

THOMAS F. WALSH: PROGRESSIVE BUSINESSMAN AND
COLORADO MINING TYCOON

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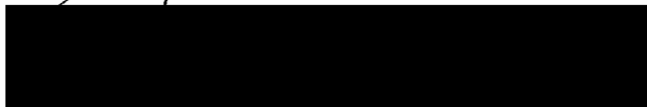
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Thomas F. Walsh: Progressive Businessman

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ABSTRACT

The life of Thomas F. Walsh is presented as an example of a progressive businessman of his time. Walsh was born in Ireland in 1850, and died in Washington, D.C. in 1910.

Walsh came from a common Irish upbringing. He worked as a millwright until emigrating to America at age 19, along with his family. In this country he first worked as carpenter, a skill he had learned as a millwright. After his move to the West in 1871, he also developed an interest in mineral prospecting. Beginning in 1880, in Leadville, Colorado, he devoted his full efforts to mining, enjoying immediate success. He also ventured into smelting.

Walsh suffered financial reverses in the Silver Crash of 1893. He became interested in Western Colorado mining ventures, and moved his family to Ouray in 1896. Later in that year he discovered a rich vein of gold overlooked by others, and developed the highly-productive Camp Bird Mine. He owned it until 1902, earning a personal fortune from both operation and sale, and achieving note for progressive measures to benefit his workers. These included above-average wages, eight-hour working days, and excellent accommodations.

The Walsh family moved to Washington, D.C. in 1897. Eventually they owned a sixty-room mansion and became well-known in the city for their lavish entertainment. Walsh also practiced extensive philanthropy. He later purchased a large estate near Denver, and was often mentioned as a candidate for political office in Colorado. He was never successful in this. In 1906 he made a speech extolling the needs of working Americans, which many believe doomed his Colorado Senate candidacy in that year. Walsh did become a friend and advisor to three U.S. Presidents, and received impressive appointments such as commissioner to the 1899 Paris Exhibition, and president of the National Irrigation Association. He also was a friend and mining advisor to the controversial King Leopold II of Belgium.

Thomas F. Walsh died of cancer on April 8, 1910. While his life is similar in many ways to the those of his peers, it can be distinguished by his personal and business integrity and his great concern for working people. Amid an unrestricted entrepreneurial culture, these characteristics were rare.

This abstract accurately represents the content of the candidate's thesis. I recommend its publication.

Signed

A solid black rectangular box redacting the signature.

Thomas J. Noel

DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to my wife Carol and my daughter Emilie, who have provided the utmost support during the long hours of its preparation. I also dedicate this thesis to my mother, Mary, who was first a great fan of my career as a lawyer, and now is an equally great fan of my second career as a historian.

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I can only mention a small number of the many others who helped me put this large and satisfying project together. In Ouray, Colorado, Ann Hoffman, Executive Director of the Ouray County Historical Society, as well as local authors Doris Gregory and Tom Rosemeyer, led me to resources and reviewed my writings. Carol Ann Rapp, co-editor of Queen of Diamonds, the new edition of Evalyn Walsh McLean's Father Struck It Rich, opened her extensive files so I might benefit from her own hard work on the subject. Walsh cousin Kathleen O'Brien of Worcester, Massachusetts provided the written family history as well as other important documents and family oral traditions. Other Walsh family members who offered contributions and encouragement were Mary and Michael Ryan of Dublin, Ireland, Michael O'Brien of Clonmel, and Joseph Gregory, who is the great-great grandson of Thomas F. Walsh and co-editor of Queen of Diamonds. My fellow students and the staffs of many libraries, museums, and the Library of Congress certainly deserve to be on the list.

Thanks you, all of you.

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INTRODUCTION

It is a sad thing to happen to Colorado. He was always one of the most valuable citizens of this state, generous to a fault, ready to help in any enterprise for Colorado's advancement. His kindness will be remembered by thousands, the people will miss him more than they would any other citizen.

Ten years ago I worked in Washington and found him always ready to help the Colorado delegation. In spite of all his wealth and riches, he had a strong sympathy for the poor and love for the masses. There was no question concerning them but what found Walsh upon the side of the common people.

Colorado Governor John F. Shafroth eulogized Thomas F. Walsh in the April 9, 1910 edition of Denver's *Rocky Mountain News*.¹ Another old friend, former Colorado Governor and U. S. Senator Charles S. Thomas lamented the passing of "one of our most noted mining characters, a tall warm-hearted Irishman of florid complexion, genial to a fault, lovable and generous."² Tom Walsh, as he was known by nearly everyone, passed away the previous evening at his mansion in

¹ "Colorado Grief-Stricken Over Death of Tom Walsh," *Rocky Mountain News*, Denver, 9 April 1910, 1.

² Charles S. Thomas, "A Famous Carpenter," unpublished manuscript, Charles S. Thomas Papers, MSS 626, Box 10, Colo. Hist. Society, Denver, CO.

Washington, D.C. In just over sixty years of life, Walsh had risen from Irish commoner to millionaire businessman and philanthropist, and Colorado's unofficial "man in Washington." In a series of articles in all four of Denver's newspapers and many others nationwide on this and following days, praise was bestowed upon Walsh, as well as detailed reporting on the life and career of a man little known before he achieved mining wealth from the Colorado mountains in 1896. One such article in the *Rocky Mountain News* on the same day was entitled "How Walsh Won Bonanza and Lost Another." A favorite story of family and friends, now told to the 1910 audience, told how in the 1870s a friend offered Walsh an interest in a Black Hills mining prospect. Walsh deferred long enough to ask the advice of mining men he respected. They told him that no gold deposit of any value could possibly exist in that particular type of rock formation. Tom heeded the advice and turned the offer down, thereby passing up an interest in what turned out to be the Homestake, America's richest gold mine. Walsh's daughter Evalyn later mentioned that her father would tell the story out of sheer Irish pride to demonstrate the size of his blunder.³

The story exemplifies how Tom Walsh possessed at least one attribute necessary to succeed in life. Unlike many other disappointed prospectors, Tom

³ Evalyn Walsh McLean with Boyden Sparkes, Father Struck It Rich, (1st ed., London: Faber & faber Ltd., 1936; 2nd ed., Ouray, CO: Bear Creek Pub. Co., 1981, with Intro. By Jack L. Benham; 3rd ed., Franklin, TN: Hillsboro Press, 2000, published under the title of Queen of Diamonds, with Foreword by Joseph Charles Gregory and Epilogue by Carol Ann Rapp), 30-32. Page numbering refers to the 2nd ed.

could learn from experience. One thing he learned was that a miner could suffer far more from what he called “technical prejudices” than from sheer bad luck. A technical prejudice might best be described as a sort of scientific (or mechanical) stubbornness, the clinging to a tightly-held belief that something right in one instance or place must therefore be right everywhere and at all times. Tom was somewhat cautious and conservative compared to many of his contemporaries, but he possessed a keen and open mind coupled with determination. Throughout his career, he would stop to look at rocks others passed by, and fully educate himself on the subject of mining. Walsh was also highly disciplined. He largely abstained from his peers’ social drinking, wanting nothing to cloud his judgment or stand in the way of his dreams. Finally, some once-overlooked rocks led to such fortune that he could tell the story of previous missed opportunity with humor, not anguish. Tom Walsh actually established a gold mine which would challenge the lost bonanza, the Homestake, in longevity and riches.

Tom's was far from the only Western story of an ordinary man's life turned extraordinary by riches from the earth. In many ways it typifies an era in which ready wealth was available to those who worked and studied hard, encountered a little luck or good timing along the way, and/or possessed a manner with people that led to acceptance and influence. Tom had all of these on his side, to one degree or another. He rose from common origins overseas, and lacked higher education, but so did a number of his contemporaries. New American millionaires of the

“Gilded Age,” the late-nineteenth century’s period of unprecedented wealth and extravagance, often used their riches to live in mansions full of art work and other finery, and raised their children to expect luxuries. They also engaged in philanthropy for those less fortunate, as would Walsh.

Most significantly, in an era in which one could run a business in just about any manner he or she saw fit, Tom Walsh ran his with both skill and integrity. The skill is demonstrated in that he both achieved and maintained his fortune. The integrity shows in honest dealings with his peers. Walsh did not abuse the trust of business partners and investors, and ran his mining business as just that, rather than as the highly speculative (and often corrupt) “mining stock business” run by many others of his time.⁴ More importantly, as the Colorado governor was quick to note in his eulogy, it carried an understanding and appreciation for the vital role of the common man and woman, not just as objects of charity from a distance, but also as employees and fellow citizens. In this the Republican Walsh was not alone, for his friend, President Theodore Roosevelt, and fellow Progressives, espoused similar views. However, they fell into a minority among prominent party members of the time, and also among American business leaders. Roosevelt could use his considerable political skills to accomplish many of his Progressive goals, while still

⁴ See Letter William P. Dunham to Thomas F. Walsh dated 23 February 1903, Box 77, Evalyn Walsh McLean Collection, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C. (hereafter referred to as the “Walsh Papers”), which relates to Walsh’s well-known refusal to be in the “mining stock business.” See discussion in Richard H. Peterson, The Bonanza Kings, (Lincoln: Univ. of Nebraska Press, 1971), 87-114.

maintaining his popularity in his largely conservative party.

Walsh, as an employer, had the opportunity to put his progressive ideas to work and directly benefit his laborers. They received above-average wages, and living accommodations vastly superior to those provided any other mine workers. As a result, his famous Camp Bird mine was strike-free in an era of great labor unrest. Even the Western Federation of Labor, ready to attack just about any mine owner, paid little attention to Walsh's operations and even complimented him on occasion.⁵ Despite frequent mention and even nomination, Walsh never won a high elected office, and there is strong evidence that he was not particularly motivated to do so. He was often pressured into running by friends and colleagues, and at times even seemed attracted by the public service aspects of holding political office. In the end, other influences, such as desire to be close to family and aversion to the "seamy" side of the elective process, always overrode any political dreams. When Walsh achieved wealth and prominence, he did, nonetheless, know how to use his high position and warm personality to attain considerable influence in both the business and political spheres. He also remembered old friends, and also took care of members of his extended family, in America and Ireland, who were less fortunate than he was.

The purpose of this thesis is to present the life of Thomas F. Walsh as an

⁵ *The Miners' Magazine*, Western Federation of Miners, Denver, Archives, University of Colorado at Boulder Libraries, 1896-1902, Vols. 3-11.

example of a Progressive businessman of his time. To tell his story and establish a basis for the conduct of both his business and personal life, it is necessary to explore his origins, experiences, influences, choices, motives, and opportunities (including those missed, ignored and taken).

CHAPTER 1

ORIGINS IN IRELAND

It would be the good fortune of Thomas Francis Walsh to live in at least a few of the world's beautiful locales. The first of these was his birthplace. Lisronagh, County Tipperary, Ireland was, and remains, a small crossroads settlement just north of the principal town of Clonmel, which is located along the north bank of the river Suir as it flows along the county's southern boundary. A nineteenth century writer, raised in the area, describes how "from the very bank of the river rose a long, low line of hills, and behind this another and a higher range, and still further back, a third and loftier. Beyond the third the settled order ceased, and was succeeded by a chaotic confusion of heather heights which rose and fell for many a good long Irish mile, and finally once more marshaled themselves into order and descended in long undulating lines down to the ocean."⁶ From Lisronagh it is easy to envision what the writer had in mind. One can look south over Clonmel and the Suir and into the rolling, green Comeragh Mountains of County Waterford. To the west these heights progress through the Knockmealdowns and finally to the

⁶ Richard Dowling, quoted in Sean O'Donnell, Clonmel 1840-1900, Anatomy of an Irish Town, (Dublin: Geography Publications, n.d.), 1.

Galties, among Ireland's highest ranges at 3,000 feet. To the northwest rises the Rock of Cashel, an ancient fortress and ecclesiastical seat, and beyond that the Silvermine Range spanning the northerly part of the county. However, to the east rises the summit which defines the whole region. One single round mountain, Slievenamon, dominates the view with its 2,500 foot summit, home to many an ancient hero of Irish mythology. In the middle of all these heights lies the Golden Vale of Tipperary, one of the most fertile regions in Ireland, if not Europe, with Lisronagh on its eastern fringe. It has been called a land "so fertile that if a stick were thrown into a field at night, it would grow up out of sight by morning."⁷

With such a common name as Walsh, it is difficult to trace the actual arrival of Tom's ancestors into the region. Today the fourth most common surname in Ireland, Walsh carries a non-Irish origin. It denotes "Welsh" (which is how it is actually pronounced in Ireland), or "Welshman," bespeaking an ancestor or ancestors who most likely followed in the wake of the great twelfth century invasion from the east, led by Normans based in Wales.⁸

According to family tradition, written down by a Massachusetts cousin of Tom's, his great-grandfather, Michael, and grandfather, John, worked hard to clear an abandoned, rocky field on the outskirts of Clonmel. They had bought the land

⁷ Patrick C. Power, "Slievenamon in Myth and Legend," Slievenamon in Song & Story, Sean Nugent, ed., (Waterford: Telecom Eireann, n.d.), 13-16; Breandan O hEithir, "The West of Ireland", Discovering Britain and Ireland, (Washington, DC: Natl. Geog. Society, 1985), 414.

⁸ Edward MacLysaght, The Surnames of Ireland, (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, n.d.), 296.

"for a song" with the intention of converting it into a farm. The previous occupants had been itinerant gypsies, using the land as an occasional campsite. This was at the time of the American Revolution, when the best the Catholic Irish could hope for was to find such an abandoned parcel. Indeed, during the eighteenth century the Irish themselves owned only one-tenth of their land, and no Catholic could be a physician, a soldier, or a lawyer, or openly practice his/her religion. The Protestant English overlords controlled nearly all the best land. Not long after the American Revolution, in 1798, the Irish would once again try their own revolution, only to see it swiftly put down, and more rights taken away from them. It appears that none of Tom Walsh's ancestors joined in any such armed rebellion. Like the majority of their Catholic neighbors, they seem to have been content to work hard, avoid trouble, and make the best of a less than ideal situation.⁹

In the case of Michael and John, hard work paid off in the form of a flourishing farm, praised in a family history as one of the finest in the county. This situation would have placed the Walsh family ahead of the vast majority of Catholic Irish for their time. John inherited the land from his father, and added a passenger ferry across the Suir. This brought even more family income, for a steady clientele needed to reach the growing town of Clonmel with its churches, market place and county fairs. John Walsh married, and two daughters were born, Catherine in 1808

⁹ Margaret Kennedy, "The Family History," (Worcester, MA: unpubl., n.d.), 1; Dennis Clark, Hibernia America: The Irish and Regional Cultures, (New York: Greenwood Press, 1986), 4.

and Brigid in 1811. A son Peter was born the next year. A fourth child, Tom's father Thomas K. Walsh, followed in 1820. The son showed a talent for music, and John could afford to buy him a violin.¹⁰

Tom's father was born into a rural Irish society which was beginning to experience a decline in its quality of life, leading to the very dark events in the next generation. For a while the area around Clonmel, as well as other parts of Ireland, actually benefited from agricultural developments supported by the British. Wheat and other grains grown in the Golden Vale of Tipperary could be exported to Britain and the Continent, with prices protected by the British Corn Laws, a form of tariff. During the Napoleonic Wars, in the first two decades of the nineteenth century, the high demand for agricultural products no doubt led to the relative prosperity of men like Michael and John Walsh. However, with the end of the wars, demand declined, and with it the income of Irish farmers. Discontent over having to put up with the English remained, spurred on by increasing poverty. The result was sporadic violence. Another major reason for the rebellion was the 1801 Act of Union, which abolished the Irish Parliament and put rule squarely under the government in London.¹¹

¹⁰ Kennedy, "The Family History," 2-3. Birth record for Peter Walsh is from the inscription on the family memorial erected in 1902 by Thomas F. Walsh, Kilmurray Cemetery, Ballyneale Parish, County Tipperary, Ireland. Birth record for Thomas K. Walsh is from the burial records of Mount Olivet Cemetery, Denver, CO.

¹¹ Emily Hahn, Fractured Emerald: Ireland, (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Co., Inc., 1971), 216-229.

The Walsh family once again seems to have avoided any involvement in violence. As long as relations were peaceful, the presence of soldiers could actually be an economic boon. Clonmel hosted an army post, which bought supplies from local merchants, and even contributed to the area's musical and sporting events.¹² The two Walsh daughters married two brothers named Power, Brigid to Laurence and Catherine to James. The Power families lived in the village of Nine Mile House, located to the northeast of Clonmel, near the eastern flank of Slievenamon. Here they lived well for some time, raising fine horses for sale to the British soldiers and gentry. Their home, called Rock View for its panorama of the Rock of Cashel, still stands.¹³

A Childhood With Few Advantages

At some point after he grew to manhood, Thomas K. Walsh took up farming in a rural area called Baptistgrange, just outside Lisronagh. The prosperity of his father and grandfather, which is described in the family history, seems not to have followed him. He is said to have owned, but probably rented, as much as sixty acres, raising the family above simple peasant status. Even this size of holding may be an exaggeration, for it would have placed Walsh in the top seven percent of all

¹² O'Donnell, Clonmel 1840-1900, 29; Kennedy, "The Family History," 2.

¹³ Kennedy, "The Family History," 2.

Irish farmers of the time.¹⁴ It might represent a maximum size held at one time, some of which was later lost. The farm may well have been part of the domain of Sir John Bagwell, the largest landowner in the Lisronagh area. A member of the British Parliament, Bagwell was, for a rich Protestant, rather enlightened as to the plight of his Irish tenants, especially after 1840s unrest was directed toward his estates and employees.¹⁵

Thomas K. Walsh married Bridget Scully, who came from Ballyneale Parish, located to the east near the town of Carrick-on-Suir.¹⁶ At the time the two started their young family, Thomas' farming operations may have still profited from their location in the Golden Vale, but this situation did not last long. In the short time it took for five Walsh children to be born, Irish fortunes took a bizarre turn for the worst. On April 2, 1850, young Tom was welcomed into this troubled world by Thomas and Bridget; together with John, age six; Michael, four; Mary (or Maria),

¹⁴ Interview with Mary Ryan, Dublin, Ireland, 6 July 2000. Mary is the great-granddaughter of Margaret Walsh Healy, half-sister of Thomas F. Walsh. See Hahn, *Fractured Emerald*, 245. Five acres was the average, yet Irish society of the time included a wide range of classes among agricultural tenants and workers. See David Cannadine, *The Rise and Fall of Class in Britain*, (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1999), 87.

¹⁵ O'Donnell, *Clonmel 1840-1900*, 142, 198-201.

¹⁶ Inscription on family memorial, Kilmurray Cemetery. Search of records complied by Bru Boru Heritage Center, Cashel, County Tipperary, Ireland, failed to show a marriage record for Thomas K. Walsh and Bridget Scully in Powerstown Parish, which includes Lisronagh and Baptistgrange (but may not have included Ballyneale Parish). Bridget's origin in Ballyneale Parish, several miles east of Powerstown Parish, is presumed by her burial there.

almost three; and Patrick, one.¹⁷

Ireland in 1850 was a most unpleasant setting for a young boy to enter the world. Irish farmers, who often sold their grain abroad, needed something else for their own sustenance. The potato thrived in Irish soil, and contained enough nutrients to support an entire family with the assistance of little else. Potato blights had previously broken out in Ireland and other parts of Europe, with short-term ill-effects, but nothing more. However, Ireland was the land most dependent on the potato. A blight which took much of the crop in 1845 was followed by near-total failures the next two years. The year of Tom's birth is considered the last year of the potato famine. Moreover, in 1846 British free-trade interests had succeeded in getting Parliament to abolish the protective Corn Laws. Soon Irish grains could not compete in the world market with products from the Continent and elsewhere. The two firm legs which supported Irish farm life had been kicked out almost at once. The potato famine in time would kill more than one million Irish and send at least another million scurrying for new homes overseas.¹⁸

Tom Walsh's family and their Tipperary neighbors fared better than many.

¹⁷ Ages are taken from dates of baptism found in Baptismal Record of Powerstown Parish, County Tipperary, Ireland. It is presumed baptism followed shortly after birth in each case. Thomas F. Walsh was baptized 28 April 1850. His date of birth is 2 April 1850 per McLean, Father Struck It Rich, 27, and other sources. Interestingly, obituaries of Walsh found in Denver and other American newspapers give the same day and month, but in 1851.

¹⁸ Hahn, Fractured Emerald, 246-259; Christine Kinealy, The Great Calamity, The Irish Famine, 1845-1852, (Dublin: Gill & Macmillan, Ltd., 1994), 1-38, 297-300.

By one source, "On the whole, the famine was not too severe in this part of Tipperary. Anyone who had money could buy meal, and only in the mountain districts was there real want or starvation."¹⁹ The great majority of deaths occurred in the poorer lands to the north and west, in counties such as Clare, Galway, Donegal and Mayo. The Walsh family probably suffered no famine-related deaths, yet they and their region still felt the effects of the resulting economic devastation which struck the entire island. Moreover, personal tragedy followed for them in the next few years. When Tom was two, within the course of a few months, the family lost his younger sister Alice, aged ten months, and Bridget, his mother. The cause of their deaths is not known, and they appear too late to be part of the famine. Tom's mother passed away October 12, 1852 at the age of thirty-three. She was laid to rest at Kilmurray Cemetery, in the Ballyneale Parish, with a simple grave marker. Tom, later in his life, would make certain that his mother and other family members were honored with a much more impressive monument.²⁰

The events of the late 1840s brought more fighting, and Clonmel was one of many Irish towns to see an unsuccessful armed insurrection against the British authority. A John Walsh who was arrested for fighting in the town in November

¹⁹ Cait Ní Mhannín, "The Famine Around Slievenamon," Slievenamon in Song & Story, Nugent, ed.

²⁰ Inscription on the family memorial, Kilmurray Cemetery, "In Memory of Bridget Scully Walsh of Baptistgrange. Died 12 Oct 1852, Age 33 years. Erected by Her affectionate Son Thomas F. Walsh of Washington, D.C., USA."

1848 was not Tom's grandfather, for John Walsh the grandfather had passed away earlier in the year at age 79, nor most likely any close relative.²¹ However, one story does raise the possibility of violence against the family in the year of Tom's birth. British soldiers are said to have accused the horse-breeding Powers of Nine Mile House of cheating them. They sought to evict the family from Rock View, and in the ensuing melee, James Power was killed and his mother died of a heart attack. The Powers in short order emigrated to Worcester, Massachusetts, where their descendants live to this day. The story of the fight with the British remains an unsubstantiated tale, not believed by many in the family and not included in the written family history. Even if not true in this instance, it is a tale which accurately describes the degree of ethnic animosity and violence of the times. It could have happened, even if not to the Power family in the manner described.²²

What the family history does tell is more probable, namely that fifteen family members had already booked passage when James was suddenly stricken with an illness. Such grand plans could not be changed, and so the day following his funeral a grieving family now of fourteen set sail for America. There was

²¹ O'Donnell, Clonmel 1840-1900, 153, 158. Date of death for John Walsh, grandfather of Thomas F. Walsh, on 2 September 1848 taken from the inscription on the family memorial, Kilmurray Cemetery.

²² The tale of the fight with the British soldiers, passed down orally in the family, was told by Kathleen O'Brien of Worcester, MA, cousin of Thomas F. Walsh, in a telephone interview on 24 September 2000, in which she stated that she and many other family members doubt the tale's veracity.

certainly nothing unusual about an Irish family emigrating in this the last year of the famine, when persons of all walks of life sought a better life elsewhere. Tom Walsh, who grew quite close to the Powers, was a man of few prejudices, and while he was a proud Irishman, he seems to have borne no particular ill-will to the English. Indeed, later in life an admiring reporter would pay him the "compliment" of saying that his personal dignity and manner of speech gave him the appearance of being English, not Irish. Tom's reaction is not recorded.²³

The family of Thomas K. Walsh remained in Baptistgrange, at least for a while. Eighty years later, when Tom's daughter Evalyn wrote of her own life and that of her father, she knew little of his family at this time. She describes Thomas K., the grandfather she never knew, as a farmer who was popular for his violin playing.²⁴ This talent must have helped break the gloom of the times. Thomas K. remarried, and in time Tom received two younger half-sisters, Kate and Margaret.²⁵ Young Tom most likely grew up in a typical Irish farm cottage, mud-walled and white-washed with a thatched roof, holding a large family under what would seem, at least by our standards, cramped conditions. Hard manual farm work, church and school probably took up nearly all his waking hours. If any time for leisure

²³ "Pretty Home of Thomas Walsh in Massachusetts," *Denver Times*, 26 August 1903, 1 (from the *Boston Herald*); Kennedy, "The Family History," 2-3.

²⁴ McLean, *Father Struck It Rich*, 27.

²⁵ Interview with Mary Ryan, 6 July 2000.

remained, it must have been spent at church-related social events or fairs.²⁶

Education and Training

Tom did receive as good an education as could be expected for the time and for his place in society. Most area schools were run by the Catholic Church, with endowment by Catholic merchants who wanted those less fortunate to receive a religious education. Besides religion, the schools taught the other "3 Rs", together with some attention to handcrafts, which may merely refer to girls learning to knit and crochet. In Tom's case, the "4 Rs: readin' ritin', 'rithmetic and religion," were not as important as a fifth "R," for "riches." It is doubtful that Tom would have attended the Protestant-dominated "public" schools, whose pupils largely came from the well-to-do. One story by Tom, possibly apocryphal, is the only one passed on of school days in Ireland. "I knew when I was a boy that some day I would be rich, and that my riches would come out of the earth. So when a mere lad going to an Irish school with the children of the poor families of Tipperary, I took great interest in the study of geology, of rocks and soil, and one day when the teacher had been away and came back bringing a block of granite for us to look at and study I felt I had come into my own."²⁷

²⁶ Information on the lives of Irish farm families of the time, and their society, can be found in O'Donnell, *Clonmel 1840-1900*, 87. Evalyn described the farmhouse from a return trip in 1899, see McLean, *Father Struck It Rich*, 74.

²⁷ *Denver Post*, 9 April 1910, 2; O'Donnell, *Clonmel 1840-1900*, 41-42.

Tom's formal education was over by age twelve, when he began his apprenticeship for what must have seemed his life's work, pursuit of the millwright's trade in Clonmel. That he received the apprenticeship was something of a privilege, evidence that Thomas K. Walsh was at least a farmer of sufficient means to afford the fee. He must have recognized something special in his son, providing him a rare opportunity for an Irish farm boy to rise into the skilled trades. Tom worked for, and lived with, a prominent Quaker family named Grubb. By all accounts he enjoyed the work and the benevolence of his host family. For the first time, he encountered the working world and began to form lasting opinions as to treatment of laborers. He may have been exposed to what were liberal ideas for the times. In 1844, when the great reformer Daniel O'Connell had come to Clonmel to speak on repeal of the Act of Union, he was met at the edge of town by its artisans. The millwrights led the peaceful yet swelling mass of humanity, which proceeded into town undeterred by a heavy rain. O'Connell was a dynamic figure who failed in his repeal mission, but did succeed in getting Catholics the vote. His supporters among the millwrights may well have later become Tom Walsh's co-workers and mentors.²⁸

²⁸ Interview with Mary Ryan, 6 July 2000; O'Donnell, Clonmel 1840-1900, 115; Hahn, Fractured Emerald, 236-249.

Thoughts of Leaving

The millwright's trade, with its carpentry skills, was a line of work one could pick up and take to a new location, even to a new country. Still, Tom Walsh could reasonably have remained in Clonmel. He had a job in a time of high national unemployment, his work experiences had been positive, he was better educated and trained than the average Irish youth, and his region, while buffeted by the post-famine hard times, was better off than many counties of Ireland. Still, there was no escaping the rancor, which often turned to violence, in mid-nineteenth century Ireland. It fell heavily on tenant farmers and laborers, and Tom's father and many of their friends and relatives made their living in this fashion. Unemployment was highest among agricultural workers. Between 1858 and 1870 close to 15,000 tenant families were evicted in Ireland. In such an environment, even from the rather detached position of a town resident and millwright, life could not have been pleasant.²⁹

Typical of the times was a widely-noted incident in 1868 at Ballycohey, a small settlement near the town of Tipperary, northwest of Clonmel. A less-than-popular landlord named William Scully sought to evict tenants, not the first time he

²⁹ McLean, Father Struck It Rich, 27-28; Homer E. Socolofsky, Landlord William Scully, (Lawrence, KS: The Regents Press of Kansas), 50.

had done so. This time the tenants and their supporters were ready, and planned an ambush for Scully and the constables who supported him. In the melee that followed, Scully was seriously injured and narrowly escaped with his life. His steward and a subconstable were killed. An exception to the rule of Protestant ownership, Scully came from a long-standing Irish Catholic aristocratic family, although he himself had left the church. However, tenant animosity knew bounds of neither religion nor ethnicity, and similar incidents were increasingly common. Ballycohey was much on the minds of the British Parliament when it passed the Irish Land Act of 1870, extending more rights to tenant farmers.³⁰

William Scully was already planning his alternatives, and had purchased large tracts in America. Eventually his main focus of land ownership would shift across the Atlantic, and he would become, for a time, one of the largest landowners in his new country. This ownership also brought an enhanced reputation as a landlord, compared to his previous role in Ireland. To establish residency and citizenship, William Scully purchased a grand residence in an affluent neighborhood of Washington, D.C. Eighteen-year-old Tom Walsh, working at his millwright's trade in Clonmel, no doubt heard of the incident at Ballycohey, and may well have considered it one more factor weighing against a future in Ireland. At the time he could not have imagined that in just over thirty years' time he would be William

³⁰ Socolofsky, Landlord William Scully, 121-130.

Scully's Washington neighbor.³¹

The agitation over matters such as Ballycohey also led to the formation of the Irish Land League. Founded in 1879 by Charles Stewart Parnell and Michael Davitt, the Land League further pursued (by political and sometimes violent means) what Irish tenants had long sought, often referred to as the "3Fs": fair rent, fixity of tenure (that is, greater security from evictions) and fair sale. Eventually the main mission was to rid Ireland of landlords altogether. Tom's older brother John became involved in the Land League, and by his death in 1903 had seen many changes. At this time over 60,000 former tenants had purchased their holdings (although it is not known if John Walsh was among them). In another eleven years, sixty-two percent of Irish farmers owned their lands, with many more acres soon to change hands.³² However, Tom Walsh, living in the poor and strife-ridden Ireland of the late 1860s, not only could not see this far ahead, but harbored more grandiose plans anyway.

These plans included America, and other members of Walsh family held the same interest. They were still in touch with the Powers, living in Massachusetts. According to Evalyn, the pivotal moment came in 1865 when her uncle Michael left

³¹ Socolofsky, Landlord William Scully, 128; letter Mary Sawyer to Thomas F. Walsh dated 23 May 1899, Box 9, Walsh Papers. It is not known if William Scully and Bridget Scully Walsh were related.

³² Obituary of John Walsh, *The Nationalist*, Clonmel, Ireland, 24 June 1903, 3. See Irish Land league information in Hahn, Fractured Emerald, 271-273; also K. Theodore Hoppen, Ireland Since 1800: Conflict and Conformity, 2d ed., (New York: Longman, 1999) 56, 101-104

for the American West to join the army and fight Indians.³³ Tom's older brothers and sister may not have enjoyed his advantages. Maria remained unmarried and may have thought prospects for a husband were better across the ocean. Ireland at that time was not lacking in single young men, but because most of them were very poor and without land, they often remained life-long bachelors.³⁴ For Tom, even with family persuasion, it probably came down to the vision of that great granite boulder, and the fact that Ireland held few of the mineral riches of his dreams. Even to the extent it did, the crown owned all minerals. Most of the fruits of mining labor would pass to Queen Victoria, not the miner. In America, on the other hand, a miner might find and keep a fortune³⁵

In 1869 Tom set out for America. Patrick had preceded him, and Maria left with Tom as did Thomas K. The father, aged forty-nine, must have felt the same urge as the children, and he was now estranged from his second wife.³⁶ John, the oldest child, twenty-five and recently married, stayed behind, possibly to take over and run his father's farm. Kate and Margaret also remained, in the care of their

³³ McLean, Father Struck It Rich, 28.

³⁴ Hoppen, Ireland Since 1800, 106.

³⁵ See discussion in Joseph J. Thorndike, Jr., The Very Rich, A History of Wealth, (New York: American Heritage Pub. Co., Inc., 1976), 10, as to why this was a prime motivator for immigrants to enter the American mining business.

³⁶ *Denver Post*, 9 April 1910, 1; Interview with Mary Ryan; telephone interview 29 August 2001 with Michael O'Brien, Clonmel, Ireland, grandson of Kate Walsh Shea, half-sister of Thomas F. Walsh. See Letter John Healy to Thomas F. Walsh dated 21 July 1904, Box 9, Walsh Papers, which establishes that Tom's stepmother died in 1903. Her first name is not known.

mother. It was not unusual for Irish emigrant families to leave behind young children, sometimes with the intention that they would be sent to America when grown. At any rate, the oldest and two youngest Walsh children lived out their lives in Ireland. Family letters after the turn of the century find Kate Walsh Shea and her husband living on the old family farm, with John and his family next door. Kate outlived the others by many years, dying around 1951. Margaret and her husband, John Healy, lived in Boherbue, County Cork. Margaret passed away in 1894.³⁷

³⁷ Obituary of John Walsh, *The Nationalist*, Clonmel, Ireland, 24 June 1903, 3. John Walsh died near Fethard, a larger town located just north of Lisronagh. John married Catherine Burke on 10 September 1868 per Marriage Record, Powerstown Parish. Birth records for the children of John and Catherine Walsh beginning in 1875 are recorded in the Fethard Parish. Letter Kate Shea to her brother Thomas F. Walsh dated 15 November 1904, Box 1, Walsh Papers, establishes that she continued to live in Baptistgrange. Letter Annie Healy to Thomas F. Walsh dated September 29, 1903, Box 9, Walsh Papers, states that her mother, Margaret Walsh Healy, died in 1894. This letter and subsequent letters from John Healy were sent from Boherbue, County Cork, Ireland. Kate Walsh Shea died approximately 1951 per telephone interview with Michael O'Brien, her grandson. Letter John Healy to Thomas F. Walsh dated 21 July 1904, Box 9, Walsh Papers, states that Kate "...is married in the old farm where you were all reared....," and that John's family is next door.

CHAPTER 2

TO AMERICA, AND COLORADO

A Supportive Family in Worcester

Tom, his father and his sister, traveled in steerage and landed at the port of Boston. At some point after that, Tom left the rest of the family. While Evalyn wrote that Tom, Maria and their father settled in Worcester, Massachusetts, the tradition of the family in that city is that only Tom lived with them.³⁸ The others probably headed straight for the Colorado gold fields. This is an early indication of Tom's level of prudence and caution, choosing the better employment opportunities and life with American relatives in Worcester. Gold could wait while he got his feet on the ground and became accustomed to his vast new homeland. He arrived with \$50 in his pocket.³⁹ If Tom missed the benevolence of the Grubb family of Clonmel, he found a more-than-suitable replacement in his aunts and cousins of Worcester. He lived with his Aunt Bridget Power's family in a Worcester "three-decker," a typical three-story city residence of the time in which the many members of an Irish-American family were housed. His cousins Catherine, Joanna and Sarah

³⁸ Kennedy, "The Family History," 16.

cleaned up the young Irishman, taught him how to dress, and instructed him in the many expectations of his new community.⁴⁰ He would never forget their many kindnesses, years later referring to them as “my three sweethearts.”⁴¹ He also recalled, “I worked at my trade in Worcester getting \$3.50 a day. In Ireland a millwright is also a carpenter. I went to live with my relatives, among whom were young men and women. They were Christian people. On Sunday they took me to church and through their influence I joined the Father Matthew Abstinence society. While other young carpenters were drinking whiskey on Saturday nights I was at home with my cousins or calling on friends. God has been good to me since I came to America.”⁴²

Tom seems to have held several different jobs in Worcester, starting at the bottom like many an immigrant. Still, he demonstrated the tenacity for which he would become well-known, no doubt impressing others in the process. Work in the city’s sewers eventually led to a sewer contractor’s position. Finally his millwright’s experience brought carpentry work.⁴³

³⁹ *Denver Post*, 10 April 1910, 1.

⁴⁰ Kennedy, “The Family History,” 16.

⁴¹ See letters Thomas F. Walsh to Tim Kennedy dated 17 December 1904 and 5 September 1908, Box 9, Walsh Papers.

⁴² *Denver Post*, 9 April 1910, 3.

⁴³ *Denver Times*, 4 October 1901,

Only a few years after the Civil War, the Irish as a whole were a despised group of newcomers in a nation yet to see its greatest influx of immigration. Catholics in a Protestant-dominated nation, they were different and disrespected. The Irish draft riots in New York during the Civil War were not forgotten in northeastern U.S., despite the fact that the “fighting Irish” had, in huge numbers, served the Union cause with distinction. However, Worcester was already a very Irish town, and Tom found himself in a prominent local ethnic group with roots dating back to well before the potato famine.⁴⁴ “Irish need not apply” signs were common in the Eastern U.S., yet, if this Massachusetts city had them during Tom Walsh’s stay, they were the exception rather than the rule. He seems to have always held a job. He had his extended family and many friends. Once again, why not stay?

The Territory of Colorado

Why indeed? His family in Colorado probably told him of wealth from mining, even if they themselves had not found it, together with job opportunities in another American locale where the Irish could achieve respect. After a nearly two-year stay in Worcester, Tom headed west, feeling his \$300 in savings was sufficient

⁴³ Morris H. Cohen, “Worcester’s Ethnic Groups, A Bicentennial View,” Worcester People and Places, Ch. V, (Worcester: Worcester Bicentennial Commission, 1976), 7, 13-14; Lorraine Michele Laurie, The Island That Became a Neighborhood, A History of Green Island in Worcester, Massachusetts, 1826-1985, (Worcester, self-published, 1985), 1-7.

to establish himself in Colorado.⁴⁵ He had learned that the new rail line, the Colorado Central, near Golden, Colorado needed carpenters to build bridges.

Tom Walsh arrived in the Territory of Colorado in 1871, at age 21. The white man had been flocking to Colorado, in varying numbers, since 1858, and the number one reason was gold. The so-called Pikes Peak Gold Rush was initially centered on the new settlement of Denver, located on the South Platte River to the east of Golden. Here placer, or streambed, gold had been found in just enough quantities to whet the appetites of men fleeing the recession ravaging the East in the late 1850s. Streams flowing down from the mountains had created this type of gold deposit, and soon gold seekers were flocking into the nearby heights to seek richer ores. Central City's boom had begun in 1859, followed by such famed mountain mining towns as Idaho Springs, Georgetown, Fairplay and Leadville (or Oro City). Early booms waned in many areas, usually because the richest ores located closest to the surface were soon exhausted. After the Civil War, the pursuit of riches from the earth was rejuvenated as many miners-turned-soldiers returned to mining and technology improved to assist them. New smelting processes meant lower-grade ores could be turned into the refined product, and they could also be processed in Colorado as opposed to the far-away places once required.⁴⁶

All of this meant Colorado's transportation system needed to improve.

⁴⁴ *Denver Post*, 10 April 1910, 1.

Denver, the territory's biggest town, was frantic to get a railroad. There was one major obstacle. To the west lay the Continental Divide with some of the loftiest peaks in America. Surveying this situation, the builders of the first transcontinental railroad chose the lower route through Wyoming. It appeared Cheyenne could eclipse Denver as a transportation center on the eastern edge of the Rockies. Other lines might bypass the new city as well, possibly going to the south and following the Arkansas River Valley. Then Denver was shocked to discover another threat to its supremacy much closer to home, in nearby Golden. The nearest rail connection was with the Union Pacific in Cheyenne, but while the Denver city fathers pushed for such a line, Golden's boosters called attention to the fact that their town lay just as close to Wyoming, and closer to the rich mines of Idaho Springs and Central City. Led by William A.H. Loveland, a promoter, mine owner, and politician, Golden pushed ahead with the Colorado Central Railroad, headed for a direct link with Wyoming. Meanwhile, a rival of Loveland's, former territorial governor John Evans, together with such early Denver business leaders as Jerome Chaffee and David Moffat (later a close friend of Tom Walsh), pushed the city's own line in competition with the Colorado Central. The Denverites won the race, and their Denver Pacific line rolled its first locomotive into the city from Cheyenne in June 1870. By August, Denver had a second line when the Kansas Pacific arrived from

⁴⁶ McLean, *Father Struck It Rich*, 28; James E. Fell, Jr., *Ores to Metals, The Rocky Mountain Smelting Industry*, (Lincoln: Univ. of Nebraska Press, 1979, 1-75.

the East.⁴⁷

Undaunted, Loveland and his supporters continued to promote the Colorado Central. The line to the north eventually linked into the Denver Pacific near Fort Collins, while another line connected Golden directly with Denver. More importantly, this railroad was in a position to strike west. It ventured up Clear Creek Canyon toward Loveland's dream of a Continental Divide crossing at Berthoud Pass. That vision was not to be, due to the high altitude and the steep grades required to master it. Still, the Colorado Central did eventually reach the rich camps of Central City and Georgetown.⁴⁸ Thus, in its early years it created opportunity for the talents of young carpenter like Tom Walsh. Taking the iron rail into the mountains demanded many bridges and trestles. Tom was kept busy for about two years, and probably could have stayed for many more. However, like many another young immigrant to the West, he finally caught "mining fever", something he never lost. The stay in Golden, as in Worcester, was short-lived.⁴⁹

In 1873, Walsh followed his first gold rush to southwestern Colorado. However, as would be his strategy for some time to come, work with wood sustained him, while work in the ground sought that added "bonus." He made the

⁴⁷ Carl Ubbelohde, Maxine Benson and Duane A. Smith, A Colorado History, 7th ed., (Boulder: Pruett Pub. Co., 1995), 41-122.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 118; Thomas J. Noel, "All Hail the Denver Pacific: Colorado's First Railroad," *Colorado Magazine*, 1973.

⁴⁹ McLean, Father Struck It Rich, 28.

town of Del Norte his center of activity, building during the winter, prospecting in the warmer months. Riches did not follow, and in another year Tom returned to the Denver area. However, it is interesting to speculate on what might have been had he stayed. Del Norte itself was not famous as a mining camp so much as a jumping-off place. In time it would be virtually surrounded by some of the classic metal finds of that part of Colorado. To the south lay Summitville, where a short-lived nineteenth century bonanza has been eclipsed by a more infamous environmental problem of the next century. To the northwest, a simple man named Nicholas Creede would discover that he was literally sitting on valuable ore, and lend his name to one of the richest silver camps. However, at the time of Tom Walsh's stay, the new excitement lay farther to the west, in the rugged, remote San Juan Mountains.⁵⁰ What would have transpired had Walsh made the acquaintance of men such as Andy Richardson and William Weston? They were among the first to discover and try to work a remote basin of stunning beauty but very elusive riches, located just southwest of where the town of Ouray would be built. Tom might have joined them and arrived at the scene of his greatest success, twenty years earlier. However, without that twenty years of "schooling," he, like so many others, could well have died in obscurity after exhaustive work failed to find pay dirt.

⁴⁹ Ubbelohde, Benson and Smith, A Colorado History, 63-64, 375.

CHAPTER 3

A MISSED OPPORTUNITY IN THE BLACK HILLS

A short stay in Central City, Colorado followed for Tom. The camp still provided riches for some, but not Tom Walsh. Little is known of his time in Central City. He once again combined mining and carpentry. He chose nearby Nevadaville for his home, a small town with many Irish residents. One source has him supervising the construction of some of Central City's principal buildings. The town needed the help, for in both 1873 and the following year it experienced devastating fires.⁵¹

At some point, however, a fabulous story made its way to Central City, just as it was being heard throughout the nation. It was supposed to be a secret, for to let out the word would be in violation of a sacred treaty. The U.S. government was ever wary of the Sioux Indians, and for good reason. Only a decade earlier, this tribe, which possessed some of the world's finest horsemen, had succeeded in closing the Bozeman Trail, a path for white gold-seekers across their hunting grounds in the Wyoming Territory. The resulting Fort Laramie Treaty in 1868 left

⁵¹ *Denver Republican*, 9 April 1910, 3; Robert L. Brown, *Central City and Gilpin County, Then and Now*, (Caldwell, ID: The Caxton Printers, Ltd., 1994), 120, 134-135.

the Sioux their sacred lands in the Black Hills of the Dakota Territory (the “Paha Sapa” in their language), as well as the Powder River Basin of Wyoming. However, this treaty was to suffer the same disrespect as just about any other promise made by the westward-expanding whites. The Grant Administration supported this expansion and wanted to remove all barriers, including those of the human variety.⁵²

Sensing more Sioux troubles on the way, the United States government sent out a military expedition in 1874 for the ostensible purpose of scouting for a new fort. While the Black Hills were still to remain in Sioux hands, at least in theory, this high ground surrounded by plains seemed just the place for a military presence.

As long as the army was scouting the Paha Sapa, why not add a few scientists to study the natural environment of this little-known part of the West? For a commander, who would be a better choice than a brave but flamboyant Civil War hero, who had always professed an interest in science? Lieutenant Colonel George Armstrong Custer (the title “General” had only been a Civil War brevet position), never one to leave the pleasures of life behind, brought along a full military band to inspire the marchers and provide evening concerts as well. The Sioux watched from a distance, although the few direct encounters were peaceful. The scientists were sent out to conduct their investigations, and in no time found specks of a glittering metal in a stream. According to his orders, Custer was to protect such “scientific

⁵² Evan S. Connell, Son of the Morning Star, (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1984), 235-252

findings” with the utmost security. Since Custer and his expedition had to return a considerable distance to Fort Lincoln, (in what is now North Dakota), the commander felt it prudent to send the results of the “study” with a scout to a closer point, Fort Laramie, Wyoming. Before Custer and his men could even catch a glimpse of Fort Lincoln in the distance, prospectors were already outfitting for trips to the Black Hills. The Sioux were understandably indignant. Heavily armed travel in groups became the all-important mode of travel for the gold seekers. Even these suffered attack, sometimes in broad daylight. Sioux warrior Crazy Horse, ever a complex and moody young man, was in a period of mourning over the death of his daughter. He could ease the sorrow through long trips alone into his people’s sacred lands. Somehow, at the same time, gold prospectors turned up dead, always with a trademark arrow shot into the ground between the legs of the victim. Two years later, Crazy Horse, the Sioux hero and conqueror of Custer at the Little Big Horn, lay dead, the victim of a white soldier’s bayonet during an alleged escape attempt. It happened at Fort Robinson, Nebraska, a stop on the route of most Black Hills gold seekers, whose numbers probably included Tom Walsh. The remaining Sioux were shunted off to the same barren reservations to which their more peaceful relatives had already been relegated.⁵³

Tom had followed the trail of Black Hills gold with a number of fellow

⁵³ Connell, *Son of the Morning Star*, 235-252; Robert M. Utley, *Cavalier in Buckskin*, (Norman: Univ. of Okla. Press, 1988), 128-147.

Central City gold seekers, considered by him to be experts in the field of gold mining. Their journey seems to have been uneventful, at least as far as Indian encounters. The tragic tale of the uprooting of the first Americans so Walsh and men like him could aspire to riches is a sometimes forgotten but important historical background to his story. While following in the wake of those who had “removed the red menace,” Tom’s western journeys seem to have been largely devoid of encounters with Indians, hostile or otherwise. On one occasion, while traveling to Rapid City, Indians stampeded the group’s horses, forcing Tom and his companions to walk home.⁵⁴ Evalyn tells of meeting a man years later who recognized Tom as a member of the posse which hunted down the Indian murderers of a minister. Beyond this, no incidents were recorded, and Tom’s statements about the area’s previous inhabitants seem to have been passed down merely as colorful (and perhaps fictional) tales for his children.⁵⁵

Tom first explored in the Custer area, before establishing himself in the famous town of Deadwood. His experiences in the muddy boomtown provided even more material for stories. It was peopled with gentlemen and thieves, heroes and killers, proper ladies and prostitutes. Calamity Jane called him by his first name. He had a partner in a cabin who went crazy, from loneliness, drink, or other reasons, and threatened to kill him. Tom responded by leaping at him and knocking his gun

⁵⁴ *Rocky Mountain News*, 9 April 1910; McLean, Father Struck It Rich, 30; Connell, Son of the Morning Star, 235-253.

away. When told to his children, the story usually ended with the moral that one must meet trouble face to face. Whatever the courage required of him, Tom nonetheless started on a quiet note in Deadwood. He opened a carpentry shop and once again searched for gold on the side. Evalyn and others give him credit for erecting many of the town's trademark false-fronted buildings.⁵⁶

One day in 1876, an old prospector named Smoky Jones needed some carpentry work, and Tom invited him to stay for lunch. A friendship developed, and Smoky stopped by for many future visits as well. By Tom's recollection, under Jones' outer shabbiness, "there dwelt a charming and lovable personality." The old prospector appreciated the gesture of friendship, and soon wanted to share some information. His prospect in the hills looked very promising, and he needed a partner to develop it. Might his carpenter friend be interested? Tom thought about it, and then turned to the advice of those "experts" from Central City who had accompanied him. Their response was ominous. No slate formation could possibly bear gold. Look only for a true fissure vein in granite. Sadly, Tom had to tell Smoky that caution forbade him from entering into the partnership. The friendship probably endured, but Smoky had to seek support elsewhere. As the story goes, he found it, and the result was the richest and longest lived of all American gold mines. Tom Walsh had turned down a one-half interest in the Homestake mine, which

⁵⁵ McLean, Father Struck It Rich, 30-33.

produced millions of dollars worth of ore until it closed in the year 2001. The mine's history, produced for its centennial in 1976, fails to mention Smoky Jones (or Tom's blunder). It credits the Manuel brothers, Moses and Fred, together with Hank Harney, with discovering the Homestake Ledge (or Lead) on April 9, 1876. The following year California capitalists, led by the legendary George Hearst, purchased the mine, and made themselves very wealthy. A South Dakota history states that Hearst bought out Moses Manuel and his partners. Smoky Jones definitely existed, for another source describes him as a colorful local character who could howl like a wolf. Perhaps he played a role as one of the Manuels' "partners." If Smoky was not the mine's true "discoverer" as stated, it is still likely that Walsh felt he had somehow missed the bonanza, and therefore had one more very important moral to pass down.⁵⁷

As for the results of his stay in the Black Hills, Tom may have left heartbroken over the missed opportunity, but certainly not broke. His prudence in sticking with the much-needed building trades was one reason he carried the tidy sum of \$75,000 to \$100,000 upon his return to Colorado. It is debatable how much of this amount came from gold. One source has him selling Black Hills properties

⁵⁶ McLean, Father Struck It Rich, 29-30, 82.

⁵⁷ *Rocky Mountain News*, 9 April 1910, 1; McLean, Father Struck It Rich, 30-31. Richard B. Hughes, Pioneer Years in the Black Hills, 2nd ed., Ed. Agnes Wright Spring, (Rapid City, SD: Dakota Alpha Press, 1999), 42; "Homestake Centennial 1876-1976," a brochure publ. by Homestake Gold Mine, divn. of Homestake Mining Company, San Francisco, 1976; Herbert S. Schell, History of South Dakota, 3rd ed., (Lincoln: Univ. of Nebr. Press, 1975), 147-148.

for close to \$100,000.⁵⁸ Evalyn tells us Tom found enough riches to have a cross placed on his mother's grave in Ireland, paid for with Black Hills gold. However, the cross was placed much later when Tom had wealth from a different mining source. The family version of the story seems to depict the Black Hills years as a learning experience in mining.⁵⁹ At any rate, considering his lack of higher education, and failure to find a true mining bonanza, he was quite well off for his times.

⁵⁸ *Ouray Herald*, Ouray, CO, 12 January 1899.

⁵⁹ McLean, Father Struck It Rich, 29-32.

CHAPTER 4

THE SILVER BOOMTOWN OF LEADVILLE

The Proprietor of the Grand Hotel

The next boomtown, Leadville, Colorado, seemed the right destination, and Tom Walsh arrived in 1878. This time the target was silver not gold. Early prospectors in the area had encountered a frustrating experience not unlike their brothers in Nevada's Comstock, and elsewhere. When trying to extract gold, a thick bluish-blackish substance always seemed to get in the way. By the late 1870s it was becoming well-known that the "damned blue stuff", or "black cement," was actually carbonate of lead, rich in silver.⁶⁰ It brought Leadville, one of the highest silver cities at more than ten thousand feet, a second boom, following the area's original 1860s Oro City gold bonanza days. Reporting in early 1879, the Colorado representative of the Mining Record of New York City found that "It is not too much to say, that California and Nevada in their palmier days never knew such an excitement as is raging here, nor did the Black Hills...Out of a comparative wilderness, a little over a year ago, has arisen a town, of now nearly ten thousand

⁶⁰ Duane A. Smith, Horace Tabor, His Life and the Legend, (Niwot, CO: Univ. Press of Colo., 1989), 53.

people, some very handsome buildings, three banks, several churches, and an organized fire department..."⁶¹ The remarkable tales of overnight millionaires, some of them benefiting from nothing more than blind luck, are legendary. Their mines, carrying names like Matchless, Robert E. Lee, Little Pittsburg, Maid of Erin, Wolfstone, and Little Jonny, survive in the lore of famous bonanzas to this day.⁶²

Shortly after his arrival, Walsh invested some of his money to purchase a part interest in the "premiere place of lodging in Leadville," the Grand Hotel. The previous owner, George Harris, had just completed remodeling his imposing two-story structure, with a grand opening on July 4, 1878, but only a few weeks later he sold out to Tom Walsh and his Deadwood friends Felix Leavick and Jerry Daly. So successful was the venture that the trio was able to finish paying Harris the \$14,120 purchase price by December. Lack of any better-class competition at the time meant the proprietors could offer their finest first floor rooms at seven to ten dollars a night, while a guest willing to stay in the garret could get by for three.⁶³ It was a shrewd real estate move as well, in a town of skyrocketing land values. The building also held additional room for business offices. A young and upcoming

⁶¹ Don L. Griswold and Jean Harvey Griswold, History of Leadville and Lake County, Colorado, 2 vol., (Denver: Colo. Hist. Soc. in coop. with Univ. Press of Colorado, 1996), Intro. by James E. Fell, Jr., 189.

⁶² Phyllis Flanders Dorset, The New Eldorado, The Story of Colorado's Gold & Silver Rushes, 2nd ed., (New York: Barnes & Noble Books, 1994), 245-280.

⁶³ Griswold, History of Leadville, 163.

Leadville attorney, Charles S. Thomas, took one of the offices. Later a Colorado governor and U.S. Senator, he was starting a lifelong friendship and professional relationship with Walsh. For Tom business was good and pursuit of silver remained a sidelight.

Marriage Presents a Religious Dilemma

Tom arrived in Leadville still a bachelor. One thing he enjoyed was music, and the quality and quantity of musical entertainment was growing with the new metropolis. A particular singer caught his eye. It may well have been at the June 1879 presentation of the best of local talent before the Knights of Robert Emmet, an Irish group Tom was proud to join. Here, "Miss Reed, but recently arrived in our city, a lady whose musical culture is of the highest order played her own accompaniment upon the piano."⁶⁴ It may also have occurred on an occasion when the young Irishman, with an Irish Catholic upbringing, nevertheless ventured into a Protestant church one Sunday and heard her voice in the choir.⁶⁵ Yet another version has her staying at his hotel on her arrival to Leadville. Carrie Bell Reed had come west from Wisconsin, by way of Alabama, with her family.⁶⁶ The Reed

⁶⁴ Griswold, History of Leadville, 281.

⁶⁵ McLean, Father Struck It Rich, 35.

⁶⁶ "The Adventures and Successes of Thomas F. Walsh," *Silverite-Plaindealer*, Ouray, CO, 14 December 1900, 1.

family, whose ranks included a Colorado state senator, Elton T. Beckwith, were socially ambitious. By some accounts they had fallen on hard times after achieving some social standing in the Midwest. The parents felt the boomtown would have need of Carrie's teaching talents. As it was also the home of many over-night millionaires, both parents and daughter must have seen that life at ten thousand feet could be bearable if it meant finding the right husband. "That is the girl I'm going to marry," is said to have been Tom's immediate reaction upon first seeing and hearing Carrie. He was as successful in love as he would prove to be in mining. He won the heart of one of the town's most eligible young women, later described by their daughter as possessing "a figure that men would turn to stare at", but also "one of the most refined women I ever knew."⁶⁷

The wedding took place five months later, and was considered one of Leadville's most prestigious of the time. Held on October 7, 1879, it was a strictly private affair, for the friends of both bride and groom were too numerous to be housed by any existing Leadville establishment. An advance notice related, "That none may have occasion to be blighted, it has been wisely concluded to issue no invitations whatever..." An interesting religious compromise was worked out between the Catholic Tom and Presbyterian Carrie. The service took place at the home of Carrie's mother, with Father Henry Robinson of Leadville's Annunciation

⁶⁷ McLean, Father Struck It Rich, 33-34.

Catholic Church presiding. However, as noted by the attending society reporter, the priest presented his remarks, and was dressed, so that a stranger would not guess he was of the Catholic faith. The simple service was followed by an elegant reception at Tom's hotel, under the supervision of Michael J. Welch, "the steward and head waiter at the popular Grand, who is in his profession a very prince." Banquet fare included oysters (raw and stewed), brook trout, venison with currant jelly, tongue with calf's foot jelly, malaga grapes, pears, apples, cream cake and champagne.⁶⁸

Maria attended her brother's wedding, but the rest of the Catholic Walsh family were conspicuous in their absence. Thomas K. Walsh, and Tom's brothers Michael and Patrick, were most likely in Colorado at the time, yet none made the wedding. Signs of religious friction within the family continued for some time. At least from this time forward, Tom showed little attachment to the Catholic Church, later even joining the Masonic Order. Evalyn tells of overhearing talk of a family scandal that she, a Walsh child, could be raised a Protestant. She mentions the homes of her Uncle Michael and Aunt Maria, who both lived nearby in Denver, as places rarely visited. Tom continued in a close relationship with his family in both America and Ireland for the rest of his life, yet Carrie and the children seem to have been largely excluded from that relationship. Tom's father made Denver his home for the last years of his life. Little is known about the life of Thomas K. Walsh in

⁶⁸ Griswold, History of Leadville, 379.

Colorado, apart from a few short references in family letters. There are signs that Tom did not have a close relationship with his father at this time, and religious differences may be the reason. Evalyn makes no mention that her grandfather ever lived in Colorado. Records in Denver place his death in 1883. Later Tom placed his impressive limestone memorial on his mother's grave in Ireland. However, he made no such provision for his father's grave in Denver's Mount Calvary, the city's Catholic Cemetery.⁶⁹

It is also interesting to speculate if love alone was enough to drive Walsh from the traditional religion of his family and homeland, or if he had other motives as well. As the proprietor of a prominent hotel, real estate investor, and soon a successful mine developer, Tom was rising in the business world. He no doubt was paying close attention to the paths of success for America's business leaders. Protestants dominated American business leadership, with Catholics more often found among the working class. Observing this, Walsh may have seen Catholicism as a barrier which could be avoided. Another Irish immigrant who achieved

⁶⁹ "Miss Marie Walsh, a sister of the groom" is listed among the wedding guests in the Leadville newspaper account. See Griswold, *History of Leadville*, 379. Stories of religious friction in the family can be found in McLean, *Father Struck It Rich*, 25; also in the author's interviews with Kathleen O'Brien and Mary Ryan. Little is known of the life of Thomas K. Walsh in Colorado. Letter John Healy to Thomas F. Walsh dated 19 May 1904, Box 9, Walsh Papers, establishes the presence of Thomas K. Walsh in Denver, probably as a long term resident of the city. More than one Thomas Walsh (none with a middle initial K.) can be found in Corbett, Hoye and Ballenger, *Denver City Directory*, microfilm, Western Hist. Dept., Denver Public Library, for the years 1869-1883. Records of Denver's Mount Olivet Cemetery place the death of Thomas K. Walsh in 1883, burial next to his daughter Maria Lafferty. Bodies buried at Mount Calvary were moved to Mount Olivet in the 1950s when the site of the early cemetery became the Denver Botanic Gardens.

business success in Colorado was John K. Mullen, Denver's wealthy flour-miller. Mullen staunchly held to his Catholicism, and sometimes found it an asset when dealing with his mill-workers, who were largely Irish Catholics. However, Mullen also had to deal with strong anti-Catholic feelings espoused by many prominent Denver citizens, as well as the mostly-Protestant wheat farmers who supplied his mills. In Mullen's case, it did not stop him from acquiring wealth and power while openly supporting many Catholic charities. However, Mullen and many Irish Catholics of every social level received the threats and antagonism of the Ku Klux Klan and other nativist organizations. These groups were a very vocal force in Colorado, as well as the rest of the nation, beginning in the late Nineteenth Century.⁷⁰

Not all Irish-Catholic Americans were as bold as John K. Mullen, even those who became wealthy and prominent. Take the example of New York publisher Robert J. Cuddihy, who rose from poverty to make millions from his *Literary Digest*. Cuddihy supported Catholic charities yet made certain his magazine kept a strict policy of religious neutrality in its editorials. Few of his non-Catholic friends and business associates suspected his religion. When one of those friends, a Baptist minister, presented him a book of decidedly anti-Catholic propaganda, Cuddihy merely accepted the gift and extended his thanks. Known Catholics, even the

⁷⁰ William J. Convery III, Pride of the Rockies, The Life of John K. Mullen, (Niwot, CO: Univ. Press of Colorado, 2000), 113-122, 171-183, 195-202.

richest, were still banned from many exclusive social clubs, or at best admitted on a quota system. When on vacation, they learned to seek out only resorts with good track records for accepting their lot. Even after wealth arrived, their party of choice was Democratic, seen as the “people’s party” since the days of Jefferson.

Nevertheless, these “lace curtain” Irish, who advanced in American life, could not avoid estrangement from working-class Irish. This was largely due to disparities in economic condition, not religion. Even John K. Mullen learned to “straddle the fence,” forming relationships with prominent Protestants, and straying from the Democratic party when a Protestant Republican had something attractive to offer.⁷¹

Throughout his career Tom Walsh sought to reach his goals, including social acceptance at the highest level, while incurring as little personal animosity as possible. He was not always successful. However, being a Catholic might create animosity in America which, to his eye, could be avoided. Since Tom displayed little religious fervor of any kind, he probably decided early on that he could afford the price of abandoning his religion of birth to smooth the path to success. He did not abandon being Irish, however, but he definitely avoided the more militant and religious-based Irish causes. “Irishness,” to the American mind of the time, also included the positive traits of ambition, courage, a fighting spirit, and most

⁷¹ Stephen Birmingham, Real Lace, America’s Irish Rich, (New York: Harper and Row, 1973), 28-30, 247-248; Convery, Pride of the Rockies, 71-83.

importantly charm. Walsh no doubt observed this as well.⁷²

The Social Strata of a Frontier Town

Carrie helped Tom run the Grand. Shortly after the wedding, in early December, Tom obtained financing from a former Memphis banker named Thomas Fisher, and then bought out his partners, Leavick and Daly. The latter two wanted to devote full-time to their mining interests. The local press regretted the loss of “the genial faces” of the departing partners, but found, “The new firm will be a most acceptable one to the patrons of this excellent house. Mr. Walsh having few equals and no superiors as a host, and having a large acquaintance all over the mountains.”⁷³ Their efforts were praised by one Leadville historian for attracting as clientele “the sober and respectable,” although this still did not place the hotel proprietors within the esteemed ranks of the bonanza rich.⁷⁴

In January 1880, the *Leadville Chronicle* decided to conduct a survey of sorts as to the extent of local wealth. A search for local owners of diamonds turned up 130 “happy possessors.” Few could top Horace A.W. Tabor, silver multimillionaire and now Lieutenant Governor of Colorado, reported as “decked with diamonds, wearing elegant and costly studs and sleeve buttons.” Tom’s former

⁷² Birmingham, Real Lace, 277-279.

⁷³ Griswold, History of Leadville, 418.

⁷⁴ McLean, Father Struck It Rich, 33.

partner, Felix Leavick, owned “a solitary stud that sparkles as merrily as his eyes.” Near the end of the article, in a group of “other men who owned magnificent, handsome or elegant diamond studs,” the name of Thomas F. Walsh was one of twelve. Carrie’s name does not appear on Leadville’s list of “silver ladies.”⁷⁵ In fact, their personal housing seems a bit sparse for their position. Tom owned claims in Sowbelly Gulch, soon christened St. Kevin’s by his new bride. This area was located approximately six miles northwest of Leadville, just west of the open expanse known as Tennessee Park. Finding no other suitable dwelling for the place, Tom had a boxcar moved in and fixed it up into a better-than-acceptable home by Leadville standards. Carrie was evidently happy, for later in life she usually broke into a smile while relating the story.⁷⁶

At this time, Leadville had developed several distinct levels of social strata. At the top stood the legendary Tabor. His mines such as the Little Pittsburg, Chrysolite, and Matchless were bringing the former stonemason from Vermont untold riches, and his jewels were just one demonstration of his ostentatious lifestyle. Silver money helped build his Bank of Leadville, the city’s largest (although Tabor found banking to be a boring sidelight). On a lower stratum of Leadville society was a man plying Walsh’s old trade, carpenter Winfield Scott Stratton. Stratton is said to have first encountered the “Silver King” when he built

⁷⁵ Griswold, History of Leadville, 466.

the vault in Tabor's bank. Later, when Tabor's fortunes crashed with the price of silver, the now wealthy and prominent Stratton tried unsuccessfully to pull him out of the doldrums.⁷⁷ Meanwhile Tom Walsh progressed, through ups and downs, from somewhere in the middle of society toward the top. Whether any close acquaintance ever developed among these three men, prominent at different times in Colorado history yet living in the silver boom of Leadville at the same time, is an interesting speculation. However, their examples of Western reversal of fortunes are very typical.

Full Time Mining

An incident during his stay in Leadville shows that the long term on the job training of Tom Walsh in mining was beginning to pay dividends. One day, prospecting along the Frying Pan River, west and over the Continental Divide from the "Cloud City," he chanced upon an abandoned cabin and claim. The pit dug by the departed miner showed nothing but worthless rock. The situation may have seemed to explain itself quite well, yet the ever-curious Walsh looked further.

⁷⁵ McLean, Father Struck It Rich, 36.

⁷⁷ See Dorset, The New Eldorado, 391; also Marshall Sprague, Money Mountain, (Lincoln: Univ. of Nebraska Press, 1953), 164; and Smith, Horace Tabor, 307, all agreeing that Stratton loaned money to Tabor for a mining prospect (unsuccessful). While Stratton probably built Tabor's vault (Dorset, The New Eldorado, 354), one source has him building a large silver dollar for the top of the bank (Sprague, Money Mountain, 113). The Little Pittsburg is most commonly spelled without a final "h", although some spellings conform with that of its namesake city in Pennsylvania. Smith, Horace Tabor, 334.

Entering the cabin, he peered down. The miner's choice of a homesite sat on what he had been seeking in the first place, gold-bearing quartz poking up through the clay floor. Tom quickly picked up the claim, hired men to perform the needed exploratory work (which probably included demolition of the cabin), and later sold it for a neat \$75,000 gain.⁷⁸

By early 1880, Tom had found enough confidence to plunge full-time into mining. In April, after his financier Fisher had died, he sold the Grand to James Street and Howard C. Chapin.⁷⁹ Most of his properties were located near their home, now known as the St. Kevin's Mining District. A local landmark became known as Walsh Hill. His brothers Michael and Patrick worked with him, as well as Maria's new husband, former Leadville policeman Arthur Lafferty. Still, Walsh's Leadville successes do not exactly place him with the legendary Leadville fortunes built by the likes of Tabor, Moffat, Chaffee and Guggenheim. Nevertheless, if one newspaper statement is true, his returns were impressive enough. The Griffin Group, his best property, is said to have provided an income as high as \$95,000 for some months. Another property, the Shields mine brought profits upon sale of \$45,000. Tom acquired a half interest in the President property, which netted him a handsome income and sale proceeds of \$50,000.⁸⁰

⁷⁸ McLean, *Father Struck It Rich*, 36-37; *Rocky Mountain News*, 9 April 1910.

⁷⁹ Griswold, *History of Leadville*, 540.

⁸⁰ "An Honorable and Successful Career," *Ouray Herald*, 12 January 1899.

Tom was rising in the mining field at a time of great prosperity, and would in time attract the attention of its leaders. His rise could not just be attributed to on the job training, nor was it based on the hit-and-miss luck found by many Western prospectors. Lacking formal education, Tom devoted his energies to the development of a thorough mining, metallurgical and geological education. This included the particulars of ore body deposition, and the development and treatment of mining products. He read everything available, met those with knowledge, and asked penetrating questions. It would soon pay dividends.⁸¹

⁸¹ Tom's work with his brothers can be found in Mining Deeds recorded at the office of the Clerk and Recorder, Lake County, Colorado: Book 105, Page 389; Book 105, Page 55; as well as in the Patent to Mining Lodes recorded in Book O, Page 20, issued by the U.S. General Land Office to grantees Thomas F. Walsh, Patrick Walsh, S. Vinson Farnum and A.W. Duggan for the Gerald Griffin Claim. See also the following obituaries: "Death of Michael Walsh After Short Illness," *Denver Post*, 6 December 1904; "Arthur Lafferty, Pioneer Miner and Hotel Man, Dead," *Denver Post*, 7 September 1916. See "Poor Boy Becomes One of Richest of Men," *Colorado Springs Gazette*, 9 April 1910, 1, for a good discussion of Walsh's early self-education.

CHAPTER 5

DENVER, SMELTING AND THE SILVER CRASH

Tom Walsh, who had always wandered, now sought another move. Perhaps the desire to take the family to a lower altitude was the prime motivator. In January 1881 they lost a young daughter, Vena, who was only four months old. The cause of her death is not known, and it occurred in Denver, but she was born in the cabin at Leadville. Carrie always suffered from living in the heights.⁸² Another reason was Tom's belief that the place to be in an increasingly prosperous state was its capital and largest city. In late 1880, the Walshes began a move to Denver. At first it was probably the place to escape the long Colorado mountain winter, with the warmer months available to explore and develop the mining properties in Leadville, and elsewhere.⁸³ Reports in 1883 and 1884 still show him operating successfully at the Griffin Mine.⁸⁴ However, Tom's success with the Grand Hotel property encouraged him to invest heavily in the booming Denver real estate. He acquired valuable business properties at Champa and 22nd, and on Arapahoe Street between

⁸² McLean, *Father Struck It Rich*, 37; *Rocky Mountain News*, 23 January 1881.

⁸³ McLean, *Father Struck It Rich*, 37; *Rocky Mountain News*, 9 April 1910.

⁸⁴ Griswold, *History of Leadville*, 1267, 1445, 1884.

16th and 17th, in the expanding downtown area. As for mining, he was willing to look farther afield, investing part of his growing wealth in locations such as the great copper camp of Butte, Montana. More mining properties and real estate, as well as cattle ranches, were added to the Walsh portfolio. The Walshes spent some time in Carrie's former home, Birmingham, Alabama, and Tom invested in rental real estate there.⁸⁵

The Walsh family grew, with the additions of daughter Evalyn in 1886, and son Vinson in 1888. They were riding the tide of the glittering Colorado decade of the 1880s. Yet their lifestyle appears modest. Their home for the last three years of their stay in Denver, 1343 Vine Street, was and remains an imposing two-and-one-half story red brick Queen Anne style residence.⁸⁶ At the time, 1894-1896, the neighborhood was an upper-middle class area, known as the Wyman neighborhood, and located to the east of the mansions of the mining barons. The Walsh home on Vine Street was one of many designed by William A. Lang, considered Denver's greatest residential architect of the nineteenth century, and also its most eclectic architect. Lang's thriving practice created more than 150 Denver area residences between 1888 and 1893, including the home of the "unsinkable" Molly Brown. Evalyn, writing after years of living in mansions, called it "our little house on Vine

⁸⁵ McLean, *Father Struck It Rich*, 37-38; "Miners Loved Walsh as Friend and Benefactor," *Rocky Mountain News*, 9 April 1910, 1; See letters which deal with the Birmingham property from Hagood & Thomas to Walsh dated 3 September 1892 and 24 September 1892, Box 1, Arthur Redman Wilfley Papers, Archives, University of Colorado at Boulder Libraries.

Street." The family hired a servant girl, Annie MacDonald, who remained with them for a long time. Summers were spent in the mountains, near Tom's mining properties, with accommodations even simpler than in Denver. Neither Tom nor Carrie had known riches, and they were not yet ready to begin a lavish style of living. This fact was very much to their benefit.⁸⁷

Smelting in the Ten Mile District

Tom's business focus also shifted to ore refining. To the northeast of Leadville, over Fremont Pass, lay a land of quick successes and broken dreams known as the Ten Mile District, named for the lofty portion of the Continental Divide lying on its southeast side. Like Leadville, it was now being exploited for its silver potential. Possibly because they both had offices in the Boston Building in Denver, Tom became acquainted with Arthur Redman Wilfley, who was blessed with an inventive spirit, and also becoming active and successful in the Ten Mile district. Eventually he achieved fame and fortune as the inventor of the Wilfley table, a vibrating means for breaking down ore into smaller components. Late in 1891, Wilfley began looking at smelters to process his Ten Mile District ores. His

⁸⁶ Corbett et. al., *City Directory*, for the years 1894-1896.

⁸⁷ McLean, Father Struck It Rich, 15-25; Diane Wilk, The Wyman Historic District, (Denver: Historic Denver, Inc. in cooperation with Denver Museum of Natural History, 1995), 48; Thomas J. Noel and Barbara S. Norgren, Denver, The City Beautiful and Its Architects, 1893-1941, (Denver: Historic Denver, Inc., 1987), 208-209.

Elk Mountain properties, most notably the White Quail mine, held primarily low-grade iron and lead sulphides with low silver content. Shipping such ores to distant smelters would be unprofitable. However, Wilfley had learned of a new technology which could be used with this type of ore, if a smelter could be built locally. It was called the Austin process, and it required very little fuel. Heated by outside fuel sources to the point of combustion, the sulphides provided their own heat to complete the smelting process. The Austin process had been developed a few years earlier, and was first used in Colorado in 1891 by David Moffat and Eben Smith at their Bi-Metallic smelter in Leadville. Wilfley did not know that Walsh had already formed a partnership with the inventor, William L. Austin of San Francisco, to control the patents for the process in Colorado. Another partner was Chicago businessman David Wegg, whose business relationship with Walsh dated back to 1886 in Leadville, and would continue for some time. They called their company the Union Mining and Smelting Company. All they needed was some good ore for smelting. In January 1892 Austin had asked Walsh to look for more mining properties, and Tom was successful in obtaining leases to property near the Ten Mile district town of Kokomo. The deal offered by Wilfley seemed a fair one under the circumstances, a trade of technology for ore. Walsh contributed Union company's leases, Wilfley and his partner Ethan Byron contributed the White Quail mines, and together they formed the Summit Mining and Smelting Company to exploit the Austin process. Construction of a pyritic smelter commenced, with Tom

placed in charge. The plant was completed in September 1892, and the test runs looked promising. Walsh also installed a state-of-the-art feature, an electric dynamo for round-the-clock lighting of the smelter.⁸⁸

When organization of the new company was finalized, Wilfley was named president and Walsh as vice-president. Members of Carrie's family were involved as well. Samuel W. Lee, a Denver businessman and the husband of Carrie's sister Lucy, was a director, as was S. Vinson Farnum. Tom and Carrie's son was no doubt the namesake of Farnum, a Denver real estate developer, who was probably related to Carrie as well. Farnum was Tom's partner in the Griffin Mine near Leadville, and also helped him with his Denver real estate holdings. However, family strife ensued when Tom also hired brother-in-law Arthur Lafferty, who had prior smelter experience in Leadville. Samuel Lee and Lafferty did not get along, and Lee, as his superior, soon drove Arthur off the job. Tom received a stern letter from sister Maria complaining of the treatment and demanding that he find her husband a new job. Whether he complied is not known, but Tom hated to be a part of such animosity. In September 1892 he arranged, with the assistance of Farnum,

⁸⁸ Jay E. Niebur, in Collaboration with James E. Fell, Jr., Arthur Redman Wilfley. Miner, Inventor and Entrepreneur, (Denver: Western Busn. Hist. Research Center, Colo. Hist. Soc., 1982), 56-58; Letter Austin to Walsh dated 24 January 1892, Box 1, Wilfley Papers. Deed Walsh to Wegg dated 13 April 1886, Book 112, Page 264, Lake County Records, notes an early dealing between the two men.

to be the anonymous guarantor of a Denver bank's loan to Lafferty.⁸⁹

The Kokomo smelter suffered from more than a family feud. Another problem was the developers' haste to apply the Austin process in a new setting. In July 1892 Farnum warned Walsh that Leadville newspapers were declaring the Austin process a failure at the Bi-Metallic smelter. Not long after, Austin himself addressed the problem. Walsh had earlier written him about problems with ores containing zinc. In a November letter of response, Austin tactfully praised the mechanical ingenuity of the developers of both the Leadville and Kokomo smelters. He went on to add, however, that they had disregarded his warnings that his system would not necessarily work for all pyritic ores, and that radical alterations were now needed to handle the ores from Wilfley's properties. His advice could not be taken, for there were no profits to support the necessary work. By December the smelter was losing money, and a drop in silver prices was the chief contributor. The trend continued into 1893.⁹⁰

⁸⁹ Articles of Incorporation of the Summit Mining and Smelting Company, Index to Domestic Corporations, Book 32, 529-530, Colorado State Archives; Letters Maria Lafferty to Walsh dated 13 July 1892, and Farnum to Walsh dated 30 September 1892, Box 1, Wilfley Papers.

⁹⁰ Stanley Dempsey and James E. Fell, Jr., Mining the Summit, Colorado's Ten Mine District, 1860-1960, (Norman: Univ. of Oklahoma Press, 1986), 191-193, 230-231; McLean, Father Struck It Rich, 37-38; Letters Farnum to Walsh dated 5 July 1892, and Austin to Walsh dated 15 November 1892, Box 1, Wilfley Papers; Niebur and Fell, Arthur Redman Wilfley, 58-61.

The Silver Crash Brings Economic Devastation

Tom Walsh, his partners, and many other miners and investors may not have seen that the bottom was about to drop out of silver. The state of Colorado was very dependent on the metal, for since 1881 it had been the nation's leading silver producer. Coins and silver reserves as a basis for paper money were major uses of silver, and Colorado needed a favorable attitude from Washington to keep up the demand for its product. There were many opponents. Since the Bland-Allison Act of 1878, Congress had at least been willing to compromise on the issue. This Act, passed over President Rutherford B. Hayes' veto, provided for coinage of two to four million dollars worth of silver each month, the exact amount to be set by the secretary of the treasury. Mint price of the silver would equal the current market price. Coloradans were generally pleased by the legislation, although it fell short of their demands for unlimited free coinage. However, secretaries of the treasury tended to favor price deflation and coin the minimum amount required. Pressure from Colorado, Nevada and other silver states led to the Sherman Silver Purchase Act of 1890. Now 4.5 million ounces of silver were required to be purchased each month. Prices rose to one dollar an ounce in 1890, but then the decline set in,

proving that the act fell far short of the expected results.⁹¹

In 1893, a national economic crisis set in, often called the Panic of '93. In Colorado it was simply called the year of the Silver Crash. The continual decline in price reached eighty-three cents an ounce in June, but then India announced it was ceasing to coin silver. An international element was thrown into the already dismal national situation, coupled with growing Washington sentiment against the Silver Purchase Act. In the four days after the Indian announcement the price dropped to sixty-two cents. The Sherman Act was repealed in August, but Colorado's economy already lay in ruins. In July twelve Denver banks closed, while around the state mines and smelters stopped running, and real estate values plummeted. On September 1 the Colorado Bureau of Labor Statistics reported 377 business failures, 435 mines closed (nearly half the number which had been producing a year before), and 45,000 persons out of work.⁹²

The toll on the state's citizens, rich to poor, was devastating. Leadville's Silver King, Horace Tabor, now one of Denver's richest citizens, had too much of his fortune wrapped up in silver, and much of the rest in unsafe investments which also dropped in value. He and his second wife, Baby Doe, had amassed many prized possessions as well as extensive commercial interests, including Denver's Tabor Block and Tabor Grand Opera House. Much of this was lost to creditors' sales;

⁹¹ Ubbelohde, Benson and Smith, A Colorado History, 211-215.

most of the remainder sold to support the family. The family lived simply in Denver, while Horace tried everything to recoup his former wealth. Nothing worked, and debts piled up. Finally concerned Denver friends found him a job as the city's postmaster, but Tabor died of a heart attack in April 1899, a little over a year after taking over the position.⁹³ A similar collapse of fortune awaited Tabor's fellow silver mining magnates William Hamill of Georgetown and Jerome Wheeler of Aspen.⁹⁴

The Silver Crash devastated other Colorado citizens and their businesses which were not directly involved in mining, but which were heavily dependent upon the steady flow of mining income. One such casualty was William Lang, the architect who designed the Walsh home on Vine Street. As new construction came to a halt, Lang's practice was ruined. By 1895 he was in severe financial straits, poor health, and possibly suffering from alcoholism and mental illness. In another two years he was arrested in Illinois for drunken and disorderly behavior, and soon after killed by a train while walking along its tracks.⁹⁵ Even Tom Walsh's first Colorado employer, William A. H. Loveland, could not escape. Loveland's fortune

⁹² Ubbelohde, Benson and Smith, A Colorado History, 216-219.

⁹³ Duane A. Smith, Horace Tabor, His Life and the Legend, (Niwot, CO: Univ. Press of Colo., 1989), 281-315.

⁹⁴ Dorset, The New Eldorado, 345.

⁹⁵ Noel and Norgren, Denver, The City Beautiful, 209.

was seemingly safe and well-diversified in railroads, mining, and banks, and he had owned the *Rocky Mountain News* as well as other newspapers. Nonetheless, he died poor in 1894. At his death, Loveland still owned an interest in a coal mining company, as well as about half the land of what is now the city of Lakewood, Colorado. His holdings, however large, were no longer of value following the crash.⁹⁶

Walsh and his partners found a way to cushion the blow of the Silver Crash somewhat. Wilfley took an interest in two new camps located west of Colorado Springs, named Hayden Placer and Fremont. He persuaded his partners to have the Summit Company buy three claims in the area, the Deer Horn, Deer Horn No. 2, and Pride of the Rockies. The company earned \$45,000 from the claims in the first six months of 1893. The surrounding area now went by the name of Cripple Creek, and was on its way to becoming one of the world's greatest gold camps. For the next few years it was the one shining light in the dark night that was Colorado mining (although it would soon suffer from labor strife). Its first millionaire, Winfield Scott Stratton, would never again need to build a bank vault for someone else.⁹⁷

The partners eventually sold the Cripple Creek claims for another \$45,000

⁹⁶ Charles S. Ryland, "Golden's Resourceful Merchant," *The Denver Westerners Roundup*, Nov.-Dec. 1972, Vol. XXVIII, No. 9, 1-18.

⁹⁷ Dempsey and Fell, Mining the Summit, 193, 231-233; Sprague, Money Mountain, 11-120.

profit. By this time, Tom had soured of the Ten Mile District. After some negotiations, he sold his interests in the Kokomo smelter to Wilfley and Byron.⁹⁸ He was not done with Cripple Creek, although his earnings from the district would never approach those of Stratton and the twenty-seven other millionaires it helped create.⁹⁹ Walsh did lease and operate two mines in the district, the Deer Horn and the Summit, both of which were now owned by Stratton. Here Tom noticed a certain pink spar which was unusual for the Cripple Creek area. It was gold-bearing, yet it brought him little wealth from these two mines. What it did provide him was one more bit of geological knowledge. Tom Walsh decided to take that knowledge to another part of Colorado where the future looked even brighter. Perhaps feeling that nearly twenty years before he had left too soon, Tom directed his attention west across the Continental Divide to the San Juan Mountains.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁸ Dempsey and Fell, Mining the Summit, 193, 231-233.

⁹⁹ Sprague, Money Mountain, 11-120, 313.

¹⁰⁰ T.A. Rickard, "Two Famous Mines – II," *Mining and Scientific Press*, 30 December 1911, 82; McLean, Father Struck It Rich, 39.

CHAPTER 6

THE SNOWY SAN JUANS

The Ute Indians

Walsh once again prospected and developed business opportunities in relative safety after the region's Native Americans had first been removed. Like others he benefited from what they knew and passed on to newcomers. The Ute Indians were the long-time residents of the Colorado mountains. They knew the natural properties of the area, and its many hazards, and adapted well. In winter they sought out hot water springs bubbling up from deep within the earth. The Indians found these fitted for relaxation and healing, not to mention providing a place of calm where discussions could be held, treaties worked out. While sometimes warlike, the Utes generally had a heritage of accepting others into their midst. One thing found in their vast domain was of little use to the Utes. It was a soft, shining metal often found in the rocks, and sometimes even in the hot springs. It had no functional value, and the Utes looked elsewhere when they wanted ornaments. If this useless material was all the whites wanted, the Utes were more than happy to let

them have it.¹⁰¹

However, too many prospectors sought too much gold, and whether peaceful or hostile, the Utes were in the way. The whites frequently sought treaties. The Utes were never a united tribe, but rather a loose collection of bands. The band which lived and hunted in the central part of the San Juan region took the name of Tabeguache. Their leader, Ouray, had a Ute mother and a Jicarilla Apache father, and according to longstanding tradition, he had joined his mother's people. Ouray (the "Arrow") spoke Ute and Apache dialects, and was also fluent in Spanish and understandable in English. Nearly all whites who encountered him were impressed. He was a peace chief, and always felt the sacrifice of some of their land was much preferable to warfare for his vastly outnumbered people. Some Western lore still holds Ouray as the leader of all Utes, and in his time many whites believed this. In fact he led only his band, while achieving some degree of respect from the other Utes.¹⁰²

Therefore, this Indian leader was summoned by the future railroad builder, Colorado Territorial Governor John Evans. Evans was having no success in his relations with the tribes of the Eastern plains. However, thanks largely to Ouray, he could at least claim success with the mountain Indians. Their 1863 treaty gave the

¹⁰¹ Richard K. Young, The Ute Indians of Colorado in the Twentieth Century, (Norman, OK: Univ. of Oklahoma Press, 1997), 19-24; Charles Marsh, People of the Shining Mountains, (Boulder, CO: Pruett Pub. Co., 1982), 7-8, 56-57.

¹⁰² Young, The Ute Indians, 24-29.

the San Luis Valley of South-central Colorado to the whites. The pressure continued, however, for knowledge of some gold in the San Juans could be traced back to Charles Baker's findings of 1860-61, and even farther back to the explorations of de Rivera and other Spaniards. Another treaty, in 1868, moved the Utes still further back, while still allowing them land encompassing one-third of the Colorado Territory. No sooner was the ink dry, than white miners began to violate the treaty. The Del Norte gold rush, which included Tom Walsh, was the beginning of the stampede. Then the 1873 Brunot Treaty gave the whites the entire mining region of the San Juans. In return, the Utes were promised annual gifts of clothing, food and supplies. The Indians grudgingly accepted, but more and more believed that no white man could be trusted. Ouray, still believed by the whites to represent all Utes (perhaps an exercise in wishful thinking), was presented with a house and an annual salary of \$1,000.¹⁰³

Ouray and many of the Utes felt they could trust one white man, a short young immigrant from Russia. Otto Mears had arrived in America under much more austere conditions than Tom Walsh and many others. Twelve years old when he landed in San Francisco, Otto soon learned that the uncle who was to meet him was nowhere to be found. Otto made his way to Colorado, and through hard work and the skill of his mind rose to be acknowledged as the Pathfinder of the San Juans. His first paths were the toll wagon roads he built across the San Juans and other

¹⁰³ Young, The Ute Indians, 24-29; Smith, Song of the Hammer and Drill, 7-9.

parts of southwest Colorado. Not long into this work, Otto's vision told him that railroads would soon bring out the area's riches, not wagons. As long as he had to build wagon roads, he might as well make sure they were no steeper than railroad grade. Otto's paths carved up the Utes' land and brought more whites. Still, he possessed the tact and consideration to make certain that the impact on the life of the Indians was as minimal as possible, and that he could maintain good relations for his business. Soon he became their spokesman, for he had also learned their language.¹⁰⁴

Mears spent many hours listening to the Utes, and then presenting their case to the whites. He was a skilled negotiator. He accompanied Ouray to the Brunot Treaty discussions. Yet in the long run, the more he spoke, the more the Utes' lands passed over to the whites, and money passed into the pockets of Mears. In the end he had a fortune while his Indian "friends" lost most of their lands. Evidence of Mears' collusion with the government to rid the land of the Utes is strong. He was paid two dollars a head to get the Utes to sign a treaty, and also accused of various financial schemes while acting as chief transporter of supplies to the tribe. Otto Mears may not have felt ill-will toward the Utes; he just knew what it took to prosper in business.¹⁰⁵ If the Utes suspected Mears' true motives, their continuing

¹⁰⁴ Dorset, The New Eldorado, 210, 215-216.

¹⁰⁵ P. David Smith, Mountains of Silver, The Story of Colorado's Red Mountain District, (Boulder, CO: Pruett Pub. Co., 1994), 93; Val J. McClellan, This is Our Land, (New York: Vantage Press, 1976), 74, 398, 412.

friendship with him may well have proven one thing. Despite his deceit, Otto Mears was still the white man they thought they could trust the most.

By 1881 the Utes were forced to leave the San Juan region forever. In the end, it was not due to the actions of any of Ouray's band, nor others living in the San Juan Mountains. Rather, the problem lay to the north with the White River band of Utes in northwest Colorado. The agent assigned to their reservation in 1878, Nathan Meeker, was making himself very unpopular by demanding that the nomadic Indians become farmers. The following year, he threatened to plow up the Utes' racetrack to make his point. Enraged by this, and the approach of white troops to assist him, the Utes killed Meeker and all his male employees, kidnapped the three white women at his agency, and attacked the advancing troopers. This fight was a standoff, with many deaths on each side.¹⁰⁶ Tom Walsh, getting his start in Leadville, probably heard the many exaggerated reports that the Utes were about to be overrun the entire mountain district.

Ouray and his wife Chipeta were among those who convinced the White River Utes to give up their captives and surrender. The white man now had the perfect pretext to convince any doubters that "The Utes Must Go!" It was now too late for Ouray's negotiating skills to make any difference, for he was very ill. The peace chief died on August 20, 1880, in the small town of Ignacio near the New

¹⁰⁶ James Whiteside, Colorado, A Sports History, (Niwot, CO: University Press of Colorado, 1999), 3-5.

Mexico border, after returning from the Washington meeting that sealed his tribe's fate.¹⁰⁷ Due to Ute custom and probably distrust of the whites as well, his friends hid his body in a rock crevice two miles south of Ignacio. Forty-four years later on May 24, 1925, the Utes recovered his bones for burial in the Indian reservation cemetery in Ignacio where they remain today.¹⁰⁸

It was probably a blessing that Ouray did not have to witness the expulsion of the Utes to northeast Utah by General Ranald McKenzie a year after his death. Ouray's Tabeguache joined the White River band in the exodus. Chipeta chose to go with her people to Utah now that Ouray was dead. The only Utes remaining in Colorado were southern bands relegated to the Ute Mountain and Southern Ute Reservations south of the San Juans.¹⁰⁹ The mountains were now free for all the exploitation of resources the whites could want.

¹⁰⁷ Brown, Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee, 349-367.

¹⁰⁸ Young, The Ute Indians, 30, 35, 43; "Colorful Rites Honor Chief," *Rocky Mountain News*, 25 June 1925, 5.

¹⁰⁹ Young, The Ute Indians, 43.

Ouray and the Imogene Basin

One of the numerous mining towns to spring up in the San Juan country in 1876 decided to take the name of the great Ute leader (even though its newspapers and public were as loud in calling for the Indians' removal as those anywhere else in the region). For natural beauty, Ouray's founders would have been hard-pressed to find a better site in the entire nation. Later called the Switzerland of America, Ouray lay amid high mountains with waterfalls cascading down the nearby canyon walls. Several hot springs were located in the town by the early settlers. For accessibility, Ouray was probably one of Colorado's worst locations. The sheer walls of the Uncompahgre Canyon led south to Red Mountain Pass. These challenged even the resourceful Otto Mears. He succeeded with a toll road literally hung from the side of the canyon, and but failed in his struggle to convert this route into a railroad. To the north, a less daunting canyon was still a sufficient barrier to make it a challenge for Ouray to receive rail transportation, which arrived in 1886. To the southwest, a rugged road over 13,000 foot Imogene Pass was the shortest route to another boom town, Telluride.¹¹⁰ Arriving in 1895, nine-year old Evalyn Walsh would later remember, "Ouray was wonderful. A child first glimpsing that valley from the mountain trail scratched in the rocks high above it could look down upon a toy town the few streets of which were cross-hatched as if a giant had

¹¹⁰ Doris H. Gregory, History of Ouray: A Heritage of Mining and Everlasting Beauty, Vol. 1, (Ouray, CO: Cascade Publications, 1995), 1-4, 38, 42.

chalked on the basin's floor the patterns for a couple of games of tick-tacktoe.”¹¹¹

Ouray's fortunes rose and fell with its minerals. To the south, the rich Red Mountain District produced a silver bonanza, then joined the rest of the state's great silver areas in a major decline after 1893. To the southwest, the Imogene Basin witnessed much activity but no bonanzas. Its early explorers were certain that its potential lay in silver, not in gold. The area's discoverer, Andy Richardson, gave the name to both basin and pass, honoring his wife. However, an Englishman named William Weston brought the greatest attention to the area. Weston had just arrived to explore the West when the Kansas Pacific Railroad paid him to return to London and promote its line to traveling Europeans. No sooner had he arrived than word reached him from a friend in Del Norte, Colorado, of rich silver strikes in the region, especially in an area known as the Mount Sneffels Mining District. Weston immediately dropped his railroad promotion and enrolled in the Royal School of Mines for a six-month course on assaying.¹¹²

William Weston reached Del Norte in September 1877, put all his supplies on a burro, and crossed Stony Pass and Commodore Gulch to arrive at Imogene Basin, a part of the Mount Sneffels district. Here he met and formed a partnership with George Barber, another Englishman who was an experienced miner. They built a log cabin and began staking claims. The seven they staked that fall were

¹¹¹ McLean, Father Struck It Rich, 39.

named the Gertrude, Una, Crusader, Conqueror, Monument, Emily and Norma. Of this group only two were destined for success, the Una and the Gertrude, but not for the two Englishmen. Both claims were located at a lofty elevation of well over 11,000 feet, meaning they would be covered by snow much of the year. For their names, William Weston honored his family in England. "Gertrude" was his sister-in-law, Mrs. A. Johnstone Campbell of London; "Una" his niece, Una Weston of Brighton. Weston knew how to assay his own ores using an outfit he had brought with him. For the Una and Gertrude claims, gold values ran in the range of \$12 to \$20 per ton. At the time it cost \$35 per ton to pack the ore and ship it to the Greene smelter in Silverton, and then another \$45 per ton to treat the ore, so something in the range of \$100 per ton in value was necessary to make a clear profit.¹¹³

Next the partners turned to some mining engineers, Hubbard and Caleb Reed, and reached an agreement for them to drive a 50 foot tunnel along the line separating the Gertrude and Una. The intention was that the tunnel would intersect the gold vein 150 feet below its surface outcrop. The tunnel could be used by the owners of either claim, and as compensation for their time and effort, the Reeds

¹¹² Smith, Mountains of Silver, 88-191; Tom Rosemeyer, "Camp Bird Mine, Ouray County, Colorado," *Rocks and Minerals*, Vol. 65, No. 2, March/April 1990, 116-117.

¹¹⁶ "The True Story of the Camp Bird Discovery," *The Engineering and Mining Journal*, Denver Correspondence, 18 June 1910, 1266; "William Weston Tells," *Ouray Herald*, 8 December 1911; Doris H. Gregory, The Great Revenue and Surrounding Mines, (Ouray, CO: Cascade Publications. 1996), 9-12.

could choose one of the claims to keep. They chose the Una.¹¹⁴

Still only low grade ores were disclosed. The Reeds also drove further into their new claim, the Una, but found nothing of commercial value. However, as fate would have it, the Reed's original tunnel between the claims would later be proven to have crossed a high-grade vein at a "dead spot", or "pinch," where there was no ore in paying quantities exposed. A mere directional change of ten feet could have made them all very wealthy. The following year, a Quincy, Illinois mining engineer named W.C. Coman examined the area for Orrin Skinner, a lawyer of the same city. Liking what he saw, he recommended a purchase. Later in 1881, Weston and Barber sold out to Skinner for \$50,000. Skinner then organized the Allied Mines Company, composed of prominent Easterners whose ranks included his father-in-law and former Secretary of the Interior for the Lincoln Administration, O.M. Browning. Weston stayed on as mine manager, with Coman in charge of mill and metallurgy. Great expectations awaited another fifty-foot tunnel to be driven into the Gertrude. Only thirty-eight feet could be completed before winter, and for some reason, no samples could be taken. Skinner had ordered the construction of a very large mill, too large for the size of operation as it turned out. Other mismanagement and scheming on Skinner's part succeeded in wrecking the company, and Weston resigned when he could no longer pay his men. Before further exploration could be

¹¹⁴ "The True Story of the Camp Bird Discovery," *The Engineering and Mining Journal*, 18 June 1910, 1266; "William Weston Tells," *Ouray Herald*, 8 December 1911.

done, the Allied Mines Company declared bankruptcy, and creditors seized all its equipment. In 1884 the final twelve feet of the intended fifty-foot tunnel were driven, just enough to fulfill the legal requirements for a patent. Once again no one thought to take samples. Had they done so, the story would have had a vastly different conclusion. Rich ores had already been exposed. The Gertrude was largely written off as unprofitable. However, former owner William Weston still believed in the Gertrude and the Una, feeling only his personal lack of funds prevented great success. It was not to be, for in the words of one writer, Gertrude was not a fickle lady, she just had only one suitor in mind.¹¹⁵ At the time, that suitor was in Denver.

One day in 1879, Ouray received a claim to fame which did not come out of the earth. David Frakes Day was a Civil War Medal of Honor winner for heroism at Vicksburg, achieved when he was only sixteen. The experience gave him supreme self-confidence. Now the Flamboyant Day arrived and set up the presses of Ouray's *Solid Muldoon*. No one was sure what constituted a "Solid Muldoon". Day was somewhat evasive, his most famous response being that "muldoon" was the Zulu word for "virgin." However, he was not evasive as to how he felt on nearly all other

¹¹⁵ Gregory, The Great Revenue, 9-12; "True Story of the Camp Bird Discovery," 1266; Rosemeyer, "Camp Bird Mine," 117; T.A. Rickard, Across the San Juan Mountains, (1st ed. San Francisco: Dewey Pub. Co., 1907, 2nd ed. Ouray, CO: Bear Creek Pub. Co., 1980), 28-29; Frances Melrose, "Tom Walsh's Lucky hunch," *Rocky Mountain News*, 2 February 1947, B-1 – B-8. These accounts are conflicting as to some details, but there is general agreement that the rich vein later found by Walsh was first missed, then overlooked, and samples were not taken at critical points.

matters. Rival towns suffered from his barbs, as did Republicans, the town's other newspaper, mine owners, and any public official who did not completely support his positions. His small paper received state, national and even world attention. Queen Victoria is said to have been an avid *Solid Muldoon* reader.¹¹⁶

Vintage reporting by Day included the misinformation that "Telluride has seven lawyers and two dance halls, 0 churches and 000 school houses. Mercy, what a wicked village."¹¹⁷ Day is said to have been named in forty-seven libel suits and to have won them all (or at least to have never paid a cent to his opponents). He had a wide reputation for honesty, often of the brutal variety. He even challenged Judge Theron Stevens to a duel, after the latter objected to being called "a liar, a scoundrel, a hypocrite and a dirty dog..."¹¹⁸ The two men later settled their differences. However, the subject of mining fraud was perhaps his favorite. He attacked one mining company after another, especially if he suspected the mining venture was merely a scheme to make money through the sale of stock. He liked to brag that many capitalists looked first to his paper before investing. As for the common man who worked the mines, the Democrat Day gave his unequivocal support. Even as silver prices fell, he announced that "the *Muldoon* will oppose any

¹¹⁶ Smith, Mountains of Silver, 73-75. Day is listed among the Medal of Honor winners buried at Denver Fairmount Cemetery. See also "David F. Day, Noted Editor, Buried Today," *Rocky Mountain News*, 25 June 1914, 3.

¹¹⁷ Smith, Mountains of Silver, 85; *Solid Muldoon*, Ouray, CO, 17 August 1883.

¹¹⁸ Gregory, History of Ouray, 51.

and all attempts to reduce the wages of miners. A good miner earns every dollar he receives in this country." He contrasted their vital role to that of others for whom he found no real demand, "preachers, lawyers, book agents, tramps or ornamental nuisances."¹¹⁹

The era of the *Solid Muldoon* ended in 1892, largely brought on by Day's misjudgment as to how far the Denver and Rio Grande Railroad could reach. Guessing it could never navigate the canyon to the north of town, Day invested in the still-nonexistent town of Ramona (later changed to Chipeta), north of the canyon. He was not alone, for other investors included Otto Mears, Ouray's mayor John Jardine, and at least one prominent banker. However, strong opposition appeared in the form of the mine owners and many other prominent citizens, some of whom withdrew advertising from the *Solid Muldoon*. The railroad builders bowed to the pressure, and then astonished Day and his supporters by switching to the opposite side of the canyon, and pushing the tracks straight into downtown Ouray in 1886. The townspeople forgave Day some of his other shortcomings, but always felt he would remain loyal to them. His local popularity plummeted, and in 1892 he packed his presses and moved to Durango. His *Durango Weekly Democrat* allowed Day's rancorous voice to be heard in Southwest Colorado until 1914. However, he never achieved the fame (and notoriety) of his stay in Ouray. The miners of Ouray, at least for the meantime, had lost a person of prominence who

¹¹⁹ Smith, *Mountains of Silver*, 152.

would stand up for them.¹²⁰ They would find a new champion in Tom Walsh.

¹²⁰ Gregory, History of Ouray, 61-63; Smith, Mountains of Silver, 181.

CHAPTER 7

FINDING A BONANZA

A Troubled Start

Tom Walsh not only missed area's Native Americans, but also Otto Mears (who left in 1896 to build railroads in the East),¹²¹ and the Ouray tenure of David Day. Still, one way or another, he felt the effect of both these men. But for Mears' ingenuity and tenacity, Tom would have lacked a way to carry out the ores from the bonanza he would one day find. He would encounter Day in a totally different setting, and not to his pleasure. Starting in the early 1890s, Tom first explored the San Juan area, then chose the town of Ouray for his base of operations, as it was situated in the midst of his new interests. Tom continued his relationship with David Wegg and other investors, some of them English, becoming their representative in Southwest Colorado. A major part of the job was to be the manager, and also a part-owner, of another pyritic smelter. It would employ the Austin process once again, for Wegg now owned the patent rights for the southern

¹²¹ Smith, Mountains of Silver, 186.

portion of the state.¹²² The new smelter was located in Silverton, to the south over formidable Red Mountain Pass, and it was completed in July 1894. To the southwest, Tom and his partners acquired mining interests in Rico, another San Juan boomtown. The best of these was the Black Hawk Mine, a consistent producer which helped pay for their other operations. Tom looked into the potential of the Ouray area as well, although he no doubt received conflicting accounts as to whether his exploration could prove worthwhile. He persisted nonetheless, and found promising results in the Ben Butler and San Bernardo mines. However, for Tom and his investors, over-all profits were inconsistent, and the glory days of the 1880s simply could not be repeated.¹²³

The Walsh family seems in dire straits compared to their well-to-do status of the 1880s. Tom's once-valuable Denver real estate would not sell, and was heavily mortgaged. Another venture in Birmingham, Alabama was equally unsuccessful. Yet in the end, Tom would recoup something from these ventures. Evalyn paints a picture of a father under great stress. Any type of childish transgression could bring out the Irish temper at its full capacity. She recalls a father with "piercing blue eyes that could be as gentle as forget-me-nots or cold as a

¹²² Letter Walsh to Wegg dated 6 May 1894, Box 77, Walsh Papers.

¹²³ Gregory, *History of Ouray*, 107; Letters Walsh to Wegg dated 10 July, 8 November 23 November, and 26 December 1894, Box 77, Walsh Papers.

blizzard wind.”¹²⁴ Faithful Annie MacDonald was kept on as a servant, but in most other respects the Walsh household appears spartan. Their first home in Ouray was the Geneva Hotel, remodeled and refitted as a dwelling (probably using Tom’s own carpentry skills) for the summer of 1895. The house on Vine Street in Denver was sold in 1896, and the Walsh family settled into year-round life in a small town. Their first permanent home was a modest, two-story residence. Evalyn’s description of her childhood at the time appears to be typical of how any other child would look for excitement (often in the form of pranks) in a small town which provided few luxuries for its residents. Her father worked hard, and frequently was absent for many days.¹²⁵

One letter, dated August 2, 1895, to business partner Wegg is a study in desperation, and is quoted by Evalyn in her book. Probably the Chicago partner had questioned why greater (or any) profits could not be realized from his investments. In a seven-page response, Walsh agonizes in phrases such as “I have no money, not even enough to pay my life insurance. I have not spent any on myself nor family beyond our support...I gathered you would like to get completely out of the mining interests...Now Dave, don’t think I have my Irish up or that I have any grievance against you...P.S. Of course if there is any way for me to keep on and hold on to our lease I will do it. In any event, I will do nothing until I hear from you first.” Tom did

¹²⁴ McLean, Father Struck It Rich, 40-44; Letter Hagood & Thomas to Walsh dated 24 September 1892, Box 1, Wilfley Papers.

hear from David Wegg in the form of a check for \$1,000, and evidently other statements of support. By the end of August, Tom's communication to Wegg demonstrates more optimism, noting that Red Mountain still holds great prospects for their venture. In a letter dated March 25, 1896, however, despair had returned. Commenting on the final demise of the Kokomo smelter (and perhaps feeling a little under-appreciated), Walsh lamented, "Without stating it in a complaining mood I have given a good deal of my time to the Austin process. Within myself I feel even though no one else agrees with me that I recovered victory from defeat at Silverton, made what was a lost investment worth something. Kokomo was ruined by the drop in silver. I am very poor, I have nothing to look forward to, and it is but natural that I should desire to have some plan mapped out by which I should get a definite sum that once more would place my family in an humble manner above want." Tom probably did not receive that sum, at least not from Wegg. Their business together continued for at least one more year, although much of it seems to have been a closing-up of affairs in Southwest Colorado. The letter of May 29, 1897 related that "...you and I have had a final adjustment and separation in all mines in which we were interested together, as well as all other interests including the Silverton smelter..." However, most of the letters from Walsh to Wegg also conveyed warm personal and family messages, evidencing a close relationship which remained after

¹²⁵ McLean, Father Struck It Rich, 36-46.

the end of the business relationship.¹²⁶

As the Walsh family settled and made Ouray acquaintances, the friends standing out most in Evalyn's account were the Thompson family, whom they had previously known in Denver. Their daughter Faith became one of her best friends, while Mrs. Thompson and Carrie developed a close relationship as well. John, the father, held himself out as a mining expert. He quickly sought to curry the favor of Walsh. Tom suspected John Thompson knew more about mining stock than the mines themselves, but nonetheless accepted the gesture of friendship with a possibility of mutual business. Later, under far different circumstances, he stated that he only accommodated Thompson because of the closeness of their wives. The two men would frequently take trips together into the mountains for four or five days, investigating mining property. No apparent commercial mining developments resulted from the trips. On one occasion, in June 1895, Walsh helped Thompson locate mining claims for the benefit of some mutual friends. Tom kept no interest in the claims, later assigning them to Thompson and his company. Beyond this, Tom would later strongly assert, the two men had no business dealings whatsoever. An associate recalled Walsh's assessment of Thompson as good socially, but otherwise tricky and unreliable. Yet John Thompson must have been impressed with Walsh's knowledge and his willingness to share (perhaps incorrectly seen as gullibility). If

¹²⁶ Letters Walsh to Wegg dated 2 August, 18 August and 29 August; 1895; 25 March 1896; 29 May 1897, all in Box 77, Walsh Papers. No letters from Wegg to Walsh in the papers of this time.

the riches Thompson wanted could not be found immediately in a joint mining venture, perhaps there was another way to tap the Walsh expertise. John Thompson, it seems, was willing to bide his time.¹²⁷

Daughter, I've Struck It Rich

Tom's Silverton smelter needed some low-grade gold ore for flux in processing. He looked to the Imogene Basin as a source. By this time it held many abandoned mines operated as much as eighteen to twenty years before. He formed a friendship with the area's discoverer, Andy Richardson. Evalyn remembered Andy as a frequent guest at the house, an old prospector who wore a coat turning green at the seams. He had thick callouses on his hands, and great tufts of hair growing out of each ear. He fell in love with Annie MacDonald, never mind that he was married to Imogene. Andy had worked the basin for years without any major success, and now the low price of silver had severely depressed its values. He still remained loyal to the beautiful place he had named for his wife, and he greatly respected Walsh because he too was interested in the area. Andy did not believe the Imogene held any gold values, but Tom had strong reason to disagree. He had recognized what he thought to be the same pink spar which he knew to be a precursor of gold

¹²⁷ Letters Walsh to Davies dated 31 January 1903, Box 9; Osborn to Walsh, dated 5 September 1903, Box 77; Walsh to Benson dated 17 April 1904, Box 78; and "Answers of Thomas F. Walsh to Complaint of John A. Thompson," n.d., Box 103; all in Walsh Papers.

from his work in the Deer Horn and Summit mines near Cripple Creek.¹²⁸

Their discussions revealed to Walsh that this area of at least some mining potential could be purchased for very little. He was able to pick up much of the area from owners only too happy to part with their claims. Several others, including the Gertrude, could be purchased at tax or sheriff's sales. However, Tom's health was beginning to fail, as the long-term effect of a fever he had contracted twenty years before, no doubt intensified by his many years working in mines. Still, he put in long hours getting together a land position in the Imogene. In July 1896 he traveled into the area to look at his newly purchased Hidden Treasure mine, which Andy Richardson strongly felt could live up to its name.¹²⁹

What happened next is best explained in Tom Walsh's own words, as told to an audience of graduating Colorado School of Mines students in 1908:¹³⁰

Along in the '80s, millions of dollars were expended in the development of the silver-lead veins and the erection of mills in the

¹²⁸ McLean, Father Struck It Rich, 42-49; Rickard, "Two Famous Mines – II," Mining and Scientific Press, 30 December 1911.

¹²⁹ Rickard, "Two Famous Mines – II," Mining and Scientific Press, 30 December 1911. Rickard believed Walsh had actually seen fluorite at Cripple Creek, and either rhodonite or rhodochrosite in the Imogene Basin.

¹³⁰ Walsh speech quoted in *Denver Times*, 9 April 1910, 8.

Imogene Basin, nine miles from Ouray. Miles of drift tunnels and shafts were driven and sunk upon the strong veins that pass through that basin. Immense hoisting and concentrating plants were installed to handle and treat the ores, all of which proved an entire failure. As time went on, the mills and machinery were sold.

The mines were shut down, and when in 1896 I came upon the scene, the section was generally condemned as a failure; the country was abandoned save by one man, Mr. Andy Richardson, as honest and loyal a man as ever lived; one of the oldest pioneers of Ouray. He was the first white man to cross the range from Red Mountain, eighteen or twenty years before, to prospect Imogene Basin. After examining the locality, I concluded that by owning all of the properties in the basin, and making a large output, I could make the low grade mines pay handsomely. Following this up, I commenced buying all the prospects and mines that were offered me, and as no one believed it possible to succeed where so much money had been lost, everyone who owned a claim was anxious to dispose of it to me. At the particular time I speak of, I had already acquired a large number of claims.

I was offered one away up near the summit of the range, and started one day in the company of Mr. Richardson to examine it. We rode as far as we could and climbed the rest of the way. The trail ran along the slope and high up the side of a steep mountain. About three-fourths of the way up from where we left the horses we came to a slide of reddish pyritiferous porphyry. It at once attracted my attention as being a very strong indication of having gold in or near it. We went up, examined the prospect, and as we came down I took samples from the porphyry slide. I asked Andy if gold was ever found in the basin, and he said: "No, Mr. Walsh, there is no gold in Imogene, except the little associated with silver and lead." I said: "Andy, I believe there is gold in Imogene, and I am going to find it."

I had the samples of porphyry assayed and it ran \$2 to the ton. This confirmed my suspicion. Among the claims I owned at the time there was one located at about the same altitude some 300 feet from where I sampled the porphyry. I never saw the workings of this claim because a snowslide that never melted covered the tunnel to a great depth. I suspected this vein passed through or near the porphyry dike, and that it carried gold values. Some days after I was taken ill and went to Excelsior Springs for treatment.

Before leaving I told Andy to drive a tunnel through the snow and have samples for me on my return. Impatient to get back, I left

the Springs against the doctor's advice and returned to Ouray in two weeks, got on my horse the next morning, and started off for our cabin in the basin. Here Andy gave me two or three sacks of samples, saying: "These are the ones you asked me to get." Something within me said: "Go and take your own samples. Remember, Andy has been in the basin for eighteen years and has never found gold." I threw them aside saying: "Andy, I must see and sample the vein for myself." He said: "Oh, Mr. Walsh, you're too sick and weak to go up there today." I said: "No, Andy, I'm going." He saddled the horses, helped me on mine, and we rode as near the tunnel as possible. With a great effort I reached it.

Outside I found a dump of very showy ore, having zinc, lead and some copper pyrites. I went inside and examined the vein. There I found an eighteen-inch streak of the same kind of ore that was on the dump. Between it and the hanging wall there was about three feet of modest looking quartz. It had none of the adjoining mineral in it and looked so barren that the average miner would consider it no good; but as I examined it closely I saw little specks and thread-like circles of glistening black mineral all through it which experience told me was gold in the tellurium form.

My illness was completely forgotten and I became so alert in sampling the grayish looking quartz that Andy grew quite uneasy and asked me not to work so hard. Thinking that I did not see the low grade metalliferous streak he called my attention to it, saying that was the pay streak. I said: "Never mind, Andy; I always assay everything in a vein." However, I took some samples from the galena zinc streak and got returns from them of \$8 a ton, while the samples from the common rock ran as high as \$3,000.

I came back, looked over the situation and found that the men who did the work, although they were no ordinary prospectors, saved the showy low-grade stuff and threw the modest but rich ore over the dump, from which I afterward shipped it.

At this story into a sermon for his young engineer listeners on the value of a through knowledge of metals:

From this experience you can draw not one, but many lessons. It teaches you to look for opportunity in any place. I found my greatest and best up here on the side of a bleak and barren

mountain, far from vegetation and on a trail that thousands had in years past walked over, for it was one of the trails leading from Ouray to Telluride. It teaches you not to despise modest looking rock for sparkling, showy ore. It teaches you to have a thorough knowledge of all kinds of mineral bearing ore, and lastly, it teaches you to send no one to do your work, but to go yourself. If I had accepted Andy's samples, which were taken from the low grade streak, the great Camp Bird mine might have remained undiscovered for years, hidden and guarded with its covering of perpetual snow.¹³¹

Tom had found the Gertrude's long-held secret. In reality what he had found was a major geologic structure left behind by volcanic activity of the mid-Tertiary time, twenty-eight to thirty-two million years before. Massive volcanoes, called calderas, were formed in what is now called the San Juan Mountains. One of these, the Silverton caldera, eventually subsided and in so doing formed a major east-west vein structure to the northwest of the caldera center. Now called the Camp Bird vein, it was left rich in gold, copper, lead, zinc and other minerals. Then it was buried over the millions of years of its life. To further evade detection, the ore was not deposited continuously along the vein, but rather occurred at or near junctions with cross-veins, in what are called ore "shoots." The ore of Camp Bird vein was concentrated in four main shoots – the Discovery, Bluebird, Gertrude, and Hematite. A few smaller shoots were also found along the vein. The highest-grade gold deposits usually consisted of small, irregularly-shaped grains dispersed throughout a quartz matrix. It was not unusual to discover such valuable ore deposits still hidden

¹³¹ "Yield of Millions and More Millions Assured," *Denver Times*, 9 April 1910, 8.

after years of activity by settlers. The great Cripple Creek deposit, another buried caldera, was found beneath lands believed useful only for ranching.¹³²

For Walsh, secrecy and disguise were the order of the day in July 1896. Faithful Andy Richardson could always be trusted, yet even he did not immediately receive the full report. Still, the assayer did have to become a party of knowledge. By one account, Walsh had a clever solution for this. To the man's astonishment at the richness of the ore, and the probability that it had been found nearby, Tom merely replied, "Confound those children, they've gone and mixed up a lot of Cripple Creek specimens with some recently obtained in the district and this is the result."¹³³ He also took some samples to Leadville for assay, far away from the small circle of Ouray.

By Evalyn's account, she was the only person Tom could trust with the information. Carrie was away at the time tending to her sick mother, and Vinson at age eight might have had trouble keeping so monumental a piece of news to himself. Tom called his ten-year-old daughter into a room and closed the door. He told her of his next trip to the mountains, following an excursion they had made together. He showed her the unimpressive grayish quartz, and wetted it with his tongue to distinguish its tiny threads and circles of gold. When she was ready to

¹³² Rosemeyer, "The Camp Bird Mine," 129; Ed Raines, "Colorado Gold: Part 2 – The Discovery, Mining History, Geology, and Specimen Mineralogy of Selected Occurrences in Central Colorado and the San Juans," *Rocks & Minerals*, Vol. 72, No. 5, Sept./Oct. 1997.

¹³³ *Silverite-Plainedealer*, 14 December 1910; *Denver Republican*, 3 December 1899.

jump for joy, he reminded her that they were sharing a very important secret.

"Daughter, " he whispered, "I've struck it rich." ¹³⁴

¹³⁴ McLean, Father Struck It Rich, 53-54.

CHAPTER 8

THE FABULOUS CAMP BIRD MINE

Tom had already put together a sizeable portion of the Imogene Basin. Now, he needed to move quietly. During the remainder of 1896, he acquired nearly all the remaining claims, and staked most of the basin's unclaimed ground. While a common belief is that he accomplished his entire purchase of the basin for around \$8,000, at least one commentator has put the figure closer to \$20,000-25,000.¹³⁵ Yet another source has him paying \$60,000 for the Una claim alone. Deeds of record in Ouray County recite a total consideration of \$52,850 for Walsh's 1896-1910 purchase of mining claims in the Imogene Basin. However, not all deeds recite consideration, and it has never been uncommon for deeds to fail to state the correct consideration. The conservative Walsh had a practice of never paying more than the value of the ore in sight.¹³⁶ He probably did not even have to pay that much. Whatever the exact figure, it became a bargain at any price when compared to what happened next. The secret remained until the fall. When it was finally made public,

¹³⁵ *Rocky Mountain News*, 9 April 1910.

¹³⁶ "The Adventures and Successes of Thomas F. Walsh," *Silverite-Plaindealer*, 14 December 1900; Richard H. Peterson, *The Bonanza Kings*, (Lincoln: Univ. of Nebraska Press, 1971), 48. Deeds of record, Clerk and Recorder for Ouray County, Thomas F. Walsh, grantee, 1896-1901.

Tom Walsh owned just about everything, and many an experienced miner could be found shaking his head. In the words of renowned mining engineer T.A. Rickard, who inspected the property: "Moral: Never fail to test the ore of a drift that is penetrating into new ground, and never assume that ore is poor because it *looks* like ore you know to be poor."¹³⁷ In the words of former-owner William Weston, "The man who sells for a big price in cash a colt that years after becomes a derby winner, and who then regrets he sold it, has a mean streak in his composition. He ought to be glad that the other fellow made a good thing out of it..."¹³⁸ Not everyone who had given up on the Imogene was as charitable as Weston.

In the winter of 1896-97, Tom Walsh and Andy Richardson began the actual formation of the mine. Eight miners helped Walsh and Richardson extend the drift east and west along the vein. Tom and Andy felt the mine needed a new name. Overlooking all the usual sources, those invoking such glorious matters as victory, wealth, heroic or mythical figures, or of course women's names, Walsh merely chose a common sight around the area. A noisy jay (actually the gray jay, *Perisoreus Canadensis*, or camp bird) frequently tried to steal the miners' food, and, according to one story, a flock of them had just devoured Tom's lunch when he returned from finding the first rich ore. Under the circumstances, he considered

¹³⁷ Rickard, *Across the San Juan Mountains*, 29.

¹³⁸ "William Weston Tells," *Ouray Herald*, Ouray, Colorado, 8 December 1911.

them a good omen, and the mine became the Camp Bird.¹³⁹ Other sources do not paint so colorful a story, one noting that Camp Bird was an existing claim staked by Richardson, the name perhaps used by Walsh to distract attention from the Gertrude. Of course, it is possible that both stories are true. However, Camp Bird was not an uncommon name for a mine or claim in Colorado (possibly because the birds themselves were very common). No less than sixteen Camp Birds could be found within the state in the late Nineteenth Century, many of them pre-dating Tom's bonanza. The earliest was found in Park County in 1880.¹⁴⁰

Duly named, work on the most famous of the Camp Birds proceeded rapidly. The first two cars of ore were shipped out in October 1896. This was followed by three cars in November, six in December, five in January 1897, seven in February, and progressively increasing amounts thereafter. The U.S. Depository Mill, one mile away, processed the first ores. Development work proceeded rapidly in 1897. From the first tunnel, called the Gertrude level, a stope was taken out 120 feet long by 129 feet high and an upraise made to the surface about 200 feet above. Another tunnel at about the same elevation, called the Blue Bird level, reached the vein in July. In September the workers also commenced a new tunnel 220 feet lower than the Gertrude, at 11,500 feet, called the 2-level. Plans were finalized for a more modern

¹³⁹ Rosemeyer, "Camp Bird Mine," 117; Melrose, "Tom Walsh's Luncky Hunch," *Rocky Mountain News*, 2 February 1947, B-7; "Ouray Mourns the Death of the Discoveror of the Camp Bird Mine," *Plainealer*, 15 April 1910.

¹⁴⁰ See the card catalogue, Western History Department, Denver Public Library.

mill, which would use twenty stamps to process 70 tons per day. Its location was two miles below the mine, at the junction of Canyon and Imogene Creeks. The small settlement which developed at the site took the name of Potosi, after the 13,700-foot peak to the northwest. All the while Walsh had his workers keep up surveying and locating of additional claims. On November 12, 1897, Ouray's *Silverite-Plaindealer* announced, "Thomas F. Walsh has placed the Camp Bird on good condition for winter work...The shipments of gold ore continue to come down with no diminution in quantity or quality. Between 80 and 100 men are on the payrolls and it is the concensus of opinion among the workmen that they could receive no better treatment in any other mine in the state."¹⁴¹ Part of that treatment was the building of a temporary boardinghouse at a point about halfway between the mine and Ouray, near the future location of the mill. The building also housed a telephone connection to the mine's Ouray office. Construction of the mill commenced December 14.¹⁴²

In the early stages of mine development Tom kept Andy Richardson as his mine manager. Andy possessed a wealth of experience in the Imogene Basin and Tom appreciated his loyalty. However, as Camp Bird grew it needed an experienced manager, and Andy had worked mostly as a prospector. Late in 1897

¹⁴¹ Rosemeyer, "Camp Bird Mine," 118; *Silverite-Plaindealer*, Ouray, CO, 12 November 1897, 1; *Denver Republican*, 3 December 1899, 25.

¹⁴² *Silverite-Plaindealer*, 19 November 1897, 1.

Walsh replaced Richardson with John Benson. Benson's work with Walsh dated back to Cripple Creek, where he managed the Deer Horn for Tom. Later he ran Tom's successful Black Hawk mine in Rico. The two men probably knew each other in Leadville even before that time. Additionally they shared origins in Ireland. Benson would go on to receive high praise for his management of the Camp Bird. Andy Richardson continued to serve as the mine superintendent.¹⁴³

In the week of February 11, 1898, the 2-level tunnel reached the Camp Bird vein 750 feet into the mountain. A month later an upraise from the 2-level reached the Gertrude level. At about the same time, the new amalgamating-concentrating mill, completed in mid-February, was reported working perfectly in all respects. Water from the roaring creeks supplied its power for the five ice-free months of the year, with a 110-horse-power Reynolds-Corliss engine operating the remainder of the time. It was a simple mill to construct, for the ore passing through required only free milling (as opposed to treatment by chemicals to separate metals from waste rock). Thus the mill's only machines for treatment were its stamps for crushing, and its 20 vanners for separating free gold from the resulting amalgam. Seventy-five percent of the gold values were caught on the plates of the vanners. So rapidly did the amalgam pile up that manager John Benson needed to come up with a solution to prevent loss of values. He invented a well for quicksilver to be placed below each

¹⁴³ *Denver Republican*, 3 December 1899, 25; letter Walsh to Benson dated 28 December 1904, Box 78, Walsh Papers.

plate, which would catch all free gold escaping the plates. The mill's average output was fifty tons per day, producing a gold-silver retorted sponge and a gold-silver-copper-lead concentrate worth about \$150 per ton. Two mule pack trains a day carried the mill's output down the steep Canyon Creek Road to the rail connection in Ouray. The road was another route Otto Mears had carved into the side of a canyon wall, yet been unable to construct to railroad grade. After its smooth start, the mill operated continuously for the rest of the year.¹⁴⁴

In September 1898 another major tunnel, the 3-level, was commenced at 11,200 feet. Its mouth contained an approach of heavy timbers for a distance of about 300 feet to protect against snow slides. A short Houston tram was constructed to connect the higher tunnels with the 3-level. Then, to cover the 9,000-foot-long route from the mouth of the 3-level tunnel to the mill, with its 1,350-foot vertical drop, a Bleichert aerial tramway was commenced on September 15, 1898. The building of this immense structure, together with the Camp Bird's contribution to a large increase in Ouray County gold production, caught the attention of the Denver press. It was impressed with the hard work and ingenuity of tram-builder E.H. Taylor, who quickly put sixty-eight carpenters to work on a job. Walsh had demanded that Taylor complete the work in ninety days, before the worst snows closed the roads for the winter. The two men reached an agreement that the time

¹⁴⁴ Rosemeyer, "Camp Bird Mine," 118; *Denver Republican*, 3 December 1899, 25; *Denver Times*, 23 September, 3 October 1898; *Mining Reporter*, Denver, 29 September, 1898.

might even be shortened with Walsh supplying all men and materials, Taylor providing the supervision. Plans called for a main tramway and a system of sub-trams radiating from the main line in all directions, which would keep the mill running day and night. Sites for the tram's towers were carefully surveyed, with ground cleared to the living rock, erection of substantial masonry piers, and snow splits to protect the exposed structures. The project was carried out without a mishap, and completed in a record forty-eight days. The tram's buckets held 700 pounds of ore, with a capacity of twelve tons per hour. Eventually it would carry 100 to 140 tons of ore per day. Like the mill, it ran flawlessly for a long time. The press reported that its only maintenance cost was grease, and the original traction rope was still in operation more than a year later. This attested to accuracy of design and construction, for such ropes normally had an operating life of only four to five months.¹⁴⁵

The year 1899 saw further tunnel construction, especially as the 3-level pushed toward the vein. Higher up, another tunnel at the Hancock level sought lead and silver values in a vein which intersected the Camp Bird near the Gertrude. The elevation was between the Gertrude and 2-levels. The Hancock vein was reached at a point 350 feet from the Camp Bird vein, and large quantities of low-grade ores values revealed. Walsh and Benson began plans for a lead mill. However, their biggest project for the year was completion of the permanent boardinghouse. It was

¹⁴⁵ *Denver Times*, 23 September, 3 October 1898; *Denver Republican*, 3 December 1899.

begun in August and completed in October, at a cost of \$40,000. The three-story structure was steam-heated, electric-lighted, capable of housing 400, and located near the portal of the 3-level. It became famous as one of the greatest accommodations ever built for mine workers, and is further described in the next chapter. By the end of 1899 the mine and the mill employed about 225 men.¹⁴⁶

The December 3, 1899 edition of the *Denver Republican* carried a full-page article entitled "Story of the Wonderful Camp Bird Mine." Calling the mine a "Golden monument to the shrewdness and enterprise of Thomas F. Walsh," the article provided a thorough description of its history and current operations. The Camp Bird now boasted not quite \$3,000,000 in total production, with 4,400 feet of tunnel levels exposing the vein, and more than six miles of the vein actually traced. All production had been taken from the 120-by-129-foot stope in the Gertrude level, the 2,300-by-40-foot stope in the 2-level, and the drifts. Since this amounted to development of little more than one-eighth of the total vein, the mine's future potential was very great. Walsh's shrewdness was reflected in the care he took to identify and assay both his original discovery, and every few feet of all newly exposed vein structure. The ore discovered by these methods "stands alone among the ores of Colorado as yet discovered. It is a pure white quartz, streaked with seams of black telluride ore. There is no indication of the values contained in either

¹⁴⁶ *Denver Times*, 9 February, 14 August, 8 October, 31 December 1899; *Denver Republican*, 3 December 1899.

material, and yet the white quartz frequently carries from six to eight ounces in free gold, while the streaks of telluride sometimes runs as high as 200 ounces." The ore body in the mine was three to fourteen feet wide, with seventy-five percent of its values yielding to amalgamation. Walsh also held to a firm policy of development rather than production, requiring that several years of future production be blocked out before any increase in output. His was an efficient and experienced staff, reflecting his hiring and management skills. Singled out for praise in their work were Benson, Richardson, mill superintendent W.H. Coates, and electrician A.H. Fiery, all of whom were paid top wages. The reporter concluded that "when the extent of the underground development is taken into consideration, the assertion that it is the greatest gold mine in the world is fully warranted."¹⁴⁷

The 3-level tunnel was extended, eventually crossing the Camp Bird vein in the spring of 1900. Its length from portal to vein was 2,300 feet. By November, it was reported as 1,500 feet in length on each side of the cross-cut, showing that the ore bodies developed above were also present below. Eventually this level would become the source of all mining for Walsh. Production was increasing so rapidly that new stamps needed to be added to the mill each year. By 1900, sixty stamps raised its capacity to 200 tons per day. A March report noted that the previous year's operations had required \$250,000 for machinery alone, and 1,700,000 feet of lumber

¹⁴⁷ *Denver Republican*, 3 December 1899, 25.

for construction and mine timbering, with further large outlays predicted for the current year. Also in March the experimental lead mill was put into operation. Another experiment was in use of cyanide to further extract gold from the large volume of tailing produced by the Potosi mill. San Francisco expert Frank L. Bosquin's tests proved that the cyanide process could save eighty percent of the tailings, producing an output of three dollars per ton, at an expense of seventy-five cents per ton. A 150-ton cyanide mill was completed in August, but by November Benson placed an order for the doubling of its capacity. The Camp Bird had now reached just about its greatest surface extent, with 103 lode mining claims and twelve millsites, covering 941 acres altogether.¹⁴⁸

Noted geologist Charles W. Henderson appraised the Camp Bird in July 1900. He reported that from inception in 1896 through that date, the mine had produced a value of recovered metallic contents (gold, silver, lead, copper) of \$2,535,512, with a profit to Walsh of \$1,650,000.¹⁴⁹ Rumors were now abounding that the mine was for sale. In the same month T.A. Rickard produced the same values as Henderson in a report prepared for prospective London purchasers. Rickard appraised the mine's 1900 value at \$6,000,000, with an estimated \$6,118,800 in reserve, the ore averaging five feet in width along the vein, and forty-

¹⁴⁸ Rosemeyer, "Camp Bird Mine," 120; *Mining Reporter*, 1 March, 9 August and 1 November 1900; *Denver Times*, 15 April and 23 November 1900; Rickard, "Two Famous Mines II."

¹⁴⁹ Charles W. Henderson, "Mining in Colorado," Prof. Paper 138, Dept. of Interior, U.S.G.S., 1926.

eight dollars per ton.¹⁵⁰ John Benson dismissed reporters' questions about any sale, stating that he just needed to go about developing the mine. While rumors circulated for nearly two years, Walsh and Benson continued business as usual. In 1901 the number of stamps at the mill was increased to eighty, while the cyanide plant doubled in capacity. The plants were now receiving electric power from the Vance Junction station, twenty miles away. Periodic reports told of discoveries of rich new veins of ore, most likely just extensions of the long Camp Bird vein. One such report in February 1902 told of extra mounted guards now assigned to the Camp Bird stage shipments bound for Ouray, now totaling \$5,000 to \$10,000 daily. Actually, extra guards had been a reality since an abortive 1899 robbery. Benson agreed that there had been many new developmental expenditures in the last year, but now stated that no new additions of great value would be made during the rest of 1902. The sale of the Camp Bird came within three months. In a later appraisal, Henderson found that from his July 1900 report through April 1902, the mine had recovered additional metal value of \$1,500,000, with Walsh's profit placed at \$750,000. No wonder Evalyn would later call the operation a "gold engine." For its final two years in her father's ownership, its daily profits (which she exaggerated at \$5,000) virtually guaranteed that each morning the Walsh family woke up richer than the night before.¹⁵¹

¹⁵⁰ Rickard, "Two Famous Mines II."

A common myth has it that Tom Walsh, destitute and down on his luck, found a very rich deposit of gold ore and proceeded in rapid fashion to build a world-class mine which paid for itself. As a practical matter, this would have been nearly impossible. The ore simply could not have been dug from the ground, processed, and sold on the market quickly enough to pay for the extensive capital improvements placed on the Camp Bird. True, those mainstays of Western mining development, the Eastern bankers and investors, are noticeably absent. Walsh had a stated philosophy that he would not go into the mining stock business, nor engage in "flotations of property on a stock basis."¹⁵² Even long-time business partner David Wegg was not involved in the Camp Bird. Wegg knew about the Camp Bird and Walsh's success. Apparently he was firm in his decision to retire from mining involvement in the area, for the two men continued as friends.¹⁵³

Yet despite the dark tone of some of his letters of 1895 and early 1896, (which might have been overly pessimistic), Walsh had apparently run into a bit of luck before finding his rich mine. Over the mountains to the southwest, his Black Hawk mine at Rico was his first acquisition of a San Juan mining property. Taking

¹⁵¹ Henderson, "Mining in Colorado"; *Denver Times*, 26 February, 12 June 1901, 23 February 1902; Mining Reporter, 21 February 1901; McLean, Father Struck It Rich, 78-86.

¹⁵² Peterson, The Bonanza Kings, 97; Letter William Dunham to Walsh, dated 23 February 1903, Box 77, Walsh Papers.

¹⁵³ Letters Walsh to Wegg, dated May 12 and May 13, 1897, Box 77, Walsh Papers. These letters are on Camp Bird Mine letterhead.

over a mine which had been losing money, he soon found a large shoot of sulphide ore for which a Durango smelter was willing to pay a premium. According to one source, he "cleaned up a neat little fortune."¹⁵⁴ Even his earliest Ouray properties, such as the Black Girl and American Nettie, and the San Bernardo mine near Telluride, brought him small profits. The early development of the Camp Bird required Tom to reach into his own pocket, and the money was there. By one estimate, before he even received any return on the property, he had paid nearly \$100,000 for labor, supplies, acquisition of adjoining properties, water and timber rights, experimentation in milling, and other steps to perfect his plans. He is said to have paid hundreds of dollars for assaying. If the need arose, he had excellent credit with Colorado's bankers from his long dealings with them. In fact his only loan to develop the Camp Bird came from his old friend David Moffat, now president of the First National Bank of Denver.¹⁵⁵ A Denver reporter, three years after the discovery of the Camp Bird, referred to the stories of poverty before riches as "mere fairy tales."¹⁵⁶ Tom Walsh knew how to survive the Silver Crash and then profit handsomely from it, searching spent silver mines for a golden lining.

¹⁵⁴ "Walsh Rose from Poor Boy Born on Irish Farm, to Wield Power Won by his Millions," *Rocky Mountain News*, 9 April 1910.

¹⁵⁵ "Acquisition of Camp Bird a Masterstroke," *Denver Post*, 9 April 1910.

¹⁵⁶ "Story of the Wonderful Camp Bird Mine," *Denver Republican*, 3 September 1899.

CHAPTER 9

WALSH ON LABOR

The Camp Bird mine and mills employed up to 500 laborers during the tenure of Tom Walsh. Here a test would be made as to whether Tom's newfound wealth in any way changed his outlook on those not so fortunate. Evalyn recalled that her father and John Benson had seen labor-related violence in other camps, and agreed that there should be no problems with their workers at the Camp Bird. In 1894 Walsh had expressed his concerns in a letter to David Wegg, bemoaning that, "As I write our country is almost in the throes of anarchy. The Pullman strike has stopped everything, caused riots and bloodshed, especially in Chicago, with millions of property destroyed. I don't know what we are coming to. You should rejoice at being both out of office and out of the country."¹⁵⁷

Tom poured large amounts of Camp Bird profits into surface improvements over five years, including a self-contained community with shops, warehouses, and the greatest showpiece, the famous three-story boardinghouse. Knowing that at over 11,000 feet, miners could frequently become snow-bound, their boss brought

¹⁵⁷ McLean, Father Struck It Rich, 63; Letter Walsh to Wegg dated 10 July 1894, Box 77, Walsh Papers, quoted in Peterson, The Bonanza Kings, 76.

them all the comforts of home, rated as on a par with the best hotels in the area. The Camp Bird miners received sleeping rooms for two men, equipped with marble-topped basins and porcelain tubs in the lavatories, not to mention hot and cold running water. As the mine itself was an early one to electrify, and the bunkhouse also contained electric lights, not to mention steam heat. Miners ate off china plates in spacious dining rooms served by modern kitchens. Camp Bird milk bottles became collectors' items in a later time. The miners had time for leisure, for Walsh restricted their shifts to eight hours. The recreation and smoking rooms held pool tables, subscriptions to seventeen different newspapers and magazines, and comfortable chairs for reading. On the second story was the company store, featuring all kinds of clothing and supplies, and also paper and pencils for letters home. For all this, room and board cost one dollar a day.¹⁵⁸

When the men worked the mines, they found the latest in compressed air drills and electric locomotives to haul the ore to the surface. Camp Bird payroll records during Walsh's ownership have not survived. One source has noted that wages for the eight-hour shift ran as high as \$4.50 per day for miners and engineers, while blacksmiths earned \$4.00. Another stated that while the machine men driving the tunnels earned a base rate of \$3.00 per day, that amount could be advanced in proportion to the number of feet driven in a month. Two hundred feet of rock work

¹⁵⁸ Rosemeyer, "Camp Bird Mine," 120; *Denver Republican*, 3 December 1899; "Life at Camp Bird," *Silverite-Plainealer*, 1 November 1901.

in a month entitled the men to \$7.00 per day. There were few months in which this goal was not met.¹⁵⁹

By taking care of its laborers, the Camp Bird avoided strikes. Such was seldom the case for other mines of the times, in the San Juans or elsewhere in the state and the West. A strike occurred near the Camp Bird in 1896. On December 3, workers walked off their jobs at the Revenue and Virginus Mines, demanding eight-hour shifts and expressing grievances against supervisors. The mine manager was Hubbard Reed, who with his brother years before had helped drive the tunnel for the Gertrude and Una, and then acquired the Una. Earlier in the year, he had sold the Una to Walsh in the latter's purchase of most of the Imogene Basin. The Una, like the Gertrude, proved to contain a sizeable portion of the Camp Bird vein. Now Reed, with a good record as a manager, faced his first strike. Matters were soon settled, after some threats of violence, and normal conditions returned by February 1897. However, it was only a small part of increasing labor agitation locally, and throughout the West. For Hubbard Reed it was a bitter pill for Tom Walsh to find the mineral wealth which had eluded him for so many years, and then see Walsh provide benefits to workers which Reed's struggling mines could not match. Hubbard Reed soon left the area.¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁹ H.A. Titcomb, "The Camp Bird Gold Mine and Mills," *School of Mines Quarterly*, Vol. XXIV, (Golden: Colo. School of Mines), Nov. 1902, 1; *Denver Republican*, 3 December 1899; Rosemeyer, "Camp Bird Mine," 120.

¹⁶⁰ Gregory, *The Great Revenue*, 147-150, 171-172.

Walsh had already witnessed some of the earliest labor-related violence to hit the Colorado mining industry near his holdings in Cripple Creek and Leadville. The 1894 strike in Cripple Creek was an early effort by the newly-formed Western Federation of Miners (the infamous "W.F.M" or even "Western Federation of Murderers" to owners). It succeeded, largely due to support from Colorado's one-term, Populist governor, Davis "Bloody Bridles" Waite. Waite received his nickname from an inflammatory speech in which he proclaimed that against the strong hand of money power, "we shall meet the issue when it is forced upon us, for it is better, infinitely better, that blood should flow to the horses' bridles rather than our national liberties should be destroyed." The main goals of the strike were \$3.00 per day pay and the eight-hour day. Even Stratton, who also could remember his roots and support the workingman, was hit. However, he also was among the first to enter into negotiations with labor and agree to the three dollar, eight-hour day.¹⁶¹

In 1896, the newly-formed Cloud City Mining Union, an affiliate of the W.F.M., struck Leadville's mines. Here the workers again sought the three dollar day, a figure already paid by some mines. Among the staunchest holdouts for keeping the \$2.50 day was John Campion, lord of the booming Little Jonny Mine and an old friend of Tom Walsh from his Leadville days. Violence flared not long after the strike began and the state militia were called in, this time at the behest of

¹⁶¹ Sprague, *Money Mountain*, 133-156; Thomas J. Noel, "William D. Haywood," *Colorado Heritage*, Issue 2, 1984, 2-12.

the pro-mine owner governor, Albert McIntyre, Waite's successor. After a prolonged strike lasting well into 1897, the owners prevailed. Campion and his allies simply had more money, time and staying power. They commissioned spies to infiltrate labor ranks, and also exploited differences among the miners, many of them ethnic-related. The return to the status quo meant many miners lost their jobs. The entire community suffered, for many mines which had closed during the strike had flooded, and now remained closed. John Campion left the field shortly thereafter, destined to make a second fortune in sugar beets from the Colorado plains.¹⁶²

Governor Charles S. Thomas and the Colorado legislature actually passed a law requiring the eight-hour maximum workday for miners, smelterworkers and other occupational groups in 1899. However, the Colorado Supreme Court declared the law unconstitutional in 1902. Next the law's supporters tried a constitutional amendment, which passed in 1903. However, the legislature turned the enabling laws into a watered-down version of the amendment with loopholes whereby ten-to-twelve hour workdays could still be required by mine and smelter owners. With little help from the state, labor leaders such as William "Big Bill" Haywood of the W.F.M. continued to promote strikes around the state. These culminated in the Cripple Creek violence of 1903-04, which included an anarchist bombing leaving

¹⁶² William Philpott, The Lessons of Leadville, (Denver: Colo. Hist. Society, 1994); Ubbelohde et. al., A Colorado History, 259.

thirteen men dead. In 1901-02, Telluride was the scene of violence. On July 3, 1901, a band of some 250 armed union men attacked the big Smuggler-Union Mine, killing three non-union workers. The following year a mine manager was assassinated in his living room. The wages complained of fell into the \$3.00 - \$3.50 range.¹⁶³

Throughout the period, the Camp Bird Mine sat like an island in a stormy sea. It suffered no strikes during the tenure of Tom Walsh, nor for some time thereafter. Famed international mining engineer John Hays Hammond tells in his autobiography of one undated incident at the Camp Bird. Hammond frequented the mine, first as a representative of potential buyers, and later its general manager. One day he heard a rumor that a delegation from the International Workers of the World was headed for the Camp Bird. Hammond accused this group (better known as the I.W.W. or the "Wobblies") of responsibility for the Cripple Creek violence. Actually the IWW did not come into being until 1905, two years later, and the W.F.M. was implicated in the Cripple Creek problems, which led to its demise. Whatever the source of his troubles, Hammond immediately took action, calling a meeting of the miners, mill hands, foremen and clerks. He asked if they had any grievances against management. The reply was negative, that they liked the mine's owner and manager, and even the food. The Camp Bird men then told Hammond

¹⁶³ Gregory, The Great Revenue, 178; Ubbelohde et. al., A Colorado History, 245.

they would take care of the situation, and quickly organized a delegation to meet the "I.W.W." in the canyon below the mine. There, with menacing gestures, as Hammond related it, they ordered the agitators to leave. Whether this occurred before or after Walsh sold the mine, his legacy was such that during a turbulent period in 1903 the Camp Bird mill men, some of who were by now union members, still voted down a strike. Walsh's buyers continued many of his labor practices, including above-average wages.¹⁶⁴

Statements by some individual workers regarding their treatment also provide reasons for labor's cooperation with Walsh. One veteran miner working there at the time called the mine "one of the best managed ...the manager and owner of the Camp Bird mines are greatly liked by their vast army of employees for their considerate treatment, which is largely responsible for the constantly increasing earnings of the wonderful mine."¹⁶⁵ Walsh had also continued to operate the nearby Hidden Treasure Mine, a mine whose lower-grade ore kept it from reaching the Camp Bird's status. The mine's foreman from 1896 to 1902, Harry T. Cook, found Walsh to be in the habit of rewarding loyal employees. Cook recalled, "At the close of our business relations he presented me with \$4,000 to show his appreciation for

¹⁶⁴ John Hays Hammond, *The Autobiography of John Hays Hammond*, (New York: Farrar & Rinehart, Inc., 1935), 2 vols, 493-494; "Camp Bird Mill Men Didn't Want Strike," *Denver Times*, 26 September 1903; Peterson, *The Bonanza Kings*, 76; "Directors' Report and Statement of Accounts to 30 April 1903, Camp Bird Limited," Ouray County Historical Society Papers.

¹⁶⁵ "What Mr. O'Brien Says of the Camp Bird," *Denver Times*, 23 September 1901.

my services and he gave four other faithful workers like amounts.”¹⁶⁶ An 1899

article in a Ouray newspaper described the Walsh leadership style as follows:

He has about him trusted employees. He does not have to suspicion them or place checks upon them to know a trustworthy man. His knowledge of man is as complete as his command of details. He has never been a “boss” in the sense of asserting his superiority. He is always with all men a gentleman. He is obeyed, not because of his position, but because the ruling power is stamped on his jeans. Success has not turned his head but has added to his care to see that he shall be more successful.¹⁶⁷

Tom Walsh, as we shall see, held steadfast to his beliefs about the treatment of workingmen. The miners had a new champion to replace David Day, and one in a better position to help them.

Ideas Unlike Many of His Peers

Few other Western miners of the time had a champion like Walsh, as witnessed by the unrest of the era. His attitude about his miners placed him in a distinct minority among Western mine owners. Even his friends and contemporaries among the owning class held vastly different labor views. David Moffat, who owned considerable mining and smelting properties in Colorado, had never worked

¹⁶⁶ John W. Taylor, “Interview with Harry T. Cook,” MS, 1934, Colorado State Historical Society, 2; see also Richard H. Peterson, “Thomas F. Walsh and Western Business Elitism: The Lifestyle Of A Colorado Mining Magnate, 1896-1910,” Red River Valley Historical Review, Vol. VI, No. 4, Fall 1981, 55.

¹⁶⁷ “An Honorable and Successful Career,” *Ouray Herald*, 12 January 1899.

as a miner himself. This is cited as one reason for his fury when union miners struck his Leadville and Cripple Creek properties. Moffat, his partners, and fellow owners in the districts held firm on wages and called in pro-owner sheriff's deputies and state militia to quell strikes, often violently. A letter by Moffat's business partner, Eben Smith, summed up the attitude of many Colorado owners toward labor organizers, many of whom came from Tom Walsh's homeland. Smith told an associate to plan on closing down his Leadville mines "unless lightning strikes and kills off all the Irish."¹⁶⁸

Among the greatest of Cripple Creek fortunes was that of Spencer Penrose and his partner Charles Tutt. Their C.O.D. mine became one of the district's first big revenue-producers. After selling it for a large profit to a French concern, the partners turned to milling the rich Cripple Creek ores, and soon became the area's largest producer. Their continued success soon led to highly successful Utah copper ventures as well. In both locations they fought bitterly against union formation, and in Cripple Creek they supported the strikebreaking Colorado state militia which put down the 1903-04 strike with questionable strong-arm tactics. In Utah their labor record was even worse. Workers at Penrose and Tutt's Utah Copper operation endured low wages and miserable working conditions. Many were fired for

¹⁶⁸ Peterson, "Thomas F. Walsh and Business Elitism," 55; Philpott, Lessons of Leadville, 50.

supporting union activities.¹⁶⁹

The famous Guggenheim family made a great American fortune from Colorado mining and smelting. Their philanthropy eventually became their trademark, especially in the world of art. However, it is debatable how much philanthropy was extended to their laborers. In 1899 future Colorado Senator Simon Guggenheim did work long hours to negotiate with smelter workers in Pueblo, and averted a strike which crippled the industry elsewhere. However, this example of compromising was atypical of the family's general attitudes toward their workers. Simon's father and family patriarch, Meyer, rose from poverty in a European ghetto to wealth in America. He credited his own hard work, with few hand-outs from others, and therefore had trouble understanding the demands of labor for shorter hours, higher wages and better working conditions. He evicted Leadville miners from their shacks so he could build a tailings pile. Meyer's sons usually followed their father's labor practices. The family's smelting empire was a rare part of the industry to survive the Silver Crash, but much of this good fortune could be attributed to moving plants to Mexico and benefiting from the cheap labor to be found there. The Guggenheims' employees frequently participated in the strikes of the late Nineteenth and early Twentieth centuries. When this occurred the family would bring in strike-breakers, usually recent immigrants who would work for

¹⁶⁹ Thomas J. Noel and Cathleen M. Norman, A Pikes Peak Partnership, The Penroses and the Tutts, (Boulder: Univ. Press of Colorado, 2000), 34-46, 60-62.

cheap wages and did not realize they could be subjected to violence.¹⁷⁰

While the general attitude of American capitalists of the time was one of standing up to labor in a tough and uncompromising manner, Walsh and a few others proved that cooperation and accommodation with labor could bring benefits without accompanying work stoppage and violence. At least one other Colorado employer of the time echoed this theme. Denver smelter owner Dennis Sheedy learned a lesson from a late 1880's strike, and from then on followed a policy of kindness and an open office door for his laborers. He also provided paid leave and medical assistance to injured workers, a rarity for the time. The mine Walsh almost owned, South Dakota's Homestake, helped build the great fortunes of owners George Hearst, Lloyd Tevis and James B. Haggin. Had he become their partner, Walsh probably would have endorsed their labor policies. These included a wage of \$3.50 per day, an eight-hour day, and a company hospital dating back to the mine's early days in 1879. Hearst's wife Phoebe provided the town with a free library and a free kindergarten. The result of all this was peaceful labor-management relations which lasted for decades, broken only once by an unexpected lockout.¹⁷¹

Tom Walsh's most famous statement on the subject read:

As employers, treat your men with humanity and justice.
Provide them with clean, comfortable quarters, wholesome food, and
keep medicine at hand for their use. Money spent for their comfort is

¹⁷⁰ Edwin P. Hoyt, Jr., The Guggenheims and the American Dream, New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1967), 50-57, 120-121, 224-240, 331-350; Fell, Ores to Metals, 228-229.

¹⁷¹ Peterson, The Bonanza Kings, 74-76.

well well-spent, for besides the good results in work, you get their appreciation and loyalty, which is of incalculable value.

Strikes can nearly always be avoided by having a heart-to-heart talk with your men, by fairly and squarely presenting the state of the case from their standpoint as well as your own. In dealing with them try to get at the best side of their nature. To use a mining phrase, you will be prospecting in human hearts and may discover beauties of character little suspected.¹⁷²

Other mine owners might have found Walsh a bit naïve to make such a statement. Still, he demonstrated its worth, and to do so he must have held superior skills in dealing with his workers. He also had the right background. His past time spent as a miner was one asset. He belonged to the ranks of such former miners such as Hearst, Stratton, John Mackay of Nevada, and Marcus Daly of Montana, who proved to still be responsive to their workers even after they themselves had earned millions. Local residence was another plus, for absentee-owners were often the targets of strikes. John Mackay lived near his Comstock holdings and spent more time below ground than above, even after he had found his bonanza. Dennis Sheedy stayed nearby in Denver, for he placed a high value on communications with his employees. Even though he would later move his family away from Ouray, Walsh frequented the Camp Bird and remained a major part of the community life, first as benevolent mine owner, and soon as philanthropist.¹⁷³

¹⁷² "Walsh on Wealth and Men," *Rocky Mountain News*, 9 April 1910.

¹⁷³ See discussion in Peterson, *The Bonanza Kings*, 74-86, on attributes held by Walsh and other mine owners which led to good labor relations.

Labor on Walsh

Perhaps the best indication of organized labor's attitude toward Tom Walsh is found in what it did not say about him. The voice of the W.F.M. was *The Miners' Magazine*, published at its Denver headquarters. The magazine presented the viewpoint of the small union mineworker, with mine owners almost universally treated as a bitter enemy. Even owners and national leaders with a positive attitude toward labor still suffered its barbs. Marcus Daly was accused of buying the votes of his workers. If nothing else, John MacKay seems to have been guilty of being rich while many of his workers remained below him economically. President Theodore Roosevelt was a frequent target, a man who could do no right. William Randolph Hearst was given a W.F.M. standing of "way below zero" after a 1909 lockout of Deadwood union laborers.¹⁷⁴ Simon Guggenheim was accused of murder due to having a remote connection to a 1904 incident in Denver. Although he continued Walsh's labor practices at the Camp Bird while serving as its general manager, John Hays Hammond had "perjured his black soul" by lying on the witness stand and sending Idaho union members to the

¹⁷⁴ *The Miners' Magazine*, Western Fed. Of Miners, Denver, Archives, University of Colorado at Boulder Libraries. See for example issues of April 1900 (Daly), July 1900 (Roosevelt), September 1902 (MacKay), 7 April 1910 (Hearst).

penitentiary.¹⁷⁵

While reporting labor conditions in the San Juans and elsewhere, *The Miners Magazine* generally failed to mention Walsh and the Camp Bird. A December 1900 strike at the Ouray smelter was covered, offering support to workers who wanted three dollars a day, not \$2.50. When W.F.M. leaders toured the San Juan region in September 1900, the organization of Red Mountain workers by the local Ouray union received notice. An April 1902 report on the state of Local No. 15 in Ouray found it in good shape and growing in members. As with the 1900 tour, the fact that no members worked at the Camp Bird was not mentioned. The biggest problem reported in 1902 was the presence of Ouray's Chinese citizens. In the September 1900 issue, John Kennedy, a prominent member of the same Ouray local, wrote positively in a letter to the editor about the unionization of an Arizona mine. While his letter was postmarked "Camp Bird, Colorado," neither he nor the editor suggested that his local mine should also be unionized.¹⁷⁶

On three occasions *The Miners' Magazine* actually spoke of Walsh in a positive light. In January 1901 it reported on a statement by Walsh that he intended to keep the Camp Bird. The magazine found this to be good news to the miners employed by him. Later in the same year, Ouray Local No. 15 reported on plans for

¹⁷⁵ *The Miners' Magazine*. See November 1900 (Hammond), 10 March 1904 (Guggenheim).

¹⁷⁶ *The Miners' Magazine*, September 1900 (J. Kennedy letter), October 1900 (San Juan tour), December 1900 (Ouray strike), April 1902 (Ouray No. 15).

the Labor day picnic. Thomas F. Walsh had accepted an invitation to address the gathering, joining, among others, W.F.M. official John M. O'Neill (editor of the magazine). The Camp Bird and Bachelor mines agreed to close for the day, with the expressed hope that "other mines in the area will be as liberal." When the April 1902 edition of the magazine reported on contents of other magazines, it noted with favor that the leading contribution to the February issue of the *American Monthly Review of Reviews* was from the pen of Thomas F. Walsh, making an appeal for national irrigation.¹⁷⁷ If Tom Walsh had at best a sort of "truce" with organized labor, even this fact placed him far ahead of nearly any other Western mine owner.

¹⁷⁷ *The Miners' Magazine*, January 1901 (Keep Camp Bird), September 1901 (Labor Day), April 1902 (Irrigation article)

CHAPTER 10

PHILANTHROPY AND ENTERTAINMENT IN OURAY

Walsh remembered others besides his own employees. Ouray's miners had established their own hospital in 1887, ably assisted by Day and the *Solid Muldoon*, who aroused (some say shamed) the townspeople to the need. The Sisters of Mercy took over the job of administering to the sick and injured. The small hospital lost a great deal of contributions as a result of the 1893 Silver Crash, and in 1895 the Sisters were forced to announce they would soon close if no more money was available. The relatives of one sister took over responsibility for care, while the others attempted to raise funds. By 1899, they were unable to meet the \$3,500 bank loan. Tom Walsh, despite being a rather lapsed Catholic, came to their aid and paid off the mortgage. His only request was that his own loan would never come due as long as the Sisters ran the hospital.¹⁷⁸ Later, when he was named U.S. Commissioner to the Paris Exhibition of 1900, he donated one-third of his salary (\$1,000) to finish payment for the hospital's new heating apparatus. The remainder of his salary was donated to the charities of Denver and of Washington, D.C.¹⁷⁹

¹⁷⁸ Gregory, *History of Ouray*, 79-81; *The Colorado Miner*, Denver, December 1900.

Every Christmas, Reverend Charles Ferrari, Pastor of Ouray's Catholic Church, could expect to receive a check from Tom Walsh, in an amount he was forbidden to disclose to the public. He was then to distribute the money in equal amounts to all four of the town's churches.¹⁸⁰ A young girl crippled for life received a Shetland pony.¹⁸¹ A young man in tattered clothing riding without a ticket, and about to be thrown off the train, soon found he had a ticket in his hand, and later money for a better set of clothes, courtesy of Tom Walsh.¹⁸² In many instances, he seems to have preferred the role of anonymous benefactor. Ouray's sheriff later admitted that it was Walsh who provided him money to care for the town's poor.¹⁸³ One Camp Bird miner, asked by a reporter to describe the generosity of the mine's owner, replied, "Why, he has directed his manager, Mr. Benson, to see that no poverty or destitution exists in Ouray or its vicinity. When discovered it must be quietly and instantly relieved."¹⁸⁴ At a time when big businessmen such as Andrew Carnegie were establishing the social custom of philanthropy, Tom Walsh followed

¹⁷⁹ *Denver Times*, 21 November 1900.

¹⁸⁰ *Plaindealer*, Ouray, CO, 22 December 1905; letter Ferrari to Walsh dated 14 January 1903, Box 9, Walsh Papers; letter Darley to Walsh dated 15 January 1903, Box 9 Walsh Papers.

¹⁸¹ *Silverite-Plaindealer*, Ouray, CO, 14 December 1900.

¹⁸² McLean, *Father Struck It Rich*, 77.

¹⁸³ *Silverite-Plaindealer*, 14 December 1900.

¹⁸⁴ General Frank Hall, "Thomas F. Walsh Entertains His Friends At His Camp Bird Mine," *Denver Post*, 4 August 1901, 9.

suit, probably more so than the average millionaire. One later tribute observed that "he did not hold back from showing the world the unwritten obligations of wealth."¹⁸⁵

Mr. and Mrs. Thomas F. Walsh Invite You to be Their Guest

Ouray needed a public library as well. The man who saw to it that his own workers were well-read now did the same for the whole town. The Walsh Library was established upstairs from the City Hall in 1901. It was considered one of the most valuable in the West, eventually holding 11,000 volumes. These included an exceptional collection of the works of Drs. Sigmund Freud and Carl Jung, and (allegedly) every copy of the Congressional Record. Tom also provided a bell for the building's tower.¹⁸⁶

"If you receive a card to this effect: 'Mr. and Mrs. Thomas F. Walsh invite you to be their guest,' no matter what the occasion or in what part of the world, let nothing less severe than a case of appendicitis or sudden death prevent your acceptance." Such was the advice to the public from an old friend of Tom's, General Frank Hall, now writing for *The Denver Post*. The two men had known each other since Tom's Central City days. Now Hall joined an exclusive group of citizens from Eastern Colorado, which also included Governor and Mrs. James B. Orman, the

¹⁸⁵ Peterson, "Thomas F. Walsh and Western Business Elitism," 56, quoting from "Tom Walsh Farewell," *The Trail Magazine*, II, April 1910, 28.

¹⁸⁶ Gregory, *History of Ouray*, 132.

mayors of Denver and Colorado Springs, and other dignitaries on a special train to Ouray provided by Walsh. The occasion was the banquet to dedicate the library, held July 24, 1901, and it proved to be one of the greatest galas in the town's history. Held in the large hall of the building housing the library, guests sat at tables adorned with wildflowers and were served by a corps of well-trained waiters from the area's principal hotels, with entertainment by an orchestra. They drank wine of the finest grade, which was consumed sparingly. This, General Hall noted, was our of respect for their host, for "Mr. Walsh is averse to any indulgence in drink beyond the limit of refined moderation. His preference would be to have no wines upon his tables." After a full course dinner, speeches ran long into the evening praising the special gift from Mr. and Mrs. Walsh.¹⁸⁷

The grand tour continued the following day with carriage rides to the Camp Bird, where the guests were most impressed by the state of the mining technology and the living accommodations for the miners. Hall noted the presence of technical students from the United States and foreign lands, who were learning the practical business of mining from manager John Benson. A second dinner, nearly on a par with the previous night's extravaganza, awaited at the dining room of the boardinghouse, together with the waiters and orchestra, who had preceded the guests up the mountain.

¹⁸⁷ General Frank Hall, "Thomas F. Walsh Entertains His Friends at his Camp Bird Mine," *Denver Post*, 4 August 1901, 1-6.

"Mr. Walsh has no partners except his wife," and Hall found Mrs. Walsh to be a "very pretty, well-educated, thoroughly refined and attractive woman; rather tall, somewhat slender, lithe and graceful, a glorious mate for her husband." Pressed by Hall as to whether they might ever sell the Camp Bird, Tom replied:

No, I have given that up. I believe it will be worth many millions more than it is now ten or twelve years hence through the plans we are proceeding upon and I am content to watch and supervise their execution. Fortune has been very good to me since you and I parted at Central City years ago. When my boy, now 14 years old, shall have completed his education in the schools, he will master every detail of my business. During his present vacation he is at the mills familiarizing himself with all the departments. Later on he will take up the mining branch. He has an ardent love for it, and it will be cultivated.¹⁸⁸

¹⁸⁸ Hall, "Thomas F. Walsh Entertains," 5. At the time Vinson Walsh was actually thirteen.

CHAPTER 11

A MOVE TO WASHINGTON

Despite their fondness for the small town of Ouray, the Walshes began questioning whether to stay after their gold money began to pour in. By late 1897 events, as well as motivations, made a move certain. The first of these occurred when the family embarked on an October train trip from Ouray. According to Evalyn, the Thompsons accompanied them. Evalyn could not remember the reason for the excursion, but could well recall the outcome. She paints a picture of terror, being thrown from her sleeping compartment into the blackness of entanglement in her bedding and the train cushions. Her father rescued her along with the rest of the party, seriously injuring his hands while breaking glass to escape their overturned rail car. Once outside they witnessed the roar of flames from their burning train, and heard the screams of the wounded and the bellowing of cattle. Their westbound passenger train had collided head-on with an eastbound cattle train. Evalyn tells of holding the head of dying man in her lap. She places the death toll at thirteen, with possibly a higher number of casualties after flames consumed the entire train.¹⁸⁹

¹⁸⁹ McLean, Father Struck It Rich, 59-62.

Contemporary newspaper accounts do not bear out much of Evalyn's story. According to these accounts, the wreck of the Denver and Rio Grande Railroad passenger train occurred in the early morning hours of October 3, 1897, near the small town of Cotopaxi in Colorado's Arkansas River Canyon. The train was in fact eastbound, and derailed due to a defective axle on one car, no other train being involved. There was no fire. The death toll was two. Tom Walsh received only minor injuries in helping the others escape, and gave one of many accounts to Denver newspapers. He praised the car's porter for his quick actions in preventing fire and further disaster, and also for recovering jewels belonging to Carrie. Otherwise he faulted the railroad for not better securing its cushions, which nearly led to Evalyn's suffocation. The *Denver Republican* identified Walsh as being "of the Silverton smelter, and a well known mining man of the San Juan."¹⁹⁰

However, one more fact about the timing of the wreck seems more than mere coincidence. Only two days before, Tom's brother Patrick had passed away in Florence, Colorado.¹⁹¹ Had the train continued on its course from Cotopaxi, it would have arrived in Florence a few hours later. Could the forgotten reason for the trip have been attendance at the funeral of Patrick Walsh? The presence of the Thompsons could be explained by John Thompson's continued attempts to impress

¹⁹⁰ "Five Cars Hurlled Into The Arkansas," *Denver Republican*, 4 October, 1897, 1. See other accounts of the same day in *Rocky Mountain News*, *Denver Post*, and *The Chieftain* (Pueblo, Colorado).

¹⁹¹ *Rocky Mountain News*, 10 April 1910.

Tom Walsh. Also, since Tom's brothers sometimes worked with him on mining ventures, possibly Thompson was personally acquainted with Patrick.

Whatever the circumstances surrounding it, Evalyn seems correct in her statement that the train wreck presented one more valid reason for a move. Mountain train travel could be dangerous, as were other means of getting around in the area. Only shortly after their return to Ouray, Tom's normally sedate horse became frightened on a trip back from the Camp Bird, nearly plunging both of them into a chasm. Carrie's health problems from altitude were increasing, and she wanted to leave none too soon. The family's decision was a move to Washington, D.C. There they rented a suite of rooms at the Cochran Hotel for the winter of 1897-1898.¹⁹²

Entering the Most Exclusive Ranks of Polite Society

The Walsh family established a pattern for the next few years of summer visits to Ouray. However, Washington quickly became home, and Tom increasingly had important reasons to spend more and more of his time there. It may seem phenomenal that a man only recently of modest means, and with little education and no important family or business ties, could so quickly establish relationships with national leaders. To Tom's friend, Governor Charles Thomas, the answer was

¹⁹² McLean, Father Struck It Rich, 66

simple. Tom Walsh, now more than secure in his financial status, wanted to use his money to enter the most exclusive ranks of polite society. Some well-informed friend (possibly Charles Thomas himself) had told Walsh that the only way to gratify that desire was to "move to Washington and there devote himself to the entertainment of Cabinets, diplomats, Congressmen, and casual visitors of distinction."¹⁹³ In so doing Walsh was not alone among Western millionaires of the era. According to one observer of the times, the nation's capital "held more appeal in those days for newly solvent westerners than rock-ribbed and impersonal New York. Where the Vanderbilts and Belmonts were impervious to *arrivistes*, a senator who had been assisted into office could always be counted on to help the socially ambitious on their way up the ladder, and the Walshes were socially ambitious."¹⁹⁴

¹⁹³ Thomas, "A Famous Carpenter," 6.

¹⁹⁴ Peterson, "Thomas F. Walsh and Western Business Elitism," 58, quoting from Lucius Beebe, The Big Spenders, (New York: Pocket Books, Divn. of Simon and Schuster, 1967), 317.

CHAPTER 12

THE WALSHES ARE RICH, AND PROMINENT

Evalyn could well remember an early dinner party given by her parents at the Cochran Hotel. Their special guest was the daughter of a senator with whom they had become friends. Carrie was nervous and shy wearing her first evening gown. Tom, on the other hand, was the life of the party, friendly to all. Evalyn described the family's first winter as one of making lots of friends and learning a lot. Among their new friends were a prominent Washington publisher, John R. McLean, his wife Emily, and their son Edward. The McLeans, owners of the *Washington Post* and *Cincinnati Enquirer*, represented old, entrenched wealth, and considerable political power. John McLean is said to wielded that power by keeping secret dossiers on the private lives of important public figures. The son, known as "Neddie," was described by Evalyn at their first meeting as being her age, eleven, and "gawky." Social critic Lucius Beebe found the younger McLean "spoiled as a mackerel three hours in the sun." His mother paid his young companions to let her son win at games. Many more meetings were in store for Evalyn and Neddie.¹⁹⁵

¹⁹⁵ McLean, *Father Struck It Rich*, 66-70; Beebe, *The Big Spenders*, 325-327.

Tom's and Carrie's dream of an entrance into the highest of Washington society proceeded, but for a while at least it moved at their usual cautious pace. Camp Bird revenues now totaled nearly fifty thousand dollars each month, yet Tom and Carrie felt it prudent to return most of this sum back to further development of the mine. The family creed remained, "Can we afford it?" The children were to receive fine educations, yet not be spoiled. Their parents sent each to one of the capital's best private schools, Vinson to Friends Select School for Boys, Evalyn to the Mount Vernon Seminary. Evalyn recalled that each morning Annie MacDonald, the family's long-time servant who had become her friend and confidante, escorted her from the Cochran Hotel to school on a streetcar or on foot. There she received the derisive stares of classmates who arrived by more auspicious means. Then Evalyn noted that her mother was beginning to receive whatever she wished from Tom, including an expensive set of furs, and wondered if she might be granted the same indulgence. One morning while he concentrated on shaving, Evalyn presented her request. Could he afford to hire her a horse and carriage for her travel to school, at least some of the time? She saw the lines of his face gradually change under the shaving cream. Tom then astonished her by laughing heartily, replying that yes, he could manage to rent her a horse and carriage. Not long thereafter he called her to the street in front of the hotel, where sat a blue Victoria carriage with the top down, pulled by two magnificent prancing sorrels who answered to the commands of a deep-voiced coachman complete with silk hat and gloves. His name was Terrill,

and his job was to drive Evalyn to school in style every day. The following morning she was deliberately late so she might arrive to the “ohs” and “ahs” of the other girls lined up to enter. To Evalyn a watershed event had just occurred. The Walshes of Washington were now truly rich.¹⁹⁶

They purchased their first Washington home, at the corner of LeRoy Place and Phelps Place, in December 1898. The former home of a renowned traveler and lecturer, Conrad Jenness Miller, and his wife, the three-story brick house came complete with all its cultured furnishings. It was located in one of the city's fashionable “carriage” neighborhoods. Evalyn found it “magic” to be able to walk from the hotel straight into a new home in which she found “no ugliness either outside of it or in it.” Such magic, she noted, could be worked for \$58,129.91 cash at that time.¹⁹⁷

Mention for Higher Office

Many in Colorado still considered Walsh to be a resident of their state, and his name came to the front in coming congressional and senatorial election. His party of choice was Republican, another break with the traditions of Irish immigrants. In 1899 Walsh received serious consideration for the congressional seat in the district which included Ouray. By November, however, Tom had turned

¹⁹⁶ McLean, Father Struck It Rich, 68-70; *Denver Times*, 22 December 1898

the opportunity. He stated that he could do more for the development of the state by staying where he was, as the owner of the Camp Bird mine. Possibly his Republican king-makers had lost their enthusiasm as well. In June of that year, Tom made a speech supporting the mandatory eight-hour working day, as proposed by Governor Charles Thomas (a Democrat).¹⁹⁸ In 1902 the Walsh name came forward once again, this time to challenge Colorado Senator Henry Teller. A delegation of Colorado Republicans came all the way to Washington, only to receive an indifferent reception by Walsh. Pressed on the issue, he replied that even if assured of election as Senator (then chosen by the state legislature), he did not want to change his plans for the future, which did not include political ambition. What they did include was being happy and contented in his home circle, free of the trouble and cares of political life. For the 1904 election, the *Ouray Herald* suggested to its readers that no "Walsh for Senator" rumors be taken seriously.¹⁹⁹

When it came to appointed positions, however, Walsh was much more responsive. He also lent support to the Republican Party well from his substantial pocketbook, although the amounts of contributions are unknown. The monetary contributions, together with the value of social prestige, were sufficient to bring the

¹⁹⁷ McLean, Father Struck It Rich, 70-71; *Denver Times*, 22 December 1898.

¹⁹⁸ *Denver Times*, 5 June, 29 September, 1899; *Ouray Herald*, 16 November 1899.

¹⁹⁹ *Denver Times*, 22 November 1902; *Ouray Herald*, 29 July 1904.

the opportunity. He stated that he could do more for the development of the state by staying where he was, as the owner of the Camp Bird mine. Possibly his Republican king-makers had lost their enthusiasm as well. In June of that year, Tom made a speech supporting the mandatory eight-hour working day, as proposed by Governor Charles Thomas (a Democrat).¹⁹⁷ In 1902 the Walsh name came forward once again, this time to challenge Colorado Senator Henry Teller. A delegation of Colorado Republicans came all the way to Washington, only to receive an indifferent reception by Walsh. Pressed on the issue, he replied that even if assured of election as Senator (then chosen by the state legislature), he did not want to change his plans for the future, which did not include political ambition. What they did include was being happy and contented in his home circle, free of the trouble and cares of political life. For the 1904 election, the *Ouray Herald* suggested to its readers that no "Walsh for Senator" rumors be taken seriously.¹⁹⁹

When it came to appointed positions, however, Walsh was much more responsive. He also lent support to the Republican Party from his substantial pocketbook, although the amounts of contributions are unknown. The monetary contributions, together with the value of social prestige, were sufficient to bring the

¹⁹⁷ McLean, *Father Struck It Rich*, 70-71; *Denver Times*, 22 December 1898.

¹⁹⁸ *Denver Times*, 5 June, 29 September, 1899; *Ouray Herald*, 16 November 1899.

¹⁹⁹ *Denver Times*, 22 November 1902; *Ouray Herald*, 29 July 1904.

name of Tom Walsh to the attention of the party's national leaders. One such national leader taking notice was the President of the United States, William McKinley.²⁰⁰ In early 1899 Tom and Carrie were invited to their first reception at the White House. Later the President accepted an invitation to come to see them in Colorado. The Walshes prepared for an elaborate reception in Glenwood Springs, but it was called off due to Mrs. McKinley's illness.²⁰¹ Nevertheless, the pattern was set for Tom Walsh to be friend and confidante of three straight Republican Presidents, McKinley, Roosevelt and Taft.

The Greatest American in Paris

In 1900 President McKinley appointed Walsh a United States commissioner to the Paris Exposition of that year.²⁰² For Tom and his fellow commissioners, the purpose of the exposition was to demonstrate to Europe the advancement of American culture. In the Palace of Mines and Metallurgy, Tom presented a Camp Bird mine exhibit, which included mineral specimens and a description of mine development and activity, complete with a statement that the mine produced \$5,000 a day. He encouraged his fellow Colorado mine-owners to contribute as well. Next door, Walsh's friend John Campion exhibited leaf and crystallized gold from his

²⁰⁰ Beebe, The Big Spenders, 317-318.

²⁰¹ *Denver Post*, 4 August 1901; *Denver Times*, 6 June 1901.

²⁰² *Denver Times*, 25 June 1900, 13 March 1901.

Leadville mine. This was just part of the extensive Campion collection which later formed the core of what is now the Mineral Hall of the Denver Museum of Nature and Science.²⁰³

The Walsh style of entertaining was transported to Paris as well, with the family and their entourage taking over the entire second floor of the Elysee Palace Hotel. The hotel saw dinner parties for up to three and four hundred persons at a time. However, the very best was saved for a June 25 cruise of the Seine. The Walshes rented two riverboats for two hundred guests, mostly national and state commissioners and prominent members of the Colorado delegation. The guests enjoyed an elegant luncheon, followed by dancing to an orchestra, as the boats drifted along the scenic river. The correspondent for the *Denver Times* found Tom and Carrie to be the most popular Americans in Paris. They were probably the first representatives of Ouray, Colorado, even if only part-time residents, to receive such accolades. Regarding their favorite son, the *Ouray Herald* proudly proclaimed: "He discovered that the French people had to be shown and he is showing them. The purple of royalty bows to the yellow gold of Tom Walsh. He believes that a genuine Coloradan can capture as much as the kingly monarch. Tall, rawboned, blue-eyed, good natured, the type of man behind the pick, he has practically become the

²⁰³ McLean, Father Struck It Rich, 87-88.

greatest American in Paris.”²⁰⁴

Progressive Ideas to Benefit Working Americans

The year after Tom Walsh and other Americans displayed their national pride at the Paris Exposition, the nation was shocked by the assassination of President McKinley. Vice-President Theodore Roosevelt assumed the duties of the nation's highest office, at age forty-two the youngest man ever to hold the job (then and now). A friendship between the new President and Tom Walsh soon developed. They may have met as early as September 1900 when Colorado Senator Edward O. Wolcott feted vice-presidential candidate Roosevelt at Wolhurst, the senator's estate near Denver. Many prominent Colorado Republicans came to the occasion. Walsh had been a guest at Wolhurst for such events, and in fact liked the estate so well he later bought it. At any rate, Evalyn tells us that by October 1902 such a close relationship had developed that Walsh received a note on White House stationery in which the President simply stated “When I was riding yesterday in the Park I waved to you.”²⁰⁵

Walsh may have been asked to assist the President on at least one labor matter. While organized labor disparaged the rich Republican in the White House, in fact Roosevelt could claim credit for settling a major labor dispute early in his

²⁰⁴ *Denver Times*, 25 June 1900; *Ouray Herald*, 14 September 1900.

tenure. In 1902 he successfully brought labor and management to the table to stop a crippling and violent Pennsylvania coal strike, the first time an American President confronted and resolved such a problem. His willingness to accommodate the requests of United Mine Workers president John Mitchell shocked some conservatives. The Cripple Creek strike of 1903-1904 brought a similar situation of work stoppage and violence to the Colorado gold fields. By Evalyn's account, Roosevelt requested that Walsh use his influence to settle the disturbed conditions in the mines. She remembered that the presidential demand forced cancellation of a 1904 trip to Europe, and sent them to an unimpressive part of Colorado. Beyond this, she could remember little of her father's role in the matter. In fact, Roosevelt is generally considered to have ignored the Cripple Creek situation. After Colorado's two senators, Henry Teller and Thomas M. Patterson, petitioned the President to investigate the situation, he found no reason for federal intervention. Instead he left matters to his old Rough Rider friend, Colorado adjutant general Sherman Bell, who responded with heavy-handed tactics against labor supporters, resulting in a costly victory for mine owners. There seem to be no records of direct involvement by Walsh in the Cripple Creek matter. Most likely he advised Roosevelt in Washington, and whether that advice was taken, Walsh played little or

²⁰⁵ Caroline Bancroft, The Melodrama of Wolhurst, (Denver: The Golden Press, 1952), 12-13, 16; McLean, Father Struck It Rich, 114.

no role in Colorado.²⁰⁶ It is also very unlikely he would have taken his family to a strife-torn area.

Even if they might not have agreed on the handling of Colorado labor problems, the two men shared beliefs on democracy and the treatment of working Americans. In his speeches, Roosevelt extolled the need for equal justice and equality, without distinction based on wealth and privilege. These were unusual statements for a Republican president up to that time. Soon Walsh would make at least one similar speech, yet not be able to reap the political fruits achieved by Roosevelt through his rhetoric.²⁰⁷

Tom Walsh also became an early advocate of Roosevelt's conservation policies, chiefly on the subject of irrigation. Probably with the blessings of the President, Walsh became a founder and the first president of the National Irrigation Association. To the north of Ouray, the Uncompahgre River flowed through a fertile but largely-undeveloped area around the towns of Montrose and Delta. Early settlers found enough water in the valley bottoms for cattle raising and orchards, but could not bring water to higher lands which also held the potential to be productive. Pleas to bring irrigation to this and similar areas of the West reached the ears of Walsh, and of Roosevelt. The National Irrigation Association worked closely with the President, Cabinet officials and Congress to secure passage of the 1902 National

²⁰⁶ McLean, *Father Struck It Rich*, 120; Edmund Morris, *Theodore Rex*, (New York: Random House, 2001), 155-169; Noel, "William D. Haywood," 8.

Irrigation Act, also known as the Newlands Act. It provided for a Reclamation Fund, built from assessments on the proceeds of sale of public lands in sixteen western states, together with all the mechanisms for commencing extensive irrigation projects. It also created the Reclamation Bureau within the Department of the Interior to carry out the purposes of the act. Its pilot project was the irrigation of the Uncompahgre Valley, where many believed arable lands could be increased from 30,000 acres to 175,000 acres through irrigation. The project commenced in 1904, with the drilling of a 5.8-mile tunnel from the Gunnison River under the Vernal Mesa and into the open lands east of Montrose. An extensive system of canals further expanded the irrigation network. By 1910 Gunnison River water reached the Uncompahgre Valley. The project was not completed without cost over-runs and other problems, yet in the end vast new lands were made productive and a model set for other western land reclamation.²⁰⁸

Tom saw one major benefit of improved irrigation as its aid to the ordinary Americans who wanted land for a new life away from crowded cities.²⁰⁹ On October 6, 1902, as its president, he delivered an address to the National Irrigation Association Convention in Colorado Springs. Walsh's speech was entitled "The

²⁰⁷ Morris, Theodore Rex, 226-227.

²⁰⁸ "Thomas Francis Walsh," National Cyclopedia of American Biography, 191; Ubbelohde, Benson and Smith, A Colorado History, 184, 256-257.

²⁰⁹ *Denver Times*, 1 March 1901, 9 October 1902; *Ouray Herald*, 29 June 1904; *Rocky Mountain News*, 9 April 1910.

Humanitarian Aspect of National Irrigation.” He lauded the roles of President Roosevelt, Secretary of the Interior E.A. Hitchcock, Secretary of Agriculture James Wilson, and friends in Congress for obtaining passage of the National Irrigation Act. This act had created the addition of “a new empire as important as that drained by the Mississippi River and its tributaries.” This was not what was foremost in Walsh’s mind at the moment, however. Rather it was providing for those Americans with “the pressure of poverty upon them, and the haunting fear of future want.” They could be found in many places, but especially “in great cities, where the very forces which have created our present prosperity as a nation have also operated to make a certain fringe of half-employed and semi-prosperous.” For them, the new law would bring “the dream of home and independence which will come to many a struggling family with the announcement that one more fair valley of Arid America has been thrown open to settlement.” ²¹⁰

Walsh continued to be active in the association for several years. After it merged with the Trans-Mississippi Congress, he served as the 1908 president of the larger organization. Its goal was also the development of the West. Walsh also worked in another aspect of that development, the Good Roads Movement. He addressed the group’s November 1900 convention in Chicago, and remained a vital

²¹⁰ “Address of Thomas F. Walsh, President of the National Irrigation Association, Delivered at the Colorado Springs Convention,” 5 October 1902, Western History Department, Denver Public Library.

part of the push for better routes to and through the West.²¹¹

²¹¹ *Denver Times*, 21 November 1900; *The Mining American*, Denver, 18 November 1916, 8-9.

CHAPTER 13

THE PRICE OF AFFLUENCE

Those who achieve great wealth and prominence, especially if they turn to philanthropy, will receive the utmost praise and adulation of the great majority of the public. They will also receive the attention of that portion of the public, however small a minority it may be, which targets that wealth for its own personal gain. Tom Walsh began to find that lawyers and courtrooms were now as big a part of his life as testimonial dinners, impressive appointments, and mention for political office. Rivals claiming rights in the rich Camp Bird properties, purported agents seeking unpaid commissions, and others seeking a variety of damages, came forward. Walsh fought, and sometimes won, but usually settled out of court. However, more of his fortune was passing to his lawyers than he probably would have wished.²¹²

In one celebrated case, a New York attorney named Detlef Hanson claimed that while living in Ouray, Walsh had an affair with his client, a woman named Violet Watson. His complaint accused Tom of promising the young woman

²¹² See *Financial Statements*, Box 103, Walsh Papers. For example, in January 1905, out of total expenses of \$15,601, \$1,311 went for lawyers' fees, a fairly typical month at that time.

marriage and wealth. It was known that Watson had spent one summer in Ouray, and she could well have made the acquaintance of Walsh. Apparently little else was proven as to any liaison between the two. However, Attorney Hanson was known for bringing such lawsuits against rich and prominent persons and doggedly pursuing them until the defendant got tired and offered settlement money. His persistent efforts to get money from Walsh were deemed by the New York Court to be so frivolous that he was eventually disbarred. Walsh and his lawyers settled with Watson in an undisclosed agreement. Undaunted, Hanson sought to regain his license to practice law, and even included a suit against his own client for betraying him by accepting the settlement with Walsh without his knowledge. Walsh and his lawyers were accused of conspiracy to rid Hanson of his livelihood. Suits by Hanson continued even after Walsh's death, all of them unsuccessful.²¹³

"Blackmailers!" screamed a 1901 edition of a newspaper friendly to Walsh, the *Ouray Plaindealer*. Still, some of Ouray's own townspeople were willing to risk shame to make a buck off the wealthy Tom Walsh.²¹⁴ A local group organized a company known as the Camp Bird Extension, which staked claims in portions of the Imogene Basin which Walsh had either missed or never felt were worth the trouble of acquiring. Its president, James H. Robin, was an old antagonist of Walsh dating

²¹³ "Old Scandal is Revived While Thomas F. Walsh Lies Ill," *Denver Times*, 24 March 1910. At the time Walsh was on his deathbed and would only live for another two weeks. See also *Ouray Herald*, 12 December 1911, "Claimant's Lawyer Disbarred."

²¹⁴ *Plaindealer*, 13 December 1901.

back to Tom's earliest days in Silverton. The company commenced drilling of a tunnel toward the Camp Bird vein, offering reports of its progress to the mining press. One November 1903 report actually disclosed a rich strike of gold-bearing quartz. However, not much more, at least in the way mining developments, was heard from the Camp Bird Extension.²¹⁵ Its main purpose seems to have been to create a nuisance for the larger Camp Bird mine.

Under the federal Mining Law of 1872, the owner of a lode mining claim might pursue "apex" rights. If a vein reached the surface, and therefore had its apex, on the claim, the owner could follow that vein down underground past the side lines of the claim. Therefore, even though valuable ore deposits might be found directly under one claim, the holder of a nearby claim could still be declared the owner of those deposits upon proof that they were part of a vein structure which "apexed" on his/her property. Apex lawsuits were a favorite of Western mining lawyers. Obviously proof of a continuous vein which apexed elsewhere could be hard to come by. It was usually necessary to hire trained geologists to testify as expert witnesses on the subject of the location and direction of the vein structure (real or as geologically projected). In places such as the Imogene Basin, where ores occurred in shoots rather than continuously, a continuous vein would have been especially hard to prove. Nevertheless, claim owners often settled apex suits rather

²¹⁵ *Ouray Herald*, 27 June 1902; *Mining Reporter*, 31 January, 31 October 1901, 21 August 1902, 12 November 1903; letter Robin to Walsh dated 3 September 1892, Box 1, Wilfley Papers.

than go to the time and expense hiring lawyers and experts and conducting trials. Therefore, the owner of a claim having little or no value might, through persistence, obtain a cash settlement or outright purchase of the claim from a rich neighbor wishing to dispose of the lawsuit.²¹⁶

In the case of the Camp Bird Extension Mining Company, Walsh decided to fight in the District Court for Ouray County. In a series of suits and countersuits, neither Walsh nor Camp Bird Extension emerged a clear winner. The court's 1908 rulings found Walsh to be the owner of some of the claims in dispute, Camp Bird Extension the owner of others. The suits had little impact on the success of the Camp Bird Mine, and the Camp Bird Extension Mining Company disappeared not long after the verdicts were handed down. As often happened, the only real winners probably were the lawyers. In this and other cases, Walsh continued to fight suits involving title to Camp Bird property after he had actually sold that property, both out of agreement with the buyers and his own sense of moral obligation.²¹⁷

A Maine corporation, the Cosmopolitan Mining Company, claimed it had not received proper notice of the sheriff's sale which resulted in Walsh's purchase of

²¹⁶ See discussion in of apex law in Curtis H. Lindley, Lindley on Mines (San Francisco: Bancroft-Whitney Co., 1914), Vol..I, 676-730.

²¹⁷ Judgments, District Court for Ouray County, Colorado, all dated 6 January 1908, Cases Nos. 1072, 1087-1101, 1137. Bond between Thomas F. Walsh and Camp Bird, Ltd. Dated 6 May 1902, Box 103, Walsh Papers; Thomas, "A Famous Carpenter," 5.

the Gertrude, Hidden Treasure and other claims. The Cosmopolitan, a company which was apparently never successful at any venture other than starting litigation, had acquired the interest of the bankrupt Allied Mines Company. It had performed a small amount of tunnel work, but was in bad economic condition in 1896 when the Ouray County Sheriff seized all of its property, including the mining claims, for non-payment of a debt to a freight-hauling company. Service of the notice of the suit was presented to one John M. Jardine, one-time mayor of Ouray and now alleged agent for the Cosmopolitan Mining Company. For some time following the sheriff's sale of the claims, deemed of little value at that time, no attempt was made to amend or set aside the sale. After it became public knowledge that Camp Bird's success was based in large part on the Gertrude's wealth, the Cosmopolitan came back to life. In a 1900 suit filed in the Federal District Court for Colorado, Cosmopolitan's principals claimed that Jardine was not in fact their company's agent, and therefore the sheriff's sale was invalid, entitling them to be declared the owners of the claims. Such ownership would of course mean that Walsh must now buy back the claims at their present value and give Cosmopolitan all earnings to date, a proposition worth more than one million dollars. After numerous filings, hearing and postponements, the matter came to trial in June 1902. Judge Marshall of the U.S. District Court in Denver ruled that Jardine was in fact the company's agent, and then directed a verdict in favor of Walsh. Nonetheless, Cosmopolitan appealed to the U.S. Supreme Court in 1903. An out-of-court settlement was

probably reached shortly after, for a payment to Jardine appears in a Walsh financial statement in 1904.²¹⁸

For Tom, probably no lawsuit was more heartbreaking than one brought by his old friend John Thompson. The many trips to the mountains, and other discussions between the two men, had occurred when Tom was a smelter manager and mining promoter of no great standing. His work with Thompson produced no tangible results, probably because as Tom noted early on, Thompson possessed no great expertise in mining. Now that the success of the Camp Bird was common knowledge, Thompson was complaining that Walsh had denied him his rightful share of the mine's profits under some verbal agreement that a portion of all Walsh found was to be his. His first complaint was filed in the Supreme Court of New York, where he now lived, on June 25, 1903. In October, Walsh's New York attorney, Julian Davies, succeeded in having the case transferred to the U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals, and then dismissed. Undaunted, Thompson's attorneys filed a new case in the same court in December 1903, which dragged on in the courts for more than two years.²¹⁹

Tom and his attorneys mustered the support of a large number of his

²¹⁸ *Ouray Herald*, 27 June 1902; letter Hughes to Walsh dated 16 November 1903, Box 77, Walsh Papers; "Statement for the Month of October, 1904," Box 103, Walsh Papers.

²¹⁹ Complaint, John A. Thompson against Thomas F. Walsh, Supreme Court for New York County, dated 25 June 1903, Box 103, Walsh Papers; letter Davies to Walsh, dated 22 October 1903, Box 9, Walsh Papers; Amended Bill of Complaint, Thompson v. Walsh, U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals, S. Dist. Of New York, dated 24 December 1903, Box 103, Walsh Papers.

colleagues, past and present, who knew anything of his dealings with (and without) Thompson. The outpouring of sympathy and assistance among their ranks was almost universally in favor of Walsh. Former partner David Wegg abruptly dismissed a request for assistance by Thompson's attorneys, and threw his considerable support and influence to the side of his old friend. As a result of some deception by Thompson, Andy Richardson inadvertently made statements which might back Thompson's position. However, upon discovering what had happened, he quickly corrected his statement in favor of Walsh. Nevertheless, Tom's correspondence with his attorneys shows continuing frustration and a genuine sense of betrayal. One time, in answer to the latest complaint prepared by Thompson's attorneys, Tom seems to have reached his limit to putting up with attacks on his integrity. Responding to a charge that he defrauded Thompson, he responded, "Walsh never practiced an atom of fraud in his life and he never will."²²⁰

By November 1905, Walsh's legal expenses in the suit exceeded \$25,000. At this point Thompson's attorney was in the process appealing an order in favor of Walsh entered the previous August. On February 26, 1906, Attorney Davies argued all afternoon on his motion to dismiss Thompson's appeal. On March 9, Thompson failed to appear in Court for examination, his default noted by the Referee.

²²⁰ Letter Wegg to Walsh dated 2 November 1901, Box 77; letter Walsh to Davies dated 25 July 1903, Box 103; letter Byron to Walsh dated 17 September 1903, Box 9; letter Benson to Walsh dated 19 February 1904, Box 78; "Answers of Thomas F. Walsh to Complaint of John A. Thompson, n.d., Box 103, all in Walsh Papers.

Nonetheless, on March 23 the attorneys for the parties agreed to some sort of settlement. The suit was dismissed the following day, the terms of settlement unknown.²²¹

²²¹ Invoice, Davies, Stone & Auerbach to Thomas F. Walsh dated 23 November 1905, Box 103, Walsh Papers; "Thomas F. Walsh, Engagements," prepared by Davies, Stone & Auerbach, n.d., Box 103, Walsh Papers.

CHAPTER 16

THE WALSH PALACE

The Expectation for Conspicuous Consumption

As Tom managed his successful mine and dealt with his attorneys, the Walshes succeeded in their dream of reaching the highest level of Washington society. Soon even the magical house at the corner of LeRoy and Phelps was not enough. Beginning in April 1901, Tom purchased 26,000 square feet of land on Massachusetts Avenue, N.W., a newly fashionable D.C. neighborhood. Not long after he commissioned Danish-born New York architect Henry Andersen to build his dream. Andersen had received acclaim in the nation's largest city for designing a variety of works, including many residences, apartment houses and churches. Among his works were the Don Carlos Apartments, 76th Street and Madison Avenue; Acadia Apartments, 115th Street at 7th and St. Nicholas; Sans Souci Apartments, 30-32 West 124th Street; and the Lutheran Church of the Covenant – all in New York City. Now he set forth on what an adoring Colorado press later termed "The Walsh Palace." Andersen's building permit, filed October 16, 1901 estimated

the cost at \$300,000.00. It would eventually reach \$835,000.00.²²²

Proud that Colorado would “contribute to Washington one more residence of the highest type,” the *Denver Times* proudly presented the initial plans to its readers in its edition of October 18, 1901. 2020 Massachusetts would be a residence having a frontage of eighty feet and a depth of one hundred feet with sixty rooms. Four stories high, in French Renaissance style, it would be constructed of granite and light brick. Guests entering the first floor came into a main hall twenty feet wide, with reception room to the right, and drawing rooms and library to the left, all of which together could form one salon 100 feet in length. A large dining room occupied the rear of the first floor. The second floor was devoted to use by the family, with a breakfast room and sitting rooms in addition to spacious bedrooms and baths (whose tubs were described by a later source as small swimming pools). The third floor was for entertainment of guests, with eight guest chambers and accompanying sitting rooms. The same floor also contained an amusement room, with stage attached “designed especially for Master Walsh and his friends.” It also housed the rooms of a housekeeper and servants. The fourth floor, “reached like the others above the first by an electric elevator, contains a handsome ballroom, with a lobby thirty feet square, retiring rooms for guests, sewing rooms, and several rooms

²²² Carol M. Highsmith and Ted Landphair, “Embassy of Indonesia,” Embassies of Washington, (Washington, D.C.: Preservation Press, Natl. Trust for Hist. Preservation, 1992), 47; “2020 Massachusetts Avenue,” Massachusetts Avenue Architecture, Vol. 1, (Washington, D.C.: The Commission of Fine Arts,), 124-125; McLean, Father Struck It Rich, 114.

for family guests.” A basement contained private offices, billiard rooms, wine rooms, electrical apparatus, and other uses. The mansard roof of iron and tile surrounded a skylight over a court which extended down to the second floor. For woodwork, the first floor’s principal rooms contained mahogany, with Flemish oak in the dining room, and a variety of wood elsewhere.²²³

Architect Andersen and the builders carried out the plans largely as predicted by the *Times*. However, as evidenced by the significant rise in costs, some important changes and additions were made. Most notable was a distinctive entryway and central hall rising from the first floor to a stained-glass, domed skylight with a Y-shaped central staircase reminiscent of an ocean liner’s. The second and third floors overlooked the central hall with impressive galleries. Eight Roman brick chimneys served eight fireplaces, with a roof garden as well. Evalyn remembers Vinson’s theatre as sharing space on the fourth floor with the ballroom. Another feature was an immense baroque pipe organ (for which Tom retained a well-known church organist to serenade the diners, even when they only consisted of Carrie and himself). In addition to renaissance, the architecture of the finished structure combined baroque and rococo details within an “art-nouveau parti.”²²⁴ Ninety years later, two critics of Washington architecture found the total effect to be

²²³ “The Walsh Palace,” *Denver Times*, 18 October 1901; Highsmith and Landphair, “Embassy of Indonesia,” 49.

²²⁴ Highsmith and Landphair, “Embassy of Indonesia,” 49; McLean, Father Struck It Rich, 111.

“bulbous and vulgarly overblown, rather than gracefully curvilinear.” They also noted windows too widely spaced and not graduated in size for the palace architecture. The best feature was the “copper-clad conservatory on the east façade, with its spectacular stained-glass windows.”²²⁵

The interior of the great house needed furnishings. Tom and Carrie hired the previous owner of their former residence, Mrs. Anna Jenness Miller, to scout around for the best available in Persian rugs, French paintings, furniture and other finery. \$2.1 million, and several years, later, the house finally contained everything they wanted. Mrs. Miller set up an artist’s studio as her New York office just to satisfy the Walsh demands, and even shopped abroad for paintings and bric-a-brac. The library was so well-stocked that the book-loving Carrie feared she might be able to read only about one-tenth of the collection. “How the money went!” exclaimed Evalyn.²²⁶ In reality, the Walshes were behaving in a not-too-different manner from most of the American moneyed class. In the words of later economist and social critic Thorstein Veblen, “in order to be accepted into high society the wealthy man had to advertise the existence and extent of his wealth, that is, he had to satisfy the elitist expectation for conspicuous consumption.”²²⁷

²²⁵ Pamela Scott and Antoinette J. Lee, Buildings of the District of Columbia, (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1993), 328-329.

²²⁶ McLean, Father Struck It Rich, 112.

²²⁷ Thorstein Veblen, The Theory of the Leisure Class, (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1973), 60-62, quoted in Peterson, “Thomas F. Walsh and Western Business Elitism,” 58.

Some Famous Neighbors

The conspicuous consumption of high society was well reflected in the Walshes' new neighborhood. A few blocks away, on Sixteenth Street, stood the large red sandstone home of Tipperary landlord William Scully, now the owner of vast tracks of rich land in Illinois, Nebraska, Kansas and Missouri. Any thought of the disparity in their husbands' Irish origins must have been put aside, for Scully's wife Angela frequently assisted Carrie in her Washington entertaining.²²⁸

One and one-half blocks east of 2020 Massachusetts lay fashionable Dupont Circle, where famed newspaperwoman Eleanor (Cissy) Patterson and her family threw lavish parties in their mansion, earning Cissy a place among the "Three Graces of Washington." The other two were Alice Lee Roosevelt (daughter of the President) and Countess Marguerite Cassini (daughter of the Russian ambassador). All three would partake of the Walsh family social scene as well.²²⁹

Just east on the same block as the Walsh Palace sat the Blaine Mansion at 2000 Massachusetts Avenue. Its builder, James G. Blaine, had helped found the Republican Party, and then served as House Speaker, Senator, Secretary of State

²²⁸ "1401 Sixteenth Street, N.W., Sixteenth Street Architecture, Vol. 2, (Washington, DC: The Commission on Fine Arts, 1988), 279-283; Socolofsky, Landlord William Scully, 128.

²²⁹ "15 Dupont Circle, N.W., Massachusetts Avenue Architecture, Vol. 1, 95-102; McLean, Father Struck It Rich, 105; Beebe, The Big Spenders, 341.

and unsuccessful presidential candidate. Following his death, the family sold the mansion to inventor George Westinghouse in 1901. The man who had revolutionized rail travel with his air brake, Westinghouse soon turned to the new and thriving field of electricity. His generators electrified much of the United States and Europe, and his companies eventually employed 50,000 people.²³⁰

Ironically, just before the Walsh palace arose on the strength of Colorado mining money, a grand residence nearby which was built and sustained by both Nevada and Montana mining money was torn down. William Morris Stewart was a Nevada attorney who rose to prominence in lawsuits over the rich Comstock silver lode. He became the new state's first Senator, and a driving force behind enactment of the Mining Law of 1872, which governed how Tom Walsh and many others prospected for minerals on public lands. In the 1870s Stewart constructed his fabulous, pentagonal, turreted "Stewart Castle" at 1913 Massachusetts Avenue, just northwest of Dupont Circle and about a block from the future site of the new Walsh home. It was considered one of the earliest grand residences of the city. By some estimates its sheer cost broke Stewart financially, for he shortly returned to Nevada to again practice law and rebuild his wealth. The Stewarts nonetheless kept their Washington castle, and when William was returned as a Senator in the 1890, his wife Annie used it as the scene for much elegant entertaining. Then in 1899 they

²³⁰ "2000 Massachusetts Avenue, N.W.," Massachusetts Avenue Architecture, 121-124.

sold it to William Andrews Clark. Made fabulously wealthy from Butte, Montana copper, as well as banking and railroads, Clark had arrived as his state's senator, only to lose his seat on charges of corruption. He was subsequently re-elected, but in the meantime had decided he didn't want his new mansion. Evidently so rich that he could find a large house expendable, Clark ordered the castle demolished. He had first wanted to build his own new house on the site, but then after a disagreement over the plans, built a mansion in New York instead. The site remained vacant until erection of a bank in the 1920s.²³¹

Entertaining the Prominent in a Legendary Mansion

The Walsh family moved into their palace in the fall of 1903. Evalyn would have only grudgingly accepted the word *nouveau* to describe anything to do with the family or their residence at this time. To her they were "in." Passing cab drivers showed their riders the home of the "Colorado Monte Cristo," one more site in a special part of the city. 2020 Massachusetts (or just "2020" to the family) became the setting for some of the city's most talked-about social events. One of the first took place on December 8, 1903, as described in Washington's *Evening Star*:

Mr. and Mrs. Thomas F. Walsh entertained at a dinner last night in their new home on Massachusetts Avenue which in every detail was one of the most sumptuous affairs ever given in the Capital...The dinner table was adorned with yellow orchids of a

²³¹ "1913 Massachusetts Avenue, N.W." Massachusetts Avenue Architecture, 109-115.

very beautiful variety, their coloring being the keynote to the superb decoration of the board, where a service of gold made from glittering nuggets taken from the Camp Bird Mine, was used for the first time. A recital on the organ in the music room was an accompaniment to dinner.

The guest list included Admiral Dewey, Senator and Mrs. Wetmore, Senator and Mrs. Hanna, Senator and Mrs. Depew, the Belgian Minister and Baroness Moncheur.²³²

The honored guest a few weeks later, on December 29, was Miss Alice Roosevelt. At seventeen Evalyn was deemed too young to attend, but she recalled:

Most of the company that night saw for the first time the large Louis XIV salon on the first floor. The dancing began at eleven in the top floor ballroom, with its walls all yellow with brocade, with yellow hangings and yellow fabrics covering all the benches and chairs around the room. It was one o'clock when the cotillion began, led by Major Charles McCawley, of the Marine Corps, and Alice. Sixty couples passed the tables where favours had been piled: gold pencils for men, lace and tortoiseshell fans for the ladies...I got a fan, anyway.²³³

A New Year's Eve party, described later in the *New York Times*, seems to have reached the upper limit for entertaining on a truly grand scale. 325 guests consumer 480 quarts of champagne, 288 fifths of Scotch, 48 quarts of cocktails, 40 gallons of beer and 35 bottles of miscellaneous liquors. Once again, liquor seems to have been provided just to keep the guests happy. Evalyn recalled a mother who

²³² "2020 Massachusetts Avenue," 128; McLean, Father Struck It Rich, 111.

never drank, while the light-drinking Tom found whiskey upset his stomach.²³⁴

Vinson's attraction to the theatre also caught public attention. Well before the move to 2020, Tom was supporting his son's interests with a playhouse over the stables at the LeRoy and Phelps house. Here in February 1903, the *Denver Times* reported that Vinson and his boyfriends were fitted up with "a real stage, real scenery, a drop curtain, footlights, trapdoors in the stage, wings, dressing rooms and everything that goes to make up a theatre." A real theatre produced real plays, and the *Times* reported that the next performance was "Captain Racket," tickets \$1 each. "Last year, to belong to Kermit Roosevelt's Rough Riders was the thing for the boys here in Washington... This year, however, the theatre gang holds the center of the stage." Tom paid for an instructor, Charlemagne Koehler, "who really has performed with Booth and Barret."²³⁵ Now with an even better theatre at 2020, Evalyn tells of the emergence of Vinson the magician, who could even perform Houdini-like escapes. "You should have heard the loud clapping of Tom Walsh's hands whenever Vinson did a card trick or lifted a live and squirming rabbit from a hat. He loved that boy beyond my powers of expression."²³⁶

²³³ McLean, Father Struck It Rich, 119-120.

²³⁴ *New York Times*, 28 January 1968; "2020 Massachusetts Avenue," 128; McLean, Father Struck It Rich, 72.

²³⁵ "Thos. Walsh's Son Possessor of a Playhouse," *Denver Times*, 18 February 1903.

²³⁶ McLean, Father Struck It Rich, 113-114.

Legends developed around the great Walsh Palace. One had it that somewhere in the house Tom had hidden a huge Camp Bird gold nugget. After various rumors surfaced as to its existence and location, a Seton Hall professor with a keen interest in mining lore reported in 1953 that he had found a 12-by-15 inch slab of gold ore in the facing supporting the house's piazza. To avert a new gold rush, he quickly notified the populace that it was of sufficiently low grade to yield about \$100, and was no doubt intended by Mr. Walsh to be symbolic.²³⁷

Another legend held that an entire floor was reserved for just one special visitor. The initial plans and details of the house seem to rule this out, yet a large space on the third floor was designated for guest accommodations. In the end Vinson's theatre was moved to the fourth floor, leaving most of the third floor available. "2020" was definitely intended to impress the highest level of society, and its owners seem to have had one certain guest in mind. That guest was a king.²³⁸

²³⁷ Highsmith and Landphair, "Embassy of Indonesia," 51.

²³⁸ *Ibid.*, 47.

CHAPTER 15

A KING FOR A FRIEND

Tom first met Leopold II of Belgium in 1899 when the Walshes' chartered train stopped at Ostend after the Paris Exhibition. The meeting was arranged by a prominent Belgian capitalist who met Walsh at the Exhibition. Charles Naegelmackers, president of the International Sleeping Car Company, hoped an infusion of Walsh money might assist his ailing company. As his country's monarch was a major investor in the company, Naegelmackers hoped Leopold's presence would influence Walsh's decision. No agreement was reached at the first meeting, but the Belgians prevailed upon Walsh to return in three months. At the second meeting, in September 1900, the capitalist and the king once again began to put pressure on Tom to invest. However, as it happened the conversation turned to how the king might improve his return on the royal investments. Tom replied quite frankly that he was not interested in the three to four percent annual return promised by the sleeping car company. Why should he be when mining brought him ten to twelve percent per year, and sometimes even twenty percent? Leopold, owner of vast and largely undeveloped African mineral properties, was duly impressed. The conversation immediately shifted to mining as Leopold sought to enlist Tom as his

mining partner. Even Naegelmackers supported the move, sleeping cars forgotten for the time being. At this point Tom deferred, needing a few weeks to consider the offer. By the end of the month of October, the Denver press loudly proclaimed "Walsh Now A King's Partner," adding that the agreement between the two men entrusted millions of dollars of the king's money to Tom's care. Achievement of high social distinction was seen as one more motivation for Walsh.²³⁹

One month later, arriving at Denver's Brown Palace Hotel, Walsh sought to diffuse the excitement over his agreement with Leopold. As the papers had earlier reported, he was at first leery of the king's attention. He suspected the motive was to induce him to invest some of his millions in the royal mineral lands. Now Tom denied any major involvement, and any *carte blanche* to use the king's money. He did state that fruitful discussions had taken place, he found in Leopold a charming companion, and he would be an interested party in the king's affairs. Yes, he had been asked to invest his money as well as his expertise, but left it unclear how either would be accomplished. In fact Tom was embarking on a long-term relationship as the king's advisor. On one occasion, at a magnificent luncheon in Brussels, Leopold instructed several of his expert mining engineers to tell Walsh all they knew, for he in turn had much more to tell them about mining.²⁴⁰ In a 1903 interview Leopold

²³⁹ "Walsh Now a King's Partner," *Denver Times*, 24 October 1900, 1.

²⁴⁰ *Rocky Mountain News*, 17 December 1909, 3; *Denver Times*, 9 November 1900, 1.

named Walsh in the same breath with J. Pierpont Morgan and James J. Hill as among leading American businessmen and financiers whom he knew and admired.²⁴¹

A King's Personal Empire in Africa

Like their business relationship, the friendship between the American mining millionaire and the Belgian king was a lasting one. However, in Leopold II, Tom could not have found a friend more different than himself, a difference much more profound than the mere disparity between the circumstances of the two men's births. Twenty years before Tom Walsh's birth, the Belgians had finally achieved independence after centuries of rule by other European powers. They had overthrown their Dutch overlords, and now felt they needed a king of their own. The choice was a German prince, who became Leopold I. The father achieved the distinction of founding a dynasty and winning the loyalty of his new subjects.²⁴²

When his less-than-impressive, or popular, son became Leopold II on his father's death in 1865, he quickly sought to make his own name and reputation. In an era of empire building by European powers, why not seek overseas colonies? The Belgian people showed little interest, so Leopold set out on his own. Obtaining an

²⁴¹ *Denver Times*, 9 November 1903.

²⁴² Adam Hochschild, King Leopold's Ghost, (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1999), 33-34.

audience with famed explorer Henry Stanley, he learned of a little-known and potentially rich area in west-central Africa which was as yet unclaimed by colonial powers. Under the guise of a benevolent society to abolish slavery (as practiced by Arabs, not Europeans), Leopold obtained first commercial concessions, and later military control, over the vast watershed of the Congo River.²⁴³

Ivory was his first commercial target, but it was soon eclipsed by rubber. To finance the operation, Leopold coerced his reluctant countrymen to loan him millions. They complied, but because they had not assisted him from the start, the Congo became Leopold's personal colony, not Belgium's. When he sought official recognition by world leaders, the jealous Europeans were reluctant to come forward. The crafty Leopold nevertheless had another sponsor in mind. After considerable lavish entertainment bestowed by the king's New World connections, American President Chester A. Arthur stepped forward and gave his recognition. This marked the start of influence exerted by the king toward prominent Americans. Europe's powers soon had no alternative but to fall in line with their approval as well.²⁴⁴

When the king first approached Tom Walsh, he was already on his way to becoming one of the world's richest men because of the Congo's immense supply of rubber, a commodity of growing worldwide importance. Now the king saw the region's mineral wealth as a second wealth-builder. At the same time, the world

²⁴³ Hochschild, *King Leopold's Ghost*, 42-74.

was beginning to question Leopold's altruistic motivations. Leopold the philanthropist and humanitarian had welcomed missionaries, not just from Belgium, but also Sweden, Britain, America and other lands. Generally their presence supported the claim that the Congo enjoyed the king's protection against Arab slave traders, not to mention his concern for his subjects' spiritual lives. Missionaries could usually be expected to stay out of local politics. However, just enough looked around and asked questions that, together with the observations of others such as foreign envoys and humanitarians, the Congo was exposed as anything but Leopold's benevolent effort. To future writer Joseph Conrad, sent on a commercial mission, conditions he found abhorrent provided the background for his classic work Heart of Darkness. Any of a number of Leopold's lieutenants could be the prototype for his tyrannical Kurtz. No one did more work than British journalist and reformer E.D. Morel, who made Congo conditions the subject of a lifetime crusade. Morel got his start while stationed by a shipping company in Antwerp, Belgium. From its docks he could see that while many valuable commodities arrived from the Congo, only guns were sent back.²⁴⁵

What the reformers all found was a rubber-based slave camp with human-rights abuses on a massive scale. Hostages were taken and frequently abused to secure rubber output, hands and heads were cut off as punishment for disobedience

²⁴⁴ Hochschild, King Leopold's Ghost, 42-74.

or poor production, and whole villages and traditional ways of life were destroyed so the King of the Belgians could have his rubber profits. When the natives revolted against such rule, as they frequently did, they were put down bloodily. Modern estimates put the death toll among Congolese at well into the millions during Leopold's reign, 1878-1908. The king's legacy of cultural and economic instability has arguably continued to this day.²⁴⁶

In his role as a king's advisor, and would-be investor, Walsh never set foot in Africa, and in this he was not alone, for neither did Leopold. It is nonetheless preposterous to claim, as did his supporters, that Leopold was unaware of the excesses of his forces in the Congo. In 1908, he decided to sell his colony to his country. The terms of sale called for payments to the king in millions of francs, never mind that he had never repaid the millions loaned to him by the Belgians. Once the deal was complete, Brussels was treated to what might be termed the greatest bonfire in the history of the country up to then. The conflagration went on for eight days as every record of the king's activity with respect to the Congo went up in flames in the furnaces of the royal palace. When one of his military aides inquired of Leopold about the source of all the smoke and soot, the king replied, "I will give them my Congo, but they have no right to know what I did there." Possibly all Leopold's records of dealings with Tom Walsh joined the rest of his archives in

²⁴⁵ Hochschild, King Leopold's Ghost, 75-87, 140-191.

their destruction.²⁴⁷

We know little of what transpired in their dealings, which all took place in Europe. We do know that Tom's period as an advisor coincided with Leopold's main thrust into development of the Congo's mineral resources, especially in the rich Katanga province. In 1900 Leopold established a company to explore and develop the region. Ore discoveries the next year led to construction of a railroad, followed by the first smelter in 1911. The most extensive mining operations occurred after Leopold's sale and subsequent death. However, their conduct carried all too familiar themes. Five thousand Katanga workers died between 1911 and 1918. The workers had been forcibly recruited, led away roped together, and were disciplined with a whip, just like in the days of the rubber system.²⁴⁸

Did the well-read Walsh hear of the protests to his friend's conduct? Leopold, once shy and insecure, had developed at least some charm in his later years, and had even more charming friends and agents on his side, especially in America. His best ally in the country was powerful Senator Nelson Aldrich of

²⁴⁶ Ibid., 101-202, 300-304.

²⁴⁷ Hochschild, King Leopold's Ghost, 292-306; only one source says Walsh actually went to the Congo, and it is probably incorrect. See *Denver Post*, 17 December 1909. Other Denver newspapers published the same day indicate Walsh as an advisor only who refused to make the trip to the Congo. See *Rocky Mountain News*, *Denver Times*.

²⁴⁸ Jerome L. Sternstein, "King Leopold II, Senator Nelson W. Aldrich, and the Strange Beginnings of American Economic Penetration of the Congo," African Historical Studies, (Brookline, MA: African Studies Center of Boston Univ., 1969), 189-204; David Northrup, Beyond the Bend in the River, (Athens, OH: Ohio Univ. Center for International Studies, 1988), 93-115, 161.

Rhode Island, father-in-law to John D. Rockefeller, Jr. and grandfather to future Vice-President Nelson Aldrich Rockefeller. Aldrich, his son-in-law, and such prominent Americans as Bernard Baruch and the Guggenheim family all received major Congo concession rights. One of Aldrich's jobs was to keep reform-minded candidates from being appointed to the position of U.S. consul general to the Congo, and he successfully blocked every one. The Cardinal of Baltimore was another connection, working with a pro-Leopold Vatican as well. It is probable that among the duties of the king's many American friends was to make certain men like Walsh received and believed only sanitized versions of the Congo story. For Walsh, who valued friendship and loyalty, the strategy worked, at least to a degree. To honor a friend by setting aside a floor of his mansion demonstrates that he held Leopold in only the highest regard. However, the honored guest who never set foot in Africa also never set foot in his reserved quarters at 2020 Massachusetts Avenue.²⁴⁹

To Be a King's Partner

As pressure from the King intensified, Walsh had to decide if he should add Congo investment and possible direct involvement to his advisor's role. He had admitted to a suspicious Carrie that he had seen engineers' reports showing Congo gold and copper potential which would dwarf the Camp Bird. While the reports

²⁴⁹ Sternstein, "King Leopold et. al.," 189-204.

which Walsh viewed have not survived, his statement about the Congo's mining future was correct. In copper alone, production which started in 1911 reached the figure of 100,000 tons annual production by 1928. In 1985 it was 460,000 tons, or seven percent of the world's total. Diamond and gold mining also became quite profitable.²⁵⁰

Evalyn tells of a memorable business trip to the King's chateau in the French Pyrenees. It was September 1902. Her childhood observation of Leopold was of a large man with an incredibly stiff posture. Ever curious, she managed to bump into him when their carriage swung around a turn. A most formidable bullet-proof corset proved the reason for the king's upright demeanor.²⁵¹

The two men talked for three days. One time in between sessions, Tom confided in Evalyn, in a rage, "The way they handle things down there in the Congo - I wouldn't touch it." He did not elaborate. At the end of the conference the King and his mining advisor, Tom Walsh, shook hands as fellow-businessmen. Evalyn felt that she and her father knew something the King did not yet suspect, that Tom's mind was now firmly set against further involvement in the Congo. He did however hope the two men could remain as friends, and maybe a business deal of another kind might some day be in the cards. The King's final promise was to visit America for the 1903 St. Louis Exhibition, where Evalyn suspected he wanted to observe

²⁵⁰ F. Scott Bobb, Historical Dictionary of Democratic Republic of the Congo (Zaire), (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 1999), 281-282.

Americans making money, and make sure even more of it flowed across the ocean to his African domain. After departing, Tom's final comment to his daughter was, "I'll keep my money home where I can see it. Of course, I don't mind little flyers."²⁵²

What might have been Walsh's Congo bonanza passed instead to another Irish-American millionaire, Thomas Fortune Ryan, in partnership with King Leopold and the Guggenheim family. Their ventures, which commenced in 1906, found some gold, and millions of dollars worth of diamonds. Walsh could have added the Congo to the Homestake in the category of missed opportunities. However, the Congo tale seems not to have survived as a family story of a blunder turned into a learning experience.²⁵³

Otherwise, Tom had his way, for the friendship with the king lasted to the end of their lives, with Tom's role never growing past that of advisor. This role included not only giving advice on copper deposits of the Congo, but also on the king's gold mines in Korea and Manchuria. Tom made casual inspection of ore samples from those regions, which greatly impressed Leopold. He also told the King of his continuing belief that the Congo held one of the world's greatest and richest copper deposits, in which he was proven correct. On at least one occasion he

²⁵¹ McLean, Father Struck It Rich, 97-98.

²⁵² Ibid., 98.

²⁵³ Hoyt, The Guggenheims and the American Dream, 151-152.

sent mining experts to Africa, among whose ranks was John Benson. However, as he later steadfastly asserted, his duties never advanced beyond this level, and he engaged in no mining ventures with the monarch.²⁵⁴ Contrary to some rumors of the time, Leopold did not become an investor or partner in the Camp Bird. As correctly reported by General Hall, only Carrie could be considered a partner in the mine. When it was sold, only Tom Walsh received the proceeds.

²⁵⁴ *Rocky Mountain News*, 17 December 1909; Letter Benson to Walsh dated 13 May 1904, Box 78, Walsh Papers.

CHAPTER 16

SELLING THE CAMP BIRD MINE

The Advice of a Famous Engineer

Despite his July 1901 statement to General Frank Hall which denied any intent to sell, Tom had already opened the door to possible buyers of the Camp Bird. John Hays Hammond became the center of most of the speculation on a sale. In a colorful career, mining engineer Hammond established, bought and sold famous mines, made friendships with world leaders, and sometimes dodged bullets. While working as a mining engineer near Johannesburg, South Africa, he was convicted of attempting to overthrow the Boer government of Transvaal. Hammond, who later admitted to some complicity in the matter, was sentenced to death by the Boers. Then he was granted a last minute reprieve, partly as a good-will gesture (which included a stiff fine, but did not prevent the Boer War between Transvaal and the British).²⁵⁵

Hammond's relationship with Walsh seems to have begun around 1900, not long after the former's brush with death in Africa. It is unclear if Hammond entered

²⁵⁵ Hammond, Autobiography, 180-196.

as an independent mining consultant, or if he represented a potential buyer from the start. At about the same time he was putting together the purchase of Winfield Scott Stratton's rich Cripple Creek mine, the Independence, by a British syndicate, the Venture Corporation of London. In his autobiography, Hammond relates a simple (and somewhat self-serving) account of winning Walsh's trust and closing the sale. T.A. Rickard (who was becoming Hammond's bitter rival), had prepared a very favorable report on the Camp Bird for the Venture Corporation, which was looking to expand beyond the Independence in Colorado. Rickard and his associates found the value of the net ore in sight to be about six million dollars, and recommended that their client purchase the mine for that amount. Hammond's examination, apparently requested by the client as a second opinion, concluded that the value was less than three million. Venture Corporation took his advice, turning down the deal.²⁵⁶

The following year, Hammond describes a meeting with Walsh at Glenwood Springs, Colorado. Walsh sought him out to discuss why he had come up with a lower figure. Hammond quotes Walsh as follows:

You see, it isn't entirely a question of money with me. I've already made several millions out of the mine, but I don't want to be tied up any longer. I've been in these mountains for many years. My children are growing up. I want them to have an education and some social life, and I'd like to play around in politics myself. There's nobody I can trust to manage the mine properly. My manager, John

²⁵⁶ Hammond, Autobiography, 482-483.

Benson, can't stand the high altitude any longer, and I don't want to train a new man.²⁵⁷

Hammond promised a new examination and new offer based on its findings. It came in with a value of two and a half million dollars of ore in sight, and Walsh accepted the figure. Three million in cash was the deal made, and Hammond also advised Walsh to take part of this in stock, with "a certain additional payment if and when ore could be extracted beyond the purchase price of the mine." This total amount must have included payment for all other assets of the mine, such as buildings, equipment, and water rights, although Hammond does not elaborate. At the closing, Hammond found that Walsh possessed the integrity to honor a verbal part of the original agreement which was incorrectly stated to Walsh's benefit in the written contract. Walsh instructed his attorney, Charles Thomas, to delete the language, which would have given Walsh more than the agreed-upon power to dictate his percentage on future ore payments. Later, he refrained from sending accountants to check on mine operations, stating that as long as Hammond was the mine's consulting engineer he needed no one else to protect his interests. Walsh, Hammond concluded, was honest himself and gave others credit for possession of the same quality.²⁵⁸

According to Evalyn, her mother felt Tom was hypnotized by Hammond.

²⁵⁷ Hammond, Autobiography, 483.

Carrie was very averse to any sale, arguing on one occasion, "What can you buy that's half so safe as a six-mile vein of gold right through your own land?" Evalyn agreed with Hammond's account that Tom wanted freedom from the continual struggle of owning and developing a large mine. The Hammonds and Walshes did develop a close friendship, their son Jack becoming a playmate of Evalyn and Vinson. The two families spent time together in Colorado, and also summered near each other on the Massachusetts coast in 1903. Later the Hammond family lived not far away in Washington.²⁵⁹

Denver newspapers closely followed the many rumors of the sale of the Camp Bird, already regarded as one of Colorado's premier mines. Their accounts paint a roller-coaster ride of off-again, on-again deals, with prices and terms often out of line with Hammond's simpler story. The July 29, 1900 edition of the *Denver Times* led off the speculation, announcing, "The Camp Bird Reported Sold." Negotiations with Venture Corporation were complete, the total price undisclosed, but said to run in the millions. Rickard, the buyer's representative, was refusing to discuss anything. Within two weeks the *Denver Mining Reporter* was cautioning that the rumors were not credible, yet the *Times* persisted. Finally in late September, in its first mention of Hammond's presence, the *Times* admitted the sale might be

²⁵⁸ Hammond, *Autobiography*, 484-485.

²⁵⁹ McLean, *Father Struck It Rich*, 103-104, 106-108; Hammond, *Autobiography*, 484-485, 700-705; "Pretty Home of Thomas Walsh in Massachusetts," *Denver Times*, 26 August 1903.

off, or at least delayed while Hammond recovered from an illness. His recovery must have been rapid, for three days later on September 30 the banner headline read "Camp Bird Mine Sold For \$6,500,000." The price would be paid in cash by December 1, and the Venture investors were said to include one notable American, J. Pierpont Morgan. A further rumor held that Morgan and his cronies would then turn around and sell the mine for twice what they had just paid Walsh. Variations of the sale story continued for nearly two months, before a firm November 6 denial by Rickard seemed to lay the matter to rest, at least for a while.²⁶⁰

While the Venture Corporation deal was off, at least one rumor arose of a sale to another British millionaire.²⁶¹ Then all was largely quiet until early 1902. On April 21, experts representing Venture were again reported to be examining the mine, a closing imminent. This time the rumor was correct. The deal closed May 6, 1902, although on the following day the true price was still not available, with a *Ouray* editor predicting Walsh would receive \$11 million. The buyer was a newly formed company, Camp Bird, Ltd., whose principals included both Americans and Britons of the Venture Corporation. The best estimates hold that it paid Walsh a

²⁶⁰ See *Denver Times*, 12, 27 and 30 September; 9, 12, 14, 19, 23 and 28 October; and 5 and 6 November, 1900; *Mining Record*, Denver, CO, 9 August 1900.

²⁶¹ *Denver Times*, 23 November 1900. See also Rosemeyer, "Camp Bird Mine," 120. The conveyance of mining claims was by Warranty Mining Deed, Thomas F. Walsh to Camp Bird, Ltd., dated May 6, 1902, recorded May 12, 1902 at Book 78, Page 219, in the office of the Ouray County Clerk and Recorder.

total of about \$6,000,000 for his fabulous mine, in the form of cash, stock and royalties on future production. The deed of record in the county showed consideration of \$3,125,000, probably just representing the cash payment. In the words of one commentator, "The true sum ... will probably never be known unless Mr. Walsh cares to satisfy public curiosity."²⁶² In point of fact, the value of his stock and the royalties he would receive were based on the probability the Camp Bird could continue to produce as it had during the Walsh era, something Walsh himself knew better than anyone. On May 29, 1902, the *Times* presented the complete text of Hammond's report which had led to the sale. He found ore in sight having a gross value of \$5,000,000, and a net value of \$2,100,000. He concluded, "In my opinion the prospective value of the property is very great."²⁶³

Investing a Fortune

Despite his wealth and newfound freedom, Tom did not abandon mining. The extent of his mining revenues or losses in the era after Camp Bird is not known, but his continued pursuit may not have been solely for the purpose of adding to his wealth. Rather, he seems to have held a life-long love of the mining profession. He definitely found no new Camp Birds. In 1904 Walsh joined America's last major

²⁶² *Denver Times*, 13 May 1902.

²⁶³ "Hammond Says Camp Bird Mine Has \$5,000,000 Gross in Sight," *Denver Times*, May 29, 1902, 11.

gold rush, to Goldfield, Nevada, but discovered more rattlesnakes than gold, as well as a bad case of food poisoning. A promising tunnel proved to be a breeding ground for the reptiles, abruptly curtailing further exploration. Later John Benson, who accompanied him, told the tale of rotten food so bad he and Walsh narrowly escaped with their lives. No new mining wealth was reported for their efforts.²⁶⁴ In 1906 Tom learned of gold potential near Hartsel, Colorado, about ninety miles southwest of Denver. He told a Ouray reporter that the Hartsel gold camp might prove to be another bonanza, but needed further examination. Unfortunately, Tom's journey to make that examination ended in a train wreck. Tom received only minor injuries, but was badly shaken. He apparently dropped the matter, and nothing further came of the Hartsel "gold rush," for Walsh or anyone else. A history of the area makes no mention of Hartsel ever having been a gold camp.²⁶⁵

Soon he had less and less time or energy to devote to active exploration. However, to the end of his life mining promoters pursued his wealth. Tom remained open minded, and frequently listened and invested. His closest friends and advisers seem to have felt it was their duty to shield him from the more outlandish of the schemes. While Tom took a great interest in the many proposals of a California promoter, William Dunham, John Benson developed a strong distrust and dislike for the man. He warned Tom about Dunham, yet his words fell on deaf

²⁶⁴ McLean, Father Struck It Rich, 120-121; "Reminiscences of Days When Walsh was Prospecting," *Denver Post*, 10 April 1910, 3.

ears. Tom invested with Dunham, and the actual results are not known. However, Tom's usual level of caution combined with shrewdness never left him. He maintained his Camp Bird wealth, and any losses on individual mining deals seem to have been written off by him as foreseeable consequences of playing the game he loved.²⁶⁶

He also joined in the real estate business in the capital, just as he had done in Denver nearly twenty years before. If he could not construct more world-class mines, at least he could construct new office buildings. Early in their Washington stay, Tom returned to another old business, purchasing the city's Oxford Hotel. By 1906 downtown Washington contained the Colorado and Ouray buildings, Thomas F. Walsh proprietor.²⁶⁷ However, the mining developer who professed to love his double-digit returns on investment should have found capital real estate a bit boring. If 1904 can be considered a typical year, the return on the Colorado building was a mere 4 percent on the cost of the lot, and 6.73 percent on the cost of the building. In reality, the real estate investments seem to have been one more manifestation of a long-held Walsh trait, which dated at least back to when his carpentry work took

²⁶⁵ McLean, *Father Struck It Rich*, 154-155; *Ouray Herald*, 1 June 1906; Virginia McConnell Simmons, *Bayou Salado*, (Boulder: Fred Pruett Books, 1966), 218-222.

²⁶⁶ See Agreement between Walsh and Dunham dated 20 January 1903, Box 103, Walsh Papers, which provides that Dunham shall search for mining properties, and Walsh shall pay him expenses and a 1/8 interest in anything acquired by Walsh. See letter Benson to Walsh dated 7 September 1903, Box 77, Walsh Papers, in which Benson calls Dunham "one of the most dishonest and deceitful fellows I ever met."

²⁶⁷ *Ouray Herald*, 1 June 1906.

precedence over his mining. This was the idea of establishing a bedrock of financial stability, and only then venturing into more speculative fields. Indeed, even before the Camp Bird sale, much of the rapidly-accumulating wealth of the Walsh family was still put in very safe and low-yielding bonds.²⁶⁸

Walsh also ventured into railroading. The first time he did so was to help both the Camp Bird and the citizens of southwestern Colorado. The Denver and Rio Grande Western Railroad had a virtual monopoly on hauling ores out of the San Juan region. At the time Eastern interests such as the Gould family controlled the railroad, and no doubt ignored the concerns of Western mine operators and other users of the line. Walsh was indignant that the railroad refused to give him uniform rates on Camp Bird ore. Others who needed to transport lower grade ores found the prevailing rates of \$11 to \$14 per ton to be prohibitive.²⁶⁹

The September 6, 1901 edition of Ouray's *Plaindealer* carried the welcome news that competition was on the way. Tom Walsh, together with John Benson, their local attorneys, and other leading citizens, announced the formation of the Pueblo, Gunnison & Ouray line. Incorporation papers had been filed with the secretary of state, and the annual meeting was set for November 3 at the home office in Ouray. The railroad was to start at the smelting center of Pueblo, and then head west into the mountains in a shorter line than the existing road, in "almost an air

²⁶⁸ "Statement Colorado Building," as of 31 October 1904, Box 103, Walsh Papers; Beebe, The Big Spenders, 317.

line” as the *Plaindealer* described it. It would cross Custer, Saguache, southern Gunnison, and probably northern Hinsdale counties before reaching Ouray. The line would be standard gauge all the way, while the Rio Grande required a shift to narrow gauge near Salida. Rates would be lowered, with the confident prediction that the Rio Grande would practically have to haul ore for free to compete. Remote mining districts would finally receive the rail. Best of all, it could be extended west to Salt Lake City where it would connect with a line to the Pacific owned by the man who nearly became Walsh’s Washington neighbor, Senator William Andrews Clark of Montana.²⁷⁰

Ignored in all the optimism was the plain fact that to accomplish this along the nearly three-hundred-mile path, three major mountain ranges would need to be traversed. The Rio Grande route might be longer, but it occupied the less-snowbound valleys and lower passes. Most likely not one rail or tie of the “Walsh Road” was ever laid. On July 31, 1902, after the sale of the Camp Bird, its demise was announced. The *Denver Times* accused Walsh of no longer caring about railroad rates now that he had his fortune. Walsh was probably guilty as charged, but he was also “guilty” of exercising good business judgment in discontinuing an unrealistic venture.²⁷¹

²⁶⁹ *Plaindealer*, Ouray, CO, 6 September 1901; *Denver Times*, 31 July 1902.

²⁷⁰ *Plaindealer*, 6 September 1901; *Denver Times*, 31 July 1902.

²⁷¹ “Walsh Road Vanishes,” *Denver Times*, 31 July 1902.

Walsh made one other railroad investment seemingly out of sheer Denver pride and loyalty, rather than sound business judgment. His friend David Moffat intended to carry out the dream of giving the city a direct rail connection to the Pacific. Construction of the Denver Northwestern and Pacific Railroad, usually called the Moffat Road, commenced in 1902. The rail line climbed the Front Range west of the city, crossing the Continental Divide at 11,600 foot Rollins Pass. It then dropped into the Colorado River valley before embarking on a planned course north and then west toward Salt Lake City. It never reached the Utah city, stopping at Steamboat Springs, Colorado in 1908. The Moffat Road did succeed in opening up Northwest Colorado, and later reached another forty miles west to the town of Craig and its nearby coal mines. However the high cost of snow clearance and weather delays in the twisting mountain route meant the railroad always lost money. It was strongly opposed by major Eastern railroad interests such as the Goulds and Harrimans, who denied it access to Denver's Union Station and placed other roadblocks in its way. These tycoons of the Union Pacific and Rio Grande did not want a through route from Denver to compete with their own lines.²⁷²

Moffat had invested much of his sizeable fortune in his dream, and he lost nearly all of it before his death in 1911 (some say by suicide). Tom Walsh and a number of prominent Denver citizens also lost money on the Moffat Road. In

²⁷² P.R. Griswold, The Moffat Road, (Denver: Rocky Mtn Railroad Club, 1995), 49-159; Robert Athearn, Denver and Rio Grande Railroad, (Lincoln: Univ. of Nebr, Press, 1962, 201-205.

Tom's case the investment was large, said to have been \$150,000, and eventually declared to be valueless. Through it all, he seems to have felt support of a friend and a cause was more important than other business considerations, and perhaps both men were visionaries. Other Denver citizens carried out Moffat's dream. The route of the Moffat Road finally reached its goal of a Pacific connection many years after the deaths of Walsh and the railroad's founder. This was accomplished by digging the Moffat Tunnel under the Continental Divide, which bypassed snowy Rollins Pass. Then construction of the Dotsero Cut-off in Western Colorado formed a connection to the Denver & Rio Grande Western Railroad line from Pueblo to Salt Lake City. By 1934 it was possible to travel by rail directly west from Denver to Salt Lake City, and then on to San Francisco.²⁷³

²⁷³ Athearn, Rio Grande Railroad, 298-299; Letter Cavender to Thom, dated 7 March 1912, Box 80, Walsh Papers, notes that the Walsh investment in 33 Moffat Road bonds is now substantially valueless. In a letter dated 6 August 1904, Box 78, Walsh Papers, Walsh's secretary thanks Moffat for providing Walsh a pass over the line for the year 1904.

CHAPTER 17
DEATH, AND A RETURN TO COLORADO

Vinson

Life in Washington included a mansion with twenty-three servants and considerably more rooms, and for Evalyn and Vinson it meant a childhood undreamed-of only a few short years before in Ouray. Their wishes were their father's commands. Automobiles soon replaced theatre as the center of Vinson's life. He became a seasoned driver and a terror on the streets of Washington in his Pope Toledo (sometimes pursued by policemen on bicycles).²⁷⁴ John Hays Hammond recalled that during his family's 1903 summer stay near the Walsh family on the Massachusetts coast, the parents organized an automobile club. The fathers paid their sons' dues, and then quickly passed a by-law imposing fines and removal of license for any member reported speeding. The rule did not stop Hammond from encouraging his son Jack to engage Vinson in a high-speed race when the latter had the audacity to pass them. No fines were imposed, and the by-

²⁷⁴ McLean, Father Struck It Rich, 143-144.

law was most likely soon forgotten.²⁷⁵

In the same year, Vinson enrolled at The Washington School, along with his cousin, Monroe Lee. Monroe's mother, Carrie's sister Lucy, was killed in a 1901 carriage accident near the family's Kansas City home, and now her son spent much of his time with the Walsh family. In a December 1903 letter to Walsh, the school's headmaster reported the grades of both boys. Monroe scored all As and Bs, Vinson Bs and Cs. Headmaster James Hooper added that "Vinson is handicapped by his absence; out of forty-seven school days since the beginning of the year, he has been absent twenty-one and tardy three times. The boy is bright enough and can learn his lessons quickly, but naturally when he is absent nearly half of the time the results must of necessity be poor."²⁷⁶ Evalyn credited the absences to another of Vinson's passions, playing hockey. The following year he enrolled in the Hill School, Pottstown, Pennsylvania. Here his schoolwork improved, but apparently the Pope-Toledo came to school as well, for one of the company representatives wrote Vinson directly as to the machine's care and condition. When Vinson entered a contest for a position on the school newspaper, the goal was to bring in the most advertising dollars. Tom was only too happy to contact a number of New Yorker business owners who owed him favors. All came through with ads to his delight, and his son

²⁷⁵ Hammond, *Autobiography*, 486.

²⁷⁶ "Tom Walsh's sister-in-Law Killed in Runaway," *Denver Times*, 25 August 1901, 1; letter Louis Hooper to Walsh dated 15 December 1903, Box 9, Walsh Papers.

won the spot on the paper. The previous summer he was very proud when Vinson shot a bear in Colorado, although Tom was generally opposed to killing animals. The father's show of love and affection for the son had not diminished in the least since the day Vinson pulled a rabbit from his hat in his own private theatre. Tom Walsh's children could do no wrong.²⁷⁷

Tom, Carrie and Evalyn took one of many European trips in January 1905. Arriving in Rome, they had an audience with the Pope, and then Evalyn became romantically involved with an Italian prince. Marriage rumors were flying, but as Evalyn confided in a family friend, she wanted a red Mercedes even more than a prince. Fearing payment of a larger dowry, and a life of unhappiness for his daughter, Tom chose to spend \$18,000 for the car. Evalyn had guessed his response in advance, for she immediately told him which Paris friend would make the purchase, and how the car could then be shipped to Venice.²⁷⁸

Evalyn shared her Mercedes with Vinson. For the summer of 1905, the family rented the Vanderbilt family home in Newport, Rhode Island, and joined in that town's highest society. On August 19, the family chauffeur drove Evalyn and Vinson in the Mercedes to a luncheon at the Clambake Club. On their return, Vinson demanded to drive, carrying Evalyn, the chauffeur, and three friends at his usual fast speed. A tire blew as they approached a bridge. Evalyn found herself

²⁷⁷ McLean, Father Struck It Rich, 143-145; Letter C.R.Haugh to Vincent [sic] Walsh dated 7 November 1904, Box 78, Walsh Papers.

pinned under the car in the creek, with a severely broken leg and other injuries.

Throughout her trip to the hospital and for some time afterward, during a painfully slow recovery, she was told her brother had survived. Some days later, reading a note which had been carelessly left at her bedside, she learned that Vinson had died a few hours after the accident. The day of his funeral Tom and Carrie had arrived at her bedside in normal-looking attire, only to change into formal dress for the service after leaving the room.²⁷⁹

Evalyn had been taking morphine for the pain, and now needed more of it. She never completely recovered from her injuries, and developed an addiction to the drug as well. One consolation was the attention she received from her young family friend, Edward Beale "Ned" McLean, the heir to the publishing fortune and now a more mature eighteen. When it looked like her leg might have to be amputated, Ned rushed to his influential father. John R. McLean knew a renowned doctor at the Johns Hopkins Medical Center, who proposed a new and risky surgery. This involved inserting a silver plate where the bone had been crushed near her hip. The surgeon, Dr. John Finney, gave her only a fifty percent chance of even surviving the surgery. The family left the decision to Evalyn. She agreed, and begged them to have it done in her room at 2020 Massachusetts. Her spacious bathroom became the operating room. After a long and arduous surgery, Dr. Finney saved both Evalyn

²⁷⁸ McLean, Father Struck It Rich, 133-139.

and her leg. She required seven months to recover to the point where her life even resembled its previous level of activity. She was never quite the same.²⁸⁰

Something very vital was taken out of Tom's life when he lost his son. His dreams for Vinson's future had changed with the boy's many whims, from heir to the Camp Bird, to actor, to newspaper editor, to sportsman. All such aspirations were far beyond anything Tom could have imagined when he was Vinson's age. One friend noticed that a certain languidness had begun to replace Tom's former boyishness and light-hearted nature. Evalyn found him disconsolate at her bedside early in her recovery. He told her he would return every ounce of gold from the Camp Bird back to the earth if it meant he would have Vinson, and her health, back again.²⁸¹

Tom plunged into Washington social life to hide his grief. Then, he abruptly turned his attention to a return to Colorado. He felt the family needed a change of scenery, and a magnificent estate he admired was now for sale. It was Wolhurst, where Walsh, Theodore Roosevelt, and many others of prominence had been entertained over the years. Its founder, Edward Oliver Wolcott, was a U.S. Senator from Colorado. He bought the ramshackle 500-acre ranch property three miles south

²⁷⁹ McLean, Father Struck It Rich, 143-147.

²⁸⁰ Ibid., 143-154.

²⁸¹ Ibid., 150-151; *Rocky Mountain News*, 9 April 1910.

of Littleton in 1890.²⁸² Described later by Colorado author Caroline Bancroft as a “dashing blond giant and bachelor Beau Brummel of Denver, brilliant, moody and eloquent,” Wolcott wanted to impress his bride-to-be. He commissioned Denver architect T.D. Boal to construct a great rambling residence. Its name, Wolhurst, was a combination of his last name and a term for a grove or woods, as the property was well-endowed with large cottonwoods. Here the future senator and his wife, the former Frances Metcalfe Bass, entertained lavishly. However, in 1900, the same year as the visit of candidate Roosevelt, the Wolcotts’ marriage was annulled. From then on the senator only used his large Colorado residence for political entertaining when visiting the state, preferring to spend his time on the east coast and abroad. He failed to be reelected to the Senate in 1903. Wolcott died at Monte Carlo on March 1, 1905. He willed his Littleton estate to his brother Henry, who had little personal need for the property. By early 1906 it was up for sale.²⁸³

Wolhurst Becomes Clonmel

Tom sent brother-in-law Arthur Lafferty, now a Denver businessman, to investigate the property. Receiving a very favorable report, the family first rented, and then purchased Wolhurst in 1906. 2020 Massachusetts was kept as their

²⁸² Thomas Felton Dawson, Life and Character of Edward Oliver Wolcott, (New York: Knickerbocker Press, 1911), 586-595.

²⁸³ Caroline Bancroft, The Melodrama of Wolhurst, Celebrated Colorado Show Place, (Denver: The Golden Press, 1952), 5-15.

Washington home as well. The fantastic Walsh social life of the nation's capital was transferred to Colorado, with Wolhurst as its center. The large house was remodeled and filled with art treasures. The entertainment was lavish, frequently involving two to three bands and a large team of attendants. At the same time one guest found the personality of the host, Tom Walsh, to be surprisingly unpretentious. It was as if a citizen more fortunate than others felt his duty to meet his neighbors and bring credit to his city.²⁸⁴

Later, when Tom wanted to give the estate his own chosen name, he settled on "Clonmel." President William Howard Taft, a friend since his days in the Roosevelt Cabinet, was the honored guest for the 1909 ceremonies marking the name change. Invitations were issued to trainloads of Denver citizens.²⁸⁵ The large and jovial Taft delivered his dedication speech, and then could not resist a joke about Tom's Irish origins. He recalled a story told him by a high Irish judge who had once held court in Tipperary. In a manslaughter case, the defendant was found guilty of striking another man with a blackthorn stick. The victim's demise was largely due to the fact that he had a "paper skull." Asked if he knew of any reason why the judgment of the court should not be carried out, the guilty party sought the answer to just one question: "I would like to ask what the divil a man with a head like that was doing in Tipperary?" The President, as later described by Tom to

²⁸⁴ *Rocky Mountain News*, 15 April 1910.

Evalyn (who was not there), was shaking like an earthquake of merriment.²⁸⁶

A Senator for the Common Man?

No sooner had Walsh returned to Colorado, than his name was once again mentioned for public office. The U.S. Senate race of 1906 was approaching, and the leading Republican contender was the “smelter king” from Pueblo, Simon Guggenheim. Tom hosted a luncheon for leading Republicans at Wolhurst, and at least refrained from declining to be included in the race. His motivation may have been to make certain Guggenheim would know he did not have a sure thing. Evalyn felt that her father both talked like a candidate, and at the same time let it be known he was not trying to be one.²⁸⁷

On September 27, 1906, Tom Walsh, who served as Director General of the Pike’s Peak Centennial Celebration, presented one of the many addresses by dignitaries at the Colorado Springs event. He chose for his topic the clouds threatening the country, which might cause America to join the ranks of failed civilizations. He found the darkest cloud to be accumulated and concentrated wealth, “crushing from the masses the life of individual ownership, individual independence, and, almost, individual existence.” Since no wealth could be

²⁸⁵ McLean, Father It Rich, 183-184.

²⁸⁶ Ibid., 184.

²⁸⁷ Ibid., 155-156.

created without the assistance of the people, they should receive their proportionate share. He found the greatest cause of the decline of civilizations to be human selfishness. It carried with it the threat of an eventual business stagnation, with millions thrown out of employment. For a response to the threat, he suggested a graduated tax upon accumulating fortunes. He was also concerned about the inability of the masses to receive credit from banks, seeing no reason why the government could not create a department of savings banks to accomplish this end. The masses could also benefit from direct election of public officials, an obvious reference to the political race he was contemplating, for at the time senators were chosen by the state legislatures. Finally, he closed with the responsibility the masses must shoulder in return, that of patriotism.²⁸⁸

The *Denver Post* accused Walsh of startling his listeners by advocating "modified Socialism." It feared he had stepped on the toes of at least a few of the millionaires seated before him.²⁸⁹ Evalyn saw a certain appeal to the masses which might have placed her father in serious contention with fellow-millionaire Guggenheim. However, the Senate candidacy of Tom Walsh went no further. Lack of great motivation on the part of Walsh was one reason. An even greater reason was the great expense Simon Guggenheim was willing to undertake to virtually

²⁸⁸ "Complete Address of Hon. Thomas F. Walsh," *Ouray Herald*, 12 October 1906.

²⁸⁹ "Multi-millionaire Walsh Favors Modified Socialism," *Denver Post*, 28 September 1906.

“buy” the seat. Called the financial “angel” of the Colorado Republican party, he developed a special relationship with the state chairman, John F. Vivian, who could seemingly call on him for money at any time.²⁹⁰ Therefore, there was little surprise when the Colorado legislature picked Guggenheim for the seat later in 1906, with no indication that Walsh felt any regret. A later account by his old friend, General Frank Hall, also depicts Tom’s general frustration with how politics were carried out. Hall predicted failure when approached by an unidentified member of a political syndicate seeking introduction to the owner of Wolhurst. The proposition was that Walsh declare as a senate candidate and then furnish a large campaign fund. The man, whose principles were held in low esteem by Hall, later returned to complain that Walsh had turned him down cold. Hall felt that the Walsh standing was so high in both Colorado and the nation’s capital that a senate seat would have added little.²⁹¹

In 1908 Walsh served as a delegate to the Republican National Convention in Chicago, and hosted a dinner for dignitaries, including other Colorado delegates and senators from other states. The senators impressed upon the Coloradans that they would welcome a Senator Thomas F. Walsh of Colorado, with immeasurable benefits flowing to the state from his election. Nothing further happened. Walsh did

²⁹⁰ Hoyt, The Guggenheims and the American Dream, 184-185.

²⁹¹ General Frank Hall, “Offered a Senatorship He Spurned It Because of Degrading Conditions Attached by Scheming Politician Who Asked for Money,” *Denver Post*, 9 April 1910.

serve as a Presidential elector in the 1908 election, casting his vote for his friend (and future house guest) William Howard Taft, the eventual winner. Carrie, who perhaps held greater political ambition for her husband than he himself, confided in a family letter that "poor amiable papa Tommy the Dear Boy must continue to be a 0 (zero) in things political..."²⁹²

²⁹² Letter Freeman to Wickersham dated 29 June 1908, Box 78, Walsh Papers (regarding a Walsh senate candidacy); letter Carrie Walsh to Evalyn and Ned McLean dated 18 September 1908, Box 1, Walsh Papers, quoted in Peterson, "Thomas F. Walsh and Western Business Elitism", 62; McLean, *Father Struck It Rich*, 155-156; "Certificate of Presidential Elector," contained in Estate of Thomas F. Walsh. Case No. 143, County Court, In Probate, Arapahoe County, Colorado.

CHAPTER 18

FAMILY

A Fabulous Honeymoon

Evalyn had an on-again, off-again romance going with Ned McLean since her accident. Their 1908 engagement led Washington and Denver society to expect a huge wedding of two children from eminently prominent families. Evalyn and Ned decided to save their families the time, trouble and expense, and on the afternoon of July 22, 1908 they eloped to a small ceremony with a few friends in Denver. Among those friends were smelting heir Crawford Hill, also owner of the *Denver Republican*, and his wife Louise, “queen” of the Denver social register. Tom was away when they returned to Wolhurst. Carrie showed mild displeasure at missing out on the planned musicales, receptions, dinners and dances. She did order a large wedding feast.²⁹³

Evalyn and Ned’s honeymoon more than made up for the missed formal wedding. A new Mercedes was waiting at the dock in Amsterdam. They drove through Germany to Berlin. Along the way they decided one Mercedes was not

²⁹³ Beebe, The Big Spenders, 327-328; McLean, Father Struck It Rich, 167-168.

enough, and bought another. Vienna, Constantinople, and Egypt followed, and a final stop in Paris. The Walshes and McLeans had each given them \$100,000, intended to set up the new couple for life. The money was gone by the end of the trip, a jewel-buying spree in Paris delivering the final blow.²⁹⁴

Family on Both Sides of the Atlantic

Tom's love of family extended well beyond his wife and daughter, and to both sides of the Atlantic. All of his brothers and sisters predeceased him, save Kate in Ireland. Maria died in Denver in January 1908, and her obituary noted her closeness to Tom. Her husband, Arthur Lafferty, had once run a saloon in downtown Denver along with Tom's brother Patrick. He had recovered from his unfortunate experience working at the Kokomo smelter, and now was a respected Denver citizen and part-owner of the Columbia hotel. Arthur died in 1916. The Laffertys had no children.²⁹⁵

Other families left behind by Tom's siblings were struggling to make ends meet. After Patrick's 1897 death, his widow Josephine and her children continued to live in the little town of Florence, Colorado. Tom sent them money for the children's education, and also loaned money to Patrick's son Frank to get a start in

²⁹⁴ McLean, Father Struck It Rich, 166-181.

²⁹⁵ Maria Lafferty Obituary, *Rocky Mountain News*, 8 January 1908; Arthur Lafferty Obituary, *Denver Post*, 7 September 1916

the motion picture industry, where he was unsuccessful.²⁹⁶

Tom's brother Michael died in December 1904 in Denver. Evalyn displayed a seeming lack of interest in the uncle who inspired the others to come to America. Noting he passed away from dropsy of the liver, she blamed his death as the reason the Walshes could not entertain for the 1904 holidays. Denver newspapers were more charitable, attributing the death to dropsy of the heart. Michael was described as a successful miner and New Mexico cattle rancher, before retiring to Denver in ill health three years before.²⁹⁷ Tom was ill and could not come to his brother's funeral. He sent John Benson with instructions to pay for the service and send him the bill.²⁹⁸ Later Tom helped Michael's daughter Marguerite in the education of her son Tom, and also sent her a new automobile. Unfortunately the "gift" exploded and injured her severely. She later made a full recovery.²⁹⁹ Shortly before his death, Tom Walsh remembered all of his Colorado relatives. He gave \$15,000 in bonds to his attorney, Stephen Osborn, to be distributed among the families of his two brothers and his sister.³⁰⁰

Tom never forgot his "three sweethearts" in Worcester. Every Christmas

²⁹⁶ *Denver Post*, 9 April 1910; letter Mrs. P. Walsh (Josephine) to Thomas F. Walsh dated 8 August 1904, Box 1, Walsh Papers.

²⁹⁷ McLean, Father Struck It Rich, 132; Michael Walsh Obituary, *Denver Post*, 6 December, 1904.

²⁹⁸ Letter Benson to Walsh, 8 December 1904, Box 78, Walsh Papers.

²⁹⁹ "Gift Explodes," *Rocky Mountain News*,

Tim Kennedy, his cousin Sarah's husband, could expect a check from Tom to be distributed among the families of the three cousins who introduced him to American life many years before.³⁰¹ Tom's relationship with his brother and two sisters in Ireland may have been lost for a time after he left for America. However, it was revived soon after he found his wealth, probably in the Thomas Walsh family's visit to their Irish relatives in 1899. Thereafter family in Ireland could expect frequent gifts from their "famous" brother and uncle. He also sent money to brother-in-law John Healy so John's daughter might attend a Dublin teachers' college. Additionally, Tom made a practice of sending his brother John money to be given to the Fethard area's poor. He also made a contribution to start a library in Fethard, his attraction to the town no doubt owing to the fact his family now resided in this area, not Clonmel several miles to the south.³⁰²

³⁰⁰ *Rocky Mountain News*, 9 April 1910.

³⁰¹ Letters Walsh to Kennedy dated 17 December 1904, 20 October 1905, 16 December 1905, 18 December 1906, 15 September 1908, 20 November 1909, all in Box 1, Walsh Papers.

³⁰² Letters Healy to Walsh dated 19 May and 21 July 1904, Walsh to Healy dated 18 June 1904; letter Fethard Town Clerk to Walsh dated 1 April 1903, all in Box 9, Walsh Papers.

CHAPTER 19
THE PASSING OF THOMAS F. WALSH

The Golden Cradle

On December 18, 1909, Evalyn and Ned's first child, Vinson Walsh McLean, was born. The newspapers christened him the "hundred-million dollar baby." Tom sent them \$50,000, just received as part of one of his last dividends from Camp Bird, to celebrate the birth of the only grandson he would know.³⁰³

His old friend King Leopold, learning that Tom's first grandchild was on the way, promised to send a golden cradle. The promise was one of the very last acts of the Belgian monarch. Having "sold" the Congo to his countrymen, the king could enjoy even greater riches and share at least a few with his friends during the brief life that was left him. On December 17, one day before Vinson's birth, Leopold succumbed to cancer. The golden cradle arrived in Washington the following February, Leopold's promise carried out by the new king, his nephew Albert.³⁰⁴ Another of Leopold's final acts was to once again marry Caroline, the Baroness de

³⁰³ McLean, Father Struck It Rich, 185.

³⁰⁴ "Golden Cradle for M'Lean Baby," *Denver Times*, 5 February 1910, 1.

Vaughan, the alleged former Paris prostitute who had been his companion for years.

Their relationship dated back to well before the death of Queen Clementine, the wife Leopold hated. A first marriage, in 1902, was attempted not long after Clementine's death, but it was secret and of doubtful validity. The second marriage was open and intended to legitimize his two sons by Caroline, possibly with the intention that the eldest become king. With a largely disapproving Belgian populace looking on, the friendly Vatican sanctified the marriage. Leopold also attempted to leave the bulk of his estate to his two sons, having made every attempt to disinherit his three daughters by Clementine. A threatened crisis over succession to the Belgian throne was averted with the overwhelming acceptance of Albert, much more popular with the people than was his uncle.³⁰⁵

By now, despite the many efforts of his powerful American friends, Leopold's reputation was becoming quite tarnished in American newspapers. Many Colorado papers painted the king in a very negative light in their obituaries. His unsavory human rights record in the Congo was one charge, and another was a promiscuous lifestyle exemplified by his liaison with the Baroness de Vaughan, together with the mess it was leaving his country.³⁰⁶ Most vociferous of all was the acid-tongued David F. Day, former editor of the Ouray Solid Muldoon, now pouring

³⁰⁵ Hochschild, King Leopold's Ghost, 265-267; *Rocky Mountain News*, 20 December 1909, 1.

³⁰⁶ See "Death Ends Hated Reign of Leopold," *Denver Post*, 17 December 1909; "Leopold Hated for Love Affairs and Congo Rule," *Rocky Mountain News*, 17 December 1909, 1.

forth his venom from the Durango Weekly Democrat. In a short editorial comment the day after Leopold's death, simply titled, "Belgium's King," Day fomented:

He is dead - again. Leopold was the worst dose of degeneracy that ever blew into a throne. With him virtue was a football; womanhood a door mat; cunning an accomplishment; cruelty a passtime....The blackest page in Belgium's history, a page of oppression, cruelty and murder, of crime and torture....There were no fig leaves about the loins in Paris when the old degenerate got busy. May he be long dead. We are not used to writing the eiderdown obituaries.³⁰⁷

Tom Walsh, in turn, felt only grief upon the death of his friend and made a most supportive press statement. Asked to comment on the king's personality, Walsh said:

You can put me on record as asserting that no better monarch has lived than King Leopold of Belgium. He was a man who had been greatly traduced, and entirely without reason. He was an entirely different man than many people believed him to be. With Congo atrocities, such as were attributed to him, I know he had nothing to do, for I know him intimately and talked with him at length concerning his interests there.

He was not the man of immorality such as has been painted. But on the other hand he was of delightful personality and ever mindful of the welfare of the people of Belgium.³⁰⁸

Walsh also sent a cablegram with condolences to the Belgian court, which

³⁰⁷ *Durango Weekly Democrat*, 18 December 1909.

³⁰⁸ "Tom Walsh Close Friend of Leopold," *Rocky Mountain News*, 17 December 1909, 3; "Leopold Victim of False Slander, Asserts Walsh," *Denver Times*, 17 December 1909, 3.

Charles Thomas described as hastily drawn together.³⁰⁹ It apparently was not printed in Denver newspapers, which almost universally held Walsh in the highest esteem. These papers did note Walsh as a close friend of the king, but said nothing derogatory toward Walsh for his relationship with the king.³¹⁰ Even this gesture may simply have reflected pride that a Colorado man was affiliated with a king, even a controversial one. Indeed, among Americans it is likely Leopold had a greater fondness for the political power of a Nelson Aldrich, or the incredible wealth of the Guggenheims, than the mining expertise of Tom Walsh. Prominent writings of the later twentieth century on the subject of the king's American contacts and mining ventures do not mention Walsh at all.³¹¹

David Day, however, felt none of the constraints on his editorializing which might have been held by his Denver counterparts. An avowed opponent of mine owners, regardless of their treatment of labor, he blasted Walsh for sending the cablegram. This act Day denounced as a reflection on the good people of Colorado, "for whom he presumed to speak" as Thomas later described the editor's statement. Day declared that when in Europe, which was frequent, Walsh hobnobbed with

³⁰⁹ Thomas, "A Famous Carpenter," 8.

³¹⁰ *Rocky Mountain News*, 17 December 1909, 3; *Denver Times*, 17 December 1909, 3.

³¹¹ See for example Hochschild, *King Leopold's Ghost*, 243-244, 278-279; "Sternstein, King Leopold et. al.," 189-204; Northrup, *Beyond the Bend in the River*, 93-115; Hoyt, *The Guggenheims and the American Dream*, 151, which asserts that Daniel Guggenheim was the only American to whom Leopold and Thomas Fortune Ryan could have turned for both natural resource expertise and investment power in 1906.

Leopold as the sharer of his lascivious adventures, “and the only man in either continent low enough to laud him as a man or monarch, as Leopold was in turn the only one who was capable of performing a similar service for Walsh, had the latter predeceased him.” According to Thomas, other Colorado newspapers (apparently outside Denver) republished Day’s attack.³¹² The standing of Charles Thomas as a former governor and United States senator from Colorado, together with his personal and professional closeness to Walsh, make him a credible source. However, Day’s attack on Walsh has not survived in the microfilm collection of the *Durango Weekly Democrat* found at the Colorado Historical Society, although some December 1909 editions are missing.

Last Illness

Tom Walsh’s natural reaction to Day’s charges was outrage, but he had precious little time to dwell on the subject, mourn the death of his friend, or enjoy the new arrival in his family. On January 10, 1910 he suffered a serious heart attack, after six weeks of illness. Not long after, his doctors declared him out of danger, but still recommended a stay in Florida for the remainder of the winter. The illness, nonetheless, could not keep him from accepting, in absentia, another term as president of the Sons of Colorado on January 28. However, the seaside air of

³¹² Thomas, “A Famous Carpenter,” 8.

Florida did not prove beneficial. Evalyn received word that her father had suffered a severe hemorrhage and was soon diagnosed with the curse of many who worked the mines, lung cancer.³¹³

Next the medical experts advised the drier climate of San Antonio, Texas. Tom, Carrie and the doctors traveled to the Texas city and rented a mansion. By February 24, conflicting reports to the national press first stated that Tom was in extremely serious condition, then had him much improved. However, as the newspapers quickly noted, an urgent message that the McLeans come at once, together with long-time secretary Turner Wickersham, could only spell that his condition had clearly worsened. He was now receiving hundreds of telegrams wishing a speedy recovery, but by March 21 it was apparent that the San Antonio trip had been to no avail. Despite denials by Wickersham, the press verdict was that Tom had little time to live, as severe pneumonia had set in.³¹⁴

The next day the family began its return to Washington. Tom was carried to the car, his face drawn and colorless, his eyes deep and sunken, his every move made with great difficulty. Still the March 23 *Denver Times* predicted a fight from a man "young in years, with the possibility of high deeds yet to be done." The doctors of Johns-Hopkins, who had once saved his daughter's leg, tried in vain to

³¹³ McLean, *Father Struck It Rich*, 185-192; "Walsh Improves After Serious Heart Attack," *Denver Times*, 11 January 1910, 1; "Walsh Still Ill, But Out of Danger," *Denver Times*, 12 January 1910, 1; "Walsh Again Heads Sons of Colorado," *Denver Times*, 28 January 1910, 1.

³¹⁴ *Denver Times*, 24 February 1910, 1-2; *Denver Times*, 21 March 1910, 1-2.

stop the cancer which was too far advanced when he arrived on March 24. Visits from his young grandson were all that sustained him for two more weeks. On the evening of April 8, 1910, six days past his sixtieth birthday, Tom Walsh died.³¹⁵

He Had Oppressed Not One Single Soul in the Attainment

Governor John F. Shafroth spoke for many others when he stated that the citizens of Colorado will miss Tom Walsh more than they would the death of any other citizen of this state. Another prominent Denver Citizen, Frank C. Goudy, found him "the most generous-hearted man I ever met, ready to do anything to help someone else. A remarkable thing about him was that, with as little school training as he had, he had a scholarly bent and a polish of manner that bespoke his broad mind and innate fineness."³¹⁶ Another article was entitled "Miners Loved Walsh as Friend and Benefactor." The author, Alfred Damon Runyon, would later leave his own large mark on journalism. Walsh may have been extremely wealthy, but "he had oppressed not one single soul in the attainment; it was money that washes as clean as mountain water, but the ownership of it meant to this man simply that it had become possible for him to enjoy the pleasure of doing good...Without Tabor, without Stratton, and certainly without Walsh, the history of this state would have

³¹⁵ *Denver Times*, 25 March 1910, 1; *Denver Times*, 26 March 1910, 1; *Rocky Mountain News*, 9 April 1910, 1.

³¹⁶ "Colorado Grief-Stricken Over Death of Tom Walsh," *Rocky Mountain News*, 9 April 1910, 1.

lost much.”³¹⁷

The April 9 edition of the *Washington Post* noted the many achievements of the man deemed a respected citizen of both Washington and Colorado. Walsh's interest in better transportation was manifested in his memberships in both the Automobile Club of America and the Aero Club of Washington. Walsh was president of the latter organization. He was also credited for his many works in the advancement of science. Foremost of these was his 1909 establishment of the Vinson Walsh Fund, an endowment to the Colorado School of Mines for the purpose of providing free examination of ores thought to contain radium. Walsh felt that radium, then quoted at \$9,000,000 a pound, could be found throughout the west. The Post also noted that Walsh was popular as an after-dinner speaker, possessed of an inherited Irish wit.³¹⁸

³¹⁷ *Rocky Mountain News*, 9 December 1910, 1. .

³¹⁸ *Washington Post*, Washington, DC, 9 April 1910, 1. See also letters Victor C. Alderson (Colo. Sch. of Mines) to Walsh dated 19 April and 30 June 1909, Box 80, Walsh Papers.

CHAPTER 20

WOULD HE REMEMBER COLORADO?

Tom Walsh was laid to rest in a mausoleum in Washington's Rock Creek Cemetery, next to Vinson. His estate was estimated at about \$8,000,000, more than \$3,000,000 of which was located in Colorado. That state's citizens eagerly awaited what was assured by many close to Walsh, namely that his will would provide extensive bequests to Colorado charities. Attorney Stephen A. Osborn, who had drawn up a previous will for Walsh, offered, "This much I know: Mr. Walsh entertained large plans which would be of interest to Colorado." In fact, the document to which he may well have referred would have left \$80,000 to charities in Colorado had it remained valid and in force.³¹⁹ It was not to be. A new will drawn up in Washington, and dated January 10, 1910, the same day he suffered his heart attack, placed nearly all Walsh's property in a trust for ten years, benefiting only Carrie and Evalyn. After that time it was to be divided equally between the two. The will also gave Carrie \$100,000 in a special fund to be distributed according to her wishes, taking into account the desires of her late husband. Colorado's only place in the will was for Clonmel to be accorded the status of "that

³¹⁹ *Denver Post*, 9 April 1910, 4; Document entitled "To My Heirs at Law and Next of Kin," signed by Thomas F. Walsh, dated 6 March 1903, Box 103, Walsh Papers.

place where I am accustomed to spend my summers.” Washington was listed as his place of residence. As a possible indication of the haste in which the will was prepared, the names of both Carrie and Evalyn are misspelled.³²⁰ Colorado newspapers were shocked. One felt Tom had fallen under the wrong kind of outside influence, that which sought to reduce payment of Colorado inheritance tax over all other motivations. One Denver reporter felt that had Tom lived, recovered his health, and come to his senses, he would once again have remembered his professed love for Colorado and rescinded his recent acts.³²¹ For all we know, the reporter might have been close to the truth.

Only his old friend, former governor Thomas, seems to have passed on the true depth of Tom’s indignation over David Day’s attack, and its seeming support by others in Colorado. It is something even Evalyn missed (or avoided), not to mention much of the news media of the time. Charles Thomas felt Walsh had been mortally wounded by the attack from Day, which was made when he was far from well. He announced to his friend his intention to leave Colorado and never return. Walsh directed Charles Thomas, as his longtime attorney, to carry out the necessary steps to remove his residence status and all his personal property from Colorado, sell Clonmel, and make certain that no Colorado inheritance tax would be owing on

³²⁰ “Will of Thomas F. Walsh,” Estate of Thomas F. Walsh, Case No. 143, County Court, In Probate, Arapahoe County, Colorado, admitted to probate 27 April 1910. The names are misspelled “Carry” and Evelyn.”

³²¹ *Denver Times*, 15 April 1910.

account of his death. According to state law at that time, if Colorado was the residence of a person upon death, then the state inheritance tax would be levied on the value of all that person's property owned anywhere. Therefore, in the case of an estate the size of Walsh's the tax would be considerable. Tom's death, however, intervened, before any such acts to avoid the Colorado tax could be accomplished. Only the will change, performed by a Washington attorney, carried out Tom's sudden and furious change of plans during his lifetime.³²²

Nevertheless, Walsh's family, executor and trustee sought to carry out his wishes and prevent, or at least minimize, any payment of Colorado inheritance tax. Charles Thomas represented them, together with long-time Walsh counsel Stephen A. Osborn. Arapahoe County brought suit for collection of the tax, which by law was owing to the county of a resident.³²³ Soon a bizarre testimony unfolded in which many of the acts of kindness and generosity exhibited by Tom Walsh toward the people of Colorado were now used against the interests of his estate.

On July 27, 1910, in a hearing before a referee in the state capitol, friends, neighbors and colleagues of Walsh swore under oath as to his Colorado activities. In nearly every case the witness seemed to have felt that Tom Walsh had been acting in a very commendable manner toward his state and community. Nonetheless, such actions could be held as indicative of residence, exactly what the

³²² Thomas, "A Famous Carpenter," 9.

county intended to prove. Neighbors recalled Walsh going out of his way to meet them and invite them to his home. John Springer remembered him saying that his last days could not be spent in a better place than Wolhurst (Clonmel), in the beautiful surroundings of Colorado. He and Walsh had also served together in the Republican party, including duty as Colorado delegates to the Republican National Convention. Kate Lilley recalled Walsh establishing prizes in Littleton to encourage civic pride in its young people. He also told her he had the same interest in all Colorado towns, adding "beautiful Colorado - it's my home." The Secretary of the Sons of Colorado spoke of the special provisions whereby Walsh obtained the land for the organization's headquarters, donating a portion of the purchase price. Walsh qualified for membership in the fraternal order since he had come to live in Colorado while it was still a territory. He also served as the group's president in 1909-1910. Long-time Walsh secretary and associate Edward Hanley spoke of his many activities with Walsh which, in one way or another, benefited Colorado. The attorney for Arapahoe County was particularly interested in Walsh's desire to be a U.S. Senator from Colorado. Hanley stated that he felt Walsh was only possessed of this interest in 1906, when the political activity might take his mind off his son's death.³²⁴

³²³ Letter S.A. Osborn to E.B. McLean, dated 15 August 1910, Box 80, Walsh Papers.

³²⁴ Transcript of testimony in Case No. 143, Arapahoe County, Colorado 27 July 1910, Box 104, Walsh Papers.

Even a case of mistaken identity by the State of Colorado was used against Walsh. One Thomas F. Walsh, a Chicago native with roots in County Waterford, had established himself as a leading Denver architect.³²⁵ Late in 1909, Thomas F. Walsh, mining millionaire, received in his Washington office an Executive Order from Colorado Governor Shafroth appointing him to the State Board of Examiners of Architects. Accustomed to frequent honors bestowed by Colorado citizens and officials, and knowing something about architecture through his development of impressive residential and commercial structures, he accepted. Tom believed the position to be honorary. Shortly thereafter Colorado officials sent a letter of apology. Walsh the architect was in fact the intended appointee to the position, which required an architect's license as a prerequisite. Tom replied that the mistake was no imposition, and that he knew the architect of the same name quite well and wished him the best. Nonetheless, Tom had accepted the erroneous nomination, and this fact was now used as further evidence that he considered himself a Colorado resident.³²⁶

Carrie gave her deposition on May 15, 1912 in the office of the clerk of the Probate Court for the District of Columbia, represented by an associate of Charles S. Thomas named Nye. In a very lengthy session, she sought to evade every attempt

³²⁵ Tom Gavin, "Architect Walsh Dies; Once Attacked Auto," *Rocky Mountain News*, 22 January 1948.

³²⁶ Testimony of Thomas F. Dillon, Jr., Deputy Secretary of State for Colorado, 27 July 1910, Box 104, Walsh Papers.

by John Helbig, the lawyer for Arapahoe County to prove that Clonmel, located in that county, was in fact the Walsh residence. Yes, the Walshes had voted in Arapahoe County, but only because District of Columbia residents had no vote at the time. At best Colorado was their home for only a few summer months. Otherwise, Washington was their residence, with additional stays at other homes on the East Coast, as well as Europe. When they left Clonmel in the fall of 1909, they did not intend to return for some time, possibly for years. The following summer was to be spent at Bar Harbor, Maine, where they could be near the McLeans and their young grandchild. When questioned by Helbig as to whether they had once been poor, Nye objected on materiality, it being no discredit to have once worked for a day's pay. Helbig responded, "I know that. It is the greatest credit in the world that Mr. Walsh had the success that he did and he is a man and a citizen much respected by everybody in the State of Colorado. I think I have the right to protect the honor of his memory among our people." Carrie responded that Tom was a comparatively rich man when she married him. She finished by stating that she could not recollect Tom ever stating that Clonmel was to be their Colorado home.³²⁷

In the end the Arapahoe County Court found in favor of the county, and the Walsh Estate was ordered to pay a very substantial Colorado inheritance tax.³²⁸ The

³²⁷ Testimony of Mrs. Carry [sic] Bell Walsh, County Court, Case No. 143, Arapahoe County, Colorado, found in Box 104, Walsh Papers.

³²⁸ "Walsh Estate Must Pay Inheritance Tax," *Denver Post*, 4 January 1913, 4.

estate had already sold Clonmel in late 1910.³²⁹ Horace Bennett, a prominent Colorado millionaire who had struck it rich in Cripple Creek, was the buyer. He promptly returned the name of the estate to Wolhurst. Thus the intent of Tom Walsh to liquidate his Colorado interests and leave the state forever was finally carried out, albeit not exactly in the manner he had planned. To the extent he cared about the vast estate where he had entertained William Howard Taft and many others, he would have been saddened by its fate. Bennett turned Wolhurst into a country club. Following Bennett's ownership, the property passed to an unsavory character named Charlie Stephens, who established a casino frequently charged with illicit gambling. It later saw some duty as both a country and night club, before falling on hard times in the 1970s. A 1976 fire destroyed what was left of Wolhurst.³³⁰

³²⁹ Letter S.A. Osborn to Mrs. Thomas F. Walsh and Mrs. Edward McLean, dated 11 July 1910, Box 80, Walsh Papers.

³³⁰ Bancroft, Melodrama of Wolhurst, 16-34; Phil Goodstein, The Seamy Side of Denver, (Denver: New Social Publications, 1993), 127-129.

CHAPTER 21

THE WALSH FAMILY, AND A GREAT MINE

Carrie

Carrie Bell Walsh lived for another twenty-two years at 2020 Massachusetts Avenue, in the wealth of Washington and near her daughter and her family. She carried on Tom's philanthropy, and her relief for Belgian orphans of World War I attracted international attention. She opened her home for use by Washington volunteers who made garments for the refugees. Carrie worked alongside the others, who frequently complained that they could not accomplish more. Their efforts were nonetheless appreciated in the highest quarters. Following the war, 2020 Massachusetts Avenue finally got to welcome royal visitors from Belgium. King Albert and Queen Elizabeth came to personally thank Carrie Walsh for her work, and present her the "Order of Elizabeth, Queen of the Belgians." They stayed for three days in October 1919. Interestingly, the Walsh mansion was also acting as a stand-in for the White House on this occasion. President Woodrow Wilson had just suffered a stroke. Carrie offered her home and deferred to Vice-President and Mrs. Marshall as hosts for a state dinner, which also included the French ambassador, a Supreme Court Justice, Cabinet members, Senators and

Representatives. For the occasion, everything possible was Walsh gold, from the chrysanthemums and candelabra to the table service forged from Camp Bird ore.³³¹

Carrie distributed nearly all the special fund from Tom's will to establish a treatment and care center for victims of leprosy. In her philanthropy, she is said to have contributed both thought and money. Carrie Bell Walsh passed away in 1932, after a long illness. As with her husband, death came from lung cancer.³³²

Evalyn, Her Family, and a Large Blue Diamond

Evalyn wrote about her life in Father Struck It Rich, a mid-Depression tale of how being rich never brought her happiness. Her husband Ned could dazzle in his social life and lead her on fabulous trips abroad. However, he was a failure at business who could not curb his drinking problem. He was always jealous, and became abusive. The couple separated in 1928, and Evalyn filed for a divorce, which she never obtained. Ned's drinking led to insanity, and he died in a mental hospital in 1941. Their son Vinson, once christened the "million dollar baby," died at age ten. Like his namesake uncle, he perished in an automobile accident. Always protected by family and servants, one day Vinson broke away from them and bolted into the Washington street in front of the family home. A car, which had

³³¹ Highsmith and Landphair, "Embassy of Indonesia," 49; "2020 Massachusetts Avenue," 129; McLean, Father Struck It Rich, 330.

³³² Bruce A. Gustin, "Mrs. Thomas F. Walsh, Widow of Colorado Mining King, Dies," *Denver Post*, 25 February 1932, 1; McLean, Father Struck It Rich, 330.

nearly come to a halt, merely pushed the boy so he fell. Within a few hours he was dead. The McLeans had three other children, sons Edward (Neddie) and John (Jock), and a daughter Evalyn Washington McLean (Evie).

Evalyn Walsh McLean did continue her father's flair for lavish social events, and made a name as a Washington hostess. She also continued to travel in the circle of Washington's highest social group, sometimes to her detriment. Friendship with President Warren Harding, together with Ned's unending desire to impress those in high places, led the family to unwitting involvement in the Teapot Dome Scandal. In 1932 Evalyn was mourning the death of her mother when the kidnaping of the Lindbergh baby shocked the nation. She gave \$100,000 to a con-artist named Gaston Means to find the baby. She never saw any of the money again, and was subjected to public ridicule. She suffered from drug and alcohol dependence much of her life.

Perhaps the most enduring symbol of their lifestyle is the famous Hope Diamond, which Evalyn and Ned purchased almost as a lark early in their marriage. At the time they knew the great blue diamond was supposedly cursed, and the legend has continued that the McLeans were only one more in a long line of the stone's victims.³³³ Stories behind the Hope Diamond are almost innumerable, and always filled with doom. One has it stolen by a Frenchman in 1642 from the

³³³ McLean, Father Struck It Rich, 193-344.

forehead of a Hindu idol, thus the curse. The thief was later killed by a pack of dogs. Most subsequent owners met violent deaths, including beheading for King Louis XVI and Queen Marie Antoinette of France. Irish banker Henry Thomas Hope, who gave his name to the 44½ carat diamond, suffered the least, merely going broke. The McLeans' predecessor, a Turkish sultan, was assassinated.³³⁴

After expressing a desire in her book to see the family fortunes turn around, more tragedy ensued. Her daughter Evalyn succumbed to an overdose of sleeping tablets in 1946. Evalyn Walsh McLean died the following year at age sixty-one. Her fortune had shrunk considerably from what her parents had left her, and much of it was in jewels. New York jeweler Harry Winston purchased the Hope Diamond from Evalyn's estate, allegedly for one million dollars, and then donated it to the Smithsonian Institute, where it remains to this day.³³⁵

For all her faults and poor judgment, Evalyn Walsh McLean did in many ways demonstrate the positive character of her parents. She stood up to the supposed curse of her diamond, correctly identifying the source of family misfortune as nothing more than their wealth. Like Tom and Carrie, she believed in

³³⁴ Beebe, The Big Spenders, 334-335.

³³⁵ Carol Ann Rapp, Epilogue to Queen of Diamonds, 3rd ed. of Father Struck It Rich, 320-321.

philanthropy, often delivered anonymously. Her mansions saw party life, but also served as refuges for wounded servicemen of World War II. Her late night excursions around Washington most often sought ways to aid the city's poor, rather than find another party. The reader of Father Struck It Rich may too quickly relegate the author to the status of spoiled child, defensive, unappreciative, and not truly interested in a family history other than her own. A more thorough study discloses a strong underlying theme of sensitivity to the human condition, with no price tag attached. Like her father, she would have welcomed Smoky Jones of Deadwood.

On December 19, 1951, the government of the new Republic of Indonesia purchased 2020 Massachusetts Avenue from Carrie's estate, paying the sum of \$335,000, considerably less than what the Walshes had spent to build and furnish their palatial home a half century before. It has served as that nation's embassy to this day. Its Indonesian owners have preserved much of "2020's" Walsh architecture and retain a deep respect for the mansion's former owners, history and traditions.³³⁶

³³⁶ Interview with Ratmoko Ratmansuyu, Press and Information Division, Indonesian Embassy, and tour of the embassy, September 30, 2000.

The Camp Bird After Walsh

It was not uncommon for Eastern or European investors to pay a fortune for a Western mine, only to find that it was past its peak. The Camp Bird was a notable exception. To Walsh's estimated profit of \$2,400,000 over his six-year stay, the new owners added their own of over \$15,000,000 from 1902 to 1916. During this period the mine withstood a devastating 1906 avalanche, which destroyed the mill. A new mill was rapidly built. By 1910 it was apparent that the grade of ore along the Camp bird vein was dropping. This trend continued, and by 1914 the mill was operating at only 40% capacity. As miners followed the vein deeper and deeper into the mountain, the cost of pumping water from the lower levels became a major expense. All this prompted the 1916 decision to suspend operations and drive a new, lower tunnel. Additionally, it was decided to economize by running all operations from the lower level, resulting in the mothballing of the boardinghouse and other 3-Level buildings, and the dismantling of the tram line. The new tunnel, at the 14-Level, took nineteen months to complete and finally reached the Camp Bird vein 11,000 feet in from the portal. Even so, results were discouraging, and the mine was shut down again in early 1920.

After re-opening in October 1925, the focus of mining returned to the 3-Level, and the mine operated continuously until 1929. In that year operations

passed to King Lease, Inc., who continued year-round operation at the 3-Level, and established a permanent camp at that level utilizing the old bunkhouse and other buildings. A disaster occurred on February 25, 1936 when an avalanche hit the camp and mill at 3-Level. The mill was destroyed, and three men were killed, including the mill superintendent. The mill was rebuilt within a few months. From 1937 on King shifted attention back to the lower levels, and in a series of year-to-year leases mined on a nearly continuous basis until 1956. The World War II requirement that non-essential gold mining be discontinued had no effect on Camp Bird. It merely replaced gold with production of base metals, and continued this type of operation well into the 1950s. When King did not renew its lease for 1957, Camp Bird Ltd. resumed control and made significant improvements to the mine. These included a modern mill built in 1960. The Camp Bird was sold in 1963 to Federal Resources, who commenced further improvements in connection with their ownership of the neighboring Revenue and Virginius properties. However, as the mining drove deeper, water removal became a greater and greater expense. Finally, in 1978, the decision was made to allow the lower levels, which had reached as far as the 21-Level, to flood. From this point forward, whether the Camp Bird was mined depended entirely on the fluctuations of the prices of gold and silver. Continuous mining no longer made good economic sense for a great mine whose

glory days were behind it.³³⁷

"Bye, bye Bird-ie," eulogized Ouray's *Plaindealer* on the morning of August 3, 1995. Ninety-nine years after Tom Walsh's discovery, the Camp Bird mill built in 1960 was being dismantled and shipped to Mongolia, a sure sign of mining's shift in emphasis from the much-explored American West to the new frontiers of the Third World. From its inception, the mine had produced more than 1.5 million ounces of gold, together with large amounts of silver, lead, copper and zinc. The new owners of the mining site, a New Jersey investment group interested in tailings reclamation, predicted no more mining for the Camp Bird. As with any great mine, though, the question lingers as to what riches remain in the earth and what it might take to induce miners to renew the search.

³³⁷ Rosemeyer, "Camp Bird Mine," 120-128.

CHAPTER 22

CONCLUSION: THE LEGACY OF THOMAS F. WALSH

The end of the Nineteenth Century, and first part of the Twentieth, might well be termed the "Golden Age of the American Eulogy." The flowing prose poured out to extol the deeds and personal character of Thomas F. Walsh was not unlike that extended to many others in prominent positions of the times. As stated by author Edwin P. Hoyt, Jr., with reference to the 1905 death of Meyer Guggenheim, "The praise was fulsome, for it was not yet the time when millionaires were excoriated except by anarchists, socialists, and syndicalists."³³⁸ Often death, or other misfortune, resulted in high praise which brushed aside any indiscretions to be found along the road to prominence. Still, Walsh should not be subjected to many of the charges which could be levied against other businessmen of his time. His fortune was not based on abuse of laborers, nor on misrepresentation to investors, matters on which many of his contemporaries stand guilty. At worst, he failed to tell "the whole truth" when approaching sellers of mining property, from the owners of the cabin on the Frying Pan to those of the abandoned workings of the Imogene Basin. This practice, nonetheless, continues to this day as a standard in

much of the business of natural resource extraction. In all other respects, Tom's conduct of business appears nothing short of exemplary, for his or any time.

Once Tom had his fortune, he used it lavishly, yet still maintained it. His philanthropy deserves all the high praise given it, but in retrospect, did he really do enough of it? The ever-generous Walsh felt his donations should reach a substantial number of persons, and this of course included his immediate family to a much greater extent than any others. Tom's laborers repaid his generosity by working hard and never striking. Did his family repay that generosity as well? Carrie continued his philanthropy and seems to have also maintained a meaningful yet unpretentious course of life much as she had done before she became rich. Writing in 1935, after a tale of woe, Evalyn exhorts her family that it is time for the descendants of Tom Walsh to cast aside luxury and learn how to work. From all appearances she was not successful (even perhaps with herself). In hindsight, might her tale have been far more satisfying had her father provided his children with a secure yet modest lifestyle, while passing on the bulk of his millions to the many charities he supported? We will never know, but it is fair to say that for all his love and loyalty toward family, Tom both spoiled and misjudged his children.

³³⁸ Hoyt, The Guggenheims and the American Dream, 148.

Misguided loyalty can also explain his unflinching defense to the end for an unworthy King Leopold. If Tom had a blind spot to the faults of Evalyn and Vinson, it was magnified many times over in his attachment to his royal friend. It appears Walsh, who had little need for more money, enjoyed no significant economic benefit from his closeness to Leopold. Rather he sought exposure to a high world ruler, and in so doing must have also found something to his liking at the personal level. The normally-astute Walsh naively cast aside the clamor against his friend, and paid the price. Then the Irish temper, best described by Evalyn in an incident long before, came forth in all its fury. In other times it soon subsided with little lasting effect. We can only conjecture that the same would have happened but for his death. To his friend Charles Thomas it was a mere aberration resulting from his strong tendency to honor old ties. Thomas found in Walsh the overriding character of "a tall warm-hearted Irishman of florid complexion, genial to a fault, lovable, and generous."³³⁹ Apparently the people of Colorado, as well as the nation, felt the same.

For all this, has Tom Walsh left any lasting legacy, or proven to be a visionary? The Camp Bird most likely will never re-open, at least not if current economic conditions and expectations for environmental protection continue. The small city of Ouray does honor one of its foremost citizens in a variety of ways,

³³⁹ Thomas, "A Famous Carpenter," 9.

particularly in the historical museum now housing the building of the hospital he once saved. The remarkable tale of the discovery of a rich mine should be a staple for mining historians till time immemorial, but it is just that, a story out of the past. The Walsh method of ore-finding is still sound. However, in a modern society which values a clean environment above all else, ore-finders, for all their talents, achieve little status outside a shrinking mining industry.

Therefore, if one seeks something truly unique and perhaps visionary about Tom Walsh, it must be his attitudes toward treatment of workers. One source attributes his motivation to mere political ambition. However, this is difficult to grasp considering the continuing and unerring support for the working class expressed in his actions and words over a long period of time. At the same time Walsh displayed an unmistakably luke-warm attitude toward running for political office. With his standing and influence, when the Republicans found him unpalatable, he could have merely switched to the Democrats or run as an independent. He chose not to do either. The words of his 1906 Colorado Springs speech are amazingly prophetic. All his recommendations are now in place. If the teachings of certain modern-day business/labor experts continue to catch hold, a phrase like, "as employers, treat your men [and women] with humanity and justice" may become standard fare in our schools of business. Perhaps the name of Thomas F. Walsh will be evoked at the same time.

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