> Cold dark water,
> Silver light
> Reflected from the moon above.
>
> Now, quiet notes of mourning dove,
> Gliding otter,
> Breezes cool,
> Rainbow trout plopping, still the night.

She discloses a nature scene of exquisite serenity. The images are the commonplaces of romantic nature poetry, yet her spare language and rhythms lend the poem a special power. The counterpoint of gliding and plopping evokes the emergent stillness of dusk. The setting is probably the Laramie River.

The conciseness of "Last Notes of Day" invites comparison to the artistic economy of Jo's small landscape sketches, drawn in the 1950s. These sketches are good sources for understanding how she "read" natural landscapes. The Woman's Club was certainly the catalyst that allowed her to deepen her interest in art and to share her own vision of the mountain environs, yet she had shown an earlier interest in landscape in the oil painting of Rabbit Creek Ranch that is attributed to her. Now, as a member of the club, she had a venue for going public as an

artist. She showed her work at exhibits and art events, and she participated in the club's craft projects.

After retirement from teaching in 1960, she studied drawing at Colorado State with artist Evie Hickman. Jo drove the twenty-five miles down from Livermore and never missed class, even when it snowed. She was in her sixties, a senior citizen among coeds. Hickman remembered her clomping into the room with big boots, "raggle-taggle" clothes, and "hair that was not fashionable, to say the least." Jo's aesthetic sense came out elsewhere: "she expressed herself in her drawings," Evie told us. Jo sat in the last row, but, Evie said, "she tried harder than others to get something out of the class." Jo stayed after class and talked at length with the teacher.

Jo's drawings for this class included graphite studies of winter leaves on a branch and of a blown milkweed pod. The formal and almost abstract composition lends to each one an Asiatic quality. These drawings reverse the aesthetic of the small sketches where artistic economy and domestic frugality converge, where a vast mountain range is depicted on a 3-by-5-inch slip of paper. Here, by contrast, small natural objects, the fuzzy achenes of mountain mahogany (a common dryland shrub that grew near her house), and the bursting silk of a milkweed pod are blown up in size to fill an 8 1/2-by-11 sheet. A patient love of native plants is evident. In both sketches, the petals have fallen, the flowers turned to seed. Another drawing, different in style but probably done for the class, shows wild turkeys sitting in a dead tree. Jo's nature aesthetic was able to range beyond conventional prettiness.

In contrast to the school drawings, the pencil landscapes of the 1950s are less finished, though at least one was intended as a preliminary study for an oil painting. Some of these paintings she displayed at club exhibitions and one of them won a prize.

The rough sketches reveal a personal identification with mountains and forests. In them, she seems to trace not only the contours of the land, but an inner state of mind. Her usual practice was to sketch while watching over cattle in her old black Coupe. She stopped, opened the door, and started drawing. The sketches were done quickly, but Lamb did not think of them as entirely ephemeral. She saved them and even gave some the imprimatur of a title.

She sketched on small loose-leaf slips of paper with a line of punch

holes at the top. Handwritten notes on the flip side bleed through the thin paper. On one sketch, labeled "Poplar," a grocery list is superimposed, "jell, jam, honey, fruit juice, cocktail glasses." Another sketch, "Campus Elm Trees," shows mountains in the background. On the flip side are lists dated July 1, 1955: "2 bulls, cows, yearlings, 2–122 yearling heifers, 1 stray steer, 3 newly castrated yearlings," and "1 new branded yearling heifer 3X not vacinated clipped tail." This pattern—a landscape on one side, business notes on the other—exemplifies the tensions in Jo's view of mountains. They were a place of natural beauty, on the one hand, and the site of her cattle business, on the other.

The surviving sketches give a vivid record of how one woman of that time perceived the land. The natural world depicted in these landscapes was by no means pristine. Much of the terrain had been reshaped by human hands, streams redirected, forests cleared, new trees planted, hills leveled, roads cut through. Jo's vision of the land was itself conditioned by collective perceptions and period styles. Her favorite subjects—land forms and trees in the western mountains—are, for example, traditional. Even so, the sketches are fresh: they appear to convey her first impression of a scene. Looking at them, we seem to catch Jo in an act of perception.

Trees are typically the most dynamic and allusive elements in the drawings, as in her studies of aspens and lake trees discussed in chapter 6, "Aspens and Backswarth." As an historian, Josephine was fascinated by the oldest cottonwoods of the Front Range. Because of their longevity, trees are powerful markers of time and human memory. In her last interview (1973), she talked about a famous council tree under which generations of Arapahos met and parlayed. Like other residents of the dry West, she venerated trees—their shade being a welcome refuge from the Colorado sun.

For Lamb, trees were commercially and ecologically valuable, but they were also aesthetic objects. In the sketches, they are invariably charged with emotion. Compositionally, they define and dominate the artistic space.

Her sketches and poems show a romantic attachment to mountain scenery, yet they do not really address the question of humans' place in the natural world. People in early and archaic societies do not as a rule feel

separate from nature or have a name for it, but regard it as their home. Modern humans, however, must define nature because their urban condition alienates them from it. Lamb's yearning to be at one with the natural world is part of what makes her modern.

To understand her views on this matter, it is helpful to explore the kinds of thinking about nature that flourished in the West through the various phases of her life. It is helpful because a person's attitudes about the environment emerge not only from personal experience, but also in response to the overarching goals and pressures of the culture at large.

In the second half of the nineteenth century, at the end of which Josephine was born, key terms in public discussion about people's relation to their natural environs were *frontier* and *wilderness*. She grew up in the tail end of this period, and, as a belated pioneer, she was an advocate of putting wilderness to human use. Western settlers of the nineteenth century saw wilderness as land to be improved, or at best as a tourist attraction, a means of promoting commerce. Former Colorado governor William Gilpin in 1873 saw the natural world as raw material for farms, ranches, and gold mines. He labored to bring people into the state to tame the wild lands—to break sod, quarry mountains, build towns. To do, in short, what Josephine's father had come to do. For Gilpin, the expulsion of the Indian from his native territory and the white man's conquest of wilderness were ordained by God. He described the potential of Colorado so glowingly that his British cousin Charles Gilpin-Brown decided to immigrate to Livermore, where he met and married Helen Poland, John Elliott's future boss.

In the first decade and a half of the new century—the period of Josephine's youth—the feeling that the frontier was closing or had already closed spread through the West. The historian Frederick Jackson Turner proposed this idea in the 1890s, and it became the basis of a new and influential interpretation of western history. Turner's thesis was disconcerting because the frontier idea was a major element in the myth of what it meant to be a westerner.

Along with the sense that the loss of the frontier was imminent, there arose the conviction that some wild lands needed to be saved from "improvement" so that modern people might have the opportunity to see and experience the kind of wilderness that had been so central to their forebears. A more practical reason for preserving wilderness was

to slow the destruction of western forests and watersheds upon which farmers and city dwellers alike depended. When Josephine was still in grade school, these sentiments found a powerful voice in Theodore Roosevelt, who from the bully pulpit of high office, preached conservation. By creating a vast system of national parks and forest reserves, Roosevelt used his powers to change the map of the West in which Josephine would ranch.

The appreciation of wilderness in these early decades was accompanied by a "back to the land" movement that played on nostalgia for a simpler, more natural lifestyle. Magazines and books reiterated the idea that it was more satisfying and healthier for a person to live in rural surroundings than in cities. Urbanization was the main demographic trend in the West during the first two decades of the new century. By the mid-1920s, more than half the people in Colorado lived in towns and cities along the Front Range of the Rockies. These town dwellers felt a longing for the countryside. Yet getting "back to the land" as a place to live was no longer an easy matter. Free acreage in the public domain had largely been "settled up," so people looked for other ways to experience nature firsthand. They put their sons in the Boy Scouts of America, founded in 1910. They went into the Colorado mountains as tourists, and vacations on dude ranches in the foothills of the Rockies, including Livermore, became popular. People took the stage to the Campton Resort in Cherokee Park, twelve miles up the road from the Elliott ranch. Ida Elliott's siblings Charles and Lillie came out from Nebraska not only to see their sister, but to experience the Wild West. That the West was no longer quite so wild helped the trade. Tourists rode listless trail horses led by wranglers through Cherokee Park, where not a single Cherokee was to be seen.

Josephine's life choices reflected the "back to the land" ethic, and she tried to inculcate it in her pupils. Around 1920, she had Buck copy out "The Country Boy's Creed," which began: "I believe that the country which God made is more beautiful than the city which man made; that life out of doors and in touch with the earth is the natural life of man." She herself had chosen the backwoods over the groves of academe. Rather than use her full scholarship to get a degree in Boulder and then move to Denver to work, she became a mountain teacher and stayed in "the sticks," where, she said, she liked to be. Though most young women

who lived on the land went urban as soon as they could, Josephine went deeper into the woods.

"Back to the land" ideals and conservationism pervade the most popular adolescent novel of her youth, Gene Stratton Porter's *A Girl of the Limberlost*, published in 1909. Ted Wetzler told me it was his aunt's favorite book. Josephine was twelve when it came out, and she probably read it around then. As a teacher, she urged young people to read the novel, which praised rural values and made a case for wilderness preservation. The suspenseful novel presents emotional scenes interwoven with lessons on natural history and descriptions of wildlife. Josephine's own country upbringing was one of many links between her and the heroine of the novel, Elnora Comstock.

Like Jo Lamb, Elnora grows up with little money. To pay for schoolbooks, she collects moths and butterflies that inhabit the great Limberlost swamp and sells them to a local dealer. She also gathers nests, mosses, and other "natural history specimens" for the schools in town. On graduation from high school (as valedictorian of her class), she becomes lecturer in natural history for the school district. The naturalist activities of her heroine gave Stratton Porter the opportunity to disparage the destruction of wilderness. Part of the Limberlost wetland is drained; the woods are logged; oil wells are drilled. Insect and bird life in the area declines, and specimens are hard to find. These themes uncannily foreshadow the environmental awareness of the 1970s.

When Elnora leaves the Limberlost and goes to high school in town, the city girls snub her because of her simple clothes and ignorance of city manners. A series of amusing scenes contrasts the spoiled city girls to Elnora, whose strength of character was formed by rural adversity and intimacy with the wilderness. Elnora's knowledge, compassion, and high-mindedness enable her to triumph, both socially and academically. When the city girls see her willingness to dress like them, they embrace her.

Elnora and Josephine had much in common. Both grew up poor in the countryside and were tomboys who became valedictorians. Each had to postpone college for financial reasons. Each possessed energy and determination. Having the gift of being able to help children, they became teachers. Did Josephine model herself after Elnora? At the very least, the Colorado girl found Elnora's example inspiring. And like Elnora, she became a mediator between wilderness values and civilization.

In her 1973 interview, Jo spoke favorably of young people who were "thinking about going to Alaska, for a frontier," and she defended them against charges that they were interested only in drugs. It had been half a century since she herself had homesteaded, yet the idea of living on a settlement frontier still stirred her to the depths. In a letter to a niece living in Alaska, Jo mentioned some graduate students she knew. They had moved to Alaska, "into the hinterlands and [were] loving it." Jo's identification with these young men and women living in the "hinterlands" is heartfelt. She kept up with these latter-day pioneers—hippies inspired by another back-to-the-land movement. Jo, unlike many of her generation, did not berate young people who walked to a different drum. She herself had done so in her own time. In the 1968 letter to her niece, she said of the students: "they are rugged people in a rugged Alaska," and she concluded, with hope, "I suppose you have met and are these people."

Lamb well knew, however, that settlers changed the wild lands they settled. How could one control this process so that wilderness might be preserved? She recognized the problem, yet because of her own background as a pioneer rancher she found it difficult to resolve.

Her life was a mosaic of different times, and so there were tensions and inconsistencies in her view of the environment. Over a sixty-year period, she saw the rise and fall of various orthodoxies about how humans should interact with the natural world. Her life spanned eventful decades during the course of which landscapes underwent strange metamorphoses and land-use practices changed radically. New technologies of mechanization and land management transformed the environment, including the world in which she had grown up.

Josephine's adult perspectives on the place of human beings in the natural order are interesting because of the different claims they attempted to mediate. These claims included a romantic sense of nature's beauty, an urge to study and record the natural history of her lands, a lifelong interest in forests, and a need as a stockgrower to have access to national-forest lands. She owned a large piece of the natural world and was a heavy user of the land, yet her understanding of ecology made her a conservationist. The inner drama resulting from these contending desires and needs reflected the public controversies about

the environment that arose at the end of her life and that continue to this day. How did she sort out all of this?

From the window of her study at the old hotel, she could see her kittens playing in the yard. Great Horned Owls nested in a large cottonwood by the river. She took children down to look at the nest. Beneath the trees lay owl pellets, the droppings full of pussy-cat fur. Josephine liked her domestic cats as well as her wild owls. What was she to do? In this case, she did nothing. She left the owls alone.

She needed to protect her livelihood as a stockgrower, yet that imperative did not prevent her from seeing the bigger picture. She was not unwilling to sacrifice some of her interests for the sake of the environment. She anticipated and would have agreed with present-day initiatives to find common ground between environmentalists and ranchers, who often see each other as antagonists. She knew well the line that divided ranching and environmentalism, and she went back and forth over that line—when, that is, she wasn't sitting on the fence. This fence-sitting enabled her to be a bridge between the two positions.

Her activities as amateur naturalist (with a special interest in flora) broadened her environmentalist sympathies. In an effort to educate club members on Wildflower Day, she collected specimens in the Laramie River valley and the Rawah Mountains, from elevations as high as ten thousand feet. She kept detailed records of where and when the wildflowers bloomed. She brought professors to the club to speak on wildflower propagation on ranches. One photo shows her and a professor outside the Livermore Community Hall. She wears a print dress with a blossom pattern. Scattered over the dry-grass prairie are vases of wildflowers collected from alpine meadows. She liked to discourse on natural history to anybody in earshot, and to this day nieces and nephews remember her impromptu lectures.

She was Livermore's Elnora Comstock, but also its Annie Oakley. She was an excellent marksman and an expert hunter, but she supported game and trapping limits to keep wildlife numbers from dropping too low. She doubtless shot coyotes to protect her calves. We know John Elliott did. When a coyote once took a pair of her calves in broad daylight, she called it "brazen." Given the chance, she would certainly have shot it. And she would almost certainly have opposed the reintroduction of wolves into the northern Colorado mountains had that been an issue in her day.

In other matters, she took positions many ranchers did not approve—for example, supporting USFS regulation of grazing on public lands. The national forests were created to hold in check the destructive exploitation of the land by stockgrowers, loggers, and other entrepreneurs. Many ranchers recognized the long-term benefits of regulated grazing. John Elliott, however, tried to circumvent USFS regulations on his grazing allotments. Josephine supported these regulations, though not uncritically. In her 1956 Elliott ranch history, for example, she wrote that cattle used to be "looked after much more closely than is done today. . . . [T]he forestry officials are trying to get this old way re-established. In earlier times, the forestry officials allowed many more cattle on the range and a rancher could afford to hire a rider, but now, with herds greatly limited, a rancher cannot afford this type of rider." She acknowledged the conflicting demands put on ranchers, yet she did not reject the USFS goals. A good range rider, she wrote, "knows where all his cattle are all the time and he tries to work with his range neighbors and his assigned forest ranger."

In the mid-1920s, she, F. J. Smith (the ranger for the Colorado National Forest), and a Colorado State University forestry professor created the Laramie River Forestry Club for ranch kids living in the valley. She took the kids on field trips to logging camps. Overall, she seems to have supported the ideas of Gifford Pinchot, the major architect of the public-lands movement under Teddy Roosevelt. For Pinchot, setting aside national woodland reserves was a way of getting the best human use out of forests without damaging them. His principles were the basis for the USFS multiuse policies and were less far-reaching than the environmentalism of his contemporary, John Muir, who wanted to preserve wilderness not for human use, but for its own sake. Muir founded the Sierra Club, and his thinking provided the rationale for creating both the national parks and the wilderness areas within the national forests—areas declared off-bounds to vehicles, logging, and grazing. One long-term result of these efforts was the designation of Jo's summer range in the Roosevelt National Forest as the Rawah National Wilderness.

Josephine's *Colorado History and Geography* (1941) workbook includes sections on conservation and the national forests and parks. Josephine McDowell, the coauthor, was an expert mountaineer who summited all fifty of Colorado's Fourteeners—mountains higher than

fourteen thousand feet. The authors pay close attention to the natural environment. Pupils learned about the importance of water and had to fill in rainfall averages on a state map. They were required to collect news clippings on conservation. The two Josephines taught that "conservation of land and water is an economic necessity," and they explained the purposes of the national forests: "to preserve timber, grazing, wild life, and soils" and to regulate "water flow for the use of municipalities and irrigation." They pinpointed "man-made causes" of erosion: "overgrazing, cutting down the forests, unwise building of roads, fires and poor farming methods." Responsible use of woodlands (that is, regulated grazing and logging) is the keynote, rather than preservation of wilderness. There is surprisingly little concern about species diversity and habitat preservation, the great themes of today—in spite of Jo Lamb's passion for birds and flowers.

The authors do, however, recognize the new USFS program begun in 1939 to create national wildernesses, then called "primitive areas"—a program inspired by the philosophies of Muir and Aldo Leopold. Such areas have been crucial in preserving natural habitats in the West and in reducing destructive forms of human intrusion such as road building, logging, and the use of snowmobiles and all-terrain vehicles.

In the years before Jo's death in 1973, a new conception of the natural world and of humans' place in it began to reach the broader public. For decades, scientists had intensively studied natural environments as ecological systems. They discovered many new things: the interdependency of all forms of plant and animal life; the processes of change and degradation in a particular biome; and the importance of species diversity. This research heightened awareness of the fragility of natural habitats. Nature itself came to be redefined in ecological terms, and the idea of wilderness assumed a new and deeper significance.

By the early 1970s, the costs of human expansion into natural areas entered public consciousness. Proposals to limit this expansion became the subject of a national debate that has not yet ended. Several ideas became more widespread. One was that the enormity of the artificial world created by humans had begun to endanger the nonhuman realm, a realm upon which humans' continued existence depended. Another was that protecting the diversity of life on the planet required the establishment of wilderness areas; that is, it required a kind of human

intervention whose purpose was to limit human intervention. This idea was something Jo Lamb had come to understand.

She followed the environmentalist debate closely. She went to meetings. Tom Quan remembered that in the early 1970s she attended a conservation meeting and spoke up about a particular endangered plant. In 1971, she joined a citizens group protesting the sale of range land for a housing development. Yet she was of two minds on the subject of environmental activism. In the 1973 interview, she stated that it was "selfish" of citizens to restrict the town's outward growth.

However Jo Lamb may have felt about growth, she did spearhead the Woman's Club effort to save from destruction a rare forest in the Livermore Valley. This forest was a grove of pinyon pines (*Pinus edulis*), situated a little north of Owl Canyon, three and a half miles east of where Josephine lived. A limestone quarry with mineral rights intended to expand the area of mining to include the grove, which would have destroyed the trees. Lamb's opposition to the quarry's plan is a little ironic: her father had been a quarry man, and she herself leased land on her Taft Hill farm to a quarry company. Mining at the Livermore site, however, was a different matter, for it threatened a stand of trees known to be an ecological rarity.

Today the Owl Canyon pinyon grove spreads out over hundreds of acres on a hogback in eastern Livermore. The main part of the grove lies on the gentle eastern slope, but extends up the ridge, where, due to exposure to wind, the uppermost trees are stunted and twisted, like bonsais. It is easy to overlook the pinyons at Owl Canyon. They rarely grow taller than forty feet, and most are between ten and fifteen. Dryness and wind keep them small. The openness of the grove, the astonishingly varied forms of the trees themselves, and the rugged terrain, however, give the forest an air of enchantment.

The Owl Canyon forest is indeed unusual. No other pinyon forest grows on the Eastern Slope of the northern Colorado Front Range: the next one to the south is 150 miles away. Among scientists, a widely accepted explanation for the isolated location of the grove, lying as it does on the extreme margin of the tree's natural range, is that around five hundred years ago Native Americans planted the trees here for their

own use. Or on a trading mission, they spilled some seeds that took root. The nuts were a staple in their diet—a pound provided one adult with around three thousand calories, enough energy for a whole day.

This site, however, is not only of cultural interest, but of great ecological significance, for the woodland is a classic ecotone, an area where foothills and prairie overlap, and it supports a multitude of wildlife from both of these habitats.

The pinyon grove campaign was the most ambitious environmental undertaking of the Woman's Club. Because Jo Lamb knew trees and could write well, she became the club's "point woman" for the campaign. The effort to save the trees turned out to be a long-term project, lasting two decades. For the last third of her life, until her death in 1973, Jo Lamb was involved with the grove.

The preservation effort began in 1951 when the president of the Livermore Woman's Club, Mrs. Eugene Gammon, announced the grove's imminent destruction. She appointed a committee charged with saving the trees. Josephine Lamb, one of the four members, was secretary. In the first years, the club committee sought the public's attention. The committee traveled to Denver and met with legislators and the governor. They invented a catchy slogan: "Pinyons for Posterity." To bring the plight of the grove home to the public, one committee member displayed a four-foot-long pinyon pine trunk in the window of a Fort Collins bookstore. The committee circulated a petition for saving the trees and got five hundred signatures. They arranged a tour of the grove. In November 1952, fifty people visited the pinyons and afterward were treated to a picnic dinner in the basement of the Livermore Community Hall.

The goal of these efforts was to persuade Colorado to declare the area a state park. The committee appealed to the governor, but he was able to do little. They then met with the state Land Board, which had jurisdiction over the area. In spite of enthusiastic legislative and public support to save the pinyons, the Land Board refused to make the grove a state park.

Even after the state House of Representatives passed a (nonbinding) resolution and U.S. secretary of the interior Stewart Udall (to whom Josephine had written) offered his moral support to the cause, the Land

Board still balked, claiming to lack authority in the matter. By 1961, another hundred acres of pinyons had been destroyed by mining.

The campaign, however, did succeed in forestalling further destruction of the grove. Spurred by the committee's entreaties, a member of the Land Board persuaded the mining company to spare on a voluntary basis one hundred acres containing the oldest trees. The campaign also inspired several prominent Livermore ranchers, the Brackenburys and the Roberts, to donate to the state neighboring parcels of land with pinyons on them. In 1978, Colorado officially designated parts of the grove the Owl Canyon Pinyon Grove Natural Area.

In September 2006, I received special permission from the state of Colorado to visit the Owl Canyon forest for study purposes. I explained that I wanted to experience firsthand the forest that Josephine Lamb had been instrumental in saving. My guide into the grove was Steve Bartlett, the mining company's geologist. Linda Hamilton, environmental educator at Lory State Park west of Fort Collins, joined us for the walk.

From the quarry office, Steve drives us to the forest in a company pickup. Fine limestone powder from the quarry operation covers every surface in the cabin of the truck. During the ride, I explain to Steve who Josephine Lamb was. He knows the old Livermore Hotel, which is not far from the quarry, and has heard of Josephine's niece Kay Quan. I describe Lamb's efforts to save the grove through the "Pinyons for Posterity" campaign, and the catchy slogan elicits an appreciative chuckle from him.

It is half past six in the morning—the light has just come up. We park and walk through a meadow that archaeologists believe was a Folsom site. A squawking of unseen birds comes from a cliff—Pinyon Jays. We climb the steep side of the hogback onto the ridge. From there we can see far into the west, as far as the snow-capped Rawahs, where Josephine summered cattle. Closer in, Greyrock and Livermore Mountain are visible. To the east, I make out the strange land formation called the "Horseshoe." Farther east, the plains stretch out to the horizon. Josephine would have recognized these features, yet she would have been astonished by the coal-fired power plant rising out of the flatlands

and by the phalanx of huge windmills above the Cheyenne Ridge—generating power for the cities of northern Colorado.

We walk the hogback ridge through the pines toward the oldest trees. They are in the "school section," public land that the state leases to the mining company to generate funds for public education. A hogback to our west looks very strange—all bare rock except for a few sickly trees growing in crevices that have trapped soil. Steve explains it had been strip-mined decades ago and that the area was never reclaimed. The surface layer of limestone had been creamed off. Almost everywhere else the limestone is below the surface, beneath a layer of sandstone. From where we are standing, I hear the clanking of conveyor belts at the mine factory, where the rock is smashed and pulverized. Originally, Steve says, the limestone was sold as ballast for railway construction and as an ingredient for refining beet sugar, formerly a big money-maker in northern Colorado. I think of Josephine working as a child for the sugar beet company. Today, Steve explains, the limestone is used in a wide range of products: calcium supplements in cattle feed (to increase the milk), road asphalt, antacid tablets, glass bottles for Budweiser (at the plant in Windsor), Corning Ware, and the decorative gravels used in suburban landscapes.

Steve leaves with Linda to escort her out of the dangerous mining area, and I have the grove to myself. No sooner do I find a good observation post on the ridge than five Clark's Nutcrackers land on a dead pine tree—all bare trunk and skeletal branches. They are handsome birds, their plumage black, white, and gray—like a Whistler painting. I think of Josephine's drawing of wild turkeys roosting in a dead tree.

The nutcrackers suddenly rise up and then descend on a green pinyon. One of them acrobatically perches on a cone and pecks at another cone. The flock makes a distinct clacking sound as it pecks at the seeds. They poke into the cone, seize a nut in their black bill, and then weigh and evaluate it. If the nut passes muster, they swallow it, and the nut goes into a mouth pouch that can store eighty seeds. Later, the nutcrackers regurgitate the nuts and bury them on south-facing slopes where they can easily be retrieved for winter use. In a month, one bird can bury thirty thousand seeds. This sighting offers me a little snapshot into the ecology of a pinyon woodland. Josephine would have enjoyed observing these birds.

Steve returns, and we walk through the oldest trees, sometimes scrambling up and down little swales where water has run off. I note the mountain mahogany scrub, the understory of the grove, which offers cover for the hide-and-seek games of predator and prey. Steve mentions the recent sighting of a bobcat—they thrive on the rodents that eat the nuts: woodrats, pinyon mice, rock mice, and myriads of others. We soon arrive at the oldest section of the grove. A number of trunks have had small patches of bark gnawed away at the base—a sign of porcupine.

The trees in this area are usually twelve to eighteen feet apart. Some are forty feet high, others only eight. I have been in pinyon groves before, yet I am surprised here by the trees' size and diverse forms. Their contorted crowns and rocky perches create an uncanny atmosphere. One pinyon's twisted trunk extends horizontally and hovers just above the ground. Another pinyon has three large contorted trunks—all without bark, except one. The exposed wood is gray and smooth from the wind's constant attention, but one trunk has clusters of vibrant green needles. The tenacity of life.

We reach the southern end of the pinyon grove where the present-day mine begins. Here are piles of rock rubble from earlier mining operations. On the way back, I ask Steve if the quarry will ever mine the grove area. He tells me it will not. He says that as a geologist, he is interested mainly in extracting rock, yet he finds the grove a special place. The grove, he says, will remain a natural area.

The story of the grove illustrates a paradox of modern environmentalism—one of which Josephine was aware. The pinyon grove is wildland, yet it was probably planted by Native Americans. Human operations threaten the grove, and only human intervention can keep it in its natural state. Josephine acted upon this insight.

In August 1958, Jo Lamb came to Fort Collins for the college graduation ceremony, and beneath the shade of the American elms she met Eleanor Roosevelt. Few in the audience appreciated more than Lamb the beauty and significance of those trees. Few identified more closely with Eleanor Roosevelt, whose example and words had opened to women the possibility of an active public life.

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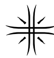
TWELVE

Three Lives

She had long hair and I braided it.
She tied three strings on a door knob to teach me
how to braid, and she let me braid her hair.

—Mary Wetzler, speaking of Mrs. Elliott



A LIFE TRAJECTORY IS THE TRAIL THAT FORMS IN OUR WAKE WHEN we are thrown into time. At birth, we are cast into some region of the planet. Certain beliefs and customs fall to our lot. We are born to this mother and this father. We are a girl or a boy, and we did not choose.

The place we land is determined by chance, yet in the course of time the motion of our trajectory becomes less random. A distinctive line emerges from our decisions, from how we respond to our condition. The axis of choice overlays the axis of chance and begins to affect the course of life. Trajectory then becomes the expression of character. We are sometimes drawn to a certain place, a landscape where we feel at home, where we sense that our being will find its full expression. Ida Meyer and Josephine Lamb decided to move to Livermore. John Elliott decided to stay there rather than go with his parents to South Dakota.

John and Ida's trajectories were woven together in marriage. Through the early twentieth century, the central event in most lives was conjugal union. That is what the popular narratives of the era tell us.

Less often do these stories explore the twists and turns of married life itself. Josephine, however, remained single, at least from a legal standpoint. This status was something of an anomaly. In a culture in which marriage was the norm, staying single made a person exceptional, statistically and otherwise.

In the retrospect of time, I watch Ida's, John's, and Josephine's trajectories join together and form a braid, each one bound to the other two, yet distinct. This convergence appears as the single most important event in each of their lives. It affected how Livermore treated the three settlers and in turn how they related to other people. Their unusual living arrangement captured the small community's attention and imagination. One old landowner told me, "It got to be *the* Livermore story" (JW).

In ranching country of that time, distance slowed communication, news arrived late, and gossip took up the slack. The community story about the triangle depicted a human drama, and not only did its retelling add spice to people's everyday lives, it also provided a forum for Livermore's unwritten moral code. One function of storytelling is to forge a sense of community. Narratives of transgression do this by reinforcing the dominant values, by defining a group by what the group rejects. Story exercises power in a community, but its effects can be divisive, for it may induce a community to treat some of its members as scapegoats. In the case of the Elliotts and Jo Lamb, story did in fact lower their reputation and social standing.

A principal conduit of community story is gossip. It is a fundamental agent of reputation, yet it is, for its own part, held in bad repute because of its associations with rumor and spite. But this estimation is not entirely fair, for gossip is also a medium of genuine curiosity. Phyllis Rose, a writer of lives, defends gossip along these lines when she observes: "we are desperate for information about how other people live because we want to know how to live ourselves, yet we are taught to see this desire as an illegitimate form of prying." Nor is gossip always groundless, one reason that the writer of lives cannot ignore it. Another reason is that gossip, whatever its truth value, remains a fact of community life. It is a crucial source for understanding how a community perceives and judges its members. By projecting on its subjects a particular image, gossip affects the course of a person's trajectory.

Livermore firmly believed that the Elliotts and Jo Lamb were involved in a domestic triangle. A few doubters pointed out there was no smoking gun, nothing proven. Unmarried mountain teachers, after all, did board with families and sometimes stayed on. The teacher and wife were usually friends. In the case of the Rabbit Creek threesome, however, it was well known that Ida and Josephine did not become friends. The common view in Livermore was that John and the teacher were or had been lovers.

In referring to the bond between John, Jo, and Ida, people did not use the term *triangle* or *ménage à trois*. They referred to the arrangement in other ways. They spoke of Jo as John's "mistress." One woman spoke of "the man with two wives" (VM). Another woman referred to the ranch as "Little Utah." Yet another talked to me about those people who "lived liked Mormons, with two women in the house" (MMM).

On the whole, Livermore people agreed that the triangle began when Buck's young teacher became John Elliott's lover. Other key pieces of the community story were that by the early 1920s, Jo's and the Elliotts' business interests were intertwined; that over time Jo became a full partner, and Ida became less of one; that in the last decade of John's life Jo became the caretaker of her aged companion.

Beyond these perceptions, there was little consensus about the precise nature of the triangle. Depending on their ages, Livermore residents knew the triangle at different times in its development. People pitied Ida and wondered why she tolerated the arrangement, but the focus was on Josephine and John. Many people thought the bond was economic rather than romantic, that the schoolteacher had exchanged sex for land and cattle so she could become a rancher. Others believed that John gave or promised to give land to Josephine on condition she take care of him in old age. The exchange of nursing care for land had at least one precedent in Livermore. Few people saw the liaison as romantic. John and Jo were reserved toward each other and did not behave like lovers. The memories of most people we talked to went no further back than to a time when John was already old and Josephine middle-aged—that is, to a time when the bloom of early love, if there was any, had turned into something more mundane.

Did the community story about the Elliotts and Josephine describe

a real situation? Or was it a convenient fiction to justify people's uneasiness about three individuals who did not quite fit in? Community stories do not always reflect actual happenings, for their purposes are not necessarily historical.

More reliable than the community story for gauging the historicity of the triangle are the views of relatives and friends who were in close touch with the family. These people had insiders' knowledge. Their testimonies, which we collected and compared, are important evidence.

Overall, relatives, friends, and employees of the Elliotts and Josephine confirmed the community story. They said the bond between John and Josephine went beyond business relations and house sharing. Their accounts provide detailed evidence, if not actual proof, of the existence of a triangle.

Toward the end of her life, Helen Elliott, Buck's wife, spoke candidly about the living arrangement in a taped interview. Near the end of the conversation, the interviewer, seemingly in all innocence, asked if Jo Lamb had been a relative. Helen, upset by the suggestion, gave a resounding "no" for an answer. She went on to say, "Josephine Lamb moved in with Buck's parents when she taught Buck. And before long she not only had her finger in the pie, she had the whole hand in the pie. And she took and branded some of Buck's father's calves. And a lot of people thought she was Mrs. Elliott."

Were John and Josephine sexual partners? Helen did not say as much, but the implication is there. Nevertheless, a sexual bond cannot be proven. One can argue that it does not much matter. What matters is that John and Jo lived like a married couple in every other way. The evidence shows they were intimate at many levels and that John was closer to Jo than to his wife. To the biographer, however, the question of whether John and Jo ever had sexual relations is not frivolous, for if they had, this fact would seriously affect our understanding of their emotional and economic lives. If they had, it would explain a great deal about Jo and about why she never married.

Some "insiders," among them Elliott's grandsons, told us straightaway that Jo was their grandfather's mistress. They were direct witnesses of their grandparents' domestic life. A testimony that carried special authority came from Mrs. Opal Moss, the wife of the Elliotts' hired hand. She and Hugh had lived at Rabbit Creek for several months in

1941. At the beginning of the interview, before I brought up the subject of the triangle, Mrs. Moss said about John, quite matter-of-factly, that "Josephine was his lover." When I asked her how she knew, she said it was obvious to her and her husband. She added: "I'd go visit Mrs. Elliott. She acted sad. She'd never say anything. There was a lot going on in her life, but she'd never say anything."

Testimonies about sleeping arrangements, though not conclusive, are also evidence. Those who were familiar with the Elliotts' household agreed that John and Ida never slept in the same room together in any of their residences. Moreover, two different individuals saw evidence that John and Josephine had in fact slept in the same room and shared a bed.

The more detailed of these two testimonies came from Babe Boyle. She was well known for her honesty and candor, and she liked both Ida and Josephine. In the 1930s, she sometimes rode over to Rabbit Creek. "Every once in a while, I'd visit Mrs. Elliott. She was lonely. I fed the cattle and then dropped off the hill to see Mrs. Elliott. She'd fix me something to eat." She once spent the night with the Elliotts. According to Babe, at the time of her visit, the Rabbit Creek house had only three bedrooms. She was exact about this detail. There were four people living in the house: John, Jo, Ida, and Buck. "Mrs. Elliott had her own bedroom." John and Jo were staying in the second bedroom, and the third bedroom was Buck's. When Babe spent the night, this pattern was disrupted. She was put in John and Jo's bedroom with Jo. To make a place for Babe, John went over to Buck in his bedroom. Babe said it was obvious that Jo and John had shared the room: both his and her personal effects were there.

Babe also supplied the motive for why Mrs. Elliott slept alone. Babe once asked Mrs. Elliott why Buck was the only child she had. Ranching couples typically had more. Mrs. Elliott replied, "I wasn't going to be no brood mare, and I moved into another room." Ida's move to another room was a method of birth control. Babe thought it was the only method Ida would have known. If Babe's testimony is correct, after 1910 Ida no longer had conjugal relations with her husband. The fact that in people's living memories, Ida and John always had separate bedrooms supports Babe's testimony. This dramatic turn in the Elliotts' marital relations offers a strong motive for John's extramarital relations with Josephine.

Two other testimonies confirmed what Babe Boyle said about sleeping arrangements. A man employed by Elliott and Lamb in the 1940s visited them at the Elliott Cow Camp on the McIntyre. Jo and John were there alone. The man told me that there was only one bed in the cabin. It had been slept in and was unmade. He said it was obvious that two people had slept together in the bed the previous night (SP). In another testimony, Gary Kuzniar, an acquaintance of Buck's, once asked Buck point-blank about Jo and John. Buck told him that at Rabbit Creek his father and the teacher slept in the same room and that his mother slept in a different room.

The photograph of John and Josephine taken on June 17, 1919, can also be read as evidence (page 134 in chapter 5). At the time of the picture, Josephine was living on the ranch and had been there at least several months. She and John are seated on the ground. Josephine wears a low-cut dress and high lace-up boots. Her head is subtly tilted, her gaze directed at the camera. The look she gives is ambiguous, perhaps self-conscious, perhaps a little defiant. Yet both subjects' body language is relaxed. Her left leg rests on top of his right knee, which extends under her dress. This image obviously captures the physical closeness and intimacy of the married rancher and the young schoolteacher.

Besides insiders' testimonies and the 1919 photograph, circumstantial evidence also supports the hypothesis that John and Josephine were at some point lovers. Motivation on John's part was not lacking. That the two were lovers accounts efficiently for things that would otherwise require cumbersome explanations: the treatment of Ida, Jo's unwavering devotion to John, Helen's insistence on leaving the ranch, and the provisions of John's will.

If John and Jo were not lovers, they did nonetheless act in other respects as if they were a pair—hence, outsiders' unwittingly taking Jo for Mrs. Elliott. Local people regarded them as a couple. It is possible, of course, that the community story about the love triangle was not true. Nevertheless, the story itself had an important effect on the three ranchers: social isolation.

Local people, especially men, were disposed to be judgmental about the Elliotts and Josephine. Babe Boyle remarked on this attitude: "People

didn't want to see it from both sides. They wanted to make their opinion known, and that was it. I know how the gossip goes around there." A prominent ranch woman told me, "Unfortunately, the Elliotts were discriminated against." Though they owned one of the largest ranches, they were treated differently from other landowners because of the triangle. Livermore people regarded Mrs. Elliott as a victim, and they blamed Josephine and John. Their sympathy for Ida, however, did not make her any more socially accepted. As one woman put it, "Because of the situation, the way it was, people looked down on Mrs. Elliott."

The Elliott-Lamb household was unusual, but it was evidently not the only triangle in the community. According to the community story, two others emerged a decade or so after the Rabbit Creek one. In each instance, a Livermore rancher lived with two women, one of whom was his wife. When discussing the Elliotts, people sometimes mentioned the other threesomes. In one family, the second woman, like Josephine, was a schoolteacher who stayed on. The interesting thing about the other two triangles is that the community treated them differently from the Elliotts: it did not socially reject the people involved. This inconsistency places Livermore's snubbing of the Elliotts in a new light and complicates our understanding of how the community dealt with what it perceived as transgressive behavior in a marriage.

When I asked a prominent ranch woman about this inconsistency, she explained that in the later ménages the ranchers and their wives were respected members of the community before the triangles formed. They were active in Livermore's dances, social clubs, and festivities, so the community was reluctant to reject them.

The Elliotts' situation was different from the other two. Long before Miss Lamb came to the ranch, genteel Livermore had not accepted the Elliotts, for class reasons. Before Ida and John Elliott became landowners, they had worked at Livermore in low-status jobs. They had been landless and did not belong to old Livermore families. Even after John bought land, Livermore continued to think of him as socially inferior. However much the community respected his ranching savvy and horsemanship, his reclusive ways and rough manners—in short, his intractable cowboyness—put him a little beyond the pale.

When the triangle became known, the Elliotts' already established marginality made it easier for the community to use morality to give

them the cold shoulder. The Elliotts and Jo Lamb, being proud, kept more to themselves than they otherwise might have done. The Elliotts' neighbors, the Boyles, also experienced social discrimination because they were Irish in background and Roman Catholic. They were not considered refined. Babe Boyle put it this way: "We weren't accepted. Elliotts weren't accepted. Livermore was clannish. And John was the way John was. We made the best of it and went our merry way."

Local rejection of the Elliotts did not mean out and out ostracism, yet Livermore people were by and large not welcoming. There were exceptions, such as Alice Walters Kluver and Sarah Nauta, who were Ida's friends, but the Elliotts had few local connections outside of the Boyles and the normal work exchanges that took place among ranchers. They went about their business, were helpful and neighborly to their neighbors, and that was about it.

Toward Josephine, community attitudes were mixed and changed over time. Livermore men wanted to see her as an interloper in the Elliott household—a femme fatale. "They didn't like what she did to Mrs. Elliott." At the same time, men respected her teaching: she took on assignments in the back country that other teachers refused. She was devoted to her pupils, who by and large loved her.

Women were less critical of Josephine. When I asked about the triangle, one woman said, "Other women didn't think a bit about it" (SN). For many women, the household had become a fact of Livermore life, and Josephine came to be seen as part of the Elliott family. Later in life, she gained fuller acceptance in the community when she joined the Woman's Club. "She was kind of a pillar in the community that everyone respected and no one knew very well," said Mary Margaret Moore. That she was able, in spite of the community story, to become an important presence in Livermore society was one of the achievements of her life. A close woman friend of hers told me, "People were critical, of course. She took all the beef people gave her mentally, and yet it didn't seem to faze her much. No doubt she knew it, but she didn't let it stop her."

How and why did the triangle persist? One of its remarkable features was its longevity. To frame the query in a way that does not assume the existence of a love triangle: Why did the three ranchers continue to live

together for forty-two years in the face of community disapproval and in the presence of serious divisions within the household itself? Why did Josephine stay? Why didn't Ida leave?

To answer these questions it is essential to understand how each member of the household regarded and acted toward the others. Making sense of the triangle also requires an awareness of radically changing ideas and practices in sexuality and family life between 1890 and 1925. In the sections that follow, I endeavor to reconstruct each individual's perspective and motivations within a larger cultural context. Some of my conclusions, though stated without qualification, are hypothetical. Parts of my subjects' life trajectories are hidden or survive only as traces. Yet the fact that the triangle excited discussion in the community and dissension within the family made the ranchers' feelings more accessible to me than they might otherwise have been. Firsthand testimonies and other sources provided a surprising number of insights as well as strong support for my interpretations.

Ida

Ida Meyer married late. The reasons for her delay are not entirely clear. Whatever they were, this belatedness decisively affected her life trajectory. When she did marry, it was for two reasons: love of John Elliott and the chance to re-create the agrarian life she knew as a child in Nebraska. Her desire was to be bound to the land.

Ida adopted the model of married life prevalent in the nineteenth-century rural West and Midwest, where she grew up. She saw herself less as her husband's companion than as the mother and preceptor of their child.

A mature woman (and older than her spouse), Ida must have found it hard to subordinate herself to a domineering husband, though it was expected of her. Both marriage partners had outgrown the pliancy of youth and young adulthood. Each had his or her set routines. Babe Boyle, who knew them well, albeit at a later stage of life, told me, "She tried to boss John and that didn't work. Both were independent. You can't run your life like John did for all those years and then have someone tell you what's going to happen and what ain't going to happen. And so he gave her the cold shoulder." When I asked Babe why John refused

to help his wife with the heavy chores, she said, "If she hadn't tried to boss John so much, she might have gotten along . . . a lot of that was her own fault." In early marriage, Ida Elliott was apparently not the submissive Mrs. Elliott of later years.

Belatedness was a big factor in her breaking off conjugal relations with her husband after Buck's birth. The decision was unilateral. Ida refused to be a "brood mare," as she put it. Her choice of words evoked the raw and unremitting animality of the reproductive cycle. She loved children, yet a number of things contributed to her decision not to be a "brood mare." With Buck's birth, she succeeded in giving John a family and a male heir. Thirty-six was then an advanced age for being a first-time mother. The risks in giving birth to a second child on the ranch were great. Ida might not survive; the second child might not survive. What would happen to her first born, an infant, should she die? Who would care for the baby on remote Rabbit Creek? The long roster of women in her family who died in childbirth or shortly thereafter was an ever-present memory.

The photographs she took after Buck's birth suggest Ida still adored her husband. Sensitive and kind-hearted, she knew that taking a separate room would alter their life together. He wanted more children. She knew he could not accept, without rancor, being cut off from intimate relations with his wife, yet she stuck to her decision.

Ida's bold move put her outside the mainstream: her contemporaries among married women in rural Colorado were giving birth to an average of five children. The decision she made was in some ways modern and forward looking. Ida took full control of her own reproductive processes. In doing so, she broke with Victorian conceptions of a wife's duty to yield to her husband's sexual desires and bear many children. This break comes as something of a surprise.

By 1910, when Ida made her decision, a revolt against the Victorian ideal of marriage was in full swing. She may have known about this change from reading magazines and talking to friends. The "voluntary motherhood" movement, promoted by women's rights advocates, arose in the late nineteenth century. It was based on the novel proposition that a woman should decide for herself how many children she had—even if her husband disagreed, even if her choice meant renouncing sex with him. This idea was a major departure from the beliefs Ida grew up with.

The new thinking may not have influenced her decision, yet the coincidence is arresting.

Why didn't Ida propose to John the use of contraceptive devices instead of abandoning sex altogether? Babe Boyle believed that Mrs. Elliott was ignorant of modern birth control methods. Even if Ida knew about them, acquiring contraceptives and getting a spouse to use them were difficult hurdles for married couples in the second decade of the twentieth century.

John and Ida no longer slept with each other, but their child bound them together in other ways. Ida's photos of the period point to the couple's devotion to their child. Buck was the only fruit of their marriage and the bearer of the Elliott name.

When he was eight, Miss Lamb came to Rabbit Creek to teach him. It is evident from the 1919 photo that the teacher and the cowman quickly developed close ties. Ida must have recognized that her husband and Josephine had become companions in ways she and John had never been. Josephine and John worked together long hours outdoors. John, however, never helped Ida with domestic chores, so even that sort of shared work between them was missing.

Ida outwardly accepted Josephine and appreciated her devotion to Buck's education. A photograph from the early 1920s shows the Elliotts, Buck, and Josephine picnicking in front of a log cabin. They look like a family. Did Ida feel that acceptance of Josephine was the price she, Ida, had to pay for taking a room of her own?

As the years went by, Josephine gained more authority in the household, and Ida lost hers. It was a humiliating change. From the 1930s onward, Ida was chronically ill. Walking and doing chores were painful, yet she received little help from John or Jo. Opal Moss remembered that Mrs. Elliott always seemed sad, yet she never cast blame on anyone and never talked about the situation.

Buck's departure from the ranch in 1941 took away an important emotional tie Ida had with her husband. The three ranchers continued to live together, but Ida became more like the domestic servant than a marriage partner. Jo's niece Margaret Ann McLean, who visited the Elliotts in the 1940s, remembered that "Mrs. Elliott did all the labor around the ranch house and yard. We thought she was treated like a servant. She never said an unkind word about John or Aunt Jo." A local man put it

more bluntly, "Mrs. Elliott was a slave" (TC). John and Jo barely recognized her existence. She was subjected to a kind of ostracism in her own home, but she submitted without complaint.

Why did she stay? It is a question people ask to this day. In the 1920s, when she was in her late forties and early fifties, she had the chance to go back to Nebraska. Ida's half-brother Charlie urged her to leave Elliott. Charlie knew the situation on the ranch. Ida did return to Lincoln on visits, and she thought about her brother's suggestion. According to Charlie's daughter, Adella Freitag, Ida told him that she wanted to come back to Lincoln, but that she could not do it. She told him, "If I walk away from the place, I would have nothing, I wouldn't have a penny." She could not abandon her young son on the ranch. And if she took him with her to Nebraska, Buck would lose touch with the land, with his birthright, and his chances in life would be much diminished. So Ida chose to stay.

Why didn't Ida sue for a divorce? She then might have stayed in Colorado and secured part of the ranch for herself and her son.

Divorce was indeed a legal option. By 1920, one of every seven marriages in the United States ended in divorce. Ida already knew of one divorce in Livermore. The Middle Rabbit holding she and John bought in 1910 had come on the market because of the divorce of the owners, Charles and Sarah Bush. The fact that divorce forced the couple to give up their ranch doubtless made an impression on Ida.

Neither Ida nor John would have considered divorce a possibility. People of their upbringing did not typically think that the purpose of matrimony was the achievement of personal happiness. Marriage was an institution for raising children and an economic arrangement. Babe Boyle told me that people in Livermore at that time did not see divorce as an option. When I emphasized Ida's plight to her, Babe replied that in Livermore, if you were unhappy in marriage, "you held your mouth and stuck your foot in it and that was it."

In spite of everything, Ida felt closely attached to her husband. When he died, she grieved deeply and kept his picture in her bedroom. Margaret Ann McLean told me, "You know, I think she loved him."

Less easy to explain than her staying was her passivity in the face of the shabby treatment she received in later years. To be sure, chronic illness and John's willfulness had worn down her spirit. Perhaps her

suffering without complaint was a strange form of self-validation. It called attention to her plight and won for her the sympathy and loyalty of Josephine's nieces and nephews.

Through her last years, she accepted a life of servitude and poverty. Ironically, it was the frightening prospect of just such a life that had prevented her from leaving Elliott in the 1920s. A trapper once asked her when she was old how she could put up with the situation. Her reply: "a pot of beans and a place to sleep, that's all I'm interested in" (SP).

John

With John, the archives of feeling are sparse indeed. It is clear, however, that for him the conditions of personal life were dictated by the incommensurate nature of his bond to a traditional wife, on the one hand, and to a modern woman, on the other. If Ida's manner of living harked back to the nineteenth century, Josephine, in her independence, anticipated many of the values of the distant future. She was, in fact, a "new woman."

John, being neither modern nor Victorian (in the genteel sense of the word), resisted the worldviews of each of his partners. He was nevertheless able to deal simultaneously with both women and bind them to him.

Compared to theirs, John's worldview was archaic. His style of patriarchal control had roots in the rough mores of the nineteenth-century settlement frontiers. His indifference to propriety and his taste for violence contradicted Victorian values. Although his carefree attitude to sex went against Victorian prudishness, it was not modern either, for it owed more to cowboy opportunism than to new ideas about human fulfillment or gender equality.

John was initially drawn to Ida Meyer because of her availability, her experience as a farm girl, her love for him, her excellent pies and pot roasts. The difficulty of running a sizeable ranch without a wife (and without children) was uppermost in his mind. As for Ida's Victorian sensibility, he took it into the bargain. He recognized its utility in raising their son and in creating an orderly household.

Ida's move into a bedroom of her own most likely did not sit well with him. He had nothing against "brood mares." He liked children and knew they were useful on a ranch. According to Babe Boyle, he did not

want Ida to stop with one child. The repeal of his "conjugal rights" produced resentment and turned him against her.

People who visited the couple in the 1930s, 1940s, and 1950s remembered that John paid little attention to his wife. Opal Moss, who lived on the ranch in the early 1940s, said, "As far as I can remember . . . they didn't have much of a relation at all." Owen Lamb told me, "From the time I can remember, I never saw them talk." Don Lamb observed, "I don't remember him showing affection to her." Jim Elliott stated, "They didn't talk much, not when I was around. Never ever seen them show any kindness or fondness for each other." Some of Ida's relatives and acquaintances told me that John never told his wife anything: she was never sure where he was going or where he was (RR), and "he never took her with him" (JiE). Don Lamb remembered how John "used to be able to upset her with words. He might say something about food or egg money. Not really abusive, but he could push buttons pretty easily with her." If her grandkids wanted to help her chop wood or Helen wanted to drive her to town, John stopped it. Dwayne Lauridsen, a ranch hand, remembered that "Josephine and John would buy ice cream and hide it from Mrs. Elliott."

When Josephine entered his life, John was forty—an age when a man is restless and feels the urge to change things, an urge probably made more acute in his case by lack of conjugal relations with his wife. He was an unlikely candidate for a life of happy abstinence. Josephine was twenty-two, short, slender, and good-looking. Her youth and prettiness made an impression. John knew she was eager to ranch and ready to learn from him. In the summer months when he needed help, Josephine was available. He noticed her zeal in teaching Buck, and he saw that Buck liked his teacher. She was a woman undaunted by rural isolation, and she was willing to stay. He noticed her independent streak, her gift for living outside the restrictive norms of society, so he seized his opportunity.

John shared the carefree attitudes toward women of his cowboy buddies Harry Holden and Red Vernon. As an old man, he enjoyed flirting with very young women. According to Jim Elliott, many of them flirted back. When he first met Josephine, she was nineteen years younger

than he was. His approach to a young woman then, when he was in his forties, was probably not so different from his approach when he was in his seventies.

Evidence of his feelings toward Josephine in the 1920s is not especially rich. Three items of information, however, offer some subtle clues. The first is the tradition that in 1923 John helped pay Jo's college expenses. It seems likely. He himself had wanted to study medicine, though nothing came of it, and he later offered to send Buck to veterinary school. He valued education and served on the rural school board.

The two other items date from 1928. The first is the testimony of a pupil, Arlene Hinsey, whom Jo taught in winter term at a rural school on the plains. During the school week, Jo lived in the teacherage, but on weekends she returned to Rabbit Creek. The trip was long, and Jo could have stayed at the teacherage, but she didn't. According to Arlene, a "cowboy . . . brought her down from the ranch on Mondays." That was John Elliott. The pupil remembered that he drove Miss Lamb to the school in an open touring car. (Pictures of the ranch in the 1920s show this car.) Miss Lamb arrived freezing cold. John had to stand in front of the heater to warm up before he could drive back. He returned Friday afternoons to pick up the teacher again. The hard winter trip made twice a week was a measure of John's devotion to Josephine.

The last item is a photograph John took of Josephine on Rabbit Creek in 1928. It was the "picture of record" (photograph on page 294 in chapter 11) that Jo chose for the Livermore Woman's Club scrapbook in the year she was elected president of the organization, 1955. She is standing near the creek, and Symbol Rock rises up in the background. The image was taken on the same day and in the same location as the iconic photograph of John Elliott and his rampant border collie (photograph on page 169 in chapter 7). The two photos were apparently intended as a matched pair, but over the decades they went their separate ways. When I discovered the shot of Jo in the Livermore Woman's Club Archive and showed it and the John Elliott photo to librarian Linda Byrne-Brown, she noticed the identical patches of snow in each of them. An indissoluble link between the two images was established.

The photo of Josephine permits us to see her briefly through John's eyes—as he saw her on that wintry day in 1928. Looking through the viewfinder of Ida's camera, he saw a thirty-one-year-old woman dressed

in a fashionable cloche hat and brand-new trench coat. (Had he bought them for her?) He saw the light in her eyes. He saw her mouth, slightly open, the hint of a smile—as if she wanted to say something funny. He snapped the picture.

The reason this matched pair of snapshots was taken is a question whose answer remains lost in the uncharted byways of time. We only know for certain that John and Josephine took each other's picture that day, an act of reciprocity that suggests mutual adulation, as do the dramatic setting, the clothes, and the poses. From these geminate pictures, we can infer that the two partners wanted to fix in time a visual record of themselves, both as individuals and in relation to each other. The whole undertaking has a romantic air about it.

If I have interpreted these clues from the 1920s accurately, they show that John's feelings for Jo were caring and amorous.

His attitude toward her in later years is not completely in accord with the glimpses we have from the 1919 photo of them together and from the late 1920s. That his attachment remained strong is undeniable, but its precise nature at the emotional level is hard to infer.

Most important is the fact that in later years he spent a great deal of time with her. He enjoyed her company. He needed her. When they were together, however, he did not show affection—at least not in the living memories of those who saw them from the 1930s onward. Margaret Ann McLean, ever the astute observer, said, "I didn't see any romance." Everybody agreed on that. John tried to maintain the appearance of a business relationship, which is not to say that he was necessarily more demonstrative toward her in private. It is possible, even likely, that his amorous feelings for Jo diminished over time, even as other aspects of their relationship, especially at the business level, deepened.

In any case, he did not give her everything she asked for. He refused her request that he "hold her note" so that she could buy the Rabbit Creek ranch in 1943. When they worked together, he was not chivalrous, but ordered her around like his minion. The one direct expression of feeling we know is the slap he gave her in the 1940s. It was a hostile act, yet at the same time it reveals closeness and intimacy. John felt he could take liberties with Jo, that he had certain claims on her. With an ordinary business partner, he would not have acted that way.

The manner in which Jo treated him in later years offers another

clue as to how he saw her. If her approach to him matched his wishes and intentions, then his feelings for her were those of a man toward his life companion. In support of this idea are the terms of his will. They are incontrovertible evidence of a profound commitment. In the end, he provided for her.

One puzzling aspect of their relationship is how they managed to resolve the incongruity between his archaic personality and her modernity. How did John come to terms with her advanced views? He did so, I believe, by making them serve his own ends. Jo's disdain for Victorian conventions and femininity gave him, a married man, a freer rein. Her willingness to do a man's work suited his need for a daily companion and a helper on the summer range.

All that said, John's position as boss and taskmaster stood in conflict with Josephine's values. He required that she, a "new woman," sacrifice her independence and knuckle under to his authority. His need to control sometimes clashed with her need for autonomy, yet by and large he succeeded in gaining her submission.

From Ida and from Josephine, John demanded obedience and hard work. The exercise of power was the most obvious expression of his attachment to each. He treated both harshly at times, Ida more so than Josephine. Yet both women remained loyal. They stayed with him until he died. How was Elliott able to maintain the devotion of two women who were different to the point of being opposites? Part of the answer lies in his charisma and in the strength of his will. An even greater part was played by his possession of natural resources that each woman, for different reasons, desired to have or retain access to: tracts of land in Livermore and on the Laramie.

Josephine

It is a most crucial fact that Josephine never married. And, as far as we know, she never bore a child or became pregnant. She stayed with the Elliotts and did not find a husband—that is, assuming she was looking. The main reason was apparently that she soon thought of herself as John's helpmate. Legally, though, she remained single.

In places where the cultural norm for a woman is being married, the fact of singleness is momentous. It puts a woman in an exceptional position and not just in the statistical sense. Living as a single woman with the Elliotts restricted Josephine's social life. Even so, singlehood gave her freedom to move around the countryside as she wished. She was not tied down by childrearing. But because she belonged to the Elliott household, she shared the powers and advantages of a landowner's wife.

If she and John were indeed lovers, how did she avoid pregnancy? She may not have had to. There is some evidence she had a metabolic disorder that would have made her infertile. If that was not the case, and if she and John were for a time lovers, they doubtless used contraceptive devices. She would have had good reason to do so. A teacher in her time who bore a child out of wedlock was soon out of a job. Like many of her peers who came of age in the 1920s (and unlike Ida or her parents), Josephine probably separated the idea of sex from the imperative to have babies. Two million U.S. troops in the First World War were issued condoms in Europe, and, with their return in 1918, the availability and use of these devices became widespread.

The way Jo Lamb defined herself as a woman anticipated future norms. She was unconcerned about not being married. She was keen on getting a college education. Her manner of dress, her taking on of men's work, and her independent attitudes made her modern. In two significant respects, however, she went against the tide of modernity. First of all, she disdained city life: she bucked the trend that saw young rural women migrate to urban areas to find husbands and work. She might easily have done so herself, yet she chose not to. Second, she willingly submitted to John Elliott. A modern woman in other respects, Jo oddly put herself under the control of an authoritarian man who already had a wife.

We have little way of knowing for certain the emotional sources of the bond that initially tied Josephine to John. Even so, it is worthwhile to venture a reconstruction of her feelings and first reactions. Several facts and a host of intriguing clues provide a basis for this interpretation.

When Josephine first came to Rabbit Creek, she was able to judge a cow. She liked the outdoors, and she dreamed of ranching. The ranch owner whose son she came to teach was a tall, clean-shaven man in vigorous middle life. At their first meeting, petite Josephine could not have

done otherwise than look up to him—literally. The immense cowboy hat and heeled boots accentuated his stature. On better acquaintance, she recognized the breadth of his ranching knowledge, which encompassed both the foothills and the wild high country of the Laramie, where he was buying up mountain meadows. She saw that he was an expert rider who liked taming a half-wild horse. She came to know firsthand his intelligence and self-possession. The young teacher observed the man's affection for his boy, but also his single-mindedness when it came to getting what he wanted. At the personal level, he could be quite reticent, but she quickly found out that he liked to tease and flirt.

That she responded warmly is evident from the 1919 photograph. What, besides his good looks and expertise, stirred her feelings? The fact that this man was nearly twice her age—old enough to be her father—was a powerful lure. Her attachment to her father was strong, as can be read in the passionate disagreements she had with him. Later in life, she spoke of him in words charged with feeling. Josephine had a bit of a father complex, so John Elliott's maturity and strength of character drew her closer to him. Though she gloated over her superiority to men, she was that type of independent woman who could give herself only to a man to whom she did not feel superior, a man who possessed authority and life experience.

Let us say, then, that young Josephine reciprocated John's amorous feelings. Let us even say she was smitten with him, a conjecture that is not excessive, though not provable. An important question remains: What induced her to get involved with a married man and stand by him for forty years? Babe Boyle, who admired Josephine, raised the same question. She wondered why Jo sacrificed her teaching career to a liaison with an aging married rancher. "She was a smart woman, and that's why I can't see why she went the way she went. . . . I would have wanted a reputable job rather than a disreputable job."

Josephine's strong attraction to John does not fully explain how she became entangled in a domestic triangle. She was a thoughtful young woman. Her involvement contradicted the moral code with which she grew up. Her parents objected to her staying with the Elliotts. How then did she justify to herself this relationship?

Youth and inexperience undermined her scruples. Jim Elliott described his grandfather's knack for getting the attention of "starry-eyed younger

women." Jo was a little starry-eyed. Margaret Ann McLean thought so: "As a young lady, she was very innocent, and maybe she was in awe of him. . . . [O]nce she fell under his spell, he was her lord and master."

Two other considerations eased Josephine's conscience.

First, the discovery early on that John and Ida did not share conjugal relations would alter for her the whole moral equation.

Second, a new moral climate arose after the First World War. Through most of the Roaring Twenties, Josephine herself was in her twenties. The Jazz Age redefined sexual ethics, especially for young people. Close dancing, joy rides in automobiles, premarital sex, and the use of contraceptives became controversial norms among urban and college-going youth. Young people increasingly questioned or defied the moral imperatives of a generation that had steered them into a horrifying war. Unlike their elders, Josephine's peers were disposed to see sexual pleasure as the legitimate sign and seal of an emotional union. If there was a sincere mutual attraction, the young argued, then sex was a natural consequence, not a sin. According to Frederick Lewis Allen, the message that the "new woman" of the postwar decade delivered to men was, "'You are tired and disillusioned, you do not want the cares of family or the companionship of mature wisdom, you want exciting play, you want the thrills of sex without their fruition, and I will give them to you.'"

None of this was lost on Josephine, she who had given a valedictory address in 1916 titled "The Call of the Twentieth Century." Not for her the pieties and restrictions of nineteenth-century America. Josephine was adept at seizing the liberties of the period to chart her own independent course. Looking closely at her personal life and educational career in the 1920s, we can observe her applying the dynamic values of the Jazz Age to the conservative rural West. The 1928 photograph showing her dressed in a trench coat and cloche hat, but standing among the winter trees of Rabbit Creek, is emblematic of this phase of her life. It was in this new moral climate that the unconventional relationship between Josephine Lamb and John Elliott took hold.

The relationship flourished, yet it is unlikely it would have done so had it not been for one essential circumstance. Jo's ties to the Elliotts allowed her to fulfill her life dream of getting enough land to ranch—hence, the community story that the triangle was based on expediency.

At the time, however, Jo may not have thought of her position as expedient. There may have been no ulterior motive in her readiness to accept John's tutelage and generosity (however much they served him as a means of securing her closeness). That granted, her attachment to him was cemented by a tangible benefit he provided: access to land. With her small salary, she knew she could not buy the land she needed. Yet through John's guidance she was able to claim a homestead of 640 acres and to run her herd on Elliott land in Livermore and on the Laramie. Because of land, her interests became so bound up with John Elliott's that reclaiming her independence, had she desired it, became an impossibility.

John's charisma and his possession of land were not easily separable. Jo was drawn to the mountains—the deer, the bird life, the spring flowers. She loved rugged landscapes, the wild and faraway. John Elliott opened up these aspects of rural life to her, and he himself seemed to be their embodiment.

Thus, although business was important in sustaining the triangle, it is apparent that Jo held strong feelings for her partner. These feelings were less hidden than his for her, though their expression, at least in the eyes of others, did not seem romantic.

Good sources for reconstructing what she felt toward him in her later years are her writings. As ranch historian, she became the custodian of his reputation, the recorder of his life. She knew him as no other person did. An attitude of deep regard and respect for him suffuses her writings, reflecting a continued loyalty. In the story of the calf rescue, she fell into rapture watching him work. Her admiration was intense—she was in awe of him. In the excitement of the rescue, her heart gave way. "I bent into a huddle and in a most dramatic way uttered 'Oh my heart' and I think any one who ever worked with John Elliott, especially in a tight spot, would know just what I meant." Even if some figurative meaning does not lurk here in the word *heart*, the narration registers the enormity of John's presence in her life.

For her history of the Elliott ranch, Jo compiled a chronology of their two lives that was never published. Its layout is revealing. Jo ran the dates down the middle of the page; then she arrayed the facts of her

life on one side and the facts of his on the other side, across from hers. In this way, she braided their life trajectories together.

She respected him and gave him his historical due, but how did she deal emotionally with his being "lord and master"? Later in life, she confided to a woman friend that she felt put upon; she resented that John demanded so much of her. This same woman, who knew the situation, observed, "He kept her under his thumb." When I asked if John had beaten Jo down, she said, "I reckon she held her own."

Independent action on Jo's part was nevertheless risky. We know John slapped her on at least one occasion. The incident as told by Margaret Ann McLean does not tell us the subject of disagreement, but it does allow us to examine how Jo responded, at least superficially, to John's violence. She did not strike back. She did not run away. Nor did she burst into tears or play for sympathy. Instead of conventional responses, she simply walked away. According to Margaret Ann, her aunt was visibly shaken, yet she tried to conceal this state from her and did not acknowledge what had happened. Jo was aware of her niece's presence and pulled herself together. She took the slap in stride, as if it were not something entirely new to her.

Submitting to John grated on her, but she had little choice because he owned the land, or most of it, anyway. She was not, however, completely helpless, and in material terms, at the very least, she gained from the relationship.

Sometimes she eluded his dominance. To get her own way, she negotiated with him or adopted subterfuges. Examples of the latter tactic appear in the hay-stacking incident (told in chapter 11) and in the episode in which she took her niece to church after telling John a white lie about where they were going. During John's 1956 interview, Jo colluded with the interviewer to get John to tell a story he did not want to tell. Ted Wetzler remembered that Jo used her bargaining skills with John. There was a lot of "I'll do this if you do that."

Did Josephine love John Elliott? Given her character and his, and given the many ties that connected them, one can at the very least say that Jo's feelings toward him were complicated and that they evolved over the considerable length of their relationship. In the first year, she was

probably in love with the handsome rancher. After 1928 or so, there are few signs of romance. Later in life, her attachment to him featured admiration, companionship, dependency, and submission. Whether all these feelings together amounted to "love" is difficult to answer. Don Lamb believed it did. He spoke to me about Jo's state of mind when it was clear John lay dying. "She was lonely. I remember a conversation between Dad and me when John Elliott was sick. 'We need to be very understanding with Jo,' he said. 'She is going through hard times. She is lonely.'" After John's death, according to Don, his aunt went through a period of depression. Concerning their relationship, Don told me, "He *was* hard on her, but she loved that old man."

What does it mean to say that one person loves another? At one end of the spectrum is romance, an intense agitation focused on possession of the beloved and not known for its lastingness. At the other end is agape: selfless, unconditional love directed toward the well-being of another person. In between there lies a great range, including friendship, matrimonial affection, and filial and parental love. How Jo herself identified or named her feeling for John is uncertain.

At one point in her life, however, Jo did devote attention to the question of women's love for men, which is documented in the typescript of a program she presented to the Livermore Woman's Club in 1953: "American Women Poets and Their Poetry." The program consisted of her reading poems she had chosen. Jo herself wrote poems, and it is hard not to believe that the poems she selected held for her a personal resonance.

Only seven of the fifty poems focus on love. Jo clearly felt there was too much emphasis on women writers as romantic warblers: she wanted to show that they excelled in other kinds of poetry as well. She was wary of sentimental expression, if not of emotion in general. Writing about the 1920s poet Elinor Wylie, she stated, "[S]he was a traditionalist. She could still learn at the very end of her life how to release her deeper personal emotion." She went on to say that it was the strictness of poetic form that enabled Wylie to have this release. I suspect Jo was thinking about her own emotional reticence here.

The love lyrics she included in the program are by major women writers, three of them the greatest poetic voices of the 1920s and 1930s:

Elinor Wylie, Edna St. Vincent Millay, and Sara Teasdale. Often grouped together, all three poets came to the fore in the Jazz Age. Millay read in Greeley around the time Josephine was at the Colorado State Teachers College there. The controversial lives of these three women made them intensely interesting to a wide public. Teasdale divorced her husband and later committed suicide. Millay, the first woman to win the Pulitzer Prize for poetry (1923), had many lovers, drank to excess, and refused to have children. Elinor Wylie had three husbands, one after the other, and abandoned all three, as well as her only child by the first one.

The poems Jo selected by the three poets are among the fundamental statements about love in the modern period—brilliant, paradoxical studies of their subject. Each piece dwells on the exchange value of love.

In Elinor Wylie's "Parting Gift," the speaker recites a litany of things she denies her lover—happiness, "heaven," beauty—and their fruition in cherry pie, (marital) love, and duty. The poem deflates the ideals of romance. The speaker's inner being seems impenetrable and fierce. Jo's choice of this poem is significant, for it presents a distinctly modern view of a woman's feelings. The speaker insists on distance. She rejects the fullness of romantic pleasure and commitment (the poem accepts parting), and yet something darkly romantic returns in the agony of the chosen images.

The poems by Millay and Teasdale are also equivocal about love's value. Both use metaphors of trade and commodities to carry over their ideas. In that sense, they echo the motif of giving (or not giving) found in Wylie's work. For Millay, Jo chose the well-known sonnet beginning "Love is not all; it is not meat nor drink/Nor slumber nor a roof against the rain." "Love is not all." In the religion of romantic love, this statement is heresy. The poem raises serious doubts about love as an absolute value in its own right, as opposed to a means to other ends, such as staving off the conditions of death and privation.

The cold, careful weighing, the repeated negations, the final ambiguity—all link this sonnet to Wylie's poems and to Teasdale's "Barter." At first glance, "Barter" is about different kinds of loveliness, but each kind is really a metonym for love, perhaps the most powerful force for making us aware of the world's beauty. The kinds of loveliness stand for romance, for it is romance that exacts the highest price. The last stanza presents the reader with an imperative: "Spend all you have for

loveliness,/Buy it and never count the cost." The poem rhetorically commands us to pay the price of love, but it more effectively dramatizes the enormity of the price.

In these three poems, love is an impersonal force that can be accepted or rejected. A striking feature of all three is the lack of attention to a particular man, to the object of love as a realized individual. Another significant feature is avoidance of the traditional rhetoric of love: the discourses of sincerity, eternal commitment, predestination, and so forth. These poems have less to do with specific love relations than with the general place and worth of love in a modern woman's life. Wylie and Millay in particular present a tough-minded modern view, antisentimental and anti-Victorian.

The three poems put forward women who are shown exercising a choice in what they give and in whether or not they will love. Most daringly, each poem flirts with the possibility of a woman's rejecting that which had been thought of as innate to her being: the impulse to love. There is a strong recognition in all three poems of the dangers love poses to women's autonomy. I believe Josephine Lamb chose these poems for her presentation to the Woman's Club not only because of their artistic value, but also because their ambivalence and insights touched her personally.

It hardly seems accidental that the poems she chose employed the language of commerce and exchange. Her attachment to John had a great deal to do with business, and we know that she bargained with him. If at the beginning of their relationship she felt romantic passion for him, it led her to become financially and emotionally dependent on him. She doubtless had an exquisite sense not only of the gain to herself, but also of the cost in personal autonomy.

Because Josephine remained single, she had in theory the freedom to go her own way, live where she wished, and do what she liked without regard to John Elliott. By the mid-1920s, however, she virtually became a second wife to John, and she fell into the responsibilities and obligations this position entailed. Through this relationship, some of John's authority became hers. He elevated and empowered her. The close bond between them endured until the latter's death. In his will, he made it possible for Jo to continue his legacy, which she did in the years remaining to her.

A major consequence of Jo's taking up the position she did in the Elliott family was a decline in Mrs. Elliott's status, authority, and assets. According to the community story, Mrs. Elliott was the victim, Jo Lamb the femme fatale. As Phyllis Rose states in her book about Victorian marriages, though, "[E]asy stories drive out complicated ones." That John had had no conjugal relations with his wife after 1910 was not generally known in the community. That said, there is no doubt that Ida Elliott suffered.

How did Jo deal with Ida and her situation—a situation that she, Jo, helped create? Jo's innermost feelings in this matter are not available to us, but her actual conduct toward Ida demonstrated little sympathy for the older woman.

Don Lamb told me, "Mrs. Elliott and my aunt did not have a loving relationship." Other testimonies confirm his words. Judy Cass remembered how John and her aunt treated Mrs. Elliott at mealtimes: "They acted like she just wasn't there." Mary Wetzler, another Lamb niece, told me, "I loved Mrs. Elliott. And I felt so sorry for her. She worked so hard. She got very little respect from Aunt Jo or John Elliott." Margaret McLean was more explicit: "Aunt Jo, we thought, didn't treat Mrs. Elliott well, spoke to her rarely, and when she did, sharply."

The people who observed these things admired and looked up to Josephine, and they were genuinely puzzled and distressed by her behavior. Adding to the puzzle was the fact that everybody else adored and pitied Mrs. Elliott. The Lamb nieces and nephews did not understand why their aunt added to her suffering.

The rewards Jo received from her involvement with the Elliotts were great. Through her own efforts, she made them greater, and she eventually achieved recognition and a measure of prominence in the community. Yet in the eyes of those who knew her, Jo's success did not make her more mellow or contented or generous. She continued to be as hard on herself as she was on others. Ted Wetzler remembered that one of her characteristic habits was pursing her lips, not to kiss—she was not into kissing—but to express disapproval. "She spent a lifetime developing that [expression]." There seemed to be a strain of bitterness in her that

grew with the years. Margaret Ann McLean said, “I think Jo became a bitter lady because of the way she treated Mrs. Elliott.”

A shared interest in the land kept the three partners in an uneasy equilibrium. The triangle persisted in spite of tensions within it and outside forces opposing it. It survived the Great Depression and the droughts of the 1930s. It survived the Second World War. It survived John and Ida’s serious illnesses in the 1940s and 1950s, and in that same period it survived the expansion of Jo’s interests beyond ranching, when she became a community activist and a leader in the Livermore Woman’s Club. By this time, Jo was as much John’s caregiver as his partner. She also tended to Ida, who could barely manage the kitchen chores. Thus it was that through thick and thin, Josephine, John, and Ida kept together in the same household. And they did so until John’s death.

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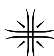
Epilogue

> Grandfather clocks with pendulums grown still . . . dolls and toy soldiers owned by children now old and dead . . . jewels no longer warm with the life of their wearers.
>
> —Russell Hoban, *The Bat Tattoo*



The objects of history are ever on the move. Most of those associated with my subjects are beyond my grasp. Ida's recipes are no longer to be found, the taste of her cooking lost to my tongue. Thus, I have relied on records and people's memories of the things that my subjects' owned, things that stood for them: Ida's camera, Josephine's Derringer, and John's whip.

Josephine was particularly sensitive to the trajectories of physical objects. The historical documents of early Livermore were sparse, so she collected lots of things. I think she sought the inner life of the past in these objects.

This epilogue is a meditation on death—on the remains of the three ranchers, their memorials—and it is an inventory I have made of the objects that Josephine collected for her museum, a museum she did not live long enough to open.

inventory 1. John's .30-.30 long-barrel Winchester rifle. A book of manners for the guidance of persons visiting the White House. A brass bed.

A hurricane lamp. Ida's heavy cream pitcher. The 2 iron of Jo's Two Lazy Six brand. A serving plate from the Livermore Hotel, showing a castle and lake scene (manufactured by Grundy, Staffordshire, England).

Jo's collection is now gone—scattered, burned. Or most of it. A few things remain, such as the cream pitcher, but not the Winchester or the book of manners. Some of the lost objects, though, became known to me. For Jo Lamb, the value of collecting went beyond pride of ownership. It was a means of understanding and an instrument of instruction. She wanted her collections to be available to the public so people might learn about Livermore's past.

INVENTORY 2. A turquoise ring, Native American. Josephine gave the ring to her favorite niece and instilled in her the idea that turquoise could be a force for good or evil. A box of arrowheads and spear points. Indian beads, colored. A Pueblo pot. An Indian horsehair quirt, dyed two colors, weighted with sand. An Indian bridle owned by a chief, woven of horsehair, dyed three colors.

Judy Cass showed me the quirt, but the bridle has disappeared. Jo told children to look closely at anthills because the ants bring up beads that were once sewn on warriors' buckskins. John Glass told how she taught him to look for "Indian stuff." "Everything," she said, "that's in the country is natural, but when you see something that isn't natural, if it doesn't fit this part of the country, then you better pick it up."

Two packed rooms in the old Livermore Hotel attested to her collecting fervor. They were the Music Room, which was once the reception area, and the Great Room, formerly the dining hall of the hostelry. These east-facing rooms were hard to heat, so they became storerooms, filled with boxes, old furniture, a grand piano, historic clothing, antiques, objets d'art, pioneer tools and hardware, saddles, fossils, a butterfly collection, books, paintings, and the memorabilia of a lifetime. In the northwest corner of the Music Room were her papers, stacked against the wall, almost reaching the ceiling.

She wanted to open a museum—I call it Miss Lamb's Cabinet of Wonder—but when Death called on Jo Lamb, her precious things grew

legs and walked away. Some went to charities, some went to the landfill, some were burned in large oil drums. The papers of a lifetime. Her nieces and nephews went through their aunt's collections. They were astonished to find boxes full of old wooden toys, dolls, playthings. She had no children, so they could not figure out why an old woman had so many toys.

She had no children, no husband. "Jo Lamb didn't own anyone, so she owned things." That is the way Deborah put it. Yet Jo was a link between generations. Through her collections she worked to pass something on to the future.

INVENTORY 3. A collection of historical clothing (formal wear, riding habits, dresses, old cavalry uniforms, yellowed wedding gowns). Lamb's heirs donated the clothing to Colorado State University's theater department. These clothes had a second life when students wore them as costumes in play productions. In the summer of 1997, when Spring Creek flooded during monsoon rains, six people drowned, thousands of books in the campus library were ruined, and the Lamb collection of historic vestments was destroyed.

The agents of destruction are many, among them mold, insects, dry rot, sunlight, wind, fire, flood, and historical "restoration." In the 1920s, the U.S. Census records for 1890 were destroyed by fire, a loss that has left holes in this narrative. In 2004, the fierce Picnic Rock Fire nearly reached the old Livermore Hotel, which still houses remnants of Jo Lamb's collections. Eighty firefighters, many of them Native Americans from New Mexico and Oklahoma, camped out at the Livermore Community Hall a hundred yards from the hotel. Their work, a change of wind, and a little rain saved the day.

Exactly one hundred years earlier, in 1904, the Livermore Hotel took in four feet of water from a flash flood of the North Poudre River. The deluge destroyed the Livermore Community Hall. The river picked up the community piano, one of the heavier objects of history, and swept it downstream like a toy boat, all the way to the little town of Bellvue, a distance of twenty-five miles.

INVENTORY 4. A grand piano. The replacement for the community piano lost in the 1904 flood.

A large square instrument manufactured in 1887 by Wheelock of New York, it probably came west via the transcontinental railway to Cheyenne, Wyoming, then to Fort Collins, again by train, and then by the railroad spur to Ingleside, near Livermore, and from there to the new community hall in a horse-drawn wagon. The cabinet of the "square grand" is made of rosewood and supported by large baroque legs that taper delicately to the floor. In the 1940s, the piano was moved into the old hotel. After Lamb's death, the instrument left the hotel and went to her niece Kay Glass. Later, when Kay and her husband, Tom, purchased the hotel, they brought the piano with them. It now stands in the Music Room. Sometimes the objects of history come back and stay a while.

Soon, though, they are on the move again. Among the agents of dispersal are forgetfulness, neglect, indifference, greed, and shortage of display space. The inventories of the past are lost in boxes, garages, attics, warehouses, and the basements of museums. I had a conversation with Jo's nephew Ted Wetzler. He mourned the loss of his aunt's collections. We talked about Ida. He said he had kept her recipes. I asked him if he could make copies; I wanted to quote them in the chapter on Livermore home life. He agreed and said he would look for them. In the end, though, nothing came of it. His things were stored in boxes, and he didn't have time to look. I encouraged him, called him again and again. I told him that not retrieving the recipes was tantamount to losing them. If they were not found now, they would be thrown away or stored again, their origin and context unrecognized. He died before he found them. Where are they now?

INVENTORY 5. Buckets of square nails, rusty shovels, rakes, broken axes, ancient horse tack, dry inkwells, rickety chairs, carbide lamps with cracked globes, cast-iron pots, chipped crockery, old aprons.

In other words, junk. It was all thrown away. The past is what we throw away so we can get on with the future. "And that's a good thing, too," says the Inner Demon in me. The past is fraught with shameful things,

with temptations. Besides, it isn't cost effective to store the objects of history. In a forward-looking culture, they are impediments to progress.

In Livermore, though, there is not much of the past left to dispose of. Northern Colorado history is thin because Euro-American settlement began late and the annals of demolition are thick. Many of the oldest structures of Livermore have recently been burned or demolished, including the historic Williams house (where the Boyles lived), the Elliott schoolhouse, and the old barn and corrals of the Elliott-Ismert Lone Pine ranch. The abolition of the past is our genius and our sorrow. In the West and in the nation, we discourage remembrance. Otherwise, we might have to confront the consequences of our actions. Amnesia is empowering. It enables our incessant productivity, our commitment to conquest.

Jo's collecting was three parts passion for history and two parts inability to throw anything away. On the lid of her large gray steamer trunk she wrote "Pack Rat."

She discouraged visitors from coming inside the old hotel: the living area had become a warehouse.

INVENTORY 6. A vacuum cleaner that worked with a foot bellows. A cast-iron veterinary's mortar and pestle for pulverizing horse medicine. A gentleman's toiletry case. A book of penmanship, *Writing Lessons for the Primary Grades*. A wood-handled brass school bell. A Victrola phonograph. A folder of old maps with illustrations of the Livermore Hotel. A U.S. cavalryman's saddle. A lady's sidesaddle.

Her collections, though, were not just another eccentricity. They were part of a coherent vision—to restore a degree of balance between the past and the future. Jo Lamb wanted to make people aware of their past before it vanished entirely. Her preoccupation with remembrance was not reactionary or an indulgence in nostalgia. It was an attempt to experience and live in the fullness of time.

Where did she find the things she collected? She attended estate sales and auctions, art and pottery shows. When word got out that she collected, ranchers whose children she had taught presented her with old implements and household articles. Hunters brought her antiques in exchange for permission to hunt on her land.

"I have a great collection of art and things," she told Lloyd Levy in 1973, shortly before she died. She wanted to put her museum in the old post office/general store building next to the Livermore Hotel. In 2001, this structure was placed on the National Register of Historic Places. The Quans are now working to turn the old building into a gallery of historic photographs.

INVENTORY 7. The skull of a buffalo. It hung in the foyer of the old hotel. There were red light bulbs where the eyes had been. Josephine liked to turn them on and off for guests.

I have called Lamb's museum a "Cabinet of Wonder." This was the name for the forerunner of the modern museum. Such cabinets appeared all over Europe in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Their purpose was to show off and make available for study the curious objects found in recent explorations, especially from the New World—things that inspired wonder, such as snakes with rattles, Stone Age tools, petrified tree limbs, and carnivorous flowers. With their miscellaneous collections of local and natural history, the mountain town museums of Colorado are rustic versions of the Cabinets of Wonder. I have spent days wandering among the heterogeneous objects of history in Estes Park, Meeker, Buena Vista, and Walden.

The object of history placed in a museum is an enigma. We can appreciate its physicality, yet its life history is unknown to us. Plucked from its context, the object of history no longer fulfills its intended function. No hand wields the axe, no finger warms the agate ring. The stories in which these things played a role have passed out of memory. An air of forlornness hangs about these uprooted objects. Yet museums and Cabinets of Wonder serve a function in keeping these objects from moving—that we might contemplate the past with a steady gaze.

INVENTORY 8. "A keyboard pattern mounted on a wooden frame 26 inches by 10 inches" copyright 1890, invented by Sylvester Birdsall (1839–1929), the itinerant music master of northern Colorado. The keyboard was donated to the Pioneer Museum of Fort Collins by Josephine

Lamb in 1945. She discovered it "in an old Livermore ranch home." The museum can no longer locate this object. Rural children practiced for hours on this keyboard, which produced no sound. Birdsall taught at Prairie Divide School, where later Lamb was also teacher. She knew the old Music Man.

I

> The Origin of Death. "Wolf wanted the dead buried in anthills and wanted them to come to life again next day. But Coyote said, 'No, let them be put in the ground and let families all cut their hair and be sad and cry.'"
>
> —A Ute tale told by Lincoln Picket, in A. Smith, *Ute Tales*

The First World War turned millions of men into the objects of history. After the war, the kaiser himself became an object of history. As a boy, he had a math tutor named Biel, a cousin to Ida's stepfather. The mathematical Biel, too, became an object of history. Death is the transmutation of the living into objects of history. The gasping fish becomes a fossil; the buffalo, a bleached skull. People become inanimate and are gathered in cemeteries, the museums of the dead.

John Elliott died on April Fools Day. I like to think the timing was the old man's last prank. The next day, Sunday, April 2, 1961, the local newspaper ran this front-page headline: "Death Calls John Elliott." It was one headline among others, including "Soviet Agrees on Cease-fire," "Heavy Vote Seen on Liquor Issue," and "Plot to Kidnap Caroline Seen—JFK's Daughter Feared Target of Cuban Group." John Elliott and Caroline Kennedy on the same page.

John's last days were spent in town, at the home of Jo's sister Del, a nurse, and her husband, Herman Glass. They lived around the corner from Grandview Cemetery in Fort Collins. Del's daughter Judy remembered that when John lived with their family, her mother fixed his meal first. When everything was ready, Judy brought Mr. Elliott his false teeth and his nitroglycerin pills. "He'd sit on his bed and eat. He wouldn't join the family. He preferred it that way."

To Del's daughter Judy, John seemed a changed man. On the trail, he had struck fear into the hearts of the young people—he had filled the dusty air with mighty curses. *Shit*, *hell*, *Jesus Christ*, and *goddamn*. At the Glasses', though, he was a different person. "He was the sweetest guy you ever saw. He was respectful. He never cussed."

John had lived sixty-five years among mountain vistas. Now he was confined to a bedroom where he took his meals, slept, and whiled away the hours. The window of his room looked north onto other town buildings, not west into the mountains. He never complained. Josephine visited often and sat with him. She asked him about what needed to be done on the ranch.

At the Glasses', his chief pleasure was watching television in the living room. "If there was a Western, he'd watch it." Cooped up in town, without a horse, the old cowboy relied on the shows. "He loved those Westerns." When Don Lamb visited, he liked to watch John watching the cowboy shows. John would chuckle at the oddest places in the program, when there was nothing to laugh at. Then Don realized that he was laughing at things in the Westerns that struck a real-life cowboy as dead wrong.

John suffered his last heart attack on a Saturday morning. Del was alone with him. She called an ambulance, and he was taken to the hospital. Judy told me that her mother baptized him in the hospital. "I don't think he was really conscious. I really don't think he knew." He died that evening.

Death certificates, obituaries, and headstone inscriptions are terminal "documents"—essential sources for writers of lives. Our researches began with them, as our account must end with them. From their dry prose we extract the facts vital and mortal, dates of birth, causes and places of death. John Elliott lived eighty-two years, three months, and nine days.

Another terminal document is the eulogy of the deceased. John Elliott's memorial service took place four days after his death in the Blythe-Goodrich Mortuary, aptly named. Jack Goodrich sang "Lead, Kindly Light," and Mrs. Robert Bullock played the organ. The Reverend E. W. Harrison delivered the eulogy.

Eulogies are biography. They present the life and character of the deceased at a moment when the audience is overcome by the immediacy of death. Eulogies follow set conventions and customary constraints: the salvation of the deceased is anticipated, the failures and flaws forgotten. Many things are glossed over. The most important person in John's life was Josephine Lamb, but she was not mentioned. Mrs. Elliott was mentioned once. The accolades for the departed are not always credible. According to the pastor, Mr. Elliott "was devoted to his family and he desired to give them the best advantages in life that he could possibly give to them." A Livermore rancher said, "The preacher made him into a saint." Reverend Harrison did not go quite that far, but he did declare that John Elliott "was a believer in Christ, and he lived the life of a practical Christian."

The pastor's description of John Elliott's worldly accomplishments was not, however, off the mark. Elliott, he said, "certainly did more than his share of the world's useful work. . . . This man was a tireless worker, and he lived in the time when work on the ranch was difficult." Elliott was an "empire builder" and a major contributor to "the early development of the cattle industry." Nearing the end of his eulogy, the pastor quoted from Longfellow's poem "The Village Blacksmith"—a fine touch because Elliott was an accomplished blacksmith. The first line: "He looked the whole world in the face and he owed not any man."

Six men carried John's remains to the burial plot: Clarence Currie, John Boyle, Eugene Lamb, Jack Goodwin, Paul Hoburg, and Arthur Collamer. The absence of Buck Elliott among them is worth noting. Currie was an Elliott neighbor, the largest landowner in Livermore; John Boyle was Babe's father and a good friend; Eugene Lamb was Josephine's brother; Jack Goodwin was a ranch neighbor and friend who told me several stories about John before he himself died; Arthur Collamer was an old-time freighter.

Two people signed the "Register of Friends": Josephine and her sister Margaret. John's death shook Jo to the depths of her being. According to Judy Cass, "Once John Elliott was gone, she just kind of lost herself, mentally and emotionally."

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Ida Elliott was older than her husband, yet she outlived him by six years. She was ninety-three years old when she succumbed to heart disease in 1967.

With Ida's death, Josephine became the last survivor. She was twenty-three years younger than Ida Elliott, but survived her by only six years. She passed away on June 13, 1973, in the old Livermore Hotel—it was an unexpected death. She had been suffering from a cold and violent cough. A blood vessel ruptured near her heart.

All three ranchers died of heart disorders.

Owen Lamb found his aunt's body in the foyer, beside the room where she kept her collections. That day, Jo did not read the headlines about Nixon and Watergate, rampant inflation, the disastrous situation in Vietnam. She did not read about the new fence at the Pioneer Museum (for which her father had supplied stone), built to protect two historic cabins on the grounds. She did not read about the razing of the historic Veterinary Science Building on Colorado State University's campus. She did not read that the Larimer County 4-H Beef Judging Team won top honors in the state or that one of the four team members was a girl.

A requiem was held for her on June 18 in St. Joseph's Catholic Church (another building for which her father had supplied stone). The organ resounded. Ted Wetzler and Kay Quan read two of her poems to the congregation. The escorts were her nephews: Don Lamb, Owen Lamb, John Glass, Herman Glass, Ken Wetzler, and Ted Wetzler. They rose and bore the sarcophagus away. She was buried in Grandview Cemetery. No flower was carved into her gravestone, but the top of her coffin was strewn with hundreds of fresh blue columbines, and they were buried with her.

The departed linger on with us in the memories of those who knew them, in the objects they left behind, and in these written records. When all of this too is gone, a worn piece of stone will remain to mark the place where they were interred. A symbol rock.

II

> Clarence Currie measured his ranch in townships, thirty-six-square-mile tracts. John Boyle—neighbor of Currie and friend of John Elliott—had more modest holdings. Boyle liked to tell people, "I'll have just as much land as Clarence someday, a two-by-six plot."
>
> —Bill Tibbets

The objects of history are ever on the move. Time bears them away—as the waters of Rabbit Creek rush through the valley, grind old granite into sand, and sweep up the dust of the earth, the bacteria and algae, the bits of leaf and animal hair, carrying them along, slowly or swiftly in their season, holding them awhile in a beaver pool, or pushing them through foaming rapids, sending them downstream to meet other waters, to meet the Poudre, where the waters mix, then to meet the Platte, where Platte and Poudre and Rabbit mix, the Platte becoming Missouri, and Missouri, Mississippi, and the waters of the Mississippi, the Gulf Stream. . . .

INVENTORY 9. A piece of sandstone, one of the many objects of natural history Jo collected. The red sandstone was layered over a core of white sandstone that bore the imprint of a prehistoric fish. The stone was local, the compacted sediment from a primeval ocean that covered Colorado millions of years ago.

Perhaps Jo's father discovered this object when cutting rock out of his Soldier Canyon quarry.

When Eugene Lamb became an object of history himself in 1932, he was buried near his quarry. A piece of sandstone was his memorial. Then in 1950, lower Soldier Canyon was flooded to create Horsetooth Reservoir. Before that event, Eugene's remains were disinterred and reburied in Grandview Cemetery, Fort Collins, but the old memorial had to be discarded: a rule at Grandview forbids the use of sandstone because, unlike granite, it weathers badly. So Eugene Lamb, the sandstone man, lies beneath granite, six miles east of where he was first buried.

The Elliotts and Josephine were not buried in Livermore, but thirty miles away in the city. They died after the era in which people were buried on their own ranch or in the old meadow graveyards. Their remains lie among the elms in Grandview Cemetery in Fort Collins.

Grandview has its advantages, even for a Livermore rancher. The plot and headstone will be cared for and not forgotten. The burial of many other Livermore ranchers in Grandview means there is a community of the dead. The informed visitor will find the peers and contemporaries of John, Josephine, and Ida: the Polands, Roberts, Gilpin-Browns, Horsleys, Curries, McNeys, Williamses, Boyles, Sloans, and Swans. Like a museum, a well-maintained cemetery makes the past available to the present.

When I was a boy, my friend Mike and I discovered an abandoned grave hidden in the thick woods bordering our river. It was the headstone of a young woman who died in the first half of the nineteenth century. I wanted to dig up the wood coffin to see the bones and ringlets of hair, the cloth of her dress like cobweb, the jewel lying on her cold breastbone. Perhaps every writer of lives is at heart a grave robber. Today, my curiosity is more bounded. Yet as I roam the hills and grasslands of northern Colorado—in what are now wildlife areas, state parks, national forests, and open spaces—I encounter, more often than seems likely, old burial sites. To come upon a grave in what we think of as wildlands and natural landscapes is eerie. These human traces are like messages, calling attention to the action of time, to the recession of the past. They make tangible the discord of great forces, of decay and endurance.

Many of these sites I sought out, but others came to me by accident, like the unmarked grave of a pioneer on the Pawnee National Grasslands. Sometimes I think it is the dead who seek me out rather than vice versa. I was once walking in Grandview, and I stumbled on Harry Holden's grave. A simple flat stone. What was John Elliott's old friend doing in Grandview? How could he have afforded it? But the stone explained it all: he had been a veteran of the First World War, a fact I had not known.

Josephine is buried in a different part of Grandview from John and Ida. She is with her sister Margaret Lamb. And Margaret is buried apart from Harry Holden, her life companion. The Elliotts' marker is a piece of granite, polished smooth on the slanted surface where their names and dates are inscribed. Two columbine flowers are cut into the inscription face. Josephine's stone is like the Elliotts' in shape and size. Her name

and dates, as well as Margaret's, are framed by a mountain landscape showing two peaks, Greyrock and Livermore Mountain. To the left and right of the scene, the carver put in two Ponderosa pines.

Josephine's headstone is a testament to the importance of landscapes in the funerary culture of the West. There is irony in the fact that cemeteries themselves aspire to be scenic, and many a graveyard boasts a panoramic view—a "grand view." There is a historic cemetery on the prairie in northeast Colorado. For hundreds of miles, all you see is prairie. The cemetery is called Prairie View. As if there were any other kind. We put the dead deep in the ground and then pretend they will love the view.

The visitors stroll the grounds of Grandview and inspect the monuments—which the buried cannot do. They contemplate the lives of the dead and admire the scenery—which John, Josephine, and Ida can no longer do. For the time being, the objects of history lie at rest beneath the old elms.

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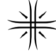
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS



The Rabbit Creek project grew out of oral history and was an intensely collaborative effort. Deborah and I found special pleasure in conversing with people about our subjects' lives and hearing about their own. The dedication at the front of the book recognizes the cooperation of Lamb and Elliott descendants and of scores of others whose gathered testimonies gave us a vivid picture of Livermore's past.

Two sodalities contributed greatly to the project and to the making of the book. The first is my walking group—sometimes called "the Jabberwocky." With these friends, I first discovered the ranch. Jacques Rieux led the way, although, like Fremont, he was not sure where he was going. Dave Cantrell, Rick Price, and Marie-Laure Ryan were on that hike, and their impressions, ideas, and interest have been a source of inspiration. Marie-Laure's irreverent "interactive video" on Rabbit Creek helped us see the project in a new light.

The second is our writing group, Poetry in the Barn, who listened to many earlier versions of the text. We have met monthly over a period of eight years. The Barn Poets unfailingly expressed their eagerness for the next installment of "Josephine, John, and Ida." We want to recognize them here: Irmgard Hunt, Mateo Pardo, Fernando Valerio-Holguin, Michael Abeyta, and, more recently, Deborah Russell. Their solemn attention, incisive comments on writing style, and lapses into sleep were equally helpful. As the years went by, it sometimes seemed that Deborah and I were researching and writing for them alone.

Our subjects' many relatives were especially supportive. Kay and Tom Quan graciously welcomed us to their house, the old Livermore Hotel. Kay encouraged us from the start, lent us manuscripts, and sponsored our talks to the Livermore Woman's Club, of which her aunt Jo was once the presiding officer.

Deborah and I also enjoyed the hospitality of Jim and Judy Elliott and of Phil and Chris Elliott on numerous occasions. John Elliott's grandsons Phil and Jim supplied valuable documents and photographs, and proudly showed us the Elliott memorabilia. They shared with us their memories of our three subjects. Without their openhandedness, this project would not have been possible. From John Lee Elliott, there came a stream of memories and vivid images that definitively shaped our reading of his grandfather's character.

Judy and Bill Cass spent a great deal of time with Josephine. Their testimonies were rich in detail and observations; their candor and insights were a boon to the project.

Don Lamb knew all three principals well. More so than anyone else, his empathy, tolerance, and psychological penetration have framed the interpretation of the three ranchers' characters. Owen Lamb contributed to our grasp of the settlers' everyday lives and ranching activities. Linda Lamb gave us generous access to Josephine's remaining papers and arranged a meeting with her Lamb cousins. We are grateful for her humanity and understanding.

Margaret Ann McLean's vivid reminiscences and intuitive penetration provided the basis for new interpretations late in the project. Mary Clare Wetzler and Ruth Loper, reaching into their memories, found treasures, and they kept in touch. Ted Wetzler shared his sharp insights about his aunt, the Elliotts, and his grandfather Eugene—for whom he was our major source. We enjoyed his prickly intelligence. It was a great sadness when he passed away before we could meet him.

On Ida's side of the family, Adella Biel Freitag remembered so many important things about her aunt that a new story emerged. The sympathetic interest she showed in Ida and her plight moved us. We are also grateful to her sister Evelyn Biel. Dick Schantz and Ken Lauer took the time to scan, label, and send a treasure trove of Meyer and Biel family photos. To them we extend our heartfelt thanks.

Deborah and I also learned a great deal from our repeated contacts with two women who knew the Elliotts and Jo Lamb well. Marian Carson (Babe Boyle), Buck's former girlfriend, provided the key for understanding the relations between Ida, John, and Josephine. Eva Degney Bradshaw, who was also close to Buck and was Jo's pupil in the 1920s, gave us a wealth of material about our subjects when they stayed

on the Laramie. The succession of letters she wrote (in response to reading earlier drafts of the chapters) spurred us on.

Many others offered precious testimonies. Arlene Hinsey Davis was Jo's pupil in the 1920s and adored her. John Elliott's friend Jack Goodwin said we'd better hurry up because he was not long for this world. Unfortunately, we did not hurry, and he did not linger long. Ed and Marilyn Hansen offered many helpful observations on John, Josephine, and Buck. Opal Moss lived at the ranch in 1941, which made her testimony of unique value. Annice Link Roberts and Richard Swan were Josephine's pupils, and their commentaries were of great interest because both individuals were in some measure and for different reasons outsiders. Bill Tibbets told some great stories and had a close-up view of the Elliotts' actual ranching practices. Johnnie Boyle also generously shared his knowledge of the Elliotts' stockraising.

Among those whose testimonies were of special value were Bill Knox, Gary Kuzniar, Dwayne Lauridsen, Patricia Boyle Maxwell, Mary Margaret Moore, Sarah Nauta, Ed Sholine, George Stewart, and Sig Palm.

Miriam Bender, an eager reader of successive chapters, commented extensively on earlier drafts, eliminating many rhetorical excesses. Howard Ensign Evans and Mary Alice Evans also candidly critiqued earlier versions, improving them. Allen Winold read several drafts, and his enthusiasm was a stimulus.

For researchers, the expertise of librarians and archivists is indispensable. Rheba Massey, archivist of the Local History Collection at the Fort Collins Public Library, steered us in all the right directions and uncovered two crucial tape recordings. It was a pleasure to work with her. We are also grateful to her assistant Linda Byrne-Brown. Terry Ketelson, Colorado's state archivist, welcomed our research and opened to us the doors of his whole domain. Judy Gaumer, at the Decatur County courthouse in Kansas, single-handedly discovered a great deal of material on Dan Elliott and his landholdings. Matt Piersol at the Nebraska State Historical Society went beyond the call of duty in finding out about the Meyers and Biels. Librarian John Newman of Colorado State University's Special Collections located several key documents.

Colorado State University supported the project generously and patiently over many years, awarding us a professional enhancement grant. We are especially grateful to Dean Bob Hoffert for his encouragement

and the financial assistance he provided. Dean Loren Crabtree also stood up for us. The chairs of my department lent their financial and moral support—most recently Bruce Ronda and earlier Pattie Cowell, who gave the chapter on Ida Meyer an enthusiastic reading.

Thanks also go to Dave Cantrell and Jacques Rieux, representing the Poudre Wilderness Volunteers. They brought together a large audience at the Fort Collins Public Library to hear us talk about the project.

The local historians of Larimer County warmly supported our research, among them Arlene Ahlbrandt, Edith Bucco, Francis Clark, Jim Hansen, Jo and Lafi Miller (who gave us some of our first leads), the late Marty Schloo, and Wayne Sundberg. The historian who reviewed our book for the University of New Mexico Press made many valuable suggestions concerning both style and content.

We gained inspiration from talks given to the English Department Colloquium at Colorado State University by a number of our colleagues who, like us, were experimenting with new forms of nonfiction and personal essay writing: John Calderazzo, Gerry Callahan, SueEllen Campbell, Pattie Cowell, David Mogen, and James Work.

We offer our gratitude to several additional people for special kinds of help: Donna Bathory for assistance in identifying flowers and plants and for helping to transcribe Josephine's tape; Linda Bel for being an early supporter of the project and publishing an article about it; Don Hazlett and Melanie Arnett for botanical and ethnobotanical counsels; Susan and Duane Kniebes for instruction in dowsing for graves and for sharing with us their work on pioneer burial sites in Larimer County, including the cemetery on the Elliott ranch; Tom Bragg for sharing memories of his old friend Red Miller and making incisive comments on the new wave of foothills settlement; Wayne Smart for his interest and his interpretation of John Elliott's will; Linda Hamilton, Colorado State Parks environmental interpreter, for supplying us with materials on the Owl Canyon Pinyon Grove; geologist Steve Bartlett for a tour of the grove; Hugh McElwee, M.D., for insights into John Elliott's ascites and heart condition; George Seidel, Livermore rancher and Colorado State professor, for his time and kind patience in teaching us about animal husbandry, past and present; Tom Field, Colorado State scientist and cowboy, for his gentle but nonetheless eye-opening remarks on our notions about stockraising; John Fusaro, USFS, for his expert comments

on the plant ecology of the Middle Rabbit; Gerry Dimon for helping to track down Biels and Meyers in Lincoln libraries; and Jesse Kerchenfaut for her inspired impersonation of Josephine and for introducing us to the Observatory Ladies Club.

I thank the following friends and relations who were fans of the project and useful sounding boards: Mike Moynihan, companion of my boyhood wanderings; James Edwards of Guernsey (who helped with the title); Klaus von Saucken; Andrea von Saucken; Roswitha Ruhnke; Keith Craddock; Paola Malpezzi Price; Julianna and John Davis. Two other friends (and hiking buddies) who listened and gave valuable advice were John Lee and Ron Francois. Kevin Foskin kindly applied his keen critical faculties to the text. Two of the "Mermaid Poets" (of which I am a third) are the late Ralph Slotten and Bettie Anne Doebler. They were early supporters and let me read prose about Josephine and Eleanor Roosevelt instead of poems. Franz Breuer of Vienna read early drafts and was to my surprise and delight much taken up with the story. Hilde Drescher has been a faithful reader and a fan of Josephine. Janet Thiem followed my researches and asked good questions. To my mother, Virginia Thiem, I owe my fascination with the twists and turns of family histories. I regret that my father, John R. Thiem, did not live to see the final result of a project that engaged his attention. Nat, Claudia, and Benji Thiem and Mitsuka Horikawa contributed to (or usefully distracted me from) the project in any number of ways. My thanks go to Barbara Thiem, who for many years indulged my quixotic enthusiasm, my writer's acedia.

Deborah thanks her patient children, Jack, Ali, and Christine, as well as her son-in-law Jake; her friend Sandy Bolyard; and her mother, who introduced her to Stratton Porter's novel *A Girl of the Limberlost* and gave her an appreciation of the past.

Together, we thank the able staff of the University of New Mexico Press for their friendly help and expertise in turning the manuscript into a bona fide book. And special thanks go to our copy editor Annie Barva for her fine editorial judgment.

Copyright Acknowledgments (Texts and Recordings)

Every effort has been made to locate copyright holders. If there are any copyright holders who are not acknowledged here because they could

not be found, I, the author, would be grateful to them if they would get in touch with me through the publisher, University of New Mexico Press.

Grateful acknowledgment is given to the following individuals and organizations for permission to quote from published materials, unpublished manuscripts, and recordings:

Jim Elliott for the Ruby Johnson tape and the diaries of Helen Elliott.

Phil Elliott and Jim Elliott for Buck Elliott's boyhood letters to Josephine, dated July 2, 1920, and August 16, 1920, and for the taped interview of Helen Elliott, dated June 6, 1990.

Gary Kuzniar for a stanza from his ballad "Josephine Lamb."

Linda Lamb for the unpublished handwritten materials in Josephine Lamb's folder "My own history of Ranches," including her essay "The Livermore Valley," "Story (1)," "Story (2)," the unedited draft version of "The John William Elliott Ranch" with an appended chronology of Jo Lamb's and John Elliott's lives, and various miscellaneous, short, handwritten notes.

Kay Quan for unpublished excerpts from the original transcript of the essay she and John Glass put together for the collection *Among These Hills*; for quotations from her aunt Jo's letter to "Bruce and Peggy [Brechtel]," dated December 26, 1968; for the quotations from Josephine Lamb and Josephine McDowell's *Colorado History and Geography* (N.p.: n.p., 1941); for Jo Lamb's presentation "American Women Poets and Their Poetry" (1953); for Eugene Lamb's letter to Josephine Lamb, dated September 26, 1926; and for Lamb's poem "Last Notes of Day," originally published in *Wings over the Classroom: An Anthology of Poetry Composed by the School Teachers of America* (New York: Harbinger House, 1943; current copyright holder not known).

Virginia Robin for her insightful memoir of her aunt Jo, written as a letter to Kay Quan, November 29, 2000.

Mary Torrez, president of the Livermore Woman's Club, for extensive excerpts from *Ranch Histories of Livermore and Vicinity 1884–1956* (reprint, Fort Collins, Colo.: Livermore Woman's Club, 1993), and from *Among These Hills: A History of Livermore Colorado*, edited by Mary Alice Evans, a Centennial Publication of the Livermore Woman's Club 1896–1996 (Livermore, Colo.: Livermore Woman's Club, 1995).

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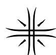
NOTES



Citations in this section give the name of an author or a title or both and usually page numbers. The complete bibliographic citations (keyed to authors' names or titles) are found in "Sources."

Introduction

Further discussion of Fremont's course up the North Poudre and his brief description of the distant Rabbit Creek country are found in chapter 4.

After the Elliotts sold the Middle Rabbit ranch in 1943, the new owners used the house as a hunting cabin until the mid-1960s (MH).

On the sense of well-being that humans feel in parklands: Juras, chap. 3; Kaplan and Kaplan; Pollan, 124.

For an exploration of the ethical, epistemological, and aesthetic issues surrounding biography today: Backscheider; Thiem. The quotation from Vikram Seth is from his book *Two Lives*, 188. Josephine Lamb's discussion of Rock Bush is in her oral interview transcript (1973), 11.

The information on place-names in Colorado is from Bright.

My thinking about the Rocky Mountains has been shaped over the years by several writers of the "New Western History," especially Robert Hine and John Mack Farragher, Elliott West, and Patricia Limerick. Of particular interest and usefulness to me have been the demographic and geographic studies by Walter Nugent and William Wyckoff. The Rabbit Creek story shows the profound and unexpected effects on three individuals of the impersonal historical and economic forces treated by these authors.

chapter one ⁄⁄⁄ Elliotts Go West

The original Ruby Johnson tape is (as of this writing in 2007) in the possession of John W. Elliott's eldest grandson, Jim Elliott of Hebron, Colorado (in North

Park). Ruby Johnson made another tape, now lost, which focused on her brother John. Several Elliott descendants heard it, but recalled only scattered bits of that precious but irretrievable recording. In the horse-chase narrative, it seems unlikely that wolves would have directly attacked Dan Elliott, no matter how eager they may have been for horseflesh. Ruby Johnson's written and typed notes on the Elliott family tree were invaluable. Buck Elliott's wife, Helen, also took down genealogical notes from Ruby.

Historian David Wrobel, 11–14, 98–99, has examined the selectivity of "pioneer memory" and its preoccupation with the hardships of journeys and settlement—the function of which was to show young people that their modern comforts were based on parents' and grandparents' privations. I would only add that past adversities, dangers, and calamities are more likely than mundane events to remain stored in human memory and thus later evoked.

I am indebted to Fort Collins educational psychologist Dave Cantrell for the intriguing idea that a high percentage of the Europeans who emigrated to North America may have had attention deficit disorder and thus a propensity for moving around.

Information about Daniel Elliott and his parents I gleaned from public records focused on Iowa, Missouri, and Kansas. Judy Gaumer in the Deeds Office of the Decatur County Courthouse (Kansas) helped me track down documents. She vividly described to me the rolling terrain around Jackson (the closest town to Dan's first farm) and the dry climate. Background material was also found in the Decatur County History section of KSGenWeb, a Web site on Kansas history, especially the *Decatur County Handbook 1885* (p. 13 on Jackson). For the Indian uprising against the settlers and other historical background on Kansas, such as the drought and weather conditions: Davis, 105ff.; Miner, 22–23, 171. For the demographics of migration (Kansas and South Dakota) and numbers of buffalo: Hine and Faragher, 320, 340; Nugent, 68, 75, 99, 115, 129, 137.

On the land fever that brought people like the Dan Elliotts into Kansas: Goldberg, 17–19. For daily life on the Kansas settlement frontier and on sod houses: Goldberg, 17–32; Turner (from 1903), 34–37. Other sources on the Dan Elliotts: the article by John Elliott's sister Lillie Grant and the obituary of Lizzie Elliott, "Funeral Rites Tuesday for Mrs. Dan Elliott." The story of squeezing water out of sand was told by Ida Elliott to Josephine's nephew Don Lamb.

Depictions of Fort Collins in the late 1890s are found in Ahlbrandt and Stieben; Fleming; Hansen; A. Morris; Swanson, *Fort Collins' Yesterdays*. On mountain water projects and diversions in Larimer County: Case, 212–89.

For the quotation by Orville "Buck" Elliott on his father wanting to be a physician: oral history transcript (1974), 27.

Westlake in the Livermore country should not be confused with West Lake in Fort Collins, an early name for City Park Lake, near which the Dan Elliotts also lived. The boundaries I give for the greater Livermore region (as opposed to the hamlet itself) were those described in 1911 by county historian Ansel Watrous, 193.

The Westlake teacher who boarded with the Dan Elliotts and was exposed to smallpox was Lida Wilkins. Through her, Carrie Williams (Darnell), John S. Williams's daughter, came down with the infection. She survived the disease and lived to tell the tale in her excellent memoir of early life in Livermore, *Three Ranch Children*. Young John Elliott was boarding with the Williamses through some of those years, but Darnell does not mention him, though she does remark on "that all important character in ranch life: the hired hand" (8). On the mountain West as a place of healing and recuperation: Bird, 42; Limerick, "The Shadows of Heaven Itself."

On John S. Williams's life: his biographical entry (including photo) in Watrous.

Josephine Lamb's unpublished chronology is the indispensable source for the ranchers who employed John Elliott when he was a youth. The "State Road" was built over the Medicine Bow Mountains in the late 1890s, when North Park was still part of Larimer County. In 1909, though, North Park became a separate county, and by 1915 the Ute Pass/Medicine Bow section had begun to fall into disrepair. In the 1920s, vehicles could no longer negotiate the pass (Swanson, *Red Feather Lakes*, 16, and Helen Elliott, taped interview [1990]). Jim Elliott defined for me the freighter terms used in his grandfather's account. The skill of using draft animals has passed down four generations, from Dan Elliott to Jim Elliott. The quote on Dan Elliott's freighting: the *Fort Collins Courier*, in Swan, 103.

On John Elliott's youth in Colorado: Poudre School District Census records. On the British ranchers: *Ranch Histories*, 99. On Fred Smith: *Ranch Histories*, 94, 30, 58, 97; Watrous, 193. On Lady Moon: Ahlbrandt and Hagen, 70; John Elliott, oral interview transcript (1956), 18; L. Miller, passim; Swan, 47–57. On John Sargisson: Evans, 206 (in the article by Juliana Miller and Lafi Miller). On Fred Smith and John Sargisson: Sivers. For the quote on the landscape of the Westlake district: A. Brown, 169. For the household and daily life of Carrie Williams Darnell's parents, John and Maggie Williams: Darnell. On the Williams house: Swanson, *Red Feather Lakes*, 20–21. For Elliott's rustling and freighting stories: John Elliott, oral interview transcript (1956), 5, 12, 14–15. On

John Elliott's registered bull: a handwritten note by Josephine Lamb. On John's ice deliveries: Cecil Moon, diary.

On the emigration into South Dakota and the conditions of life there: Nelson. Elliott's love note appears in a scrapbook album in Phil Elliott's possession.

CHAPTER TWO ⁄⁄⁄ Ida Meyer

The information on Elmer Keach came from "Elmer E. Keach Dies at 92 Years" and various Larimer County histories, including Watrous, 424. For life-expectancy statistics, see Haines, and in general the U.S. Bureau of the Census. Life expectancy at birth for both sexes combined in the United States in 1870 was 45.2 years, and in 1880 it was 40.5 years.

Adella Freitag and Evelyn Biel, Ida's nieces, along with Ken Lauer, Dick Schantz, Sandy Herrling, and Duane "Duke" Herrling gave me valuable information and genealogies on Ida's family background and shared with me numerous photos. Other sources for the Heidenreich, Meyer, and Biel families were various public records and newspaper accounts. Matt Piersoll of the Nebraska State Historical Society was helpful in tracking down these sources. Gerry Dimon assisted in this research. On the much-publicized divorce of Ida's father's friend (her stepfather's brother): "Peter Draws One." Another valuable source was the article "Charles Heidenreich" (whence the quotation on the Heidenreiches' cooking and camping on the westward trek, 297–98). The exact location of William H. Meyer's farm was "sect 8 of T10, R5 (E1/2 of NE 1/4)." For detailed descriptions of the individual farms where Ida grew up: Nebraska, U.S. Census 1880, Lancaster County, agricultural survey; Nebraska Census 1885, Lancaster County, agricultural survey; and Nebraska, Robert E. Moore Survey Fieldbooks.

On the particular culture and attitudes of German American emigrant farmers (such as Ida's parents) in contrast to Anglo American settlers: Goldberg, 29–31. The German Americans typically had been farmers and liked farming, whereas the Anglo Americans came from a variety of callings and had little connection to the land. The German Americans were more patriarchal in gender relations, more frugal (avoiding debt as much as possible), and less fussy about women doing menial labor than the Anglo Americans. The German Americans were prone to see children as a labor force and expected them to marry within the German community. This was the culture in which Ida Meyer grew up.

On the demography of German settlement in Nebraska: Klein, 131. For the quote on the opulence of Lincoln, "people in top hats and tails eating oysters":

Woodress, 65–66. E. K. Brown and Willa Cather give vivid pictures of Lincoln in the settlement and postsettlement periods. The Cather quotation comes from Cather, "Nebraska: The First Cycle" (1923). In later life, Ida liked to tell the story of living in Lincoln next to an undertaker's house that was painted black.

By 1885, Christian Biel owned 286 acres, more than double the size of the original William Meyer homestead he took over. The value of farm production for the preceding year was $862. Biel owned fifteen milk cows, eighteen head of beef, eleven horses, and two hundred pigs. Ninety acres were in corn and twenty in oats—most of the rest was hay and pasture land. Biel also had a potato patch and a small apple orchard. Ida Meyer thus grew up on a prosperous farm. See Nebraska Census 1885, Lancaster County, Agricultural Survey.

Ida Meyer may have left Lincoln because of a personal crisis—a broken engagement or an affair of the heart gone wrong. The gold locket brooch seen in the studio portrait is pinned to her dress on the side of her heart. The original picture in the locket is missing, but the locket still exists. The initials engraved on it are not Ida's, and they do not match those of known relatives or friends.

The term *servant girl* for Ida's position in Livermore is from Colorado, U.S. Census 1900, Livermore.

An excellent account of early tourism in Colorado: Wyckoff, 80–88.

The quotation from Elinor Pruett Stewart is in Luchetti and Olwell, 213. Pruett longed to see the cliff dwellings in Colorado, visit Alaska and Honolulu, and hunt in Canada. Getting married in Wyoming put an end to these dreams. In Josephine Lamb's history file, I found a note saying that Ida came to live with the Horsleys in Livermore in 1895. That is possible. More likely, though, is 1896, but the earliest proof of her residency in Livermore comes from photographs of her dated 1897. On single women in Colorado, see Abbott, Leonard, and McComb, 191. On the ratio of men to women in Colorado around 1900 and on the average marriage age of homesteading women in Colorado: Nugent, 118, 149–50. On the Nightingales and Horsleys: A. Morris and other local histories. For Ida's friends the Kellers and Kilburns: Ida's photo identifications and U.S. Census records.

Information on domestics' wages and the prices of goods and foodstuffs in 1900: Derks.

Was fear of pregnancy a reason for Ida's delay in marrying? It is interesting to note that of her three sisters, all of whom married, only one bore children.

The Livermore Hotel was a classic "roadhouse," the main stagecoach and freight-wagon stop on the route connecting the higher mountains and plains. "Old Livermore" referred to the area around the former Fisk Hotel

on the Fisk-Bollin ranch. Nearby, the "founders," Livernash and Moore, had their dwellings. The Fisk Hotel still stands and as of this writing is owned by collateral descendants of Josephine Lamb. "New Livermore" referred to the Livermore Hotel, built in 1890. The former hotel and post office/general store were placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 2001. It is now owned by Jo Lamb's niece Kay Quan and her husband, Tom Quan. Modern Livermore is at the junction of the Red Feather Lakes Road and U.S. Highway 287, two and a half miles east of the old Livermore Hotel; located there are the school, post office, and a reconstruction of the old Forks Hotel. For sources on the history of the Livermore Hotel, see the notes for chapter 9. On the devastating flood of 1904: Swan, 34–35. Also in Swan, 41, is a photograph of Ida's friend Lawrence Nightingale, behind the counter of the Livermore Store, 1898. Did Ida Meyer take this picture?

Helpful studies on the spread of amateur photography: Greenough; Orvell; the articles in Sandweiss, *Photography in Nineteenth-Century America*; Seiberling; Welling. On the importance of photography in the West and its relation to the cowboy mythos: Hales; Sandweiss, "The Narrative Tradition in Western Photography." Other studies I consulted are Anninger and Mellby; L. Smith; Sternberger. The photo by Käsebier of the woman on the balcony is in plate 103 in Sandweiss, *Photography in Nineteenth-Century America*.

Photos of a woman holding a book were the fashion, yet it is not unlikely that at this point in her life Ida was herself a reader. Livermore had no theater or music hall, and television and radio lay in the future. Reading was one of the few ways to exercise the imagination, to escape into another world. Local people took reading seriously. Livermore ranchers were strongly committed to exposing their children to book learning. The Livermore Woman's Club circulated magazines and reading matter to its members, who lived on far-flung ranches. In the Livermore Hotel, where Ida worked, the southwest room on the ground floor was called "the Library." That Ida herself valued books is shown by a Christmas present to her sixteen-year-old brother Charlie Biel, *Boy's Book of Adventures*, with an inscription from her.

For evidence that Ida's rural contemporaries considered an unmarried woman of thirty an "old maid": Jones Eddy, 25, 124, 127.

Tom Quan remembered Ida's telling him about her waiting on the steps of the Livermore Hotel for the next stagecoach.

CHAPTER THREE ≈ Rabbit Creek

It was John Glass who said that Ida Elliott told him John met her at the Livermore Hotel: Quan and Glass, the original transcript, 17.

In 1973, Don and Owen Lamb, after the death of their aunt Josephine, discovered a false wall in the attic of the old Livermore Hotel, behind which were concealed old U.S. cavalry uniforms, a Winchester rifle, and the rejection letter written by Ida. The rifle had been John Elliott's. In a telephone interview in January 2006, Don described the contents of the letter. Don and Owen gave the letter to Buck Elliott, Ida's son, who may have destroyed it. In any case, it has not turned up in the family collections of Buck's sons.

Ida was thirty-four when she married, but the average marriage age for homesteading women in 1910 was twenty. That and other statistics on the average age of males marrying in Colorado, on the average number of children of Colorado homesteaders, and on the ratio of males to female are in Nugent, 149–50, 118.

The quotation on the necessity of a woman on a mountain ranch is from Ernie Betasso, quoted in Nugent, 150.

Alford was named after Nathaniel Alford, who, like John's ranching mentor Fred Smith, had worked the area as a professional market hunter in 1861. Alford returned in 1871, acquired land on the North Rabbit, and, like the Hardens, ran chiefly horses, but also cattle: *Ranch Histories*, 13–15; Watrous, 200–201.

On the Hardens: *Ranch Histories*, 21, 43; [Josephine Lamb], "The John W. Elliott Ranch," 49–50. According to Watrous, 200–201, the Hardens came around 1867 and sold their Middle Rabbit holding in 1873, but according to Charlie Roberts's memoir in *Ranch Histories*, 21, they were still on Rabbit Creek in 1875. In that year, they attended the first dance given at the Forks Hotel.

The 1,040 acres that Elliott purchased consisted of contiguous parcels in sections 17, 20, 21, and 28 in Township 10 north of Range 71 west. Both he and Ida later took up small homestead claims near the original holding. John's was a stone and timber claim. The average public schoolteacher's annual salary in 1910 was $492: Derks. Good sources on Charles Emerson: Swan, 17, 28, 60, 61; the biographical entry (with a splendid photograph) in Watrous, 333.

According to testimony by Viola Moore, Ida often rode down to visit Alice Kluver, who lived below Calloway Hill. Alice and her daughter, Viola, in turn visited Ida at the Middle Rabbit house, whose beautiful setting Viola remembered vividly eighty years later.

John's doing odd jobs for Emerson in 1910 and the "big snow" of 1913 are mentioned in Josephine Lamb's handwritten chronology. Details on the years 1910 and 1913 are given in Swan, 12, 25, 33–35.

Most of Ida's photographs taken after Buck's birth focus on family.

CHAPTER FOUR ⁒ Seeing the Land in Time

I

Trappers and Indians in the 1820s and 1830s used the North Poudre corridor up through Livermore country into the Laramie plains, but to my knowledge they wrote nothing about the area. This corridor was part of the "Trappers Trail." A comprehensive account can be found in Schloo, 8–13, 225–40. William Ashley possibly went up the North Poudre rather than the main Poudre in February 1825, yet he left no description of this landscape in his journal: Dale, 125–26.

For Fremont's 1843 journal, I have used the excellent edition by Jackson and Spence: Fremont, 1:454–56; volume 5 gives Preuss's Map 3 (of the 1843 expedition, published in 1845). Barnes, 185–89, first established that Fremont went up the North Poudre through what would later be called Livermore, rather than up the main Poudre. Her findings are confirmed by Preuss's map. Recent histories (for example, Ubbelohde, 43), repeat Fremont's original misconception, stating that he went up the main Poudre. A useful discussion of Fremont as ecologist and scientist and of the ramifications of his expedition: Bryson, 3–18.

On Native American use of fire for hunting and grass restoration, Krech, chap. 4. "Pitch pine" in local usage refers to Ponderosa pine or sometimes to the charred wood of this tree, but not to the midwestern pitch pine (*Pinus rigida*), a different species. George Stewart was the trapper who told me Josephine's story of the Indian deer hunter killed on the Lone Pine and who described the Indian encampment north of the Elliotts' ranch house.

On the North Poudre as the "Little Otter": Evan Roberts, oral interview transcript (1975), 56. For the Ute tale in which Otter wants a long winter: "Council of the Seasons," from A. Smith, 36.

On the date of the Hardens' settling of the Middle Rabbit: Watrous, 200–201.

II

On Gordon Creek Woman and the burial artifacts: Breternitz, Swedlund, and Anderson, passim and 178 (on the elk tooth pendant).

Studies of Clovis and Folsom hunters in northern Colorado (Late Pleistocene): Cassells, 45–69 (54, on the Folsom site in Laporte, near the southern boundary of the Livermore region); Slay, 1; and Wilmsen, passim (the Lindenmeier site, on the plains eighteen miles northeast of the Middle

Rabbit). Besides the Owl Canyon site, material evidence of Folsom hunters was found at the Johnson site in Laporte, Colorado, which is on the edge of the greater Livermore region. See Galloway and Agogino, 205–8. For details of the Livermore "buffalo jump" site on the Roberts' ranch, see Witkind, passim.

Lamb's advice on searching "ant piles": John Glass, in Quan and Glass, original transcript, 12, and Arlene Hinsey Davis's account of the ant mound with Indian beads at school number 35, where Josephine taught, in Ahlbrandt and Stieben, 456. John Lee Elliott showed me his grandfather John Elliott's 3X arrowhead display.

Other sources on the Utes in Livermore: Ramer, 1; Watrous, 193.

In 1914, Arapahos described the position of "the Warrior's Trail" and its spur to Oliver Toll, 32. On the Yamparika Utes (Yampa River, Colorado): Conetah, 93–102. For general information on the Utes and details of the Ute horse theft in Laporte: Simmons, passim and 110. On rabbit eating and hunting: Dorsey and Kroeber, 35–36, 40; Simmons, 25.

For the locations of the Cherokee Park Road and Red Feather Lakes Road, see the map in the introduction. The Cherokee Park Road, a spur of the Cherokee Trail, was named after Cherokee Park, a foothills meadowland eight and a half miles (as the crow flies) northwest of the Middle Rabbit. It was evidently the campsite of a Cherokee scouting party (in search of gold) that was returning from California to their home in Indian Territory in Oklahoma in the mid–nineteenth century. Josephine Lamb recounted in her essay "The Livermore Valley" one version of the story. Red Feather Lakes Road, which ran by the old Livermore Hotel, came from the name of a Cherokee "princess" and popular singer who visited the Westlake resort in 1923. For both names: Hagen and Aycock.

III

On the age and extent of Silver Plume granite in the Middle Rabbit valley: the USGS geologic map of the Livermore Mountain Quadrangle, 1988, with notes by A. Braddock and J. J. Connor. On the Precambrian: Braddock, Peterman, and Hedge, 2277–79, 2289, 2295.

Sources for this condensed geological history are: Bell and Weitz, passim; Benedict, 39–118; Chronic and Chronic, 2–7, 8–16, 33–45, 59–60; Chronic and Williams, 22–25; Erickson and Smith, 4–7; Evans, 2; Farb, 4.

The top of Symbol Rock is sixty-eight hundred feet above sea level and five hundred feet above the creek. The altitude of the Middle Rabbit where it cuts through the Elliott ranch is roughly sixty-three hundred feet. The landscape

around historic Livermore and in the lower Lone Pine valley is characterized by its lack of hogbacks. As the Rockies lifted up, several geologic faults prevented the sedimentary layers from forming new hogbacks—hence, the tableland terrain of the lower Livermore valley proper. See Evans, 2.

IV

This section is based on observations and fieldnotes I made during visits to the Middle Rabbit from 1997 to 2007. Further information on life zones, ecological systems, and climate came from Benedict, 177–84, 236–65, 272–88, 309–34, 339–70; Benyus, especially the chapters on relevant habitats, such as "Ponderosa Pine Forest"; Cushman and Jones, passim; Huber, 20–22, 27, 91–93, 112–21. On temperature averages and so on in the northern foothills in the first half of the twentieth century: Gregg, 243–47. John Fusaro, conservation biologist with the USFS, made valuable suggestions for this section and the next two sections.

V

On the beneficial role of fire in grasslands: Benedict, 103–4.

Besides my own fieldnotes, the sources on grazers and carnivores: Chapman and Feldhamer, articles on specific animals; Feldhamer, Thompson, and Chapman, articles on specific animals; and Flannery, 112–13, 155–61, 187, 319–21, and chap. 15.

The last bison in the Southern Province of the Rockies was shot in the late 1800s. By 1890, only six hundred were left in North America, survivors of the great carnage of the second half of the nineteenth century. See Benedict, 327, and Flannery, 319–22. The key role of bison as grazers was taken over in some measure by domestic cattle and sheep, but with mixed results.

On the reintroduction of elk in the Colorado Front Range: Cushman and Jones, 228. Darnell, 23ff., described the trapping of what were probably the last wolves in Livermore. The "Rattle Snake Jack" whom Darnell mentions was not "Rattle Snake Jack" Brinkhoff, but a forerunner. The "coyote and wolf chase" was announced in the *Fort Collins Express* (Saturday, January 18, 1896).

Sources on grasses: Huber, 115; Manning, 3–4; and Meaney et al., 7, 38, 58 (on the Lone Pine and Middle Rabbit valleys). On crested wheatgrass: Manning, 174–76. In the grasses section, I am indebted to the helpful comments by John Fusaro, who did an ecological survey of the Middle Rabbit area.

VI

Sources on the western harvester ant: Barnette, 1; Cole, 193–98; Gregg, 328–33; Jones and Cushman (citing David Costello), *A Field Guide to the North American Prairie*, 64 (on amount of grass seed collected); Mackay and Mackay, 191–92; McMahon, Mull, and Christ, passim.

Sources on Preble's meadow jumping mouse: Bell, "Little Mouse Makes Much Ado"; Hamilton; Kruzsch; Meany et al.; Quimby.

Many Livermore stockgrowers resent the changes and the reporting entailed by the government listing of Preble's. Haying, they say, is not done in the uneven terrain around streams, which is the mouse's habitat. And cattle pose no threat, they argue, because they are in the high country in the summers when the mouse is active and not hibernating. Rural housing developments have probably had a much more negative impact on Preble's than ranching has. As of November 2007, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service was proposing to continue protection of Preble's in Colorado, where its riparian meadow habitat continues to disappear. See Hartman.

VII

See Watrous, 193 ("a vast unsurveyed . . . wilderness"), 89, 50 (the Frank Hall quotation). Though their lands were taken from them, the Utes remain a lively and noticeable presence in the mountainous western and southern parts of Colorado. Native American tribes who were supposed to disappear now own 20 percent of the land in the interior West; see Wilkinson, 62.

Evan Roberts quotation: oral interview transcript (1975), 47. Watrous, 193, gave the date 1824 for the coming of Hudson Bay Fur Company trappers into Livermore and said that by 1850 they had "practically exhausted the supply of beaver." See also Wohl, chap. 2, "The Beaver Men, 1811–1859," on the range of trapping in northern Colorado and on the ecological effects of the beaver extinctions.

Lamb's account of the Fackler killing: *Ranch Histories*, 37. The southern part of the Elliott ranch, which became Lamb's ranch, extended down to the Lone Pine, where Fackler worked. On the forced expulsion of the Utes from their traditional lands: Hughes, 66–71.

VIII

The brief excerpts from Overland wagon travelers are from the useful collection in Schloo: "The scenery all around us," from Benjamin Ross Cauthorn, *Trip*

to Montana by Wagon Train 1865, Brigham Young University Library, May 30, 1865, 22; "purple, black and gray bluffs," from Lavinia Honeyman Porter, *By Ox Team to California . . . in 1860*, 63; "The hills seem," from the diary of Ruth Shackleford, July 8, 1865; "we crossed the summit," from Gordon P. Lester, *A Round Trip to the Montana Mines . . . 1866*, edited by Charles W. Martin, 287.

According to tradition, the name "Livermore" came from the combined names of two men, Livernash and Moore, the very first Anglo settlers in the region in the early 1860s. They were not ranchers, but came to prospect for coal and precious metals. Their habitations were near the banks of the North Poudre about a quarter-mile south of where the old Livermore Hotel today stands. See the entry "Livermore" in Hagen and Aycock, and in Watrous, 192–93.

On Fred Smith: *Ranch Histories*, 94–95; Sivers; Swanson, *Red Feather Lakes*, 6, 15; and Watrous, 193.

For the voting population of Livermore in 1908: Burnett, 162.

The differences between Longhorns and English breeds are delineated in Manning, 119–20, 128.

CHAPTER FIVE ⁒ MISS LAMB

"Mr. Elliott, I have come to stay": Bill Tibbets told me that this was Josephine's answer to John Elliott's question. For Lamb's early career as a teacher: her oral interview transcript (1973) and the interview she did for a feature article written about her in 1966 by Betty Woodworth, "She's a Rancher, Teacher, Club Leader." Her very first teaching job was at Cactus Hill School (1916–17) on the plains: it was later renamed the Observatory School. She taught there with one other teacher, Axel A. Sammelson. The school was about one mile east of the Larimer-Weld county line, on Highway 14, between Fort Collins and Ault. For her second job, in 1918, she went all the way to Belle Fourche, South Dakota, near where her mother had relatives. It is a most curious coincidence that Daniel and Lizzie Elliott were farming nearby in the small community of Vale, South Dakota, about twenty-two miles east of Belle Fourche. I have visited their graves in the Hope Cemetery of Newell, a hamlet a little north of Vale. On the need for teachers in the newly settled Dakotas and the condition of the schools around the time Josephine was there: Nelson, 75–76, 160–63.

Buck's statement "I growed up alone": oral interview transcript (1974), 10. For the first two years of Buck's schooling, I have used his school scrapbook, report cards, Josephine's chronology, and the unpublished histories of Livermore in the Livermore Woman's Club Archive, Fort Collins Museum (hereafter LWCA). Miss Lamb most likely came to the Elliotts at the beginning

of 1919. For the quotations on her meeting the Elliotts at the Livermore Hotel and on her claiming a homestead: John Elliott and Josephine Lamb, oral interview transcript (1956), 20.

I

On Josephine's victory over eighteen boys in beef judging, see "Colorado Girl of 17." The expression *helpmeet*, a variation of *helpmate*, suggests a post-Victorian concept of marriage in which husband and wife are companions working together in the same sphere. Katharine Harris discusses these concepts in "Homesteading in Northeastern Colorado 1873–1920: Sex Roles and Women's Experience." Lamb's later reflections on the *Denver Post* article are in her oral interview transcript (1973), 21. For the title of Josephine's valedictory, see Commencement Program, Cache la Poudre Consolidated High School.

Park Bucker discusses the literary theme of rural girls immigrating to the city in connection with Willa Cather's unconventional story of a city girl who reverses the usual pattern by deciding to become a farm wife. Stratton Porter's *Girl of the Limberlost*, a favorite novel for Josephine, illustrates the more usual pattern.

On the history of Stout, Colorado, and the rock quarries: Bucco. For Josephine's early home life, I have relied on interviews given by Judy Cass and Del Glass (to reporter Daniel Thomas); Kay Quan in Quan and Glass, 141; and Josephine's oral interview transcript (1973), 3–5, 19–20.

Josephine collected information on her mother's family, some of it included in her letter to Sister Marie Adele. Also useful were two unpublished typescripts by Kathryn Quan, "The Roots and Miscellaneous Offshoots" and "Early Day Residents: Eugene Lamb Family." Effie's maternal grandfather, Joseph Miller, had a daughter named Josephine, a sister of Effie's mother, Cordelia Relief Miller.

On school consolidation and the Cache la Poudre High School, see Steinel, 629–30, 634, 637.

Sources on Eugene Lamb's life include U.S. Census records, Josephine Lamb's 1973 interview, unpublished genealogical notes, Kay Quan's genealogical notes (cited earlier for this chapter), interviews with Eugene's oldest grandson, and the obituary "Eugene Lamb Dies Suddenly." Eugene told the KKK story to his son-in-law Herman Glass, who told it to Donald Lamb, who told it to me. On Cripple Creek, the fire, and the suppression of the miners' attempt to organize: Leland Feitz's concise account. On anti-Catholicism and the Irish immigrants: Boorstin, 250; Fisher, 43–58, 88–90, 100, 132. The account about Eugene's expelling the divorced boarder who was

interested in Josephine came from her nephew Don Lamb. The story was corroborated by another nephew, Ted Wetzler, but with doubts about the shotgun. The letter from Eugene to Josephine is dated September 26, 1926, and is in Kay Quan's possession.

Though Eugene Lamb's name did not appear in the first county history, a conspicuous omission, his reputation was vindicated in death. A huge crowd turned out at the church service to honor the memory of the old quarryman. Ted Wetzler: "Everybody was there except the archbishop and the governor." *The Fort Collins Express-Courier* ran a long article on the front page, which described Lamb as "one of Colorado's real pioneers who knew the state in the early days of the mining excitement on the western slope" ("Eugene Lamb Dies Suddenly").

II

Phil Elliott kindly shared with us samples of Buck's schoolwork under Josephine and his report cards, which told us what he was studying. For the conditions of mountain and rural schools in Colorado, I learned a great deal from the excellent study by Gulliford.

The quotation on Livermore men marrying the teachers is from Catherine Roberts, oral interview transcript (1975, along with Evan Roberts), 15.

Lamb's account of her showdown with the older boys is in her oral interview transcript (1973), 22.

In the late 1930s, Josephine taught at the Upper Box Elder School in the northern foothills of the county. Through a series of fortunate circumstances, this one-room schoolhouse survived and was moved to the grounds of the Fort Collins Museum (the former Carnegie-Mellon Library, for which her father supplied building stone). The schoolhouse is one of the last architectural relics of the western settlement in the foothills. Visitors can walk around inside and imagine the way things were in another era. Missing are the kids themselves, the muddy schoolyard, the views of the hills, the privies.

On teachers pay and purchasing power: Derks; Larson, 109.

The record of Lamb's schools we pieced together from the following sources: Ahlbrandt and Stieben, 2:442–87; Lamb's chronology; unpublished histories in the LWCA; public records and schoolteacher records in the Colorado State Archives. A copy of Lamb's 1926 *Teacher's or Principal's Annual Report* for the Gleneyre School is in the Colorado State Archives. Terry Ketelsen, the Colorado state archivist, helped us access these records.

We also interviewed more than a dozen of Josephine's former pupils, three of whom she taught in the 1920s.

For Josephine's time at Colorado State Teachers College in Greeley, we consulted the college yearbook, *The Cache la Poudre* (1924). Diane Piller also assisted us at the University of Northern Colorado Registrar's Office, and Casey Quill helped us at that university's Library Archives. On the expulsion of coeds from Colorado State Teachers College and Dean Helen Gilpin-Brown: Larson, 116, 177. In 1930–31, Josephine returned again to Greeley to renew her certification. By that time, the college was one of the top teacher-training institutions in the nation. Lamb may have participated in the Laboratory School, and she probably taught some classes under her professors' supervision.

For vivid accounts of the social and sexual ferment of the 1920s, especially among college students: Allen; Fass.

III

Virginia Robin's comments come from a letter she wrote to Kay Quan about her aunt, November 29, 2000.

In presenting the Sand Creek killings in 1864, the authors of *Colorado History* (McDowell and Lamb) gloss over troubling aspects of this atrocious action. They do not call the event a massacre, which it was, and they do not mention that Left Hand, Black Kettle, and the other Native Americans at Sand Creek were peaceful, were there under agreement, and were told their safety was assured. The narrative does not say that Chivington, heading the Colorado Militia, deliberately slaughtered these peaceful Indians in an act of terrorism. The workbook does, however, give voice to Euro-American's fears of the Indians and to Chivington's self-defense. Chivington in the end was condemned even by the U.S. Congress—at a time when Congress was by no means sympathetic to the plight of Native Americans.

CHAPTER SIX ⁄⁄ "Aspens and Backswarth"

John Elliott used the State Road in his freighting business, which took him all the way to Steamboat Springs (see chap. 1). The road went west from Red Feather Lakes through the hilly Deadman district down into the Laramie valley, then up McIntyre Creek into the Rawahs, past Shipman Park, over Ute Pass, down into North Park, and then into Walden. Built in 1897, it was one

lane through most of the Rawahs. Stretches of the road became unusable in the late 1920s. Sources: Helen Elliott's taped interview (1990); Slay and Miller.

A good overview of the background to and significance of the National Wilderness Act can be obtained through T. H. Watkins's introduction and the various articles in the volume that he and Patricia Byrnes edited, *The World of Wilderness.*

Wallis Link supervised the building of a ditch from Camp Lake in the Rawahs. According to Jim Elliott, the workers' old bread ovens are still there. Wallis was the father of Annice (Jo's pupil, whose interview is discussed in the preceding chapter). On Link and the places named after him: Hagen and Aycock; Watrous, 414.

Materials from the USFS on the history of the Laramie and the Rawahs: "Chronological History of the Poudre District"; "Roosevelt National Forest History," with preface; and Slay and Miller. On the deaths of the early trappers LaRamie and Chambers: Watrous, 162–63.

O. B. Peake, 237, described the wolf Two Toes and his capture. On the logging of the Rawahs and the inundation of the valley by range cattle in the second half of the nineteenth century: Langendorf, 148, 153, 155, 217, and passim, who includes the twentieth century; Tamerlane Forrester's testimony in Watrous, 201–2.

The name "Ute Pass" preserves the memory of the Mountain Utes who crossed over from the Western Slope into the Laramie valley. On the origin of "Rawah" and other names in the region: Hagen and Aycock. Gary Kuzniar told me Buck showed him an old photograph of John Elliott standing next to the Utes he let camp on his land.

For the dating of John Elliott's acquisitions in the Laramie River valley: Josephine Lamb, chronology, and [Josephine Lamb], "The John W. Elliott Ranch," 50–51. John Glass's quotation on Josephine's haying: Quan and Glass, 143.

The story of Sam Shipp's parcel, bought by John Elliott, is told in Helen Elliott's article "Pine Creek Ranch." Another useful source on the history of the valley is her article "Glendevey Lodge." On the two gravesites discussed in this chapter: Kniebes and Kniebes, "Notes on Grave of John Shipman" and "Notes on Grave of Son of David Usher." Several years after my first visit to the Usher grave, I met the Kniebeses and learned from them that they had placed six of the stones on the boy's grave. When they first came, only a single stone had marked the site. According to the Kniebeses' research, Shipman's relatives reburied him in an unmarked spot near the original grave site so that he would not be reexhumed.

Charles "Cactus" Keller, in an interview I had with him, remembered

hearing from Louis Sholine and Lowell Cope that John Elliott slept in a sleeping bag near the cows in May. Peake, 288 and 292, gives the figures on average cost of grazing in the Rawahs and the percentage of calves in 1922. The average price per head of cattle, by year, is in Goff and McCaffree, 309.

Buck's letter to Josephine is dated July 2, 1920. I have somewhat improved the spelling and punctuation of the original version.

The excerpts from Jo Lamb on the Elliott East Bog Camp, the Pine Creek trail, and the gathering of cattle at Shipman are in her essay "The John W. Elliott Ranch," 50–51. On Shipman's death and exhumation: Helen Elliott's taped interview (1990). Lamb's account of rescuing the strays is in an unpublished manuscript titled "Story (1)," beginning "The Medicine Bow ridge. . . ."

Gary Kuzniar talked to old-timers who remembered Jo and John's excursions to Woods Landing, Jelm Mountain, and Ring Mountain in Wyoming. Special thanks to him for letting me quote from his ballad "Josephine Lamb" and to Donna Bathory for leading me to him.

CHAPTER SEVEN ⁒ JOHN ELLIOTT

On the etymology of the word *character*: *The American Heritage Dictionary*. On romantic and media images of the cowboy: Rainey; Slotkin. John took a photo of Josephine in the same spot shortly before or after she took his picture. This companion photo is on page 294, discussed in chapter 11.

Ehrlich's discussion of the taciturnity of Wyoming ranchers and herders is in *The Solace of Open Spaces*, 6–7.

I

On the "natural horsemanship" method, I am indebted to discussions with Jacques Rieux, Donna Bathory, and Patricia Burge, all horse ranchers in Livermore, and to Monty Roberts's book *The Man Who Listens to Horses*.

For John's account of Lady Moon's dog: his oral interview transcript (1956), 17. Elliott hung dog pictures on his wall, but he would have disdained pet cemeteries and pet loss–counseling clinics. On the history of the border collie: D. Morris.

The Elliott cemetery I mentioned to Phil Elliott, but which contains no Elliotts, is a stone's throw from the Rabbit Creek house. There are two grave plots of early settlers or hands, their names and identities unknown. The site is hard to find amid the summer grasses and currant bushes. Weathered hand-cut timbers frame the unmarked graves. I thought I was looking at merely the

lumber of a collapsed shed until grave researchers Susan and Duane Kniebes told me it was a burial site. Their description of it is in Kniebes and Kniebes, "Notes on Elliott Ranch Cemetery."

An example of the neglect of the cowhand in local histories is Earl "Red" Miller. He left an eloquent and informative interview on Livermore life as seen from the point of a cowhand, but his testimony was left out of Evans's *Among These Hills* not because the editor chose to do so, but because some contributors felt that Miller's status as a nonlandowner made it inappropriate to include his interview. Recently, though, Red Miller has received attention. Deborah Dimon published an essay on him for the *North Forty News* (a Livermore monthly). The quotes in my text from Red Miller are in his oral interview transcript (1974). Derks is the source for price comparisons and wage data for farm laborers (including ranch hands) in the 1920s. Buck's words about the firing of the hired man are in a letter he wrote to Jo Lamb, July 2, 1920. The bit that John made for Harry Holden (with the original slobber bar replaced by a piece of fence wire) eventually came back to Jim Elliott, who showed it to me.

For the preacher's eulogy at John Elliott's funeral: Harrison.

II

According to Helen Elliott's diary, John was already ailing in 1941. In the 1950s, he took nitroglycerin to treat angina pectoris, and he was hospitalized in 1953.

As a child, Helen had lived at Glendevey and felt emotional ties to the place. Helen and Josephine were not on friendly terms, even after Helen and Buck moved. Helen saw Jo as a usurper in the Elliotts' marriage. Her antagonism reached a climax when Jo was staying the night (perhaps with John) at Glendevey Lodge. At one point, Helen stormed into Jo's bedroom with a chamber pot and hurled the contents over the floor. I heard this story decades later from a woman to whom Jo had recounted it. After this incident, whenever Jo drove John up to Glendevey, she waited out in the car, sometimes the better part of a day, until he was finished doing his business with Buck. Then she drove him back to Livermore.

For the John Elliott quote "Here's where two fools meet": Quan and Glass, 143.

I am indebted to Dr. Hugh McElwee, Fort Collins gastroenterologist, for the information on ascites.

III

In spite of illness, Elliott purchased more land, though not enough to make up for what he sold off in 1943. Between 1950 and 1955, he and Jo bought around 1,500 acres of rangeland in Livermore and on the Laramie. The lodge and parcel on the Laramie called "Red's Place" (later the "Water Hole") and described in chapter 6 was one of those purchases. Another was the former Fisk Hotel in Livermore and the surrounding 400 acres. Yet another was the former Livermore Hotel itself with 120 acres. The Elliotts and Josephine moved from the Lone Pine ranch into this historic building in 1953. A major reason for the move was that Jo found it difficult in winter to drive her car up the steep dirt road that led out of the Lone Pine ranch.

Rheba Massey, local history archivist at Fort Collins Public Library, called one day in 2001 to give me the extraordinary news that she had found a taped interview with John Elliott. The tape was part of the library's Oral History series, but evidently had not been transcribed. For the writer of lives, hearing the voice of the biographical subject, especially one as elusive as John Elliott, is a revelation. The reconstruction of his life and the particular reading of his character in this book crucially depended on this recording.

CHAPTER EIGHT ≈ Cattle on the Land

The idea of a 1:1 scale map is found in Borges.

I am indebted in this chapter to Colorado State University professors George Seidel and Tom Field for their comments on animal husbandry and cattle breeds. They are not responsible for the overall interpretation of livestock ranching presented in the chapter. Nevertheless, their insights, based on experience in both ranching and science, were important in recasting my own ideas about stockgrowing, both in the present day and in the early twentieth century. This chapter also incorporates valuable observations about grasses and rangeland made to me by John Fusaro. All three of these researchers read through an earlier version of this chapter.

The "wild and barren west" quote is from "Dietrich Brandt" (1899), 662.

Sources on the township and range system, on the idea of the public domain, and on homesteading: Dick, 19–20, 137–39, 240, and chap. 18; Layton, 21–23, 61–63, 88–89.

News articles on the sale of the old Elliott holding by the Hansens to the Colorado State Division of Wildlife: Bell, "Circle Ranch"; J. Bjarko, "GOCO Grant"; and Blumhardt, "Committee OKs Bill."

I

In 1940, Buck had land in sections 7, 8, and 9, Range 71 west, Township 9 north. Jo Lamb's original homestead was most of section 29, Range 71 west, Township 10 north. Buck's explanation of his father's method of acquiring land is in his oral interview transcript (1974), 8–9. Other sources: [Lamb], "The John W. Elliott Ranch," 49–50; and John Glass in Quan and Glass, 143. For a partial list of Elliott and Lamb warranty deeds, see the "Public Records" section in "Sources."

My principle source for historical statistics on the Colorado beef industry: Goff and McCaffree, 263, 272, 276, 308–10. On markets, weather conditions, and the effects of war and depression over the fifty-year life span of the Elliott ranch: Abbott, Leonard, and McComb; Ellis and Smith; Hansen; Harris, Mitchell, and Schechter; G. Nash; Peake; Steinel; Wickens. For *Larimer County Atlas*: Thomas.

II

Bill Knox, Jim Elliott, and Phil Elliott discussed with me the size of John Elliott's horse herd and the supposition that he supplied the U.S. Army with remounts.

Buck Elliott mentioned the "southern heifers" in his oral interview transcript (1974), 9. Colorado State University professor Tom Field was helpful in identifying what these "southern heifers" were.

Helen Elliott told Judy Elliott, Jim's wife, that Josephine painted the Rabbit Creek ranch picture.

On the contrast between Longhorns and the English breeds: Manning, 119–22, 128. On the effects of intensive cattle grazing on grassland ecologies: Watkins, "High Noon in Cattle Country," passim, including several responses critical of Watkins's position. On Elliott's beef herd: [Lamb], "The John W. Elliott Ranch," 51.

On the slaughter of cattle in meatpacking houses: Bulliett, 3, 183; Sacks, 265–69, 277–81; and Schlosser, chap. 7, especially p. 152 on early-twentieth-century slaughterhouse methods. I sent Broco to a slaughterhouse of this period.

On pastoral attitudes to husbandry versus more industrial methods: Bulliett, chap. 9. Bulliett contrasts the current public's unconcern for the welfare of food animals (treated as "raw materials to be processed in the most efficient way possible") with their sentimentalization of pets and wild animals, 3, 177, 183 (on packing house methods being hidden from the public), 198–99. He emphasizes the historically unprecedented loss of human contact with agrarian practices and domestic animals in our time, 34, 17.

III

Information on the number of acres needed to feed a cow in Livermore came from conversations with local ranchers. On crested wheatgrass: Manning, 174–76; on its introduction into northern Colorado: Ross. According to John Fusaro, newer strains of this grass are less detrimental to other grasses than older strains were.

Jo Lamb's line about the camp tender having to go on foot was edited out of her essay "John W. Elliott Ranch," 51, but is still found in an earlier handwritten draft.

The quote from Terry Jordan comes from his book *North American Cattle-Ranching Frontier*, 10.

IV

On the romantic vision of nature as shaped by artists: Troccoli. On the problematic quality and effects of this vision, and on attempts to oppose it by emphasizing the local and the nonpanoramic views: Schulten.

Richard Knight, 132–35, a resident of Livermore and a Colorado State University professor, has studied the effects of rural subdivisions (including the dominance of generalist animals and pets) on indigenous wildlife. See also Starrs, "Ranching," 22.

Jesse Logan's research has produced convincing evidence to show that the significant rise in average winter temperatures in the Rocky Mountains has encouraged the spread of the pine beetle: see Petit.

On the ecological benefits of letting natural fires burn: Budd, 115; Knight, 127. On suppression of fires due to rural subdivisions and the role it plays in creating megafires: Egan et al., 7. On forestry science's recognition of the need for natural forest fires: Pyne, 282–93. On fire and the need for the "wildland-urban interface" to include the views of mountain homeowners: Green.

Jo Lamb supported the USFS fire-suppression campaigns that prevailed in the first two-thirds of the twentieth century. She personally funded local Smokey Bear poster contests. Her love of trees, her work with USFS rangers, and her support of the timber industry—she taught the loggers' children in the mountain schools—made her a strong advocate of Smokey Bear.

As early as 1974, Buck Elliott bemoaned the influx of people and its effect on ranching: oral interview transcript, 3.

On the plans to expand existent reservoirs on the North Poudre River and to build yet another new dam in the Livermore region: Hull; Sokoloski, "Glade EIS Delayed Again" and "Report on Relocating Highway 287 Completed"; U.S.

Army Corps of Engineers. These plans, if they are carried out, will radically alter Livermore country landscapes and ecologies. A collection of prose and poems by writers who oppose the new water projects, *Pulse of the River: Colorado Writers Speak for the Endangered Cache la Poudre* (2007), edited by Wockner and Pritchett, includes Deborah Dimon's personal essay "The Decomposition of Bone Woman."

On the two-degree rise in average temperature of the Rocky Mountains since the mid-1970s and on the correlation of this rise with the destruction of pine forests: Petit.

V

For statistics on the sharp recent decline in rangeland and farmland in Colorado due to uncontrolled development: M. Bjarko, 1; Sullins et al., 27–28.

The original Elliott holdings on the Middle Rabbit and the former Lamb-Elliott ranch on the Lone Pine are now contiguous tracts of land managed by the Colorado Division of Wildlife. Called the Rabbit Creek and Lone Pine units of the lower Cherokee State Wildlife Area, they are hunting preserves, but are open to nonhunters (walkers and horse riders) in the summer months.

In 2007, I spoke with the Rabbit Creek Unit manager Jake Frank and asked him about wildlife counts. He said that at various times of the year a herd of 160 elk, 15 or so Rocky Mountain bighorns, some antelope, and numerous deer occupy the Rabbit Creek area. I asked him about the road improvements and tree nursery. The former were recently put in to help prevent fires and to allow the transport of heavy equipment that was used to open up the natural springs of the area so that wildlife can have better access to water in times of drought. According to Frank, the Elliott Homestead Habitat Planting includes wild plum, hawthorn, chokecherry, and burr oak. Its purpose is to supply food for bears and other wild animals, which would reseed the Middle Rabbit with these trees and bushes through their dung. He agreed with me that burr oak is not a tree indigenous to the area. The building of heavy-duty roads, the "tapping" of natural springs, and the introduction of a tree species exotic to Livermore suggest that the Middle Rabbit is moving away from being a wildland and toward becoming a kind of wildlife farm.

Riebsame's "Ranching a Changing Landscape" and the essays in Knight, Gilgert, and Marston's collection *Ranching West of the 100th Meridian* present a wealth of evidence to demonstrate that modern ranches are more favorable to biodiversity and foothills ecosystems than rural subdivisions are. All these authors advocate cooperation between ranchers and environmentalists and

call for an end to their mutual mistrust. Josephine Lamb anticipated this point of view, as I show in chapter 11, "Citizen Lamb." "Mountains for the Centuries: Conservation in Colorado," an article in *The Economist* (February 3, 2007), illustrates the international attention Colorado has received for its use of easements in preserving rangeland and wild habitat.

CHAPTER NINE ⁂ A Livermore Home Companion

In the 1960s, the Buck Elliott family and Ida stayed in the Laramie River country during the warm months, but came back to Fort Collins for the winter.

On Virginia Robin's experiences with the Elliotts and her aunt Josephine: November 29, 2000, letter to Kay Quan.

"The women were always 'Mrs.'" (BB), but the custom was to call a man by his first name. Ida was invariably "Mrs. Elliott." The naming of the woman "Mrs." reflected the midwestern definition of the farmer's wife as an appendage of her husband: Goldberg, 131. John Elliott was usually "John." Ida, however, called her husband "Mr. Elliott," never "John," a mode of address whose archaic formality, common in the nineteenth century, mirrored the distance separating Ida's world from that of her husband.

On conceptions of women's role in marriage in the West: K. Harris; Jameson, "Women as Workers, Women as Civilizers." Harris maintains that the western emphasis (brought out in the popular press) on woman as "helpmate" to her husband gave her a more active and equal role than did the view of the woman as "civilizer." Jameson cautions against filtering the lives of western women through such dichotomies as woman as "civilizer" versus woman as "helpmate." In real lives, there was considerable overlap. On women's magazines and the "home companions": Bucker; Zuckerman.

By the 1940s, Ida's health problems prevented her from maintaining a high standard of tidiness and order in her house. In 1946, Helen Elliott wrote in her diary that the Lone Pine ranch was "no place to stay all night."

Houses

On the emergence of labor-saving devices from 1910 to 1930: Wilson, 84. I also consulted Busbey, passim, and Howe et al.

The Rabbit Creek house had three bedrooms, a sitting room, a dining room, a large kitchen, a pantry on the north side, and a closed-in back porch. This configuration seems to have been in place in 1943, when the Elliotts left the

house. Over the Elliotts' long tenancy, many renovations were carried out. The walls of the newer part of the house were packed with stucco made of soil and a binder (visible in photo on page 228, chap. 8, where the siding has come off).

According to Bill Cass, the Lone Pine buildings had been infirmaries at Warren Air Force Base in Cheyenne. The two structures, similar in size and shape, were butted up together to form an L-shaped house.

In the late 1890s, Ida, a decade before she married, visited the Ismert cabin on the Lone Pine and, finding it picturesque, took a photograph. After the Elliotts bought the Rabbit Creek ranch, John spent the first night of his annual cattle drive in the cabin. In the early 1950s, Red Vernon wintered over in the cabin when he helped John with the cattle. A neighbor's wife came down to live with Red for a while. I myself once found shelter in the cabin during a blizzard. That was in the 1990s, before I knew the place had been owned by the Elliotts. Old newspapers were tacked onto the walls of the cabin as insulation and wallpaper. Waiting for the snow to ease up, I read on the wall a 1950s article about a mentally disturbed Denver woman who walked naked in the streets. It made me feel a little warmer. An abandoned cabin has many uses.

For historical background on the Livermore Hotel: Bell, "Piano Marks Livermore's Past"; Evans, 22–24; "Livermore's Historic Buildings Placed on National Register"; and Ramer.

Ida was just shy of eighty when the trio moved into the old Livermore Hotel. Two years earlier she had been hospitalized for heart irregularities and an infected leg, according to Helen Elliott's diary. Helen, who visited her and brought gladiolas, came away shocked. Both conditions persisted through Ida's old age.

Yard and Garden

Absent from the oil painting are the hen coop and the meathouse, which were located to the left of the house in the 1940s, but which may have been situated elsewhere earlier on. One reason for assigning the date of the painting to sometime after 1911 is the depiction of a fenced-off area in front of the house, which is not present in a 1910–11 photo of the infant Buck in a perambulator, but is present in other photos of 1911, suggesting it was built in the summer of 1911, probably for flowerbeds and as a safe area for Buck to play in.

Numerous testimonies have gone into this reconstruction of Ida's flower and vegetable gardens. Especially valuable was Ted Wetzler's. The quotation on jellying and jamming is in a letter from Mary B. Mills to Ethel Waxham (1909); see Waxham, 306.

Kitchen

A valuable study of western rural cookery is Luchetti's *Home on the Range: A Culinary History of the American West*.

The dining room at the Middle Rabbit house was, according to Ted Wetzler, next to the parlor. Thus, it was likely to have been the southeast room, which was not the kitchen and not the parlor, whose locations we know. This heated room was in its time elegantly appointed with velvety brown, gilded wallpaper and boasted a spectacular view of Twin Mountain. Sally Ketcham and Jane Hail, curators of historic Avery House in Fort Collins, believe that the style of the wallpaper points to the period 1890 to 1915.

On changes in the taste and consistency of food due to the introduction of modern ranges, see Root, 221–26. Lynes, 180, argues that the purpose of table etiquette was (and is) to disguise the animality of eating. In the Elliott household, the feeding of dogs at table, the display of John's false teeth, and the suppression of conversation (thus giving more importance to mastication) show that the animal functions were not hidden.

Parlor

The term *sitting room* was in vogue in the first decade of the twentieth century and began replacing *parlor*. In 1905, Ethel Waxham, who was from Colorado but later was a Wyoming ranch woman, used in her journal the term *sitting room*, which looked forward to the modern "living room," a less formal arrangement: Waxham, *Lady's Choice*, 28. On these distinctions: Lynes, 234, 241.

Brenda Carlyle, a wallpaper specialist, described the blue pattern in the Middle Rabbit parlor as a "curving arabesque with half drop repeat." She classified it as a Colonial Revival style, popular in the decade after 1900.

Jim Butler, Babe Boyle's son, remembered the number of rings on the telephone party line. The 1930 U.S. Census for Colorado indicated that the Elliotts had a radio, which they probably ran on car batteries.

Porch

For the quotation from John Glass: Quan and Glass, original transcript, 17.

CHAPTER TEN ※ WOMAN RANCHER

Good published sources on Lamb's ranching are Quan and Glass and the interview Lamb gave in 1966 for the article written by Betty Woodworth, "She's a Rancher," published in the *Fort Collins Coloradoan*.

The material on the Stockgrowers Association and the Cow Belles came from a close woman friend of Jo Lamb. On conservative attitudes to rural women's roles and the way they were challenged: Shelley Armitage; Farragher, 107–10, 144; Montrie, passim. In popular literature from 1900 to 1920, there appeared the "pard heroine," the cowgirl who was a partner-companion to a cowboy: Shelley Armitage, 172. Elliott and Lamb had a such a relationship. The quotation from John Glass on Jo's riding skills: Quan and Glass, 145.

The "[t]arred with the brush of unwomanliness" quote is from Faragher, 108–9.

According to one source, Josephine was concerned enough about her body odor that she consulted a physician about it. It is possible she suffered from polycystic ovary syndrome, a metabolic disorder that affects hormone levels and afflicts about 10 percent of the female population. The syndrome causes infertility, overweight, excessive facial hair, and heart disease and stroke. We do not know if Josephine was infertile, but it is known that she was subject to the other symptoms and that she died of a ruptured blood vessel in the heart. On this syndrome: Brody, D7.

Sources on Kate Moon include oral testimonies and local histories, especially Lafi Miller's book *Those Crazy Pioneers, with the Life and Times of Lady Moon* and the article on Moon in Ahlbrandt and Hagen.

See Jameson, "A New Historical Territory," on the oldest daughter's predilection for animals. Lamb talks about her first two heifers in her oral interview transcript (1973), 24–25. On the influence that the high school course on beef judging had on her decision to ranch: Chamblin, 1214. Virginia Robin's memories are in her 2000 letter to Kay Quan.

On the National Stock Show in Denver and its importance in the education of ranchers and as a social venue: Noel.

After Jo's death, Don and Owen Lamb found a three-thousand-dollar cash hoard hidden in the old hotel (DL). She was more of a hoarder than a spender.

On the importance of the cattle drives in the memory of those who participated in them as children, Livermore rancher Duane McMurray told me, "When I was a kid, that was the high point of my life, driving those cattle up to the Laramie River." Buck Elliott, when asked how old he was when he first went on drives, answered, "ever since I was big enough to hang on an old cow's tail" (oral history transcript [1974], 2). One time, in later life, Buck and one of his sons drove by Deadman cow camp, an important stop between Livermore and the Laramie River. According to his son, when Buck noticed that the old cow camp had been razed, tears welled up in his eyes.

Josephine did take long road trips to visit relatives. She drove to Alliance,

Nebraska, to visit her sister Rose, to Chicago to visit her sister Del, to Milwaukee to attend Ted Wetzler's graduation from Marquette University, to Indiana to visit her niece Kay Quan in a convent, and to Kentucky to attend her niece Ruth Wetzler's "veiling" as a nun. Whether she ever made it to either coast and saw the ocean, I do not know.

Josephine's description of her role in the cattle drive and the crossing of the Lone Pine is in [Lamb], "The John W. Elliott Ranch," 51. Her account of the drowning of the calf in Deadman Canyon is in her manuscript "Story (2)." For Buck's comments on weather and car traffic: oral interview transcript (1974), 5 and 3. For Joyce Glass's comments: her March 26, 1995, reminiscence of Josephine Lamb.

When Jo died, her dogs could not be controlled, and no one wanted them. A nephew had to shoot them.

After John died, Jo bought not only the Lone Pine ranch, but also his half interest in the Bollin-Fisk property (400 acres) and the old Livermore Hotel (120 acres). John's last will and testament is dated March 13, 1953. I am grateful to Jim Elliott for allowing me to make a copy.

"The Josephine Lamb Ranch" Real Estate Prospectus, printed after Jo's death, confirmed neighbors and cowhands' views about the inefficiency of the operation: "The ranch has never been developed to its full potential and is presently running 160 cow units, which is only one-third to one-half of its real capacity. Scientific management, an aggressive program, and a larger number of livestock would do much to upgrade the present situation."

In the words of Verlyn Klinkenborg, 70–71, the modern view of the cow is distinctive: "Whether bred for lactation, weight gain, or sexual reproduction, its capacities and potentials have been calculated to the nth degree by ag schools and the federal government. In recent bovine literature, the cow seems no more creaturely than a solar panel or a heat exchanger."

For John Glass's comment on Jo's cussing out a hunter: Quan and Glass, 146.

Don Lamb explained why he wanted a contract and how Jo responded when he first showed it to her. "She'd say, 'You'll get this and this,' but with Aunt Jo nothing ever materialized. You needed a contract. I took a contract over to her, from the CSU [Colorado State University] County Extension Agent. Can you guess what she did with the contract? She graded the contract! I was a grown man. I was not a kid." Josephine did finally sign the contract.

Don Lamb also said: "I think she wanted the ranch to stay in the family . . . she didn't do the things she needed to do to pass the ranch on." Margaret Ann McLean spoke of the heartache the family felt at the loss of the ranch

when it was bought by the Colorado State Natural Resources Department for $1,190,000. See Colorado State Department of Natural Resources, Option to Purchase, July 9, 1975.

CHAPTER ELEVEN ⁄⁄ CITIZEN LAMB

We learned of Josephine's meeting Eleanor Roosevelt from the Livermore woman friend with whom she went to the speaking event. Eleanor's grandson Elliott Roosevelt Jr. studied animal husbandry at Colorado State University. He brought his horse with him and boarded it with Josephine on her farm at the bottom of Taft Hill. Both he and his grandmother received degrees at the same ceremony. See "Mrs. FDR in Challenge to Graduates." I am grateful to Colorado State University history professor Jim Hansen for sources and leads on Mrs. Roosevelt's commencement address at the university. I have also consulted Eleanor Roosevelt, *My Day* (for her political views), and the biographies by Blanche Wiesen Cook and William T. Youngs on her role in paving the way for women's participation in public life.

Kay Quan described her aunt as "an outspoken Democrat." Lamb's politics went against the grain of Republican Livermore, which tended to vote for the party perceived as supporting landowners. Don Lamb told me that his aunt "thought the Democrats had all the answers. I'm a Democrat, and a lot of that comes from her influence." The Lamb family believed that "the Democrat was for the poor man and the Republican was for the rich guy."

Glass's account of the haystacker incident is in Quan and Glass, 144. On the Blizzard of '49: Ahlbrandt and Sieben, 111–12. On the history of Livermore and the date of electrification: Evans, 2–5.

Jo might have been rejected by the Livermore Woman's Club had it not been for the intervention of a much younger ranch woman and club member whom Lamb met in 1948. Married to a descendant of an old Livermore family, this woman, like Jo, was a mountain teacher who had no children of her own. She and Jo became good friends. Also a Democrat, this lady was the one who attended Eleanor Roosevelt's address with Josephine.

Unpublished historical materials related to the Livermore Woman's Club that I consulted were located in the LWCA in the Local History Collection of Fort Collins Public Library. (In 2007, the Local History Collection was relocated to the Pioneer Museum, adjacent to the Fort Collins Public Library.) The account of club activities and the record of Lamb's contributions are mainly from the LWCA. The former local history curator Rheba Massey introduced me to this rich resource and showed me how to use it. The organization's records

contain minutes, treasurer's reports, and scrapbooks bulging with articles, letters, poems, programs of local and regional woman's clubs, prize certificates, party favors, photographs, historical essays, and several plays, written in the 1920s and still in manuscript. The archive is a gold mine for historical research, but it has barely been touched. To my knowledge, the only serious published history of this important organization is in Evans, chap. 2.

On the importance of nature conservation within the woman's club movement: Riley, 9, 98–99. For the historical background of Virginia Dale, the subject of Lamb's lost poem: Watrous, 189–92. Before 1949, when Lamb entered public life, texts that she wrote (that have survived and are published) are the *Colorado History* workbook (1941) and the two poems in *Wings over the Classroom* (1943).

The Lamb quotations about Watrous occur in her oral interview transcript (1973), 12–13, 17.

Linda Lamb kindly gave me access to Jo Lamb's folder "My own history of Ranches" and permission to quote from the contents. Included in the folder are also Jo Lamb's transcriptions of the histories of the following ranches: the McMurrays', Griffiths', Nautas', Webers', Voerdings', and Goodwins'.

The original title of *Ranch Histories* was *Larimer County Stockgrowers Association* (1956). Ranchers, however, usually refer to the publication as "the Brand Book" because of the definitive identification of historical livestock brands, for which Jo Lamb did the research. The first edition sold for $1.50 and is now a collector's item. When the first edition sold out, the club published a second edition in 1993 and a reprint of the second edition in 2003.

"Last Notes of Day" was published in *Wings over the Classroom* (1943). The other poem in the same volume but not discussed here is "Spring Comes."

Club scrapbooks give glimpses of Lamb's artistic engagement in this period. In 1951, she attended the Fine Arts Festival in Estes Park and reported back to the club. In 1954, she won an award for a painting (unidentified) from the Colorado Federation of Woman's Clubs. In 1955, she judged an art competition for young people. She also molded "native clay" into pots and vases and displayed them.

On William Gilpin's attitudes and, in a later period, on public anxieties about the disappearance of wilderness: Nash, 41–42, 145–46. On Frederick Jackson Turner and his influential idea that the frontier had closed: Limerick, *Something in the Soil*, 141–65; Nash, 145–47, 149.

A whole series of photographs of Lamb and Forestry Club members (on various excursions) was taken by the USFS in the 1920s. They are preserved in the Local History Collection of the Fort Collins Museum (Envelope Extension

Service 1 5144–5165). The photograph on page 136 in chapter 5 originally belonged to this series of photos.

On the rise of an ecological consciousness in the twentieth century and the concomitant rise in the importance of wilderness: Nash, 254–60, 379–88. I took the quotes about Alaska from a letter that Lamb wrote to Bruce and Peggy Brechtel, December 26, 1968. The quotation on USFS rules is from [Lamb], "The John W. Elliott Ranch," 50–51.

The hogback that supports the Owl Canyon trees has been quarried for limestone since at least 1924, though there were probably earlier excavations around 1900. In the 1930s, scientists at the State Agricultural College in Fort Collins became aware of the danger to the pines, and they pressed for measures to protect the grove, but with no success. On pollen evidence for the grove's age, found in pack rat middens, see Livo.

The main part of the pinyon grove covers a "school section," which is land owned by the state and leased to the mining company to generate education revenue. As a result, the grove still remains at some risk, especially if it were to be leased to another corporation less concerned about the hogback's ecology.

The pinyon trees and their nuts draw an astonishing range of fauna: Townsend's big-eared bats, rock mice, pine squirrels, porcupine, deer, mountain sheep, bear, wild turkey, western pack rats, Pinyon Jays, and Clark's Nutcrackers. Eagles, hawks, prairie falcons, and Great Horned Owls feed on the nut eaters. The grove also harbors purple cliff-brake (*Pellaea atropurpurea*), an uncommon dry-land fern that likes limestone.

A concise and useful introduction to the life history and feeding habits of Clark's Nutcrackers: Benyus, 295–96.

Sources on the Owl Canyon Pinyon Grove: Blumhardt, "Owl Canyon Pinyon Grove Draws Visitor In"; letter from Theodor Swem to Josephine Lamb; Livo, 22–23; minutes of the Livermore Woman's Club (November 24, 1951, and May 31, 1952), LWCA; "Owl Canyon Pinyon Grove Natural Area"; "Piece of Pinon Tree from Owl Canyon Put on Display"; "Pinon Forest Effort Pushed." I am grateful to Steve Bartlett and Mike Golliher of Colorado Lien Company for information on the mining operation and the forest.

In a sketch entitled *Campus Elm Trees*, Lamb depicted several of the American elms on the grounds of Colorado State University, Fort Collins.

CHAPTER TWELVE ⁄⁄ THREE LIVES

I learned much about the workings and effects of "community stories" from an oral presentation entitled "Common Knowledge" by my colleague Pattie

Cowell at the English Colloquium, Colorado State University, October 3, 2005. Illuminating discussions of the issues surrounding married life are in Coontz, *The Way We Never Were*, and the prologue in Rose. For the quotation on curiosity and gossip: Rose, 9.

Domestic triangle is used here in the sense of "ménage à trois"—three people in one household who are sexually involved with each other, all three being aware of their mutual relations. The term does not perfectly fit the arrangement in which our three subjects lived, for Ida and John evidently did not have sex together after Buck's birth. The community at large, however, did not know that John and Ida had ceased having conjugal relations, so, in terms of "common knowledge," the arrangement was in fact viewed as a domestic triangle.

Children who visited the household usually knew nothing about the domestic triangle; they saw three ranchers living and working together as a family. John's grandson John L. Elliott did, however, sense something amiss. He puzzled over why his granddad and Josephine were always together, his grandmother mostly alone.

Gary Kuzniar paraphrased to me what Buck told him in 1963–64: "When Josephine Lamb moved into the house, John made Mrs. Elliott move down the hall, and he slept with Josephine—and his wife down the hall." There are notable discrepancies in the various testimonies on this topic. What Buck told Gary disagrees with what Ida told Babe Boyle, which was that she, Ida, moved to another bedroom after Buck was born—not after Josephine arrived. According to Babe Boyle, Ida said she moved out of her and John's room, presumably the master bedroom, which implies that John stayed in the biggest bedroom in the house. Yet Margaret Ann McLean remembered that John's room at the Rabbit Creek house was small; it would not have been the bigger room. Both Babe Boyle's testimony and Buck's suggest that John's room, where Jo evidently stayed with him, was not small, but large enough for two persons. All three informants agree that John and Ida had separate bedrooms. Gary Kuzniar and Babe Boyle's testimonies agree that John and Jo stayed in the same bedroom at the Rabbit Creek house.

Ida

For men and women's roles in nineteenth-century married life: Coontz, *The Social Origins of Private Life*, 34–35, 269–71. On the average number of children for Colorado homesteading women: Nugent, 149–50. It was evidently Ida's decision not to have more children. According to Babe Boyle, "John would have liked more kids." Voluntary motherhood advocates opposed contraception, finding it unnatural and immoral; they argued

that it led to sexual promiscuity. On this movement: L. Gordon, "Voluntary Motherhood."

Women of Ida's age group usually knew little about mechanical birth control devices or how to get them. In the late 1800s, the advertising of contraceptives was illegal in the United States (Coontz, *The Social Origins of Private Life*, 281; L. Gordon, *Woman's Body*, 65). Women often thought that having sex purely for pleasure, without the possibility of conception, was wrong. When a Victorian couple wanted to stop having children, the cessation of sexual relations, mutually agreed upon, was the usual course. The other most common anticonception method was coitus interruptus, which required the man's cooperation and self-control and was not always to be counted on: see D. Smith, "Family Limitation." On women's knowledge of sex in the nineteenth century: Degler, 414–19.

Two people we talked to used the expression "beaten down" to describe Ida's condition in later life. A relative of Ida's who came to visit from the Midwest used an equestrian metaphor: his aunt had been "ridden hard and put away wet" (DuH).

On divorce in the early twentieth century: Griswold, "Law, Sex, Cruelty, and Divorce" and *Fatherhood in America*. For the 1920 divorce statistic: Allen, 95; see also O'Neill. Ida could have sued for divorce on the grounds of spousal infidelity. Though she evidently chose not to have sex with her husband, by the 1920s denying a man his "conjugal rights" no longer prevented a woman from receiving a divorce. Ida probably did not know the latest legal developments. What she did know was that in divorce settlements the wife came out on the short end, that she and her child often ended up living with relatives (the choice was living in poverty or accepting charity), and that as a divorcée she would face social discrimination.

Josephine

If Jo suffered from polycystic ovary syndrome (see the chap. 10 notes and the article by Jane Brody), she would not have been able to conceive. In any case, she would have known about contraception. A dramatic year for the birth control movement was 1916, the year Jo graduated from high school. We know she read newspapers at the time, where she would have learned about the arrests, the trials, and the imprisonment of birth control advocates, some of whom were acquitted. See L. Gordon, *Woman's Body*, 224–29. On college students' ability to separate sex and reproduction in the 1920s, on the

widespread use of contraception in that decade, and on coeds' belief that using birth control devices gave them more freedom: Fass, 70, 76–78, 360.

The best introductions to the moral climate among college-age youth in the 1920s are in Fass and in D. Smith, "The Dating of the American Sexual Revolution." The quotation on the new woman offering pleasure and companionship rather than marriage and children is from Allen, 89–90.

Babe Boyle's idea that Jo sacrificed her teaching career for John comes from the fact that Jo taught only five of the fifteen years that spanned the Great Depression and the Second World War, a period in which she helped with the ranch. After the war, however, she resumed her annual teaching schedule.

Jo's long association with John is paralleled by her sister Margaret's long attachment to Harry Holden, John's friend. The sisters were born a year apart. Like Josephine, Margaret never married. She remained involved with Harry, yet evidently would not marry him because he was divorced.

The quotation "easy stories drive out complicated ones" is in Rose, 218.

I am indebted to Kay and Tom Quan for providing me with a copy of the "American Women Poets" program. Lamb offered a few brief introductions, but mostly let the poems speak for themselves. Her intent was to illustrate the range of expression and poetic forms employed by American women in the past and in her own day. The poems she chose ranged from canonical pieces by Anne Bradstreet and Emily Dickinson to works by six modern poets of the first half of the twentieth century. She also included a generous sampling of contemporary Colorado and western poets, largely unknown today, as well as two of her own poems.

An Addendum Concerning Buck Elliott

The triangle altered the trajectory of Buck's life. Eva Degney Bradshaw, his former girlfriend on the Laramie, remembered that "Buck was very quiet. He never talked about Jo or his father. He was hurting. But he never talked about it." In his 1974 oral interview, Buck did not mention Josephine by name—as if he wanted to erase her from memory. The interviewer asked him, "If you could live your life over again, would you do it differently?" Buck replied, "Yeah, if I had it to do it over again, I would, yes." Buck told the interviewer that he would have stayed in the cattle business. The interviewer: "Why?" Buck: "Oh, just reasons of my own" (24–25).

It is clear from an entry in Helen's diary that Buck had wanted to stay and "take over the ranch" (January 23, 1941). Instead, he moved to the Laramie River valley in 1941 because Helen disapproved of John and Jo. By leaving

Rabbit Creek, he in effect surrendered his patrimony—literally so when he traded his share in the ranch to Josephine. Buck's close bond with his father was then broken. John, through his last will and testament, prevented Buck from ever becoming the ranch manager. Father and son continued to see each other, but without warmth of feeling on either side. Judy Cass remembered how it was: "From my perspective as a kid, they never spoke to each other. Just business." Don Lamb put it this way: "Buck and his father never got along well in my memory. They'd say hello and eat together. It was torn. It was ripped and never patched and cold air got in. As a kid I never understood that, because me and my dad had a different kind of relationship. They both took it to the grave with them. Buck didn't have a chance to be who he was. John Elliott didn't give him his chance."

Epilogue

The story of the turquoise ring that Jo gave to her favorite (and oldest) niece Mary Rose Wetzler was told to me by Mary Rose's brother Ted Wetzler. Lamb's belief in the power of turquoise owed a great deal to Native American traditions.

Ida's cream pitcher and the serving plate are in the Quans' possession and were (as of this writing), on display in the hotel along with other pieces of the dinner service once used in the roadhouse (also manufactured by Grundy). Josephine's relatives showed me or remembered many of the other objects in the inventories. Pat Burge of Colorado State University's School of Music, Theater, and Dance told me about the Lamb collection of historic clothing and its destruction in the flood.

On the flood of 1904 and the community piano floating down to Bellvue: Watrous, 194–95. Wesley Swan remembered four feet of water in the old hotel, 34–35. On the history of Jo's "square grand" piano (now in Kay Quan's possession): Bell, "Piano Marks Livermore's Past, Present."

According to Kay Quan, Jo kept her Indian artifacts in a large wooden cabinet with glass doors. On her collections and her intention to open a museum: Quan and Glass, the original transcript, 26. Jo's former pupil Derek Roberts remembered the buffalo skull, which she had set up in the entrance hall of the old hotel.

On the background to the Cabinets of Wonder and their emergence: Weschler, 27, 75, 159. Ida Elliott's "Cabinet of Wonder" was her glass display case, with one shelf devoted to snake rattles, another to arrowheads.

On Sylvester Birdsall (and the invention of the keyboard pattern): Swanson,

Fort Collins' Yesterdays, 140–41. For a personal reminiscence of the man: Darnell, 20–21.

I

Most of what I know of the end of John's life comes from memories held by Del Glass's daughter Judy Cass. "Death Calls John Elliott," along with the other articles I mention, appeared in the *Fort Collins Coloradoan* (Sunday, April 2, 1961). For John Elliott's eulogy, see Harrison.

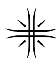
The causes of death of the three ranchers are described in funerary records from the Blythe-Goodwin Mortuary ("Elliott, Mrs. Ida L.," "Elliott, John W.," "Lamb, Miss Josephine A.") and in John Elliott's certificate of death. In the latter document, the doctor who had treated him since 1953 described the rancher's condition as acute and generalized arteriosclerosis. On the circumstances of Josephine's death: John Glass in Glass and Quan, the original transcript, 29; the personal testimonies of Owen Lamb and a woman friend of Jo Lamb. The newspaper from which the front page and other articles are cited was the *Fort Collins Coloradoan* (June 13, 1973). On the requiem and the escorts: "Miss Josephine A. Lamb," funeral program.

Ted Wetzler supplied the columbines. They looked like wild columbines, but were grown in his garden in Fort Collins.

II

Tom Quan remembered the piece of sandstone described in Inventory 9. The stone has disappeared. On the reinterment of Eugene Lamb: the burial archives of Grandview Cemetery, Fort Collins.

SOURCES



Sections

Abbreviations
Oral Testimonies
Secondary Materials
Recordings, Transcripts, Interviews, Lectures
Diaries, Letters, and Notes
Censuses, Legal Documents, Mortuary Records, Public Records

Abbreviations

FCM Fort Collins Museum

LWCA Livermore Woman's Club Archive (Local History Collection, Fort Collins Museum)

USFS United States Forest Service

Oral Testimonies: Individuals Interviewed for the Rabbit Creek Project

Abromski, Stanley
Ahlbrandt, Arlene
Ahlbrandt, Harry
Barker, Gene
Bathory, Donna
Biel, Evelyn
Bolton, Dave
Boyle, Babe (Marian Carson)
Boyle, John (Johnnie)
Bradshaw, Eva Degney
Bragg, Tom
Brechtel, Peggy Lamb
Brinkhoff, Mike
Broome, Stan
Brown, Roy
Burge, Pat

Butler, Jim
Carlyle, Brenda
Carson, Marian (Babe Boyle)
Cass, Bill
Cass, Judy Glass
Cope, Gary
Cope, Tracy
Davis, Arlene Hinsey
Davis, Bob
Denton, Gertrude
Dinkel, Joannie Lamb
Dixson, Howard
Donaldson, Michael
Drake, Florence
Durand, Caroline
Ellerman, Gladys
Elliott, Chris
Elliott, Jim
Elliott, John Lee
Elliott, Judy
Elliott, Phil
Evans, Howard Ensign
Evans, Mary Alice
Frank, Jake
Freitag, Adella Biel
Fullerton, Keith
Gibberson, Jean
Gibbons, Dixie
Goodwin, Jack
Gorshing, Barbara
Hail, Jane
Hansen, Ed
Hansen, Marilyn
Hazlett, Don
Hebbert, Bonnie Cope
Herrling, Duane
Herrling, Sandy
Hickman, Evie
Hodgson, Al
Hohnholtz, Bob
Johnson, Al
Jones, Eric
Judson, C. J.
Keller, Charles
Kerchenfaut, Sue Jesse
Ketcham, Sally
Kniebes, Duane
Kniebes, Susan
Knox, Bill
Kuzniar, Gary
Lamb, Don
Lamb, Linda
Lamb, Owen
Lauridsen, Dwayne
Livingston, Mary Jo
Loper, Ruth Wetzler
Maxwell, Allen
Maxwell, Patricia Boyle
McDanil, Erin
McElwee, Hugh
McLean, Margaret Ann Wetzler
McMurray, Duane
Miller, Jo (Juliana) Sloan
Miller, Lafi
Miller, Reith
Moore, Bob
Moore, Mary Margaret
Moore, Viola
Moss, Opal
Nauta, Lee
Nauta, Sarah
Palm, Sig
Park, Betty K.
Peden, Tom
Penfold, Donna
Purcell, Buck
Quan, Kay
Quan, Tom

Randalan, Everett
Rieux, Jacques
Roberts, Annice Link
Roberts, Derek
Roberts, Evan
Roberts, Ray
Roberts, Ruby
Rule, Walter
Schantz, Ann
Schantz, Richard
Schloo, Marty
Schurr, Leon
Sholine, Ed
Stewart, George
Swan, Richard
Tibbets, Bill
Vessel, Dick
Wagner, James
Wangnild, Bill
Wetzler, Dan
Wetzler, Mary Clare
Wetzler, Ted
Wickersham, Carolyn
Williams, George
Wyant, Patty Lamb

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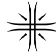

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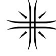

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