

CHAPTER III

FOREBEARS

We're all omnibuses in which our ancestors ride.
Oliver Wendell Holmes, Sr. (8/29/1809 – 10/7/1894)¹

We have already traced the Wigglesworth strand of Al's ancestry from Scandinavia, via France and England, to New York State at some considerable length. It is only fair, then, that we interrupt that story at this point to inject some background concerning the strand that produced Al's wife.

Family tradition has it that the Wright clan, which produced Al's devoted wife, Edna Mae Wright (whom we shall meet shortly), traces it's ancestry as far back as William Penn. Unfortunately, no documentation on this point comes readily to hand.



William Penn,²
Oct 14 1644 – July 30 1718

We can, however, be a little more definitive regarding this branch of the family from about the same time (the late 18th century) that we find the Wigglesworth clan established in the United States in Palmyra, New York. Specifically, the maternal line of

Edna's family is traceable to the marriage of Elizabeth Green and a W. W. Dorney, both of Harford County, Maryland, by the first American Catholic hierarch and founder of Georgetown University, Archbishop John Carroll, on 11 September 1796.



**Portrait of
Bishop John Carroll
(Jan 8 1735 - Dec 3 1815)
by Gilbert Stuart.³**

The amazing aspect of this branch of the Wiggs family tree, on the paternal and maternal sides, is that it was DC-Maryland centered for generations.

Now, the Dorneys had a daughter, Maria Agnes, who married Benjamin Thomas Watson of Prince Georges County, Maryland. They, in turn, had a daughter, Susannah Cecelia Watson, who became Edna's mother.

Susan, as she was called, was the youngest of nine in a family of seven girls and two boys. In due course she married Edna's father, Johnson Eliot Wright, son of Benjamin C. Wright, who was born in Alexandria, VA, when it was still part of the District of Columbia. They had 8 children as listed below.⁴

- 1 [Edna Mae. Wright](#), b. April 8 1877 - Dec 6 1954.**
 - 2 [Alma C. Wright](#), b. Abt. 1883, d. date unknown.**
 - 3 [Edith A. Wright](#), b. Abt. 1886, d. date unknown.**
 - 4 [Marguerite C. Wright](#), b. Abt. 1889, d. date unknown.**
 - 5 [Herbert F. Wright](#), b. Abt. 1892, d. date unknown.**
 - 6 [J. Eliot Wright, Jr.](#), b. Abt. 1895, d. January 1974¹³⁹.**
 - 7 [Suzanne C. Wright](#), b. Abt. 1898, d. date unknown.**
 - 8 [Herbert Wright](#), b. April 11, 1897¹⁴⁰, d. July 1971¹⁴⁰.**
-

Edna's father had a great uncle, Robert Wright, who was Provost Marshal (in charge of the Military Police) of Bladensburg, Maryland during the Civil War. Robert had inherited a gold watch as the then eldest survivor of another Wright which was inscribed: "Prescribed to ----- Wright by General Lafayette, for taking care of him while he was wounded."



Gilbert du Motier, Marquis de Lafayette.⁵

Edna's father had another great uncle, Judge James Wright, who was Chief Librarian of the Department of Justice.⁶



As for himself, "father" Johnson Eliot Wright had served in the Finance Branch of the War Department.⁷



Upon retirement a formal testimonial acclaimed him to be "a Christian and a polished gentleman of the old school, very loyal, and an assiduous worker." He was also a good husband, and together with Susan had eight children, 6 girls, 2 boys. Our Edna was the eldest.

In his retirement, he became the secretary for the Association of the Oldest Inhabitants of DC, a position in which he continued his "loyalty" and "assiduous" working habits until his death. ⁸

Before moving on, mention must be made of Edna's father's older brother, Herbert. (*FamilyTreeMaker records do not show that Johnson Eliot Wright had an elder brother named Herbert, however Edna's youngest sibling was named Herbert. DFJ ⁹*)

He began work at 16 as a telegrapher for the B&ORR, where he rose to become Chief Operator. He next switched to Western Union as chief night operator of its Washington office. Then a brief stint with United Press. From there he moved on to the Adjutant General's Office of the War Department, where he became renowned as "the best and fastest in the city." He would eventually complete 30 years of government service, including being in charge of the cable and telegraph work of the entire military establishment, including the coding/decoding of official cipher messages. Much of the latter traffic during WWI was, of course, "of the highest national importance

Because of his efficiency and expertise, his tenure was extended for three consecutive two-year terms beyond the then mandatory retirement age of 70. Surely such performance is a proper matter of family pride and warrants this brief memorial paragraph. Now, back to our story.

In sharp contrast to the geographical stability of the Wright clan, so deeply rooted in the general area of the nation's capital (and a tradition from which Edna was to deviate with happy results that

shall bear on the substance of our story), the Wiggs clan persisted in its nomadic heritage.

We pick up the thread of this tribal evolution with Al's grandfather, Matthew Wigglesworth (1794--1873) who migrated from Liverpool, England, via Canada, to Palmyra, New York. There is no accounting for how this shoemaker so directly descended from English nobility happened initially to settle in this small village, of less than 4,000 inhabitants, located on the Barge Canal south east of Rochester in west central New York. (Joseph Smith also lived in Palmyra, and published the *Book of Mormon* there.)

Not to worry, the Wiggs didn't remain there long. Somewhere along the way Matt married an Elizabeth Hudson, said to be related to *the* Henry Hudson.



This speculative portrait is one of several used to represent Henry Hudson, an Englishman employed by the Dutch.¹⁰

For our purposes, at least, their crowning achievement was son Thomas Hudson Wigglesworth, Al's father.



11

With the advent of Tom Wigglesworth at Palmyra on 31 July 1835 this story really (we sincerely hope) "takes off" at last, and your interlocutor at once suffers an embarrassment of riches with respect to source material. The simple fact is, Tom Wigglesworth was quite a man! Our fervent hope is that we may do proper justice to his truly frontier's-man character.

The latter was quick to reveal itself. He ran away from home at age 13, all the way to Kentucky. Though he would never grow to be a big man, even as a youngster he was evidently both sturdy and audacious, becoming an axman for the Louisville and Nashville RR. He was also observant and ambitious, and so returned to New York at 19 to study trigonometry in order to become an engineer. Then it was back south again, this time to Tennessee. It was at Fountain Head, TN, that he met Ann Catherine Delaney Spradlin, whom he wed on 14 May 1863.¹²



They would have five boys (including their last child who would survive only two years in Colorado) and two girls. Al would be the fifth child and third son. Perhaps his placement in the middle of this considerable constellation of

"kinder-folk" accounts for his calm, moderate and totally balanced temperament and uncommon humility. As for Al's brothers and sisters, not too much is known, except for younger sister Emily Elizabeth (later Mrs. W. H. Howard of Animas City, CO, whom we shall meet again briefly incident to the introduction of the first Silver Vista observation coach on the Durango-Silverton RR run on 22 Jun 1947), and brother William Hudson Wigglesworth and his son James.

Bill (William Hudson Wigglesworth) was born in Parksville, KY in 1866, and travelled to Durango with his parents in 1881 where he died in 1946. At various times in the interim he held nearly every public office in Durango and La Plata County, serving as Durango city manager for 14 years, and as city and county engineer, magistrate and justice of the peace. During his colorful engineering career he also spent time in New Mexico, Arizona, Florida and Mexico. He worked on the construction of the Durango-Silverton RR run and later as surveyor on the Crystal River RR in Pitkin County. Then followed two winters in Chihuahua, Mexico, on the RR from Juarez toward the Sierra Madre Mountains. He also surveyed Indian allotments and irrigation canals around Ignacio, CO, and the Perins Peak RR.

He went to AZ in 1910 for four years surveying Indian allotments to the Papago. He also did a stint as mill man at a gold mine, and assistant city engineer in Ft. Lauderdale, FL, eventually returning to Durango where he surveyed the water system, which serves the city even today, and also built the Narraguinnep Reservoir north of Cortez.

The nomadic instinct of their Norseman-Norman heritage clearly lived on through Tom and sons Bill and Al Wigglesworth. These fellows really got around.

So did Bill's son, Major James Wigglesworth. A graduate engineer, he served nine years in the state highway

department. Then, after extensive military training in OK, KS and MS, Jim saw four years service beginning in Jan 1945 as a ground liaison officer with the 7th Army and Patton's 3rd Army in France, Germany and Austria, penetrating to the Enns river link-up with the Russians. With the peace he reverted to Augsburg, Bavaria, where he was charged with feeding, housing, and relocating displaced persons - an experience that would stand him in good stead following his discharge. He returned to Durango to become city manager in Jan 1946, following in his Dad's footsteps. And, as with Dad's footsteps, Jim's soon started spreading out. After five years, he resigned his Durango post to become city manager of Russell, KS, at a substantially larger salary. The pioneering spirit apparently dies hard.

Meanwhile, and before dealing with the remarkable engineering feats of old Tom Wiggs, what do we know about his wife, Ann Spradlin? (Hey! You can't tell the players without a score-card. Maybe you should be taking notes.) Well, as we've mentioned, Tom caught up with her in TN, but before going forward, we had best take a short look backward.

On the paternal side of Ann's family tree there is a dearth of information. We only know that her father's name was John, and that he married Emily Hodges on 22 May 1839. We are a sprite more fortunate with respect to the maternal side of her family ancestry. Emily Hodges was said to be a cousin of Henry Clay.



Henry Clay
(April 12 1777 – June 29 1852),
8th, 10th and 13th Speaker of the
House of Representatives.
(Portrait by Matthew Harris
Jouett. 1818.) ¹³

Beyond that, we are able to trace back two more generations to an Elizabeth Clay married to an Isham Hodges (born 18 May 1763). They owned 600 acres in Henry County, VA (on the southern border, on a line between Roanoke and Greensboro.) Regrettably, this attractive if modest estate was confiscated by the government, since Isham unaccountably remained a British citizen. So, all Isham really "left" (and his will of 14 May 1782 is still on file and suitably inscribed with "his mark") was 11 children. Finally, we know that Ann Spradlin died in Durango on 19 Dec 1934.

Now we can proceed with the story of Tom (and then Al) Wigglesworth.

We left off with Tom in KY after completing his math studies in NY, and we noted his marriage and the subsequent seven children. Now, let us take up Tom's engineering career, which was largely performed in the service of our then still expanding RR system.

Tom's son William recorded (in *Pathfinders of the San Juan Country – Vol. III*) that the early history of the RRs of the San Juan Basin (most of which were Tom's work) was eloquent testimony to Tom's legerdemain as RR location and construction engineer. He went on to recount that Tom started his career in a RR working party under his older brother John around Fountain Head, TN. John was location and construction engineer for the Louisville and Tennessee RR. During the Civil War Tom served as a freight conductor on that road.

When the war was over and RR building was resumed, Tom returned to his first work and rapidly advanced from axman to rodman, and then to instrument man. Then he was appointed location and construction engineer for the Knoxville branch of the Louisville & Nashville RR. After service with several RR's around Parksville, Elizabethtown and Louisville, KY, Tom

answered the call of the West, and took off to check out the Black Hills of SD in 1877.

[In the Black Hills, Lt. Col. George Armstrong Custer had reported his expedition's discovery of gold in 1874. In 1876 he and his entire expedition were annihilated by Lakota, Northern Cheyenne and Arapaho Indians. The Great Sioux War continued until the Indian's surrender in April-May 1877. DFJ]

¹⁴



He then returned to his homeland for a brief respite, but by 1878 he was back in the West to stay, and working for the Denver and Rio Grande RR. It was then that his reputation as a pioneer RR locating and construction engineer was really made, beginning with his settling in around Durango, CO, where he was to die on 16 Mar 1909.

He established some 600 miles of track in this mountainous southwest CO area, including putting the first standard gauge line into the Rockies, and the surveying of the famous Moffatt Tunnel [a 6.4 mile tube at 9,100 feet across the Continental Divide and piercing James Peak WNW of Denver. DFJ], which was completed in 1922-27 after his death.

As Chief Engineer he also put in the lines from Durango to Mancos and Dolores, and from Colorado Springs to Cripple Creek and to Leadville, of which latter he said, "Other engineers said it couldn't be done, but there it is."

Incidentally, Cripple Creek once surrendered \$25 million in gold in one year. In the early 1980's it was reactivated when a steep

rise in gold prices made mining there profitable once again. Leadville, formerly Oro (Gold) City, is the highest (over 10,000 feet) incorporated city in the USA. Gold in its California Gulch attracted 5,000 people into a five-mile strip there within four months in 1860.

You may have noted that we said that Tom settled in at Durango in 1878, whereas we reported earlier how son Bill (and presumably the rest of the family) went west with Tom in 1881. Actually, Al's memoirs will clear up this seeming discrepancy. (Be patient! We promise that we shall get to them, and soon!) What happened was that the family joined Tom (who had preceded them to CO) in the spring of 1881. A complicating factor was that Durango (a name strangely of Moorish origin and meaning concourse or meeting place) was not established until 1880.

But Wikipedia reports that "The city is named after Durango, Mexico, which was named after Durango, Spain. The word Durango originates from the Basque word "Urango" meaning "water town".¹⁵

Though geographically surrounded by Indo-European Romance languages, Basque is classified as a language isolate. It is the last remaining descendant of the pre-Indo-European languages of Western Europe.¹⁶

Be that as it may, and thanks largely to Tom Wiggs and the RR, a concourse it certainly became. In the halcyon period of 1900-1912 it had four RR's converging from the four cardinal points of the compass.

Now, you might say that Durango and the RR were almost a "chicken and egg" proposition as to which came first, but you would be wrong (and in any event the Wiggs clan would have

been on hand for the greeting). Actually, it was RR policy simply to bypass non-cooperative towns, leaving them to wither and die, even as new towns along the chosen route were, as was Durango, actually designed by the RR. In fact, the present day Animas City (two miles north of Durango on the Durango-Silverton run) is the second so-named city, the first (15 miles north of Durango) having been supplanted thereby through RR manipulation.

The D&RG was perfectly willing to work with charitably disposed communities. This might mean the donation of a right-of-way or a depot site, the purchase of RR stock, or even help in grading part of the line. If such aid was not forthcoming, the RR just proceeded to establish a rival community. Such is the alleged *American Way*.

"Animas City," by the way, is really a sort of shorthand for the full name of the river for which it is named - *River Of Souls Lost In Purgatory* - (Rio de Las Animas Perdidas en Purgatorio") which in itself gives you as good an idea as anything else of the tortuous, testing nature of that formidable territory.

Durango (1986 pop. 11,400; 2009 pop. 16,887),¹⁷ variously called the *Sagebrush Metropolis*, the *Magic Metropolis*, the "*Denver of Southern Colorado*," and even more accurately "*the child of the RR*," really (as with other settlements in the area) owed its existence to the gold and silver found in the San Juan Mountains. (The heavily mined 14,150-foot Mt. Sneffels yielded \$35 million in gold and silver by 1889.) Its future was assured when the San Juan & New York Smelter was relocated there from Silverton in 1880.

Durango was not itself a conventional frontier town. It was a miracle of "instant urbanization." It had three newspapers by 1881, which is two more than the capital city of the leading nation of the free world - Washington, DC - had in 1981. And these weren't lightweight entries common to many boomtowns.

In fact, one of the area papers (nearby Ouray's *Solid Muldoon* counted Queen Victoria of England among its subscribers. Typical of its prosperity and sophistication was a Christmas newspaper ad of the period: *Fur-get and fur-give!*

Of course, Durango also suffered the maladies of most fast-growing mining towns: shortages, high prices, lawlessness, violence and the ubiquitous female "prospectors" whom they called *shady ladies of the eighties*. In Durango they occupied a two-block strip between the RR spur and the Animas River. The houses included the *Variety Theatre*, the *Silver Bell*, the *Clipper*, the *Hanging Gardens of Babylon* – (a curious name for the only one devoted to lynch-conscious blacks,) and simply *Bessie's*, *Jennie's*, *Mattie's*, and *Nellie's*. More generously, they all went under the euphemism of "dance halls."

Indicative of the times is an epitaph found upon a tombstone in nearby Ouray ("Your-A" - for a famous multi-lingual Ute Indian chief), thus:

Here lie the bones of poor old Charlotte,
Born a virgin but died a harlot;
For eighteen years she preserved her virginity,
A damn good record for this vicinity.



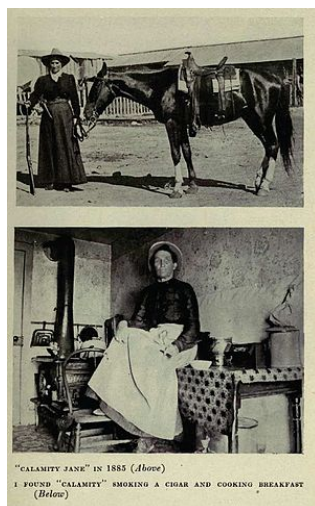
Nellie Spencer
Ca. 1920s

Historian Duane Smith, author of *Sisters of Sin*, said ... "the city's only commemoration of prostitution is a plaque marking the spot where Spencer's house once stood. Smith said that in the 1990s, Durango's City Council "came

unglued, nearly had heart attacks,” when he argued that a park positioned in Durango’s then-defunct red-light district off the Animas River Trail, near Backcountry Experience on Camino del Rio, be named, “Nellie Park,” in honor of Spencer, and the adjacent road, “Red Light Lane.” (The city settled on Smith’s second suggestion, “Iris Park,” unaware that “Iris” was Nellie’s nom de guerre, Smith said. ¹⁸

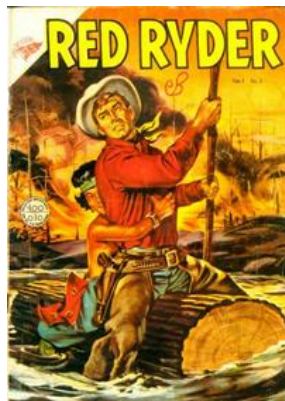
Notorious neighbors and visitors from nearby Creede (68 miles to the northeast) included Robert Ford, Martha Cannary and William Barclay Masterson. You say they don't ring a bell? How quickly we forget.

Ford was the bozo who shot Jesse James in the back and got a dose of the same for his trouble 10 fearful years later. ¹⁹



As for Martha, perhaps you'd recall her more easily as *Calamity Jane*. ²⁰

***Bat* Masterson, of course was the legendary non-gun-drawing peace officer imported to bring law and order to Silverton before moving on to New York as a newspaperman.** ²¹



More recently, attention has been drawn to the area by artist/rancher Fred Harman, originator of the comic strip *Red Ryder*. ²²

Then there was Alferd (sic) Packer, the sole survivor of a six-man trek into the San Juan Mountains in the winter of 1873. With the spring thaw, Packer was found guilty of murder and cannibalism. Years later the whimsical students at the University of Colorado would vote to name their dining hall the *Alferd E. Packer Grill*. So it goes... ²³



By now you may have forgotten that this is purported to be the saga of the Wigglesworth clan. Remember, though, that you were warned at the outset of this segment that we confronted a wealth of material. Anyhow, you surely must now have a much better feel for and flavor of the times and the territory, and that's the whole point of the immediately preceding mish-mash. It was sort of a stage setting for the scene into which our central hero, Doctor Al, would be introduced at age 9 in 1881.

Before moving on to Al, however, we should complete the dossier on his father, Tom. (Even so, we shall reserve to the next chapter the story of what we shall choose to regard as Tom's crowning engineering achievement -- the locating and construction of the D&RG's Durango-Silverton line in 1881-82.)

Let us begin our summing up by simply quoting in full his biography from the *Biographical Directory of Railway Officials of America, Edition of 1893*.²⁴ Thus:

Born 31 July 1835 at Palmyra, NY; entered RR service 19 November 1854, since which he has been consecutively (1854-67) axman, rodman, assistant resident and division engineer, Louisville & Nashville RR; (1867-72) division engineer, Elizabethtown & Paducah RR; (1872-73) chief engineer, Memphis & New Orleans RR; (1874) engaged in building Cecilian branch, Elizabeth & Paducah RR; (1874-77) contractor, Louisville & Nashville RR; (1879-84) on Denver & Rio Grande as follows: (May-Jun 1879) leveler; (Jun 1879-Jan 1880) locating engineer in charge of construction of Silverton branch; (Jan 1880-Sep 1882) in charge of Utah extension; (Sep 1882-Feb 1884) general engineering work; (Apr 1887) also chief engineer Utah Midland RR: (present: 1893 -) chief engineer for construction, Crystal River RR.

Well, so much for the nitty-gritty facts, but that still doesn't tell you very much about the character of the man. So, we have yet another biographical synopsis, which elaborates a little, and we include it here in full:

(from *Pioneers of the San Juan Country* - Vol I:) ²⁵

Mr. Wigglesworth was born in New York in 1835. He was just old enough, after he received some engineering training, to be useful to the Union Army in the Civil War. He built and maintained track, especially in Tennessee, during that time. After other ventures in his chosen work he made his appearance in Colorado in 1879. He spent the next two years with the D&RG surveying and constructing crews that were then building a railroad from Antonito (100 miles east) to Durango. (The Antonito, CO to Chama, NM section of this line survives as the tourist-attracting Cumbres-Toltec Scenic Railway to this day.) In 1886, he was chief engineer with the Midland Terminal in Eastern Colorado.

As chief engineer and constructor, he was responsible for three pieces of railroad in the San Juan:

- 1. The D&RG from Durango to Silverton, 45.63 miles, in 1881-82. The story is told (and a picture shows) that during surveying through the canyon just north of Rockwood, men had to be let down by ropes from the top of the mountain above, to peck out a line along the granite cliffs. To look at it one does not doubt.**
- 2. The south part of the RGS from Durango to Dolores, 58.75 miles, in 1890-91.**
- 3. An extension of the Silverton Northern from Eureka to Animas Forks, four miles, in 1904 [which entailed 7-1/2 %. grades - the maximum for steam railroads].**

Wigglesworth made many more railroad surveys in the San Juan than any other engineer, which rather bespeaks his ability. Following is a list of those which can be verified:

1. From Las Animas River up to Hermosa Creek and down Scotch Creek to Rico, then down the Dolores River, through Lost Canyon and over Cima Pass to Durango, in 1881.
2. From Silverton to Red Mountain and Ironton Park, in 1881.
3. Down the Las Animas River, down the La Plata River and down the Mancos River to the Farmington area, as part of a projected RR to Phoenix and Los Angeles, in 1890-91.
4. From Algodones, NM, to Farmington and Durango areas, and thence to Utah, as part of a proposed RR to Salt Lake.
5. From Durango to Clifton, AZ, in 1901.
6. From Animas Forks to Lake City in 1904,

[Original manuscript note: He was familiarly known in this country as *Old Wig*. Other appellations recently used for him have no basis in fact.]

"Old Wig's" ingenuity was remarkable. He was able to surmount almost any difficulty with some makeshift of his own. Vest Day tells of a survey crew crossing the AZ desert with no way to measure the mileage. Wigglesworth tied a can to the buggy wheel and then the men (three of them) took turns of one hour each, counting the bangs of the can as it hit the ground. The number of revolutions times the circumference of the wheel quite accurately determined the mileage for that day.

"Old Wig" was notorious for his "Kings English." He could tear off a lot of it to fit any and all occasions. He had a quick temper, an acid tongue, and was exacting with his employees. Yet he could be very kind. Marion Speer tells of working for him as a "nipper" on the railroad from Eureka to Animas Forks. He was only a young lad and had to carry heavy tools from the graders to the blacksmith's shop for sharpening and then

carry them back to the graders. Mr. Wigglesworth told him he'd have to let him go as the work was too heavy for him. Marion started to bawl and said he had to have the money to go to mining school. "Wig" not only re-hired him, but gave him a helper besides.

Soon after Wigglesworth started work in the area, he purchased land for a farm, five miles north of Durango and called it the "Waterfall Ranch." Here he built a home and lived until his death in 1909. Perhaps his greatest love was this farm and his farm work.



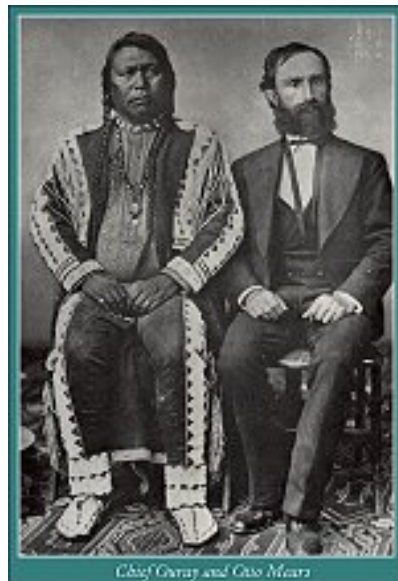
Waterfall Ranch. The white plume in the center is the waterfall. Note the many wires crossing the top of the picture. Telephones came to Durango in 1907. (Photo From the Wigglesworth Family Collection.)



An earlier view of Waterfall Ranch, from the left. No wires, no fence and foliage less developed. (Photo from the Wigglesworth Family Collection.)

When Richard Cunningham bought the property and started peeling the old paper off the walls in the living room and two bedrooms, he found the bottom layer to be those huge, linen RR Survey maps. He and his wife removed them as carefully as possible and were in the process of piecing them together when the house burned down in Nov 1953. [Pioneers of the San Juan Country - Vol I)

Well, *Old Wig* must by now be coming into somewhat sharper focus in your mind's eye, but we still haven't taken full measure of this hearty railroad pioneer. As Isadora Duncan wrote in her autobiography, "There is the vision our friends have of us; the vision we have of ourselves; and the vision our lover has of us. Also, the vision our enemies have of us - all of these visions are different." Amen! There can be no doubt that *Old Wig* pleased his main boss, the redoubtable Otto Mears, since the latter kept re-hiring him.



**Otto Mears and Chief Ouray,
"White Man's Friend." ²⁶**

And, Otto was a rugged individualist of the first order who demanded of his key employees exactly what he demanded of himself -- everything - total commitment *plus!* (He once built a lumber mill with no other tool than a hand-saw - and no nails!)

auto routes in the nation. Popularly known today as US 550, it is really only the straight six-mile stretch overlying the original toll road.

Otto also fulfilled a government mail route commitment, personally when need be, through biting sub-zero temperatures, heavy snows, near tornado level winds and soft spring slush that could engulf a man to his armpits. He was the money angel and driving force of the D&RG. Curiously, Otto's only RR venture east of CO was the construction of the now defunct Washington DC - Chesapeake Beach MD Railway.) Tom Wigglesworth was Otto's kind of man's man. But *Old Wig* also had the respect and admiration of his employees down the line. However varied the perspective, from whatever angle you look at him, Tom Wiggs comes off well.

For proof, we here excerpt an article by George Vest Day, "*The Pathfinder of the San Juan - As Crew Members Remember Him*", from *Pioneers of the San Juan Country* - Vol III: ²⁹

Recorded history has a tendency to emphasize the importance of those whose efforts aided community progress, if those efforts were richly rewarded in dollars and cents; while those who assisted the hard way, with only modest financial returns, are merely casually mentioned.

I do not wish to detract from the well deserved credit of Otto Mears for his toll and railroads, but I do want to point out, that little has been written about the engineers and crew members who found the way, worked out the grades and measured the distances, in short, those who actually made the construction of these roads possible.

This article is prompted by the desire to acquaint the present generation and its children with one of the latter, whose substantial achievements had a most important part in making the San Juan Basin what it is today; that great old engineer and most

unforgettable character, Thomas H. Wigglesworth.

One has only to travel over the Durango to Silverton Railway, the Durango to Rico portion of the Rio Grande Southern or the routes of the now abandoned Otto Mears RR empire to appreciate the almost superhuman engineering feats that won Mr. Wigglesworth the appellation, "Pathfinder of the San Juan." Thousands of persons visit here every year to view these wonders without knowing to whom credit is due.

My earliest remembrance of Thomas H. Wigglesworth dates back to 1894 when my father, David F. Day, was Indian Agent at Ignacio. He had been employed to make a survey for a large portion of the ditches and canals that now carry water to Reservation land. I was just a lad of 14, but I still have a vivid picture of him in my memory.

He was not a large man but exceedingly wiry. His face was red from much out-of-door living. His ever-present Van Dyke beard favored a goatee angle. Time had slightly greyed his hair and dimmed his eyes. He usually wore a pair of heavy lensed glasses on the tip of his nose, so he could look through them with a minimum of effort, when the occasion demanded. His uniform on location consisted of khaki trousers and shirt, the former tucked in a pair of khaki leggings.

His crew members in late years referred to him as "Sunny Jim," because of his resemblance to Sunny Jim on the package of Force, the breakfast food most favored at the moment.



The reference to Force was an apt one, because, believe me, it was force that constituted the make up of T. H. Wigglesworth. At his time in life, 59, the average man is looking for a permanent seat in an easy chair. Not T. H. W.! Most of his career in this section was ahead of him.

During his Reservation assignment it was frequently necessary to utilize the services of Indians as rodmen or to assist in various other ways. As the help spoke very little English, and in general assumed a "no savvy" attitude, it was essential for "Chief Wigg," as he was affectionately known, to produce a vocabulary to fit the occasion. He did! The finished product reached such a state of perfection it really did not sound like profanity at all. Apparently the Indians thought it was just professional lingo and grinned in such a way it sent his blood pressure soaring. When his pent up emotions needed a safety valve he could and did swear so forcefully, it is well recalled to this day.

* * *

I well remember the first night at the Basin Creek camp [6 miles south of Durango.] Sixteen men were seated around the campfire. Not a bite to eat! The cook, who had promised to take charge of the food department, failed to materialize. I had heard Chief Wigglesworth give vent to vitriolic remarks at the agency, but when he arrived to find this state of affairs his agency remarks were but feeble illustrations of his ability for tossing words. No cook living or dead could have escaped being singed.

* * *

[The Chief] never mingled or kidded with the boys or became familiar with them. He was never grouchy or fault-finding. But if he had reason to be displeased he expressed himself right now in no uncertain terms. However, he weighed things from every angle. If he found that he had made a mistake he never failed to rectify it.

I am sure all his old crew members would gladly join me in this tribute. He was a marvelous engineer, a just and square man, and one whose life was replete with kind deeds.

One could hardly improve on the latter as a fitting epitaph to *The Chief*. We won't even try, lest we muddy the waters. Suffice it to say that now we might all easily recognize the man if it were only possible to meet him. Beyond that, the probability is

strong that we should all have wished to meet him and would have enjoyed such a meeting.

All of which prompts a few reflections on the value and lessons of biography. Culling through the personal histories of those who preceded us, whether family or not, we become ever more aware of the continuity and kinship of all humanity. We're all part, after all, of a single giant tapestry of life. At the same time we become keenly aware of how fleeting life is, and are increasingly impressed that we too shall pass from this earthly scene. Finally, and happily, there is the merest hint for hope - precisely through biography - that somehow, in fact, we shall live on.

NOTES

1. There are several versions of this quote, including: "Heredity is an omnibus in which all our ancestors ride, and every now and then one of them puts his head out and embarrasses us." Holmes, Sr. is always the source, but I have yet to find a particular publication cited.

2. Wikipedia contributors. "William Penn." *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*. Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia, 2 Dec. 2012. Web. 3 Dec. 2012. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William_Penn

3. Wikipedia contributors. "John Carroll (Bishop)." *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*. Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia, 16 Nov. 2012. Web. 2 Dec. 2012.

4. FamilyTreeMaker Website. Taken on 12/11/2012. <http://familytreemaker.genealogy.com/users/m/a/j/Marguerite-D-Major/WEBSITE-0001/UHP-0152.html>

5. Wikipedia contributors. "Gilbert du Motier, Marquis de Lafayette." *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*. Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia, 12 Dec. 2012. Web. 13 Dec. 2012.

6. Wikipedia contributors. "United States Department of Justice." *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*. Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia, 6 Dec. 2012. Web. 13 Dec. 2012.

7. "United States Department of War." *Wikipedia*, . 20 Sep 2012, 07:17 UTC. 13 Dec 2012, 23:41.

<http://simple.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=United_States_Department_of_War&oldid=3858106>.

8. The Association of Oldest Inhabitants of DC created this cumulative membership list which lists on pages 107-108 many Wrights, including a Herbert. It also lists a Thomas E. Wigglesworth, born in 1905 in Arizona. http://www.aoidc.org/uploads/1/1/8/5/11853240/aoi_sesquicentennial_project_as_of_9-29-2009.pdf

9. Records indicate that Edna's father did not have an older brother named Herbert. Either the name or the relationship is wrong. See the FamilyTreeMaker website: <http://familytreemaker.genealogy.com/users/m/a/j/Marguerite-D-Major/WEBSITE-0001/UHP-0022.html> taken on 12/11/2012.

10. Wikipedia contributors. "Henry Hudson." *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*. Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia, 2 Dec. 2012. Web. 4 Dec. 2012.

**11. Picture of Thomas Wigglesworth taken on 12/11/2012 from the Heritage West website. <http://heritagewest.coalliance.org/items/show/73163>
This Durango RV site mentions TW and some of his achievements.
<http://www.durangorvpark.com/Animas-City-1870s-History-Durango-Co.htm>**

12. Picture of Ann Spradlin taken on 12/11/2012 from the Heritage West website: <http://heritagewest.coalliance.org/items/show/73155>

13. Wikipedia contributors. "Henry Clay." *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*. Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia, 27 Nov. 2012. Web. 4 Dec. 2012.

14. Wikipedia contributors. "George Armstrong Custer." *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*. Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia, 11 Dec. 2012. Web. 14 Dec. 2012.

15. Wikipedia contributors. "Durango, Colorado." *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*. Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia, 11 Dec. 2012. Web. 14 Dec. 2012.

16. Wikipedia contributors. "Basque language." *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*. Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia, 7 Dec. 2012. Web. 14 Dec. 2012.

17. Wikipedia contributors. "Durango, Colorado." *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*. Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia, 5 Dec. 2012. Web. 8 Dec. 2012.

18. Chase Olivarius-Mcallister. "Durango's Hidden History of Harlotry. Some Western towns herald their sordid past, but we keep ours on the down low." Durango Herald Webpage. Last updated on September 25 2012. Taken on 12/13/2012

19. Wikipedia contributors. "Robert Ford (outlaw)." *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*. Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia, 26 Nov. 2012. Web. 8 Dec. 2012.

20. Wikipedia contributors. "Calamity Jane." *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*. Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia, 4 Dec. 2012. Web. 8 Dec. 2012.

21. Wikipedia contributors. "Bat Masterson." *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*. Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia, 4 Dec. 2012. Web. 8 Dec. 2012.

22. Copyright. Editorial Novaro. 1954. <http://www.comics.org/series/34046/>

23. Wikipedia contributors. "Alferd Packer." *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*. Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia, 23 Nov. 2012. Web. 8 Dec. 2012.

24. *Biographical Directory of Railway Officials of America, Edition of 1893. Edited and Compiled by T.A. Busbey. Railway Age and Northwestern RailRoader. The Lakeside Press, R. R. Donnelly & Sons Co. Chicago. (Google Books.)*

25. *Pioneers of the San Juan Country, Vol. I. Sarah Platt Decker Chapter, National Society of the Daughters of the American Revolution. 1969.*

**26. The Silverton Railroads. Silverton Colorado. Silverton and Its Railroads. Website by Mark L. Evans. Taken on 12/14/2012.
http://www.narrowgauge.org/ncmap/excur2_silverton_railroad_silverton.html**

**27. Photo of Otto Mears from the Doris Gregory Collection taken on 12/14/2012 from the website: Ouray History. Otto Mears by Jenny Hart.
<http://ourayhistory.wikidot.com/otto-mears>**

**28. Photo from the website: Historical Photos of Colorado and Utah. Mark L. Evans Collection. Historical Paper Items from the Rio Grande Southern Railroad. John Hitzeman Collection. Taken on 12/14/2012.
<http://www.narrowgauge.org/ngc/html/mevans-collection/paper/mevans-collection-rgs-paper.html>**

29. *Pioneers of the San Juan Country, Vol. III. Sarah Platt Decker Chapter, National Society of the Daughters of the American Revolution. 1969.*

30. Wikipedia contributors. "Sunny Jim." *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*. Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia, 29 Oct. 2012. Web. 14 Dec. 2012.
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sunny_Jim