

W. A. Richards
and the
Pioneer Newsmen
of the
Bighorn Basin

From the early 1890s

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RB
Red Bank Press

STARTING A NEWSPAPER was not what William A. Richards had in mind when he returned to the Bighorn Basin in 1885 after exploring it the previous year. His days as a reporter were long past: He was a surveyor now, and he intended to claim a homestead. His move would be financed by the construction of the first large-scale irrigation canal on the Bighorn River for a company of Colorado investors who wanted to claim land. It is curious, though, that Richards would eventually own a paper, and that two of the four young men in his crew were printers. They may have joined this pioneer venture to escape from a summer in a stifling newspaper press room, even if it meant hard labor and camping out. One of them, Owen Thomas (Tom) Gebhart, would return to toil on the ditch for several seasons, then start his own paper in the basin and edit or manage others there well into the next century.

In a few years Richards would acquire *The Rustler*, the first newspaper published in the basin. (At this time the word meant go-getter rather than livestock thief.) His story is entwined with that of Joseph De Barthe,¹ the original publisher, and Thomas Daggett, who took over as editor when Richards bought the paper. De Barthe and Daggett were talented eastern journalists who found their way to the oil boom town of Bonanza. Daggett moved the *Rustler* to Otto in 1896 to promote that town for the county seat of Big Horn County, which was about to be organized. Otto was considered likeliest to succeed, but Basin City was created in opposition, and a newspaper was founded to push the new "city." *The Basin City Herald* was put out by Gebhart and an eloquent and imaginative Irishman, Joseph Magill of Thermopolis, who was also a cowboy, teacher, and poet. In a letter to Richards after the election, Daggett called editor Magill a "filthy bird," and *The Otto Courier* blasted him with a string of choicer epithets. (See "William A. Richards and the Battle for Big Horn County.pdf" on WilliamA.Richards.com.)

Magill was a Democrat, and when Richards was running for governor in 1894 Magill helped Edward Payton put together articles aimed at defeating him. Payton started his own newspaper, moved to Thermopolis, and suffered the first of a number of attacks of violent insanity. In 1911 he was suspected of the murders of Richards's daughter Edna and her husband, Tom Jenkins.

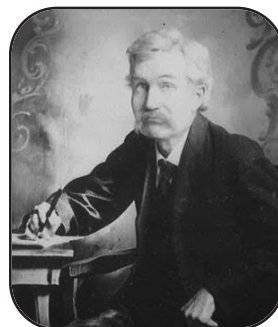
Though De Barthe left the Bighorn Basin soon after his arrival, Daggett, Richards, Magill, and Payton remained loyal till fate forced them out. Gebhart ended his days in the town of Basin, and well into the twentieth century its newspapers quoted him about pioneer days.

THE SAME YEAR that De Barthe started *The Rustler*, 1889, Richards was appointed U.S. surveyor general for Wyoming Territory, which required him and his family to move to the state capital, Cheyenne. Their real home, however, was always their ranch in what was then part of Johnson County, and Richards was concerned about the future of the only Republican paper in that Democratic stronghold. This paper, *The Big Horn Sentinel*, had been published at Buffalo



Joe Magill, cowpoke, justice of the peace, stage driver, teacher, scribe, lecturer, yarnspinner, poet

Undated photo from undated article in *Real West* magazine, courtesy of Hot Springs County Historical Society



Left to right: Tom Gebhart, Joe De Barthe, and Tom Daggett.² No photo of Payton is known to exist.

since 1884. Joseph M. Carey, Wyoming Territory's most prominent Republican and its delegate to Congress, also wanted it to survive. Richards wrote H. R. Mann, a local Republican leader who managed the *Sentinel*, on October 5, 1889,¹

I have not yet been able to find any one to run the paper. Had a talk today with Judge Carey. He is anxious that the paper should be kept running and may write you. I will keep rustling and hope you will keep it going at least until after the election.

Two weeks later, the *Sentinel* went off duty. It was in good shape financially but its stockholders decided to sell it because they could not find a manager, typesetters, and a printer's devil (assistant) on short notice, at least according to the final issue.² The plant was purchased by Thomas Bouton of *The Buffalo Echo*, the local Democratic organ.³ It is unknown whether Richards or anyone else approached Gebhart to help save the *Sentinel*. Gebhart's whereabouts at this time are uncertain, but he probably was living at Richards's Red Bank ranch, trying to finish the ditch for the Colorado company and doing surveys and other work for local ranchers.

GEBHART'S PASSION FOR PRINTING began in childhood. Born in Urbana, Ohio on January 21, 1860, he grew up in Pennsylvania, where his father encouraged the boy's interest by giving him a small press. Tom entered the printer's trade at age 17, working for the *Greeneville (Pennsylvania) Advance Argus*. In 1883 he headed west and found work on a daily paper at Fort Collins, Colorado, *The Express*.⁴

In May 1885, Gebhart and a Fort Collins printer friend, Charles E. Black, along with Augustus C. Coleman and William Gamble, set out for the basin with Richards. They would start excavating the miles of irrigation ditch that would enable the Colorado investors (including Richards) to claim a section each under the Desert Land Act.⁵

That October, Gebhart, Black, and Gamble returned to Colorado.⁶ Gebhart worked in the press room of the *Colorado Springs Gazette*⁷ until spring, when the lure of another summer digging and scraping under the broiling sun overcame him. He and, apparently, Black,⁸ returned to the basin. At some point Gebhart took over the supervision of the ditch construction, and in the spring of 1889 it diverted enough high water to enable the investors to prove up on their parcels.⁹ He then worked for ranchmen in the area,¹⁰ probably as a surveyor and all-around hand, and about 1890 he bought a herd of horses with Richards. On November 1 of that year Gebhart married Sallie Lee Hatten, 23, who had come to Hyattville the year before to join four siblings who lived in the area.¹¹ When a new minister was called to Hyattville, his wife was grateful for Sallie's friendship and hospitality. Carol Moore wrote her husband, Austin, in July 1893 that the Gebharts "are not christian people but are inclined towards things good and she and I are going to try to start a Sunday school soon."¹²

Gebhart launched the *Paint Rock Record* at Hyattville in 1893, reportedly with someone named Jackson or Johnson.¹³ It was not the first paper in the basin: that honor belonged to *The Rustler*, published at the oil boomtown of Bonanza a few miles southwest of Hyattville. Both towns were in the Nowood country, on the east side of the basin about 50 miles north of Red Bank. Founded in 1886, Hyattville was one of the few "towns" in the basin, a relative term. Years later Tom Gebhart must have supplied the *Big Horn County Rustler*, by then at Basin, with this tidbit,¹⁴

At that time The Rustler was being published at Bonanza, a town of one store, and Tom felt that if The Rustler could be successful in a town of one store, he could do equally well in another town of one store. Samuel Hyatt was running the store at Hyattville. The Record got along very nicely.

There is no mention of anyone named Jackson or Johnson in that article or any other after the announcement of the paper's founding. He may have supplied capital and a press outfit,

since Gebhart's earnings must have been meager and he had a family to support while his paper got established. In any case, on February 10, 1893, *The Cheyenne Daily Sun* reported,

The second number of the *Paint Rock Record* has reached THE SUN....Published by Gobhart [sic] & Jackson with Tom Gobhart as editor and claims to be independent in politics, but shows a decided leaning toward Democracy. THE SUN congratulates the *Record* on its neat typographical appearance, its loyalty to Wyoming and especially to that part of it lying within the Big Horn basin; may it meet with success.

Laramie's *Daily Boomerang* wrote on February 2, "[J]udging from the first number they will issue a very creditable paper."

The independence was short lived: during the 1894 electoral campaign season, the *Record* allied itself with Richards's party. Casper's *Natrona Tribune* reported on September 4 that Gebhart's paper

announced last week it would henceforth champion republican principles. This is a very intelligent change and we expect to see some good things politically in the *Record*, for Brother Gebhart is a smooth writer.

Gebhart may have been a smooth writer, but he was primarily a printer trying to compete with an inspired New York City journalist at nearby Bonanza, Thomas F. Daggett. In five years the *Rustler* had become solidly established, and the businesses in Billings, Lander, Buffalo, Casper, and Hyattville whose large ads filled its pages week after week may have felt no need to spend money with the *Record* to reach many of the same readers.¹ Less than two years after launching the *Record*, Gebhart sold it to Sheridan newsman Fay V. Sommers in August 1895,² and Sommers joined forces with Daggett. Sommers had founded *The Enterprise* in 1887 with Thomas T. Tynan, and now saw the potential of the country over the mountains.³ Gebhart wrote Richards on August 14,⁴

I have turned over the "Record" to Tom Daggett and Fay Sommers, consolidating the "Record" and the "Rustler." These two men, who are both first-class newspaper men, will get out a paper of which any country may well feel proud, and will do a world of good for the Basin and the entire state of Wyoming. They will continue on the good old lines of republicanism, that being one of the conditions Tom exacted when he went into partnership with Sommers...

The Basin is prospering finely and Hyattville is slowly growing. This country will come out all right in the end and when we get rid of some of the lawless characters now infesting it[, it] will be a very good place to live.

Since the *Record* and *Rustler* have consolidated I am out of a job, and must look around for something to do, hence my application to Judge Riner.

John A. Riner was Federal Circuit Court judge for Wyoming, and Gebhart hoped to replace Winfield S. Collins as county court commissioner. Gebhart listed various charges against Collins for which he should be removed. He wasn't, and Gebhart somehow supported himself and his family until Collins offered him a job a year later.

The *Boomerang* spoke well of the *Record/Rustler* merger:⁵

Fay Somers [sic] of the *Paint Rock Record* and Tom Daggett of the *Bonanza Rustler* have consolidated their papers and will put their well known talents and energy into a greater paper for the Big Horn Basin.

The merged paper would be published for the time being at Hyattville, a permanent loss to Bonanza.⁶

TOM DAGGETT had taken over *The Rustler* about a year after it was founded by Joe De Barthe. Prior to that, De Barthe was employed at Lander's *Wind River Mountaineer*, the latest in a rapid succession of newspaper gigs listed by his wife, Harriett, in her memoir, "My Forty-One

Years in Wyoming.”¹ Providence. Chicago. Boston. Springfield, Massachusetts. New York City. Minneapolis. St. Paul. He started his own paper in Buffalo, New York, but that ended over unspecified problems related to advertising by certain liquor interests. In New York City he worked at the *Clipper* (an entertainment weekly), the *Sun*, the *Police Gazette*, the *Herald*, and was assistant dramatic critic of the *Star* for two years. The publisher of the *Sun* from 1868 until his death in 1897, Charles A. Dana, made it “the best edited paper in the world,” in the opinion of one Philadelphia editor. “He gave journalism the hall-mark stamp of literature, while preserving for it the freshness and spontaneity which is the inseparable quality of a real newspaper.”² The *Sun* pioneered the use of human interest stories, personal ads, among other staples of modern newspapers.³ Daggett also worked there,⁴ and in this environment he and De Barthe may have spread their wings as writers.

The De Barthes moved to Denver on the advice of doctors when he contracted pneumonia. The date of the move isn’t recorded, nor is his place of employment, but their second child was born there, on September 14, 1887.⁵

“After all these years of experience Mr. De Barthe had made quite a name for himself, being considered an A. No. 1 newspaperman,” wrote his wife.⁶ In Denver he apparently knew or met John F. Ludin, who took over the Lander paper in the summer of 1887. Ludin’s “intention is to place the *Mountaineer* in the front ranks of territorial weekly newspapers,” wrote the Democratic *Cheyenne Daily Leader*.⁷ “He has secured George R. Caldwell for editor, which assures the success of that feature of the paper, and is now negotiating for a power press so as to increase the mechanical facilities.” Ludin, a Democrat, was described as a “lurid lightening [sic] editor” by the Republican *Cheyenne Daily Sun*,⁸ and he obviously thought De Barthe capable of hurling bolts as well. De Barthe accepted the offer of a better position (on the *Mountaineer*) and his wife stayed behind until their newborn was old enough to travel.⁹

Ludin had brought his own wife and baby up from Denver in October.¹⁰ About November 3, Mrs. De Barthe and her infant son took the train to Rawlins, Wyoming, then boarded the stagecoach for Lander. She must have been thinking of the treacherous Beaver Rim when she wrote,

This next part of the trip was very dangerous and to keep the passengers from getting nervous the shades were pulled down and fastened so one could not see the road. The road was on a narrow ledge and if anything were to go wrong it would have been disastrous to both passengers and horses, for they would have plunged over the precipice and down hundreds of feet below. The horses seemed to realize the danger but the driver did not want to take any chances of screaming passengers exciting them. Both men and horses had nerves of steel to make such perilous journeys.

When they finally arrived at the small town of Lander,

To me, it seemed one of the most beautiful places I had ever seen and it was such a relief to know I was at the end of my journey, and where there was safety and comfort. Lander is built in a little valley that is shaped like a big basin and completely surrounded by mountains. Of course there were no accommodations like I had been accustomed to. The country was so new, so



Beaver Hill about 1901

Courtesy of the Riverton (Wyoming) Museum

different, but still it made such an appeal to me that I soon grew to like the West.

One thing in particular that I could not get used to was the Indians. The Shoshone Reservation was only a short distance, and when they came into town they didn't hesitate [to walk] into my house and ask for something to eat. One buck* was particularly annoying, for he was never satisfied when he had his own dinner but always wanted some for his papoose. I was quite timid at first so would comply with his request until I became tired of being bothered so I decided I'd get rid of him. The next time he came I laid a six shooter on the table and when he saw it he said to me, "White squaw no shoot." However, I gave him a plate of food but he never troubled me again.

De Barthe may have replaced Caldwell as editor less than a year later, in February 1888. James H. Hayford of the Republican *Laramie Weekly Sentinel* was jubilant even though Joe was a Democrat.¹ *Mountaineer* issues do not show him as editor, however.

LE ROI EST MORTE! VIVE LE ROI!

Gentlemen of the Wyoming press, George R. Caldwell has retired from our ranks and we have given him a good send off. Now you want to doff your tiles and do obeisance to a new star which has risen in our firmament. We allude to Joe De Barthe, who has taken Caldwell's place on the Lander *Mountaineer*. Joe is a brick. He writes both poetry and prose, and his writings are full of pathos and sentiment, of poetry and feeling.

Hayford quoted a long piece by De Barthe about a young man's devotion to his mother. Today's readers might wonder if it was tongue-in-cheek, but Daggett said that "...in addition to being a virile prose writer he was a poet of tender sentiments and graceful fancies."² While in New York City, De Barthe had composed and self-published in 1883 a nostalgic ballad, "The Gable-Roofed Attic."³

In 1888, the publisher of Lander's other sheet, the *Fremont Clipper*, had put out feelers for a paper, the *Herald*, in the new oil boom town of Bonanza. Isaac C. Wynn tried to raise \$1,000 in subscription pledges (about \$33,000 in 2023 dollars⁴), but one of his brother newsmen thought the new paper would be worth only \$300.⁵ Potential subscribers wouldn't even go that far: among the pledges were a cow tooth, cat skin, dog hide, jaw bone, cow tail, pills, rabbit pelt, and a skunk hide. The story spiced up a number of issues of territorial newspapers before Wynn dropped the idea.⁶

Word of this withering reception could not have escaped De Barthe. But it did not deter him from leaping into the unknown himself a year later, when the oil excitement became too much for his restless and imaginative soul. If he moved to the promising new town he could start his own paper, and this would give Bonanza and the basin *their* own paper. Albert A. ("Pap") Conant, who had platted the town in 1888,⁷ may have had that in mind: According to the maiden issue of *The Rustler*, June 1, 1889,⁸ he gave De Barthe two lots and built him a 20' x 20' log building, complete with a floor, four windows and two doors, next to the new oil rig. In this issue Joe cheerfully chirped about the difficulties of the four-day wagon trip from Lander with the press outfit and personal effects; early on, the driver had to carry items on his own back across a long muddy stretch, and a dunking in the Bighorn River cost them paper and sugar.

Hayford approved of the move, writing on May 18, 1889:

Joe De Barthe, the wide awake newspaper man of Lander, will issue the first number of the *Rustler*, at Bonanza, a new town in the northern part of Fremont county [Johnson county, actually], about the first of June. Joe is a live editor and we anticipate great pleasure in the perusal of the *Rustler*.

In her memoir Mrs. De Barthe relates her rough trip overland through the Shoshone Reservation and fording the "dangerous big Wind River" with the guidance of a sheep dog. At last they "came to a bright yellow log house which had been chinked up with gypsum," she recalled. "This log house was to be our home. And here the 'Rustler' first made its appearance."

* In this era "buck," "squaw," and "papoose" were common terms for Indians by whites, not necessarily slurs. If Mrs. De Barthe quoted the man correctly, even he was referring to her as a squaw, which could have been a slur.

Years later, in 1904, Tom Daggett described the *Rustler's* beginnings from a newsman's point of view:¹

Joseph Newton De Barthe, a native of [Connecticut], reared to manhood in Pittsfield, Massachusetts, and New York City[,] was its founder. He began its publication with a miserably poor outfit of second-hand type, a Washington hand press and other printing material obtained from J. F. Ludin, publisher of the "Wind River Mountaineer," at Lander, Fremont County. This equipment was brought to the Basin by Perry Townsend with a four-horse team, and its purchaser accompanied it on horseback. Its transportation over an almost trackless country involved many hardships, but it finally reached Bonanza and was placed in a log cabin on the west bank of the Nowood built for it by A. A. Conant. (Pap).

...The first issue of "The Rustler," all things considered, presented a highly creditable appearance. In its salutatory its editor and founder jocundly announced that "The paper has not come to the Basin to wait, Macawber like, for 'something to turn up.' Nay, nay, pardners, it has come to turn something up. We have been told that failure will be our portion; that a lingering death by starvation awaits its publisher. But he snaps his fingers at fate and prophecies and has pulled off his coat and gone to work. Come what may, The Rustler has come to stay."

It did stay and apparently enjoyed its turbulent and purposeful existence....it went to different points over the United States, a few copies going even to the Old World, and everywhere it pictured with fervid words and glowing imagination the glorious possibilities of the new land where it had made its home.

"Turbulous" is a Scottish word meaning "liable to cause disorder and unrest." Daggett embellished or misremembered what De Barthe actually wrote:

We have been warned that a lingering starvation awaits us, but as we came to turn something up instead of waiting for something to turn up, we snap our fingers at the prophecy and have gone to work.

"Rustler" in the sense of go-getter fit De Barthe and his fledgling publication. He beat the drum in the first issue:

Why should not THE RUSTLER be successful? It is true that the Big Horn Basin is more vast than the yawn of the whale that swallowed Jonah, yet it is one of the most favored portions of the United States. The surveyors of the Wyoming Midland railroad are even now pushing their way in our very midst; by all indications the shrill whistle of the locomotive will undoubtedly startle us into the realization of painted cars and cheap freights a year hence. Land here is plentiful and fertile. The rigors of winter are unknown. Three mighty rivers are constantly before our eyes. Fuel—coal and oil—is so abundant and easy of acquisition that the boon it must some day confer upon our people is as far beyond present conception as the want of it is beyond possibility.

THE RUSTLER desires to be a weekly visitor at the fireside of every family in Johnson and Fremont counties, and its editor believes that pluck, perseverance and patience will find suitable reward when the paper shall have been established long enough to entitle it to the place it aspires to fill—a welcome weekly Wyoming news nugget.

Though the population of the basin and the Nowood country was still small, the four six-column pages of the maiden issue were filled with ads and news. De Barthe boasted that he had to cut a half column of ads to make room for late local news. Issues from May and June of 1890²

"THE RUSTLER"

The First and Only Newspaper Published in the
Big Horn Basin,
Is published every Saturday in the
year by
Joe De Barthe.

Terms of Subscription:

One year (in advance) - - -	\$3.00
Six months (in advance) - - -	\$1.50

Advertising Rates.

One inch (one insertion)	.50
One inch (monthly)	\$1.00
One inch (three months)	2.00
One inch (six months)	4.00
One inch (one year)	6.00
Display ads, 50 cents an inch, regardless of space or time.	

Entered at the postoffice at Bonanza as
second-class mail matter.

THE RUSTLER starts out with a
phenomenal subscription list of
400. We propose to double that
number inside the year.

Masthead of the first issue of The Rustler

\$1 was about \$32.80 in 2022 dollars, per measuringworth.com purchasing-power calculator

show that his move to Bonanza had paid off. The *Rustler* was packed with ads from Billings, Buffalo, Lander, and Casper as well as nearby Hyattville, which also was growing. Its masthead claimed 500 subscribers, up from the original 400. Ads for Bonanza itself show it was home to the Taylor brothers' general store, a drug store, a saloon, a physician, two lawyers (one of whom was also a notary and surveyor/land locator), and a purveyor of fine wines, liquors, and cigars. Two lodging houses offered feed or livery stables and one had a bar.

While De Barthe was setting up shop, Tom Gebhart of Red Bank came calling. His eyes may have lit up over the press outfit, and he may even have given De Barthe a hand with typesetting or other work, though this is not mentioned in the note about his visit in the first issue of the paper. The next month Gebhart was serving as editor *pro tem* for an unknown length of time.¹ It is also unknown if he wanted a permanent job at the *Rustler* or whether De Barthe offered him one.

In the *Rustler* in 1904, Daggett described his own arrival in Bonanza:

In the summer of 1889 [more likely 1890²] the writer whom many of his eastern friends regarded as De Barthe's most exact human counterpart in many respects, became attached to "The Rustler" as an assistant in its editorial and mechanical department.

He doesn't say what brought him to Bonanza. At this time he was in Cheyenne, according to basin historian Paul Frison.³ The Wyoming capital was Daggett's most recent stop in the wanderings that started when his bride took sick and died on the eve of their wedding, according to Frison. To deal with his grief he began drinking. His employer (probably the *Sun*) sent him to Europe in hopes he could recover, but he did not. He wandered west to St. Louis, Omaha, Denver, Salt Lake, Albuquerque and then Cheyenne. There he became acquainted with A. S. Mercer, according to Frison. That makes sense: Daggett may have worked on Mercer's *North Western Livestock Journal*, which began publication in 1883. Frison claims Richards was responsible for steering Daggett toward the basin, but why didn't Daggett ever say so in print, when he gave Richards credit for much else? Daggett might have visited remote Bonanza out of curiosity about the oil excitement, but it seems more likely that the two former *Sun* veterans got together on their own. Daggett may have looked up De Barthe after seeing his name in Wyoming papers or in the *Rustler* itself.

Mrs. De Barthe says only that her husband "put the 'Rustler' in the hands of an old time friend, Tom Daggett, whom he had known while working on the New York Times." She may have meant the *Sun*, as De Barthe is not noted elsewhere as having worked at the *Times*. However it happened, the boomtown now had a second talented eastern journalist.

Daggett's 1904 article continues:

"The Rustler" had been established as an independent journal and during the first few weeks of its existence was quietly indifferent to conflicting opinions in the world's current thought and ideas. It had one dominating keynote for all of its utterances, i.e., that the Big Horn Basin was the grandest region on earth and in all regards the most beautiful and promising.

Two weeks prior to my arrival at its headquarters, "The Rustler," for reasons which did not concern me, proclaimed itself an advocate of the policies and principles of the Republican part, and so it remains. [De Barthe switched parties in April 1890.]

Shortly after it had announced its political allegiance De Barthe, true to his restless temperament and his uncontrollable spirit for newer fields of endeavor, decided to go to Buffalo, then the capital of the Johnson county part of the Basin in which Bonanza was located, and established a new journal devoted to the development of the resources of Northern Wyoming, and incidentally his own material affairs. The Buffalo Bulletin was the result, and I found myself with "The Rustler" on my hands.

There was something else behind the move, according to Harriett De Barthe:

I believe the town of Bonanza was located some where near the "Hole in the Wall" the famous hiding place of fugitives from justice....* They would often come into the office where they liked to spin yarns, tell stories and joke. One would never suspect their real characters.

Their "real characters" made the De Barthes live "in constant dread and fear," she recalled. So did certain tricks of the outlaw trade:

It was a common occurrence in those days for men to muffle the horses' feet so there would be no sound when they wished to ride in the silence of the night.

HEAVILY DEMOCRATIC northern Wyoming had been without a Republican newspaper since the *Big Horn Sentinel* folded in October 1889. De Barthe, a Republican since April 1890, may have wanted to fill the political void and enjoy greater influence in the coming election. Whatever his reasoning, he founded the *Buffalo Bulletin* in October 1890 with Charles M. Lingle, and turned the *Rustler* over to Daggett.

When Joe pledged his new allegiance, the Republican *Cheyenne Sun* was delighted, and it quoted a statement from the *Rustler* in its April 26 issue. Joe was incensed that the *Carbon County Journal* had "taken the liberty of using his name" as a speaker at a celebration of the birthday of Thomas Jefferson that the Democrats had held in Rawlins earlier in the month.¹

By the way, would it not be a grand idea for a democratic savant to present the inducements that he has to offer a western man for becoming or remaining a democrat. This is in an era when people are supposed to be influenced by intelligent considerations. What has the democratic party done for the great west? What does it propose to do?

Joe and others also felt betrayed by the opposition of congressional Democrats to the admission of Wyoming and Idaho to the Union. The *Sun* quoted De Barthe on May 18, 1890, just two months before Wyoming became a State:

Democracy in principle is a glorious thing, but as the principal thing about the democracy of the present is a rapidly increasing catalogue of mistakes and retrogression, the party that Thomas Jefferson did not found is having rather a hard time of it in making converts.

...Wyoming has been knocking at the doors of congress for admission to statehood. Was it not a big mistake for the democrats to scoff at her plea in fear of her "political complexion"? Do not the democrats see that the mistake was fatal? They not only lost to the democratic party the affiliation of many good Wyoming citizens, but created an adverse criticism that has given birth to a sympathy in the breasts of thousands of other men in other states.

Sympathy and intelligence are noble endowments, and unlike water and oil, united; but they cannot be put down as attributes of the democracy that maintains at the present time.

About six months later he founded the *Bulletin*, and he and his family moved to Buffalo. At some point after that the *Rustler* "became the property of the Hon. W. A. Richards, then surveyor-general," Daggett wrote in 1904. He added,

To this gentleman's financial aid and encouragement is due, I believe, the existence of "The Rustler," and cheerfully I here accord him credit for it.

Many things vital to the continuation of the Basin's pioneer newspaper occurred at this time, but the limits of this history prohibit extended mention of them. Soon after Mr. Richards assumed the ownership of "The Rustler" he engaged me as its editor. I accepted the position and continued in his employ until he became Wyoming's governor.

*Bonanza was about 75 miles as the crow flies from the Hole in the Wall, a natural fortress in the red wall country to the east. A narrow opening led to a lush pasture where stolen livestock could be sequestered.

Rumors that the *Rustler* had been sold were denied by De Barthe in the June 21, 1890, issue:

ABOUT the funniest thing we have heard lately is the story that THE RUSTLER has sold out to the republican central committee. Apparently this means that THE RUSTLER has sold out its "influence" to the republicans. Funny, isn't it? It is on a par with the report that we had sold a half interest to some Cheyenne party. As we once before remarked, if any man outside of Joe De Barthe thinks he owns THE RUSTLER, or any part of it, he should step up to the band wagon and make himself known. ...So far as the republicans are concerned, they would be foolish people to buy that which is theirs by gift.

The "Cheyenne party" was probably Surveyor General Richards: Who else in town would have been interested? He may have discussed the matter with De Barthe when he went to Bonanza the month before to honor W. D. Pickett for legislating the creation of Big Horn County. (See pp. 4–5 in "William A. Richards and the Battle for Big Horn County.pdf.") Word did not get out until years later that Richards owned the *Rustler*.

When did Richards buy at least an interest in it, perhaps in August? On the 15th of that month the *Sun* announced:

Joe De Barthe, editor of the Bonanza *Rustler*, will shortly start a republican paper at Buffalo and move the *Rustler* to the promising town named Warren. Joe is very popular and has a large host of friends in several states as well as Wyoming who admire his newspaper ability and genial nature. THE SUN congratulates him on his enterprise and wishes him success.

August 15 is the date on the deed for fifteen town lots that Richards purchased from De Barthe for \$500 in the new town of Warren.¹ Warren was on the east bank of the Bighorn River north of the mouth of No Wood Creek,² about where Manderson is today. Was an interest in the *Rustler* possibly part of the deal? The \$500 for the lots and something beyond that for a piece of the *Rustler* would have helped De Barthe launch his new venture.

Richards' salary as surveyor general was \$2,500,³ so \$500—plus anything else he might have paid De Barthe for a share in the *Rustler*—was a significant outlay. Since the paper was doing well, Richards may have seen it as a paying investment that would also continue to serve as a Republican voice in the basin. He surely expected to make money on the lots, but the town of Warren did not survive.

During the first week of August 1890, the *Rustler* acquired new equipment. And in honor of the still-unorganized county, the banner now proclaimed it *The Big Horn County Rustler*. At least two papers, the *Sheridan Enterprise* and the *Lusk Herald*, commented on the new name and new look. The *Herald* said that it "has added a new dress of type which makes it wear a neat appearance."⁴

De Barthe evidently retained an interest in the *Rustler* at least for a while. Cheyenne's *Wyoming State Tribune* described him as "the talented and levelheaded editor of THE BUFFALO BULLETIN; founder and part owner of the Bonanza Rustler, and president of the Commonwealth Publishing co. (Cheyenne); ..." ⁵

AS FOR DAGGETT, "The history of the pioneer press of the Big Horn basin is the history of Tom Daggett," wrote Tom Gebhart in November 1910, shortly after Daggett died. "He left his impress on journalism here which will take ability of a very high order to equal."⁶

Daggett's story is known only from contemporary newspaper articles and obituaries, from letters to Richards, and from later accounts by two men who knew him. Marvin B. Rhodes, who was in Basin City the same time as Daggett, claimed that the newsman had been assistant city editor of the New York *Sun*,⁷ and Daggett wrote Richards that he had been one of the "newspaper lieutenants" of the *Sun*'s publisher during the campaign of the populist candidate

for President in 1884.¹ As an eastern Democrat, Daggett was said to have been friends with Grover Cleveland and William Cullen Bryant.² Cleveland was governor of New York when he was elected president in 1884. Bryant, a famous poet and longtime editor of the *New York Evening Post*, was a champion of human rights causes such as the abolition of slavery. He died in 1878, not too early for Daggett to have known him.³

By his own account Daggett was 55 years of age on November 5, 1908.⁴ So he would have been in his early twenties when he supposedly knew Bryant and 36 years of age in the summer of 1890, the likely year of his attachment to the *Rustler*. The *Worland Grit*, his final editorial home, wrote that Daggett had been born in Campbell County, Virginia⁵

of aristocratic southern stock, received a fine education, later moving to New York, where he was engaged as a reporter for the daily papers, later becoming an editorial writer upon various papers.

Upon taking up his residence in Wyoming, his whole being became possessed and enraptured with the wild western life, mountains and desert wastes and his facile pen never lost an opportunity to show how fully and completely he was in love with the crude surroundings incident to pioneer life.

Genial, companionable and gentle, he moved quietly about in performance of his duty as he saw it, industriously striving to do his part in transforming the desert wastes.

Daggett was described as a “most polished and courtly gentleman of the old school”⁶ and his talent was praised in the *Thermopolis Record*.⁷

Although not the first publisher of a paper in this region, he was the first who came to stay. Had he turned his talents into the more permanent channels of literature and worked with the same zeal he devoted to a sage brush newspaper he would have been one of the noted authors of the country.

He may have come close. Daggett reportedly said he wrote two-thirds of *The Virginian*, then gave the manuscript to Owen Wister, according to Frison. This revelation, along with the story of Daggett’s wedding tragedy, was said to have been made when Daggett and Mercer visited Frison’s family in 1906.⁸ If the date is correct, Frison was 13—old enough to have remembered correctly? Set in Wyoming Territory, *The Virginian* was published in 1902. Wister was from Philadelphia and did spend time in Wyoming. But why would he have named his hero after Daggett’s home state? The story also involves an engagement and wedding. In New York City, a Thomas F. Daggett had published books about Billy the Kid and the James brothers in 1881; if this was our Tom Daggett, it shows an interest in the West prior to his going there, and experience with book as well as newspaper writing.⁹ One researcher found documents very recently concerning Wister’s dealings with people in Thermopolis and elsewhere that relate to elements in the novel that possibly expanded on Daggett’s story.¹⁰

TOM DAGGETT was editor of the *Rustler* off and on from about 1890–1903. No issues of the paper from his tenure are known to survive, but his writing lived on because his fellow editors found his commentary worth reprinting. A few examples:

Upon the journalists of Wyoming has been imposed the greatest work ever confined to mortal man—the building of a state—and grandly, gloriously, harmoniously are they doing it. All hail to the press of Wyoming!¹¹

It will be a surprise to the ladies who served on a jury in Bonanza to learn that they were not legally qualified to do so. Two of the state’s most eminent lawyers, one being the chief justice, informed Justice Peay, much to his surprise, he tells us, that under the statutes women are debarred from doing jury duty. If you happen to have a copy of the Wyoming statutes handy, turn to the sections defining the qualifications for jurors, and you will see how our lawmakers chivalrously spared the fair sex the performance of a duty the lords of creation gladly shirk.¹²

The CHEYENNE LEADER inclines to the belief that it would be better if the Big Horn hot springs were kept under government control the same as those in Arkansas, instead of being turned over to this state. Maybe so. The *Rustler* is in favor of anything which will keep them out of the hands of a lot of medical quacks who masquerade in the name of one of the noblest of human professions to rob their unfortunate fellow men. Wyoming should be spared the disgrace of having a resort in the control of such men within her borders. If something is not done either by the state or the government with those springs they are certain one of these days to fall into possession of parties who will make them a resort which will be an insult to decency.¹

The approaching fall election campaign is gradually warming up all the state, and the democrats are still hunting in the mire of their own worthlessness for an issue which will commend them to the support of a people they have humbugged too often.²

A well-known resident of the basin who modestly desires to have his name unmentioned for the present, is planning the construction of a toll bridge across the Big Horn river as soon as the conditions of that capricious stream will permit him to carry out his plans. Such a bridge would be hailed with pleasure not only in the basin but all over the state, for it will serve to deprive the Big Horn of many of its terrors at all seasons of the year.³

In early 1896,

A great change has come over the Basin ranges within a year past—a change so wonderful in fact that the old timers can scarcely believe their eyes when they look over them and find here and there some solitary bovine, where formerly thousands grazed in wild and timid watchfulness. The owners of the large herds have disappeared with them, and [in] their places are to be found the settlers with their amal [small] bunches, combining the cultivation of the soil with stock-raising on a limited scale. The change from the old times is indeed a sweeping one in many ways, but experience is continually proving that it is for the better, and it is without a doubt.⁴

In mid 1898,

The Hyattville *Rustler* claims to have unimpeachable information that there are lawyers in Big Horn county who make a practice between the sittings of the district court of promoting discord between husbands and wives, temporarily estranged, by promising to obtain a divorce for one or the other without any expense until a decree is secured, when a fat fee is expected, of course. The *Rustler* comments on the situation as follows: "If this isn't prostituting a noble profession to the basest of uses, then we are willing to admit that we know nothing whatever of honor, decency or any of the proprieties which belong to our common civilization. We commend this matter to the attention of Judge Stotts, who honors the law as it has honored him."⁵

In mid 1900, about Basin City,

The advance phalanx of a small army of peaceful tillers of the soil, intent upon a mission fraught with good to Big Horn county, invaded the town. A train of canvas-covered wagons, well filled with the implements of husbandry and stalwart men, young and old, trailed its way to the west and disappeared in the badlands which fringe the town. They were Mormon colonists.⁶

APART FROM an unexplained two-month hiatus during the summer of 1893,⁷ Daggett issued the *Rustler* until shortly after his boss was elected governor. During the campaign Richards's ownership, or part ownership, of the paper remained under wraps except for a vague and fleeting mention in an article in the Democratic *Boomerang* condemning him and some

For Governor,
WILLIAM ALFORD RICHARDS

Needs no introduction to the people of the Big Horn basin, for almost since its settlement began he has been a vital, moving force in its history and development. Coming into this great valley in 1884 with a pack outfit, he traveled over its barren hills and desolate plains, and his practical eye at once saw the possibilities of its reclamation under the stimulating aids of civilization. In 1886 Mr. Richards demonstrated his faith in Wyoming and the Big Horn country by breaking up an established home in El Paso county, Colorado, where he had been honored with positions of trust and responsibility by his fellow citizens, and coming to Red Bank, this county. He was elected to represent the basin in the Johnson county board of county commissioners, in which body he served with great credit to himself and his constituency. He was appointed surveyor general of Wyoming by President Harrison, and while in that position won golden opinions from all, political friends and opponents alike, for the thorough and honest performance of all of the duties of that responsible position. Mr. Richards was born at Hazel Green, Wisconsin in 1849, and is consequently still in the full flush of a vigorous and useful manhood. Splendidly equipped by nature and his youthful advantages for an honored career he came west early in life and settled temporarily in Omaha, where as journalist, law student and civil engineer he proved the sterling worth of his character. He is in all of his ideas and sympathies distinctively a man of the people, self-made and self-reliant. Thoroughly western in all of his hopes and impulses, the destinies of Wyoming could not be placed in abler or safer hands. His ~~entire~~ ~~and~~ ~~error~~ ~~is~~ ~~a~~ ~~foregone~~ ~~conclusion~~.

*Endorsement of Richards for governor. Unidentified, but most likely written by Tom Daggett in the Rustler*¹

other Republicans as land-grabbers. In the course of writing the story about the large tract claimed but not used by Richards's Colorado company, E. T. Payton quoted a tantalizing statement by an unnamed rancher: Although Richards "owned an interest in the Basin papers which consequently 'say nothing' some people do 'talk fraud a little.'" Neither Payton nor the *Boomerang* seem to have done anything with this revelation, perhaps because they didn't consider it important or there wasn't time for a new investigation.²

Publication of the *Rustler* was suspended again when Daggett decided to go back East to start a western news bureau. Richards engaged someone else to use the plant as a print shop.³ Before boarding the eastbound train at Cheyenne, Daggett stayed in the capital a short while. There is no mention of Richards as owner of the *Rustler* in an article in the *Cheyenne Daily Leader* on December 4, 1894. The *Leader* related that Daggett was

renewing many friendships, formed, some of them, in Cheyenne and some beneath the clear Wyoming skies under the shadow of the sage brush.* Mr. Daggett's paper always was a welcome visitor, containing as it did a very fair resume of the news in its field, [the Bighorn Basin]. Being himself an editorial trinity, editor, city editor and reportorial staff, Mr. Daggett covered the news of a field 10,000 square miles in extent in a manner that would seem impossible to the ordinary newspaper man. But he is not such a one and whether writing up a wedding or "doing" a murder it was always produced in a happy vein that compelled the reader's attention.

The erstwhile editor was going to Washington, D.C., to establish his bureau, and the *Leader* wished him "more luck."

The Trans-Missouri News Bureau would promote "Western News—Western Interests—Western Progress," proclaimed the letterhead on its stationery.⁴ It had a Washington, D.C., address, but Daggett soon left for New York. Less than a month later Richards heard that Tom had had enough. In a letter about the progress of the organization of Big Horn County, Pap Conant wrote the governor on January 18,⁵

I received a letter two day from Tom Daggett he says that if any body wants to know if he is a-going to come back in the spring tell them Yes with a big Y. To Hell with the East

In February, a month-old letter from Richards finally reached Tom after bouncing from one address to another. Richards asked for a statement about the balance claimed by the printer who had been employed in the *Rustler* office that winter, but he surely inquired how Daggett was getting along. In the depths of February, Daggett was feel-

*The sagebrush at Bonanza was said to grow 12-15 feet high.⁶

ing blue; he opened his heart to "My Dear Friend" and sent out feelers about a possible return to the *Rustler*.¹ He praised Richards's first Message to the Legislature, which had been sent by Jay L. Torrey, a basin rancher and attorney who was speaker of Wyoming's house of representatives, adding:

Since my return to New York I have mingled a great deal with the representatives of the metropolitan press. I regret to say that I find it a very difficult matter, as a rule, to interest them in Western matters. The ignorance existing among Eastern people generally, and journalists particularly, with regard to the country comprised in the arid region, is simply surprising—not to say disgusting!

Daggett noted that while he was at the *Rustler* he had advocated for a press bureau based in Cheyenne or some other Wyoming town to disseminate information on the resources and business advantages offered by the arid West. He still liked the idea:

Something of the kind will do Wyoming and her thirsty sisters more good than anyone can conceive. It would serve to dispel a great deal of ignorance and misconception which now exists regarding the arid west and which is a great drawback to its settlement and development....There are millions of dollars here which are kept out of our development because their owners do not realize that the once "great American Desert" is not the worthless country the [illegible word] traditions of our common country have made it.

His plan of serving as a one-man bureau in the East was not working out. Apart from whether or not he was making ends meet, he was personally dissatisfied—and homesick. He told Richards,

Candidly, I have little affection left in my nature for the east. I realize now more than at any time within the past seven years that I have become in every fibre of my being a western man. The east has no charms left for me, that I cannot cheerfully ignore. I feel that it has been good for me to have returned to New York, for my ideas have been broadened, and my mentality quickened with new inspirations. I am certain that if I were disposed to settle down here in New York I could regain much of my old standing and reputation in my profession. I find that the Tom Daggett of to-day, sober, quiet and unobtrusive[,] is more cordially greeted and sincerely admired than the Tom Daggett of ten years ago, drunken and with a reputation as one of the rising men of the metropolitan press. Circles which once tolerated me now delight to welcome me. But for all this, I feel that my future, as I once hoped to realize it, is not here. A man who tumbled physically and morally as I did once upon a time, has a long and rocky road to travel to regain himself. [Underscores are usually the writer's.]

All this as a preface to the inquiry as to your future intention with regard to "The Rustler" plant. Ever since I have been identified with Wyoming journalism I have been sincere in the belief that there was not within her borders one single so-called news paper that was in any respect representative of her and the genius of her people. My isolation and remoteness from everything which brought me into touch with the silent forces of civilization made it possible for me to realize the ideal Wyoming news paper I had in mind—or to even suggest it. "The Rustler" outfit of printing material, apart from the hand press, is one of the best in the state, and I have often felt that it was almost a shame that it should be in a section where it was in a great measure unappreciated, and hence, in that degree, worthless. With that same plant—bar the press—in Cheyenne, for instance, or any other town in touch with civilization as it exists, I knew that I could make a paper that would be felt all over the west. Pardon my egotism. I am honest in this estimation of myself. I am old enough in years and experience to appreciate and

realize my powers for success or failure in my profession, better than any one else, and a man who underrates and has no confidence in himself in this go-ahead, progressive age should turn himself over to the bone yard without delay.

You, of course, do not care to let so valuable a property as "The Rustler" printing outfit be a dead weight on your hands. Printing material will really suffer more from disuse than employment. I would like to have you write me, at your leisure, as to what are your plans with The Rustler. I have never regarded it as dead and I feel pretty sure that the people in the state do not. This past fall Jack Flagg when in the basin made overtures to me to take The Voice* and run it on democratic lines. I have no stomach for the undertaking, for, though raised a democrat, I have seen enough democracy in the West to have no desire to advocate its doctrines. If you intend to revive "The Rustler," please let me know your plans and desire regarding it. . . .

Your Loyal Friend, Tom Daggett

P.S. It will please you, I am sure, to know that I am still temperate in my drinks—don't touch—nor handle anything intoxicating.

Sometime the next month Daggett was back in Wyoming to stay. It was announced in March that he and Richards had begun "compiling the facts in regard to the early history of the basin," reported the *Paint Rock Record*.¹ In late April other papers announced that Daggett had leased the *Rustler* plant from Richards and would soon revive the paper.

On May 29 the *Crook County Monitor* informed its readers,

The first number of the resurrected Big Horn County Rustler, under the efficient management of Tom Daggett, has reached this office. The Rustler fairly glitters with bright promises for the Basin country, and will in the future, as it has in the past, prove an important factor in the development of Big Horn county's resources. It is needless to state that the Rustler is a straight-out Republican paper—that's understood.

On the masthead may have appeared the phrase that can be seen on surviving later editions of the *Big Horn County Rustler*: The Pioneer Newspaper of the Basin. Western Interests. . . . Western Progress. . . . Western in Everything. Daggett also changed his mind about the organization of Big Horn County. He had written Richards in February,

I have received several letters from the Basin, and the people there, I judge, are getting slightly "off their base" on the subject of county division. No one desires the organization of Big Horn County more than I do in my humble way, but I have long thought, entre nous, that the people now living within its proposed limits lack many of the qualifications necessary to successful self-government. Perhaps I'm wrong in underrating them but I can't overrule the connections which six years of residence and observation in the basin have enforced upon me. There is no section west of the Missouri so rich in promise as Big Horn County [missing word] to be, and it seems to me that it would be suicidal to sacrifice it to a passing sentiment.

Once back at work in Bonanza, however, success and springtime bucked him up. He wrote the governor on May 27, 1895,

The revival has been a lucky stroke, for the people in the basin seem to take to "The Rustler" like to the proverbial hot cakes. I have been much pleased with the cordial reception given to it in all parts of the basin, and I feel a great pleasure in my work. I find that a good deal of ignorance exists with regard to the Big Horn County bill, but few having had a chance to read it carefully and give it the consideration it deserves. Therefore occurred to me that it would be a good journalistic stroke to publish the bill in "The

**The People's Voice*, published at Buffalo, was started by Flagg as a Populist organ in May 1892, right after the cattlemen's invasion of Johnson County. Its name was changed to the *Buffalo Voice* in December 1897, but issues on wyomingnewspapers.org show its political views stayed the same.

Rustler,” and I write you to enlist your kindly effort in securing me a copy of it. What I really want is a copy of the last session laws. May I presume on your kindness to have a copy sent me. Any expense incurred I will assume cheerfully. A large immigration is coming into the basin every week, and it is, in the main, made up of a desirable class of people. The outlook for Big Horn county, it strikes me[,] is encouraging.

THE NEW COUNTY would, of course, have to have a county seat, and Daggett, Gebhart, and Magill were in the thick of the battle to elect one. Otto, an established town in the center of the basin, seemed the logical choice, but it was challenged by two upstarts, Cody City and Basin City. Entrepreneur W. S. Collins founded Basin City on the Bighorn River east of Otto in 1896. To promote it, he and Barnett G. Rogers started the *Basin City Herald* and got Tom Gebhart to move his printing plant there and run it, according a long article in the 1920 *Big Horn County Rustler* that employs recollections of Gebhart himself, who still lived in Basin.¹ The equipment may have been gathering dust since the merger of the *Record* and the *Rustler* in 1895.

Collins and Rogers paid every item of expense connected with the publication of the *Herald*, according to the *Rustler* article. There's no word about *how* they paid for it. Gebhart may have been unaware of an alleged \$2,500 loan from a Cody rancher², but how else could Collins and Rogers have afforded to hire two men to put out the *Herald*? Tom could have done the job himself, but Collins may have realized that he needed a gifted pitchman to help him sell voters on Basin City. Magill fit the bill perfectly.

When Gebhart, his family, and the press outfit arrived, they moved into the one-room log house built for them—the only building in the “city.”³ (Magill's accommodations are unknown; he may have boarded with one of the families across the river.) Gebhart's two children, Earl and Gladys,⁴ were the first in town. The maiden issue of the *Herald*, dated August 26, 1896, announced that Col. Samuel Hyatt of Hyattville, of whom there is “no firmer believer in the future of Basin City,” hauled in the *Herald* printing outfit Monday of the previous week. “He has filed on two lots on the north side of the main square.” The issue boomed the town with large ads and hype such as:

Unless all present indications are fallacious, the magic growth and development of Cripple Creek and other mining towns in the west will be paralleled in the case of Basin City.

The author could only have been Collins's spokesman, Joseph Magill, perhaps Wyoming's most colorful and erudite writer ever. The *Herald* articles were unsigned, but the content, the grandiloquence, and a mention of Thermopolis point to Magill. Born in County Tyrone, Ireland, on January 25, 1848, Magill was educated for the priesthood in his home country and in Rome. He was a Latin and Greek scholar who was fluent in French and Italian, and he had traveled the world as purser on an ocean steamer. On one voyage he “accompanied” showman P. T. Barnum's white elephant from India to New York, according to news items about him in the Cheyenne papers in the years after his arrival there.⁵ It sounds like Magill was in charge of this valuable animal when they may merely have been on the same ship. The Irishman was, after all, a noted storyteller, but reporters are not unknown to stretch the truth themselves.

Just when and why Joe went to America is uncertain. One latter-day account says he came to Cheyenne in September 1886, having been advised by physicians to go to the American West for his health. An 1887 Cheyenne paper credits a “roaming disposition.” Perhaps it was both. In any case, by 1886 he was already on the editorial staff of Cheyenne's Catholic organ, the *Mirror*. The *Laramie Weekly Sentinel* reported on May 15, 1886, that “Joseph McGill...has resigned from the *Mirror* and gone back to the Cowboy profession.” It sounds like he was no greenhorn.

Magill returned to the *Mirror*, probably after a summer on the range, but in the next year his health was still “broken,” as the *Sun* put it on March 13, 1887:

[He] went out on the range last summer and devoted himself to the energetic if not esthetic occupation of wrangling horses for the YT outfit in the Black Hills country. He became much more healthy than wealthy at this occupation, but had lots of fun and as he acquired the knack of riding a bucking brocho he can never be convinced that life is a wretched failure. Returning to Cheyenne again in the fall he was given complete editorial charge of the *Mirror*.

Mr. Magill has as yet had few opportunities of mastering the details of journalism but with his education and native ability he cannot fail to make a success of the business which he has now adopted as a profession.

The *Sun's* article was prompted by Joe's impending departure for Denver to become associate editor of the *Colorado Catholic*. He returned to Cheyenne sometime before January 1889¹ and served as sexton of St. Mark's Cathedral.² When he became editor of the Cheyenne's *Wyoming Tribune* in February 1890, the Cheyenne *Sun* was pleased:³ He had been a "frequent and valued contributor" to its pages and "[h]is Irish wit, exuberant fancy, and facile pen will find an ample field for expression in Cheyenne's only evening daily. We extend the right hand of fellowship."

At some point he left for Lander and the *Wind River Mountaineer*. By June 1890, Magill, who had had charge of the local news,⁴ had replaced Ludin as editor. His lamentations about a windy election day—"dry" in more ways than one—were reprinted in the *Laramie Weekly Sentinel* in September.⁵

The atmosphere was as dry as the air of Sahara. Not even the back door of a saloon was open—a man could not get a drink of whisky or beer unless on a doctor's prescription. Now, was it any wonder the elements were disturbed? It is a nice state of affairs when a man cannot get a drink on election day above all other days in the year! With good reason many of us sigh for the good old days when candidates threw themselves upon the "free and independent" in the form of beer and cigars. Those were the blessed times.

When *were* those blessed times? He only arrived in 1886.

Magill left after six months, and the paper was suspended for a time.⁶

Like Joe De Barthe, Joe Magill left Lander for the Bighorn Basin. On the recommendation of a Lander physician, Dr. Julius A. Schuelke, Magill went to the hot springs in the Bighorn Basin sometime before 1894. He signed on as a cowhand at the Embar ranch, owned by Robert A. and Jay L. Torrey, and taught school there in the winter, according to an article in *Real West* magazine.⁷ (The article is based on secondary sources and one item about Magill could not be found in the newspaper cited or elsewhere. The statements seem plausible, though.)

The hot springs were inside the Shoshone Reservation, but the waters drew so many visitors that a general store and other buildings sprang up on the reservation's border where Owl Creek meets the Bighorn River.

It was Magill and Schuelke who came up with the name "Thermopolis" to promote the new "polis."⁸ It would have a newspaper managed by Magill, or so it was reported in the September 4, 1894, *Cheyenne Daily Leader*. If the name Thermopolis was official by that time, it had yet to take hold: the paper would be published "at the mouth of Owl creek."^{*}

ON SEPTEMBER 26 the *Leader* declared its independence from the Democratic party in the heat of the electoral campaign. This political earthquake left Edward T. Payton professionally homeless. Payton had owned the circulation arm of the *Leader* since 1890, arriving there by a roundabout route. Born in 1856 to a pioneer family in Minnesota, he first worked as a teamster, then at his sister's suggestion tried his hand at soliciting books and magazines in Colorado about 1887. The *Denver Times* offered him a job covering Wyoming, and in 1890 he bought the circulation business of the *Leader*.⁹ As subscription salesman and manager, Payton came to

*The name Thermopolis first appears in available papers on Sept. 21, 1894, in an ad in *The Fremont Clipper*.

serve as a roving reporter. In Newcastle in early April 1892, he got wind of something ominous:¹

I learned that a "mysterious train" of men, horses, munitions and supplies had left Denver and had in all probability embarked somewhere in Wyoming enroute to Buffalo in Johnson County. The first inkling of the "mysterious" expedition was contained in a brief paragraph in the Denver Times but there were some people in Wyoming who knew at once what it meant; the editor of the Leader was one of these. I was another. It was the beginning of the "Johnson County war."

Payton hurried to the T A ranch, where the cattle barons' force was under siege by Johnson County law-enforcement officers, outraged small ranchmen, and other local people. His dispatches to the *Leader* were the first hard news about the invasion.

In the September 7, 1892, *Leader* Payton wrote about the few settlers in the Bighorn valley, where "there is no grass" and "scarcely any rain...." Despite that, "the speculator has found his way." He continued,

...a Colorado company has taken out a high water ditch, and under the desert law proved up on something like 10,000 acres of land. Your correspondent has been informed that the ditch, even during high water, has never carried water enough to irrigate forty acres. There is no one on the land now, and it lies there untouched waiting until the railroads and hardy settlers shall have developed the surrounding country, when it shall profit the owners. Such things are a curse to Wyoming.

He must have been unaware that the irrigation canal had been built by Richards, who in 1892 was surveyor general of Wyoming. And the tract actually comprised around 13,000 acres. After Payton's estrangement from the *Leader*, the *Boomerang* published his long articles in October and November 1894 that charged gubernatorial candidate Richards and other Republicans with land-grabbing. In one of them Payton said that he and "Joseph McGill [*sic*]" came down from the mouth of Owl creek" to investigate the unused Colorado tract, in which Richards himself had about a section. Payton and the Democrats saw the recently passed Carey Act as a land-grab opportunity for Richards, Warren, Carey, and others. The Act, which would grant states a million acres of federal land if they would cause that land to be irrigated, stipulated among other things that only actual settlers could claim land and that the size of those claims would be limited to 160 acres.³ If the Democrats had read the stipulations, they apparently mistrusted them. The *Leader's* editor, John F. Carroll, declared his paper's independence largely because he saw the Carey Act as a boon to the arid West. (See "The Big Horn Ditch and Politics.pdf" on WilliamARichards.com.)

AS FOR THE NEW PAPER on Owl creek, the *Leader* must have learned about it from Payton himself. But Payton probably kept his own involvement, if any, under wraps. Right before the election he started his own sheet, *The Big Horn Basin Savior*, whose name was taken from a sarcastic swipe at him in the *Leader*. He had 3,000 copies printed at the *Boomerang* plant, and used the *Leader* newsboys still in his employ to distribute them all over Cheyenne the day before the election.⁴

The Republicans won anyway, but Payton was encouraged by the reception for the *Savior* and continued to publish it at Cheyenne, with three issues appearing in the week after the election. Payton claimed a circulation of 1,000, all sample copies.⁵ The *Boomerang* reprinted⁶ a tribute to Payton as "the moral hero of the Bighorn basin" from the *People's Voice*, Buffalo, which noted that "the sentiments expressed are those of a large majority of the people throughout northern Wyoming." (Johnson County was the only one in the state that voted Democratic; Richards was defeated in his home county.) The tribute sounds like Joe Magill:

One more moral hero has entered the charmed circle. Payton has struck—he bids The *Leader* adieu—practically saying that the *Leader* has been seduced from the right path.

This is not the first time Edward T. Payton has struck. His first advent into Wyoming was under a guard of soldiers, when a mere boy, in company with the striking miners from the Black Hills. His honest, ardent and impetuous soul had flamed out against the wrongs of those unfortunate men. Now, after serving *The Leader* in its days of glory as the champion of the invaded north with conspicuous energy and courage, after suffering with it through boycotts and litigations, true to his manly nature, to his love of principle, to his devotion to the democratic theory; that laws are intended to promote the general welfare of the people, we find him parting company with it, with indignation and scorn, the moment he hears it 'has crooked the pregnant hinges of the knee, that thrift may follow fawning,' by becoming the minion of the land robbers, who are pushing forward the arid land steal.

All honor to Edward Payton. Every walk of life produces heroes. Payton the independent, the solitary horseman, traversing the sagebrush and sand hills of the Big Horn basin to warn settlers of the impending measure, which is calculated to place the virgin land under the baneful rule of foreign and home land monopolists.

The *Boomerang* agreed. "We doff our hats to the moral hero of the Big Horn basin."

The "moral hero" came in for some digs from the Republican press after reports that Payton had filed a claim on the hot springs. Since the springs were on the Shoshone reservation, this claim—if there was one—was legally dubious. Reports had Payton wanting to conduct water miles away for a bath house and medicinal use, or even use the warm water to irrigate crops in winter.¹ (His book *Mad Men* only talks about the failure of his Cooperative Farmer's Canal No. 1.) The *Sun* copied a slam from Gebhart in the *Paint Rock Record*:²

PAYTON'S HYPOCRASY [sic]

E. T. Payton, "the moral hero of the Big Horn Basin" and the "Big Horn Basin Savior," it would seem was in strange business when he did the very thing he has been, and still is, howling against other men doing. Oh, Payton! thou "Savior" and "hero" why has thou fallen from grace? Mammon, we fear, hath more attraction for thee than the "moral" welfare of the people thou professest to love so well.

Payton aimed for a daily edition of the *Savior* while the legislature was in session.³ But he ceased publication right after the legislature's opening and leased three columns of space in the *Cheyenne Democrat*, which was to be published daily.⁴ After the legislature adjourned, Payton went to the Bighorn Basin with a printing-press outfit he had acquired from the *Leader* in exchange for subscription bills he was owed.⁵ It turned into an ordeal that the *Leader* described sympathetically:⁶

Harry Sapp, formerly a compositor in this office, who went north to help Payton issue the *Savior*, writes that the party is having a hard time of it working their way through snow. The printing outfit was abandoned at Lost Cabin and the party, consisting of Payton, his brother and Mr. Sapp, are shoveling their way through the drifts to Thermopolis. All the members of the party have suffered a great deal, their faces, hands and feet being frozen. It will undoubtedly be some time before the *Savior* will make its appearance.

Payton himself recalled much later,⁷

I was without funds, yet impatient, impulsive, determined....I could not sleep...I threw myself upon my back in the snow and cried aloud to God—a singular thing for an agnostic to do. However, my mental condition instantly improved, somewhat.

Publication resumed less than two weeks later, on April 18, 1895, as the *Big Horn River Pilot*. "Thermopolis, Wyoming," not yet a post office, was on the banner on page one. If this was the paper that Magill was supposed to manage, his name is not on the masthead of extant issues, and Payton doesn't mention him in this context.

Payton and Magill kept after Governor Richards on the land-grab issue. Sometime in 1895 they filed a complaint with the U.S. General Land Office charging him with an illegal entry in Wyoming in 1885 (probably his parcel in the Colorado tract). The charges were dismissed by the acting commissioner of the land office, but they surfaced again a decade later, when Richards himself was commissioner. In March 1907, right before Richards was due to retire, President Theodore Roosevelt reviewed the new case and noted that Payton and Magill were the principal witnesses. He wrote, "In my judgement, this decision of the land office in 1895 effectually disposes of any similar charge that might be made now against a land entry made twenty-two years ago."¹

MAGILL WAS INVOLVED in local law enforcement before Payton made it to Thermopolis. Across the river was Andersonville, whose saloons and sporting houses attracted members of the Hole in the Wall gang. When Jake Snyder and some pals robbed the general store at Thermopolis in November 1894, Magill, who was justice of the peace at the time, was in the posse that pursued Snyder and his cohorts.²

Magill evidently felt it was time to settle down. A couple of papers commented on his search for a wife, including *Bill Barlow's Budget* (Douglas) on November 28:

Joe Magill, a ranchman residing at Thermopolis, is advertising for a wife. ... "Young lady need have no requirements but must agree to make coffee three times a day."

He is also said to have "proposed to an early-day belle of the Paintrock country in a hen-house."³ One would think that if an Irish poet really wanted to get married, he would pour on the blarney when he went a-wooing—and in a more romantic setting.

As justice of the peace, Magill had to deal with a violently insane Payton in August 1895. Payton's mother had suffered from periods of insanity.⁴ The stress of homesteading and running his paper kept Payton from sleeping, he said, and that sent him round the bend. But some papers reported he had gone crazy on the subject of big irrigation schemes that shut out small settlers. Payton became so violent that Magill ordered him tied up in a grain sack and had three deputies take him to Lander, where his sanity would be judged.⁵ In his book *Mad Men*, Payton says that he was allowed to go back to Thermopolis in the company of his brother. Having no money, he settled with his printer, Harry Sapp, by turning over to him the *Pilot's* press outfit. Then he went to the Evanston Asylum on his own. He soon regained mental stability but could not get released until friends appealed to state authorities. They were Joseph Breckons, principal owner of the *Leader* when Payton was its circulation agent, and his brother R. W., a Cheyenne attorney, one of the prosecutors of the invasion cattlemen whose attorney Willis Van Devanter had managed to keep from being tried. Released in November 1895, Payton went to live with his family in Rapid City, South Dakota.

Besides influential friends, Payton had always had the firm support of his mother and stepfather. In May 1896, they accompanied him to Thermopolis, and his mother, despite having younger children, stayed with him in his log cabin, which had few neighbors nearby. While she cared for his homestead, Payton went to Denver, where Joseph Breckons helped him get hired by the *Denver Republican* to solicit and collect subscriptions in Wyoming. Success was rewarded with two immediate raises, and Payton's stepfather redeemed the *Pilot* press and type from Sapp.⁶ The *Pilot* resumed publication in June 1897⁷ with Michael F. Maley, a Cheyenne printer, at the helm. Payton was doing well enough to send money to his parents.⁸

By that time, of course, the Big Horn county seat fight was over. Would Payton have campaigned for Thermopolis even though its victory was unlikely, given its location far from the center of the county? And would Magill have joined him? Perhaps, but it was a moot question. The eloquent Irishman was hired to promote the eventual winner, and he may have painted this yet-to-be-built "city" in bright enough colors that voters chose it over an established town.

MAGILL was called away from Torrey's Embar ranch in mid-1896 to write for the *Basin City Herald*.¹ "It was a real job to grind out copy" for a paper published in a town that was still "storeless," recalled his colleague Tom Gebhart.² One time, as press day was looming, a wind-storm approached the shacks on the Bighorn River. At Gebhart's suggestion, Magill

told of how the storm came upon the city, of how it took the cupalo from a seven-story building and hurled it onto a storage building three blocks away. There was other astounding information for those who knew of conditions as they existed in Basin. Mr. Patten caught a fish. It was just a little thing, but Joe was good for half a column on that fish. And so they managed to fill the paper.

The 1896 election would give Magill and other newsmen plenty to write about, since more was at stake than the Big Horn county seat: The U.S. presidency and various state offices. The *Herald* aimed to be "strictly nonpartisan," it declared in its inaugural issue. It would not "vilify opponents," and there would be "no cowardly attacks" or falsehoods:³

In these days, when old party lines have been obliterated, old political landmarks swept away, and the shibboleths that once were powerful to rally the rank and file, now charm no longer, we believe that a policy untrameled by any party lines is the safest and best....[T]here is a fever in the blood of the body politic. In such a crisis, it should be the function of a newspaper to raise politics from a mere struggle for place and power to the higher plane of broad and intelligent patriotism. To achieve this, independence from any and all party ties is absolutely necessary. The man who is placed on the skirts of the battle sees the ebb and flow of the tide of war, the sweep of the charge and the chances of victory and defeat better than the keen strugglers who are swept to and fro in the deadly maelstrom of the fight. With this truth in view, THE HERALD will plume its flight above the sordid struggle of warring partisans. Untrameled by party ties, dictated to by no clique, wearing no man's brass collar, the opinions expressed in our columns will be our own.

Doing battle with Basin City for county seat were other towns in the north-central part of the new county: Cody City, in its northwest corner; Otto, on the Grey Bull River just west of Basin City; and (according to Daggett) Jordan, on the No Wood Creek near the Bighorn River. Daggett and the *Rustler* relocated to Otto,* where Lou Blakesley and his brother Hal had been publishing the *Otto Courier* since 1893. Sommers may have accompanied Daggett, since Senator Francis E. Warren addressed a letter to both of them during the 1896 electoral campaign.⁴ The move had been announced, more or less, in the May 27, 1896, *Wind River Mountaineer*:

The Hyattville *Rustler* wants its mail sent to Otto, and from that we infer the *Rustler* plant is to be removed to the future county seat of Big Horn county... [The] marshaling of forces at Otto at this time is indicative of a sanguinary battle, and great victory for Otto the most central and best located of any of the contestants for countyseat honors.

The battle was indeed "sanguinary," if only in terms of ink spilled. Cody City somehow promoted itself without a newspaper; the *Shoshone Valley News* apparently did not debut there until after the election.**

At the *Herald*, the lofty promises in the maiden issue apparently evaporated quickly. Even then it had taken aim at an article in the *Rustler*, lobbing at Daggett all manner of literary references and apparent allusions to Republican editors across the mountains:

It requires no X ray, with fluorescent screen attachment, to penetrate the outer tissues of the great "Eye Opener," which figured so prominently in the *Rustler* of the 15th inst.

*Relocated from Hyattville, having left Bonanza when the *Rustler* merged with Gebhart's *Paint Rock Record*.

**Only the second issue, published in December 1896, survives on wyomingnewspapers.org as of this writing. No mention of a maiden issue has been found in other papers.

The little scheme is so diaphanous, so transparent, that even the children are laughing at it. The fine, Florentine hand of Brother Daggett can be detected all through the screed. The man from Buffalo and the man from Sheridan are full brothers to Falstaff's "men in buckram," [thieves] and second cousins to the vaporous essence that surrounded Faust in his study. They are the creations of our dearly beloved brother's luxuriant imagination. The people of the Basin were flatteringly referred to, in the "eye opener," as silly dupes, but they are scarcely as idiotic as [hole in paper] tated old stage property as these imaginary dialogues. It may not be improper to say here that the people of the Basin are perfectly competent to manage their own internal affairs without the advice or dictation of men, real or imaginary, [goes on about outsiders, unpardonable impertinence] ...Basinites will exercise their own good judgment. They will brook no interference from anyone [etc. etc.]

Elsewhere in the issue were more pot-shots about eye-openers, one having to do with some puppies.

Apparently Magill didn't see this as vilification, and by the standards of the day it was in fact rather tame. We don't know what else he might have said about Daggett or anyone else because no other issues of the *Herald* are known to survive, and items reprinted in other papers are mostly uncontroversial. The *Laramie Republican*, however, blasted Magill over his comments connected with Governor Richards's appointment of a judge for Wyoming's Fourth District. There must have been more to his comments, judging from the *Republican's* eruption on March 26, 1897, which ran in part:

Occupying a small shack on a greasewood [sic] flat by the Big Horn, with little else than the ululating cry of the coyote to inspire him to activity, it is no wonder that Joe Magill of the *Herald* should pass clear beyond the realm of truth and draw upon his somewhat elastic imagination for editorial gray matter.

In truth there is no popular feeling against the present administration of state affairs, which has been wise, conservative and economical,... It is strange indeed that a Big Horn county paper should make such insinuations against the executive. If there is a man in Wyoming who could properly be called the father of Big Horn county, that man is Governor W. A. Richards. As early as 1889 he paved the way for the organization of the new county, and but for his labors with the territorial legislature of that year and the state legislature of 1895, it would not have been segregated.

Why would the opinion of someone in a remote shack touch off such a reaction from a prominent state paper? Since Richards's administration had incurred little disapproval, why was the *Republican* protesting so much against an isolated Democrat? Only the *Herald* seems to have criticized the appointment, and most reported satisfaction with it. The nominee, Joseph L. Stotts, was county attorney of Crook County and had been endorsed by a majority of the Bar of his district. The reasons for Magill's opinion are lost with the issue of the *Herald* itself.

Yes, Magill was undoubtedly issuing his remarks from the log house where the *Herald* been born less than a year before, but Basin was now a growing county seat. Magill could have been dismissed as a sagebrush journalist, but "greasewood" is inspired invective. (Sagebrush is a sign of good soil, greasewood of poor, and the names have a different aura.) And in its near-hysteria the *Republican* itself is guilty of a certain amount of "elastic imagination": Pickett, a Democrat, is only mentioned in an unrelated matter, and it's hard to imagine how he might be connected to Richards and the judge appointment. Yes, Richards was from the basin and worked for the organization of Big Horn County, but it's a real stretch to say he is the only man who could "properly" be considered its father. The wording is crafty: the *Republican* must have been aware that the title was normally conferred on Pickett for having pushed the bill creating

the new county through the final territorial assembly in 1889, with the help of Surveyor General Richards. As the county's new state senator until his recent ouster, Pickett had been called its father several times in January by Laramie's Democratic daily, the *Boomerang*. And the *Republican's* editorial makes it sound like Richards, who wasn't even a lawmaker, got the bill through the assembly by himself.

Bill Barlow's Budget at Douglas agreed with the *Republican* about Magill but did not reprint its commentary about who the proper father of Big Horn County was, saying only,¹

There's a fellow running an alleged newspaper up at Basin City who seeks to build up a reputation for himself as a "writer" by indiscriminate abuse of everything and everybody. His latest is an attack on Governor Richards, in connection with the recent appointment of Judge Stotts, in the Fourth district. However, it won't hurt.

The *Budget* praised the Richards administration and concluded its remarks with the *Republican's* parting shot:

"The trouble with the editor of the Herald lies in the fact that he is displeased with the present executive of the state and is narrow-minded enough to think that his displeasure amounts to popular disfavor."

The *Budget's* first three sentences were repeated by *The Cheyenne Daily Sun-Leader*,² and that was that.

In an unusual move, Magill recanted his opinion about the appointment in a long statement reprinted in the April 14, 1897, *Crook County Monitor*. There was no mention of either Richards or Pickett.

MORE CRITICISM OF MAGILL came from Daggett in a letter to Richards dated August 4, 1897.³ This was nearly a year after the Democrats had triumphed in Wyoming and other western states (although nationally, Republican William McKinley defeated William Jennings Bryan for President). Daggett wrote,

There are only two or three points in your letter which need my attention. You ask, "how are you getting along?" Poorly, hardly making a living. What with bad debts, slow collections, and no money to speak of in the county, it is a hard scramble to keep afloat. Since a year ago we have not printed a single land notice, for the reason, I assume, that the land offices are in democratic control, and republican papers are being made the sufferers. The democratic Board of County Commissioners and the democratic county clerk turn all the legal printing over to that hybrid sheet known as The Herald at Basin City, and there we are. There's no use in kicking, however. It can't always be thus, and that's a consolation without much profit in it.

...I assume that in reading The Rustler you had noticed that upon good ground I have been "roasting" the hobo who edits the Basin City Herald. I have good reasons for believing that he will blossom out in the next state campaign as the "main journalistic push" for the democracy in this county, and as he is nothing but the shabbiest sort of a blackguard I have sought to keep that fact before the public for the purpose of letting him kill himself off, which he is certain to do if given the opportunity. During the last campaign when the county seat fight was on I suffered more villification [*sic*] from that fellow than I have ever endured from anyone posing as a newspaper man. Rather than sacrifice my self respect I have submitted to his attacks and borne them with silent contempt.

Recently Magill sat in judgement upon the Gish Brothers at Basin, and his conduct afforded me a chance to spit and roast him. I have not neglected it, and have the satisfaction of knowing that I am getting him to his proper level. He has been, and is now, for aught I know, one of Judge Torrey's pets and that fact has swelled his ego-

tism to a point where it has made him disgusting to all who meet him. Collins and Magill are "cheek by jowl" with each other in making common cause against everything respectable. As leading members of "The Big Horn County Voters' Protective Association," an organization designed to keep alive matters detrimental to republican success in this county, these two worthies are foolish enough to imagine themselves "men of influence and character," when I am assured by residents of the county seat that they are both thoroughly despised.

Returning to the Gish matter... I enclose article so that you may see what a filthy bird this Magill is, and how fit a companion he makes for Collins. I also enclose you my reply to him. I hate—loathe, in fact—to notice the dirty blackguard, but it's one of those cases where a newspaper man can't help himself. I am compelled to defile myself in order to scratch him, and truth to tell, I rather enjoy the job, because I know I have the sympathy of every decent man and woman in the Basin.

Nary a word about Gebhart. Daggett's enclosed articles somehow got lost, and the Gish matter remains obscure. "Shabbiest sort of blackguard" and "filthy bird" paled in comparison to what the *Otto Courier* famously called Magill: "A lowlived, brainless coward, biggest lying coward that ever breathed the breath of life, half witted disgrace on humanity, a thing, lying cur, brainless pup, skunk and poor fool."¹

About this time the *People's Voice* reprinted an item from *The Saratoga Sun*:²

The editor of the Basin City Herald says the papers at Otto are not worth noticing, and forthwith proceeds to ignore them in a couple of columns of billingsgate that would make a Liverpool fish woman turn green with envy. Great scheme that.

As for himself, Daggett told Richards he was "getting along nicely, things having improved of late, and I am hopeful that all will yet be well with me."

By October 1897 Daggett and the *Big Horn County Rustler* were back in Hyattville.³ They would remain there until relocating to the paper's permanent home, Basin City, in early 1899.

Daggett marked the occasion of the *Rustler's* tenth year of publication (1889–99) with an ad that probably ran in other issues:⁴

THE RUSTLER was established at a time when the future of what is now known Big Horn county was doubtful even to the most hopeful minds. It has never from its initial issue lost faith in Big Horn County's ultimate destiny as one of the greatest and most prosperous agricultural sections in all the mighty arid region. Its faith has inspired it at all times and under all circumstances to advocate every measure tending to the progress of its pioneer people.

...The columns of this paper will not be crowded with foreign matter having no bearing on local or state welfare, but will always be bright and interesting with topics directly related to and affecting **HOME INTERESTS** which will always be a primary consideration with **THE RUSTLER** and their advancement its earnest endeavor. Our state and county's resources need developing, and their development requires capital and the aid it can command.

Daggett goes on in that vein and reiterates that the *Rustler* will be staunchly Republican.

The *Rustler* for the next three years is apparently lost to history. Daggett's story from this time on comes only from items in other newspapers, and Gebhart's from not much more than that. If either of them corresponded with Richards, those letters have not survived.

In early 1902 they were both working at the *Big Horn County News* at Meeteetse,⁵ but by the following August Daggett was back at the *Rustler*.⁶ His successor at the *News*, F. W. Freeman, praised Daggett on a couple of occasions, such as November 22, 1902:

The News extends congratulations to the Basin Rustler on its enlargement, also to Bro. Daggett, that veteran newspaper man, for the creditable appearance of that publication. Old Tom, as we want to call him has our best wishes for future success.

A few months later Freeman was impressed by the *Rustler's* New Year's issue:¹

...the best special issue ever gotten out in the basin. It contains sixteen pages [about] the mining, agricultural, stock raising and other industries, ... finely illustrated with half-tone cuts. In fact, it is as full of good things as an egg is of meat. Typographically it is a gem. Bro. Daggett did not herald the announcement of the coming of that work of art with the blare of trumpets or a brass band, but in a quiet way surprised many of his patrons. That this edition of the Rustler will result in much good in Basin and Big Horn county is beyond question. We congratulate you and your force, Bro. Daggett.

Just two weeks later, though, the *News* announced:²

Tom Daggett, probably one of the best journalists in Wyoming, has severed his connection with the Big Horn County Rustler...we trust the Rustler will lose none of its popularity (gained through the efforts of Mr. Daggett) by the change.

For the next few years his whereabouts are unclear. In August 1904 this former editor of the Basin *Rustler* was reported to have returned to the county seat "after an absence of several weeks of solitude in the Paint Rock mountains, communing with nature."³ Though he was not employed at the *Rustler*, his long article about the basin was featured in that paper on November 3, 1904, the fruit of years of research. In a preface, the editor, A. W. Selton, observed that when Daggett was editor, his was "the first mind to grasp the agricultural future of this country." The next year, one report had him working for the *Wyoming Standard*, a Meeteetse paper that eventually moved to Grey Bull, but only as a printer⁴ and that for an unknown length of time. Even if Daggett was unemployed or working as a printer or typesetter in late 1905 and early 1906, he could not be lured away from the basin. The *Worland Grit* reported,⁵

Tom F. Daggett, an oldtimer of some local newspaper notoriety, received a letter a short time ago from Walter Wellman, the famous newspaper correspondent, his old friend, inviting him to accompany him on his trip to the north pole via the balloon route. Tom declined, saying that he felt as a good old soul he'd rather go to heaven by way of Jackson's Hole.

IN MARCH 1906 Daggett became editor of the *Grit*, the new paper at the new town not far from his first home in the basin. After 20 years of dashed hopes, capitalists were still pouring money into oil wells at Bonanza in hopes it would come gushing back a thousandfold. Never mind: Worland was the new boomtown—for agriculture—and Daggett began to sing its praises.*

Worland was founded as a stagecoach stop by Charles H. "Dad" Worland on the west side of the Bighorn River. A few of its structures were dragged across the ice in the winter of 1905–06 to the side with the greatest agricultural promise.⁶ The move was made at the urging of Charles F. Robertson of the Hanover Land and Irrigation Company, which was building one canal nearby (the Upper Hanover) and was buying up parcels that had been patented by men in Colorado once the required canal had been built by Richards and Gebhart. After improvement, it would be named the Lower Hanover Canal. The two parallel ditches would irrigate about 26,000 acres (far less than the anticipated 35,000 acres). But without a railroad, the agricultural promise would remain only that. Robertson claims credit for inducing the Burlington Railroad to build to his fledgling town when the plan was to build only to Basin and then west to Otto.

*The January 6 issue of the *Grit* said capitalists were to begin development work at Bonanza, showing there was still hope for the boom nearly 20 years after 1888. See article on the Bighorn Basin on WyoHistory.org by Rebecca Hein.

Worland was still on the west side of the river when the *Grit* debuted on December 28, 1905. The publisher was a local merchant, A. G. Rupp, and the editor was J. P. May. A few months later they sold the paper to Robertson and H. A. Stine.¹ The *Grit* had received complimentary reviews from other editors, and “we sell it only because other opportunities present themselves which demand our time and attention,” explained May in the March 8 issue. “Mr. Tom F. Daggett, this county’s pioneer journalist, becomes editor with this, the eleventh issue.”

A new declaration was metaphorically nailed to the editorial page masthead:

Our Motto: GRIT, GUMPTION, AND GET-THERE.

Published by the Worland Grit Company on the Big Horn Railroad,
the great commercial highway of the northwest.

Daggett came out with pistols blazing:

...when an editor first assumes control of a journal new to him, and to whose patrons he is more or less a stranger, it is customary for him to write a flowery and generally ambiguous screed in which he sets forth in glowing verbiage the wonderful reforms and mighty achievements he intends to accomplish, and he always, you and I have noticed, accompanies these unaccomplished performances with honied promises that ring as vibrant as a cowbell in the dusk of a pastoral evening. His glowing promises are usually made to be forgotten the day after to-morrow, or sooner.

A fig for fossilized editorial customs! We have no promises to make, therefore none to break. An ounce of performance today is worth a ton of promises for tomorrow. NOW is the time for action! ...We are out for improvements, to be of benefit to everyone, whether a subscriber or not. Greetings to every resident of Big Horn county. May success hound your trail so unceasingly that you cannot keep out of the way of it, sleeping or waking.

Fraternally Yours,
Editor, GRIT.

The new paper and the new town had other wants: One was for people to drop in and share news. The two-month-old town has, “in the infantile stage of her vigorous youth, yearnings that cry aloud....She has several wants that must, shall and will be gratified....:

“WE WANT a beet sugar factory located right here in the locality of Worland.” The town is surrounded by thousands of acres of fertile land capable of raising beets with a “higher percentage of saccharine matter than those produced anywhere else in the northwest.” His source was the Department of Agriculture.

“WE WANT Worland as registration point for the opening of the Shoshone reservation.

“WE WANT stockyards for the thousands of cattle, sheep, hogs for which this is the most convenient shipping point in all the limits of the great Big Horn Basin. ... We want it, and we’re after it with our ‘big stick’ labeled Enterprise, backed with Grit, Gumption and Get-there.

“WE WANT A wool warehouse and exchange.”

The issue of the location of the state capital was up in the air, with some towns in north and central Wyoming aspiring to that lofty goal. Daggett rose to the occasion:

WE WANT Worland to be the state capital. It has numberless advantages to make it a capital city worthy of Wyoming’s coming grandeur, and the hopes and wishes of a people born to things superlatively and sublimely great.

After quoting the poem “Little Jack Horner,” he demanded like that small child:

WE WANT plums. WE WANT Wyoming—to be the greatest state in the Union. And WE WANT Worland to be its greatest, most prosperous town.

WATCH WORLAND GROW.

His return was saluted by the *News*, which had yet another editor and business manager, one F. Harding Barrow:¹

Glad to welcome Tom Daggett back into active journalism. While Tom has never let up entirely since his advent many years ago, it has been some time since his name has been on the masthead of a publication, and it will look good. He is one of the most entertaining writers in the state,...The writer has said many mean things of Tom—received a like number in return; but our differences have always been of as editorial nature—never social. When Tom and I meet and one or both of us are on the water wagon, one or both immediately drop the whip. And here's to the next time.

Soon afterward Barrow may have whooped with delight at a scorcher from Daggett. It was reprinted in the *News* with the comment, "Brother Daggett voices the sentiment of all of us in his characteristic style."²

A young man living in Freeport, Ill., writes,

"What is the chance for a young gentleman who is considered above the average intellectually to engage in some kind of business in your locality and make money?"

Excellent, Sir Gentleman, excellent, if you are willing to get in and drill with the rest of us, hit or miss, at anything that presents itself to your industry. Just at present we are getting a surplus of young men from the Mississippi Valley States who fancy themselves too intellectual to get out and rustle with the rest of us at any old thing that happens along. They wear good clothes, eat jawbone grub and sit around public places with linen collars up to their ears and cuss the country because they are not appreciated at the worth they put upon themselves, when everyone with a lick of sense knows that they are not worth a cuss in any man's country. They're stuck on themselves, and it is a pitiable condition for any young man to be in. If, Mr. Freeporter, you are willing to come out here and help build up the country and yourself there's a chance for you and many good ones. Come along, but tone down your intellectuals to a point where they won't make you so smart that you will feel it to be incumbent upon you to educate us in the way they do things back in Illinois. We have got ways of our own—western ways—and they suit us and the country too well to throw them up for the ways of the East that long since became fossilized and obsolete. Don't imagine we are a lot of uncivilized barbarians out here, and that we need the refining influence of your exquisite presence to tone us down to drawing-room airs. We don't. We need someone who is willing to get out and work any work hard. He is the chap who succeeds.

In that spirit, Daggett wasn't too proud or too intellectual to supplement his income as a notary public, thanks to an appointment from Governor Bryant B. Brooks.³ He was also appointed Justice of the Peace.

When the Big Horn Basin Press Association was formed in April 1906, it elected Tom president. At the first meeting were representatives of the *Rustler* and the *Republican* at Basin, the *Wyoming Stockgrower and Farmer* (Cody), the *Big Horn County News* and *Wyoming Standard* at Meeteetse; and *The Burlington Post*. Unable to attend was the representative from *The Cody Enterprise*.⁴ (Other basin papers were the *Lovell Chronicle*, *The Garland Guard*, the *Cowley Progress* and possibly others, but they may not all have been members.) One of the association's concerns was financial: resolutions were proposed that would fix prices on job work and advertising on pain of expulsion, and would protest the practice of county commissioners asking publishers to do county printing at greatly reduced rates.⁵ Uncertain if that happened.

Daggett's tenure at the *Grit* did not last long, though he would be back. Carl B. Stow had purchased Roger Culbertson's interest in the paper, according to an announcement in the November 1, 1906, issue. (Culbertson was vice president of the Hanover Canal Company.) "Grit, Gumption and Get-There" disappeared from the masthead along with Daggett's name

and the reference to the great commercial highway. But those wanting Daggett's services as notary and for legal paperwork could find him at the *Grit* office. The *Cody Enterprise* announced:¹

Thos. Daggett, the veteran newspaper man, has retired from the Worland Grit and will devote his time to his official duties as justice of the peace and police judge. For many years Mr. Daggett has occupied a unique place among the newspaper men of Wyoming. ...having before his young manhood the overshadowing personality of such great editors as Dana, Greeley and Bennett, yet he preferred the west to the metropolitan New York and early cast his lot with the Big Horn Basin.

The development of this county has been to him a great source of pride and satisfaction. Northern Wyoming has no more optimistic, stauncher friend than Tom Daggett.

It's hard to imagine that the *Grit* would fail to make use of someone of Daggett's ability and dedication, as a reporter or in the press room or both. He filled in for Stow during a bout of illness in January 1907² and may have been paid for the long article boosting the agricultural and mining potential of Worland that the paper ran on page one on August 8. In September, Daggett published a daily paper covering the county fair.

The *Grit* always spoke highly of him even in small news items, such as his two-week visit to the Thermopolis hot springs in April 1907:³

Mr. Daggett is one of the pioneer news paper men of Big Horn county, and one who has done much to bring about the wonderful transformations now taking place in this country. He is an unselfish untiring booster for Big Horn county, and in fact the whole state of Wyoming, and if there were a hundred more just like him our developments would be even more rapid than they are today.

Daggett went back to the hot springs in May "to relieve his suffering caused by rheumatism" and again in July, returning "much improved in health."⁴

Late in 1907 Stow and his wife moved to New Mexico out of concern for her health. He sold his interest in the *Grit* to William E. Howell, who is listed as business manager in the issue of November 21. No editor is named, but the style and content of the articles sound like Daggett. For instance, "It is generally conceded that Mr. Bryan will lead the forlorn hopes of the democratic party as he has done twice before, without profiting by the experience."⁵ Even Richards, who sent in a correction to one item, concluded, "The article referred to reads like Tom Daggett."⁶ So did the apology on the editorial page.

Richards had made the pages of the *Grit* himself when he was commissioner of the General Land Office, most prominently when he was in town to supervise the opening of the Shoshone Reservation in July 1906. Once he retired and returned to his ranch on the No Wood, he was mentioned occasionally in the *Grit*, such as this item on December 5, 1908:

Ex governor W. A. Richards was in Worland last week and he and his old friend Tom F. Daggett spent Thanksgiving day together. He was in company with George B. McClellan, they were down to see the governor's ranch which is located four miles from town.

By "ranch" the writer must have meant the parcel Richards had patented as a member of the Big Horn Ditch company, and McClellan was an owner as well. Since 1906 this parcel and Red Bank Ranch had been owned by the Red Bank Cattle Company, which comprised Richards, McClellan, and Dr. Malcolm L. Harris of Chicago. (Contrary to popular belief, "Land and" was never part of its name.)

In January 1909 the *Grit* wrote,⁷

Ex-governor Richards denies a report by Daggett that he is spending the winter in Cal-

ifornia, and he adds, "Wyoming is good enough for me in all kinds of weather, winter or summer."

Whatever Daggett's official connection was to the *Grit*, he was linked to it by the *Basin Republican*, which reported on June 4, 1909, that he and Johnson "of the Grit" were in town visiting.

Daggett sent items boosting his home county to the *Wyoming Tribune* (Cheyenne) "for years," according to a posthumous item.¹ The *Tribune* published items from around the state, either separately or under its "special news service" heading. Most were the social tidbits that were a staple of newspapers back then. Daggett, the likely "Worland correspondent," could be identified by his distinctive style and content: the larger issues facing the area, not social notes. A couple of examples show not only his style but also political doings and optimism on all fronts.. The *Tribune* used asterisks instead of paragraph breaks, probably to save space.²

All of Big Horn county's riotous streams are being gradually deprived of their terrors by bridging. A fine bridge is being built across the Big Horn at Manderson, and another one will soon be constructed at Worland. * * [A man said to be a wealthy member of the] Standard Oil company...has been quietly looking over the oil fields of Big Horn county. * * Pleasure parties en route to the mountains for an outing are met nowadays on every Big Horn county road, and the Yellowstone National Park is attracting many of them. * * ...The first crop of alfalfa all over Big Horn county is now in stack. It is the heaviest known in years, and the trouble experienced in gathering it was the scarcity of labor to assist. * * ... Many agents of the Socialist party are busy all over Big Horn county circulating inflammatory literature and proselytizing for recruits, with poor success. Your correspondent predicts that less than fifty socialist votes will be polled at the coming elections * * Professor Buffum has been exhibiting some plump bundles of grain from dry farming, and skeptics who do not regard that system with favor were amazed with the evidences he offered to prove that it could be made a success.

Burt C. Buffum, a professor of agriculture at the University of Wyoming who was connected with the government experiment station in Laramie, had moved to Worland after seeing "amazing" alfalfa, crab apples, and tomatoes from the basin," that master promoter Robertson tells us.³ Buffum founded a company to conduct commercial plant and seed breeding, the only such venture in the West as of 1909.⁴ He wrote one of the first books on arid agriculture,⁵ and developed varieties of wheat and emmer that could be grown in the cold, high altitude of Wyoming and other arid states.

Infrastructure was another issue. Tom recalled in 1904 that when Big Horn County was finally organized, its board of county commissioners had to deal with inadequate roads and bridges:⁶

These most necessary adjuncts to civilization had long been neglected because of their distant removal from their seats of government, and the lack of proper representation, the natural outgrowth of a sparse population. What had answered the purposes of the cattleman by way of public thoroughfares in a manner more or less satisfactory would not meet the exigencies of the farmer.

By October 1908 he could boast about new bridges and much else. His report was so lengthy, and evidently so newsworthy, that the *Tribune* gave it a prominent headline and sub-head, and set off the individual items with small bold crossheads instead of asterisks:⁷

The coal mines at Gebo and Crosby in southern Big Horn county which have been completely idle for a few months past are now in an active state of development, about 500 miners being employed in taking out about 450 tons daily of the dusky diamonds, which are being shipped over the Burlington to various eastern points....

Many New Bridges.

Big Horn river under the present energetic county Republican administration is becoming the best bridged stream in the state. A bridge at Manderson is being constructed...one at Worland will commence in November....

Sugar Beet Crop.

Big Horn county will contribute this fall between 500,000 and 600,000 pounds of sugar beets to the Billings factory, the largest percentage being shipped from Lovell. In other parts of the county the crop was not a profitable success, because it was cared for by inexperienced labor. A large acreage to sugar beet culture is being planned for the coming year all over the county, and the mistakes of the season now closing will be avoided.

Can Raise Winter Wheat.

For many years the ranchmen of Big Horn county have entertained the notion that winter wheat could not be successfully grown. That fallacy was exploded this past harvest by recent settlers who raised abundant crops of that cereal, and the incoming winter will find a greater acreage sown to it than was ever known in the county. The local flouring mills furnish a ready and profitable market for the crop.

Efforts were underway to foil "range pirates" and keep saloons closed on Sundays. The Horseman's Association, organized by Col. Torrey the previous summer at Basin, was expected to be "an almost absolute safeguard against the depredations of range pirates who have hitherto profited greatly by their piracies on equine interests." (The word "rustler" was not used by the former editor of the newspaper with that name.) As for the Sunday closings: "A well defined movement has developed all over Big Horn county under the impetus of the Anti-Saloon league," started at Cody. "There is "a strong probability that other towns in the county will soon follow suit."

The next year, 1909, was not so good for stock growers but excellent for the sugar beet producers. The August 16 issue reported that stockmen were shipping cattle early, as they had not fattened as rapidly as in previous years. "[S]ome are disposed to attribute this to the extreme heat that has prevailed during the months of June, July, and August." But sugar beet growers were "in a jubilant frame of mind over the rich yields promised by the present rapid growth of those saccharine tubers." The yields were fifteen or twenty tons per acre.*

By that time Daggett was officially back at the helm of the *Grit*, his name having reappeared on the masthead of the July 1 issue. On December 16 he sarcastically commented,

Our esteemed friend, Duhig, of the Thermopolis Record, suggests that "Tom Daggett write a history of Basin journalism." Thanks, Louie, we never deal with dead matter.

By the following March, though, his name had disappeared from the masthead.¹ The papers at Basin ("City" had long since been dropped) had him in town the week of March 4 gathering information for a history of the Bighorn Basin from 1804, and the *Rustler's* March 4 issue said the history had been printed at the plant of the *Grit*. But it was "[s]o elaborate that it cannot be widely distributed." There is no other mention of the work being published, no ads for it found, no copies of it known to exist.

On May 12, 1910, the *Grit* reported what had been going on with him:

Tom F. Daggett, the pioneer editor, who has been confined to his room some time past with a severe case of rheumatism, is gradually recovering, and is now able to be around in an enfeebled condition among his friends.

In August he went back to Thermopolis for a week.² From about that time on "he gradually failed in health and went to the hospital at Sheridan [in late October], hoping that he could

*Annual yields are of course affected by the weather, but by 2022, the yield had more than doubled in Washakie County, to about 32 tons per acre, per the USDA's 2022 Census of Agriculture County Data.

there regain his former energy and nerve force," wrote the *Riverton Republican*.¹ His admission to the Central Wyoming Hospital would have come on the heels of the October 27 issue of the *Grit*. No editor was named on the masthead, but Daggett was identified as the author of a denunciation of Joseph M. Carey reprinted in the *Basin Republican*.² Alienated from the Republican party, Carey was was running for governor as a Democrat. The item said:

Judge Carey was with us during the week, and to a few patient auditors in our town hall he sought to convey the impression that the was the embodiment and incarnation of all that is pure virtuous and honest in Wyoming politics, and that everyone who is opposing him is exactly the reverse. But beneath all the veneer with which he so liberally smeared himself the smug hypocrisy of a vindictive and soured old politician was so apparent as to make him a pitiful spectacle. Judge Carey is a candidate for governor for the express purpose of venting his political spleen against men [who] have proven of greater moral and political worth than he has ever possessed, and the people of Wyoming will prove to him on November 8th that they have no use for a man of his caliber.

Daggett escaped the news of Carey's triumph by dying early in the morning after the election, before the results would have been fully tallied. His life ended on November 9³ in Sheridan, just over the mountains from the country he was so devoted to. And it was just after his 57th birthday.

About three months prior to his death, he'd written a modest assessment of his abilities in the *Grit*:⁴

The esteemed Cody Enterprise refers to the writer of this page as a "sage"—sage brush editor, yes, only that and nothing more.

The *Sheridan Post* announced the news on November 11, near the top of page one. It wrote in part that Daggett's

death comes as shock to his many friends and acquaintances, of whom he had many all over the state. ...has been connected with many papers all over the state, particularly in the Big Horn Basin. At one time he worked on the Enterprise of this city. For the last two years he has edited the Worland Grit, a live little Basin paper.

His remains are being held, awaiting instructions from relatives.

If he did work at the *Enterprise* or any other paper outside the basin in an editorial capacity, available newspapers or other sources show no record of it.

News of Daggett's demise appeared in papers around the state. His alma mater, the *Big Horn County Rustler*, stuck the story on page 7 (out of 8) and it telescoped his basin newspaper career. Owned by Democrats since 1905, the editor may have wanted to waste as little ink as possible on this powerful and articulate Republican adversary who had attacked the Democratic party and its candidates for years, most recently in the election just concluded.⁵

The *Rustler* reported, in a small item below the ending of a story about the Fruitgrowers' Congress, that it heard the "sad news" the day before by phone from Sheridan. "Death was due to general break-down."⁶ It continued,

Tom Daggett came to the Basin over twenty-one years ago, and became editor of The Rustler, which was at that time located at Bonanza.

He was a brilliant newspaper man who was a member of the newspaper crowd of New York[,] had been an intimate friend of William Cullen Bryant and a close friend of Grover Cleveland....During the past ten years been connected with the Worland Grit as editor.

His many friends throughout the Basin will regret to learn of his death and will be pleased to remember him for his great ability in a profession for which he was well fitted.

The *Basin Republican*¹ was far more generous in its coverage. Tom Gebhart featured the story on his editorial page after issuing some hopeful words for his party, which had been stunned by Carey's election.

Gebhart opened his tribute with a reprint from another paper in the basin, then heaped hot coals on its editor without the customary nod to "Brother so-and so."² Gebhart's known writing is not usually eloquent or vitriolic, and even his denunciation of Carey is tame compared to his excoriation of the editor's comments about Daggett:

WHAT MANNER OF MAN?

Tom Daggett, who has been working on the Worland Grit, was taken to the Sheridan hospital last week. It is the same old story where a bright and capable man thought he could wrestle successfully with booze. Broken financially and physically and a charge on the state, what a warning this should be to young men.—Lovell Chronicle.

The mind that gave birth to the above is so small that one generous thought would shatter its balance; one big idea would fail of impression as a finger stuck in a pail of water; the heart that could so still its love for a stricken soul, whatever the cause, is pulsed by the same blood that moves the heart of a savage; and finally, the hand that penned it is far from being worthy to write either for or in an intelligent and generous community.

Tom Daggett?

Compared with the author of the above item it is as comparing a tallow dip to the noonday sun; a hyena to a lion; a wharf rat to a St. Bernard; fungus from decadent vegetable matter to the lily of the valley.

Tom Daggett?

When the editor of the Chronicle was endeavoring to secure the true culture that makes real men, Tom Daggett was the intimate of men like Cleveland and other statesmen whose confidence and respect he had held and whom the editor of the Chronicle could never have interested beyond the requirements of common courtesy.

In his chosen profession—newspaper work—Tom Daggett, in his most indifferent moods, could not write as does the editor of the Chronicle.

But hold! It is a waste of lather to shave an ass.

The men and women who have made it possible for the editor of the Chronicle to come into the Big Horn Basin and dwell in peace and plenty, know the true value of Tom Daggett and his work.

Nothing that the editor of the Chronicle could write could alter the love and affection of the old timers for Tom Daggett.

Gebhart followed that with:

TOM DAGGETT DEAD.

"Tom Daggett is dead."

That is the word which was received in Basin from Sheridan yesterday morning, and to which place Tom had gone to enter the hospital several weeks ago.

The history of the pioneer press of the Big Horn basin is the history of Tom Daggett. He left his impress on journalism here which will take ability of a very high order to equal.

There certainly now be few indeed, here, that equal his pen in its scope and literary merit, much less excel.

We feel prouder than ever that the editorial, written in reply to what the Lovell Chronicle wrote concerning Tm [*sic*] Daggett, was penned when Tom was alive, and

that what we did say was said as soon as the article in the Chronicle was read.

Tom Daggett is dead, but genuine regret will be felt in many a heart and home in the Big Horn Basin when the news is read. The old timers knew him, respected the man as only men who have made this country through hard toil and sacrifice can know one who was with them in the early days.

Apparently for the record, a more detailed news item was published on page 7 of the same issue, with a small headline:

Tom Daggett is Dead.

Word was received in Basin yesterday by the county clerk, Peter Enders, that Tom Daggett had died at 5 o'clock Thursday morning in the state hospital at Sheridan.

Tom Daggett was known to all of the old timers here who eagerly followed his writings in the papers with which he was connected, as they have but few writers in the Big Horn Basin.

In his early days in the east Tom Daggett was the intimate of some of the biggest men in this country, and many people recall with pleasure the interesting reminiscences Tom could relate of men like Sam'l J. Tilden, Grover Cleveland, Dan Lamont and other great men of the Democratic party.

Tom Daggett was a newspaper man, which is the most difficult thing to say about many who are accidentally in possession of, or have access to[,] newspaper space.

Tom Daggett's pen and his work proclaimed the fact.

How the *Grit* handled the story is unknown. The issues of November 3 and 10—the ones following Daggett's admission to the hospital—have apparently not survived. The only November edition available on the Wyoming newspaper database is that of the 17th, and its story on page one about the funeral is illegible in parts.*

Other papers' obituaries ranged from short announcements to heartfelt eulogies. One by Leslie Davidson, editor and publisher of the Hudson *Miner*, appeared in the *Basin Republican*:¹

Fine Tribute to Tom Daggett.

Tom Daggett is dead, may God rest his soul. He was one of the kindest of characters that we ever met and one of the most consistent boosters that the northern part of the state ever had in its borders. He came to Big Horn Basin country while it was yet a part of Johnson county and while the settler was an unknown quantity, and his courage was of the kind that made him—in a cow country—place at the head of his paper this motto: "More settlers; More schools and less steers." He made it win too, and eventually that great country was set off from Fremont and Johnson and it is a monument to Tom Daggett in the manner in which it has gone ahead. His early training in the journalistic field was secured under the great editor, Chas. Dana, of New York, and Tom was for years one of the leading writers of the metropolis of these United States. He was a native of the state of Virginia and had all the southerner's chivalry and gentleness of manner, but once get him aroused and he was one editor that could wield a pen dipped in vitriol. He numbered his friends by the hundreds all through the state and many an eye will drop a tear when the news of his demise is heard.

The *Riverton Republican* carried the story at the top of page one.² It said in part:

Tom Daggett, journalist and philosopher,...came to the Big Horn basin and engaged in the newspaper business at Bonanza.... It was he who first published to the world the aspirations for a new county by placing at the head of his paper "The Big Horn County Rustler." This was some time before the real active fight was made for the passage of the bill [organizing] the new county.

* It's possible that without Daggett the *Grit* was not published, but the Oct. 28 issue was "No. 49" and that of Nov. 17 was "No. 52." There are no known reprints from the *Grit* about Daggett in other papers.

For the past four years he has lived in Worland and during most of that period was editor of *The Grit*. For two months he gradually failed in health and went to the hospital at Sheridan three weeks ago, hoping that he could there regain his former energy and nerve force.

He was loved by all, and a loyal friend and highly regarded for his literary ability.

The *Park County Enterprise* (Cody) lamented on page one:¹

Every old timer in the Big Horn Basin knows Tom Daggett and to know him was to love him. Tom Daggett had lived among us for 21 years. He was a Virginian by birth, and a most polished and courtly gentleman of the old school. Mr. Daggett was charmed by the fresh vigor of the west and entranced by the hospitality and friendliness of its people, so he cast his lot at Bonanza before there was a Basin or Cody and unfurled the flag of the Big Horn Rustler to the breeze....

He was a friend and associate of famous men, notably Grover Cleveland, and his fund of wit and ever present sunshine made him welcome always. Tom Daggett is dead. We shall miss him; this section will miss him and his earnest work in its behalf. The world is better for his having lived. No more can be said of any man.

From the *Thermopolis Record*:²

...every old timer of the Big Horn country will feel a pang of regret that he is no more. Although not the first publisher of a paper in this region, he was the first who came to stay, and the ups and downs of his pioneer journalistic experience, if preserved in the form of an autobiography, as it was his expressed intention, will some day make interesting reading. Had he turned his talents into the more permanent channels of literature and worked with the same zeal he devoted to a sage brush newspaper he would have been one of the noted authors of the country. ...Many of the best articles that ever appeared in a Wyoming paper came from his pen.

...His health giving way, he came to Wyoming, and so dearly did he love the state and its people that he frequently said he would end his days in his chosen home. Fortune did not prosper him but he left his imprint on his time and surroundings. Peace to his ashes.

On the front page of the *Grit* on November 17 was a small story about his funeral and some words of praise for the departed. After an "impressive service" at the M. E. Church,

The remains were borne by loving hands, to their last resting place in Riverview Cemetery, followed by a large number of mourning friends.

No names of the pallbearers or the mourning friends were noted, just those who participated in the service. If Richards was there, he wasn't mentioned either. He was in his final days as state tax commissioner, and may not have been able to make the long trip from Cheyenne.

To help pay for the burial and a grave marker, a subscription was set up. "Many of the old timers responded very generously," reported the *Basin Republican*.³ But who should be in charge of it?

C. F. Robertson, mayor of Worland, suggested that the *Cheyenne Tribune* organize a committee. The paper had sent a \$5 donation to the monument fund along with the balance due Tom for the "sort of dragnet Big Horn county letter" that he had supplied the paper for years, per a story in the *Tribune*. Included was Robertson's letter of thanks to the paper's business manager, J. H. Walton.⁴

"Ever so many" have said they wanted to subscribe to such a fund, Robertson said, and it would be nice for The Tribune to start a movement. I suggest that you have a committee to have charge of the fund, say Hon. W. S. Collins, of Basin, Billy Simpson, of Cody, and one say from Meeteetse and another from Hyattville.

We buried him in a full lot and everything was conducted in proper shape. We miss old Tom's weekly letter in *The Tribune*.

The Tribune adroitly tossed the ball back to Worland:

As Daggett was practically alone in the west, a wayfaring genius whose ability everyone recognized, *The Tribune* thought his grave in Worland should be properly marked, hence the contribution for a headstone.

We appreciate the compliment Mayor Robertson pays *The Tribune* in asking us to appoint a committee. That is a matter, however, that Mr. Robertson is better able to manage, being right on the ground.

When we visit Worland we hope to see the grave of Tom Daggett properly marked.

So did Will Simpson and W. D. Pickett, who sent letters of tribute to the *Grit*.¹ But to this day the grave is still unmarked.

THE LONGEST AND MOST EFFUSIVE known tribute to Tom Daggett came from none other than his old editorial adversary, Joe Magill. The *Rustler* ran a chunk of it on December 20th, and the *Republican* a much longer but still incomplete one on the 23rd. "That was a very gracious tribute which Joe Magill paid to the memory of his old friend, the late Tom Daggett, in last week's Thermopolis Independent," the *Rustler* said. "Joe is ever a genius in the use of English and in this tribute he was at his best."

"Old friend"? Joe and Tom apparently had buried the hatchets swung with such gusto a decade earlier, during the county seat fight. Upon Daggett's passing, the *Rustler*, which he and Richards had likely saved from extinction years earlier, devoted less space to Magill's tribute than Gebhart did in the *Basin Republican*. Space limitations supposedly prevented publication of the full tribute, but the editors could "not refrain from placing the following excerpt before the readers of *The Rustler*."—beneath an ad on its last page. The *Rustler* had eight pages at its disposal vs. ten for the *Republican*.

Magill went all out with the literary references and metaphors:

In his death the Big Horn Basin has lost a doughty champion. No other pen has portrayed the beauties and the advantages of this section with greater ability or more deathless loyalty than his. When the angel of death touched him with his sable wing, and the pen he had wielded so ably and so long fell from his weakening fingers the Basin suffered a loss which it will be difficult to repair. Daggett might be very aptly termed the Homer of the Big Horn. Just as the Grecian genius sang the glories and the triumphs of the lands of Hellos [Hellas], so did the subject of this sketch embalm in imperishable prose the fertility and the beauty of the land of the Big Horn. He loved this young commonwealth of the Northwest with an ardent and abiding love. Its beauties and its charms thrilled his soul as the witchery of orange grove and vine-clad hill around the Alban Lake held the heart of Horace. Every valley and plain and hillside within its borders had each its own appeal to his beauty-loving soul. He wrote of it with the lucid diction of which he was master, and with the brilliancy and glow that only an ardent love can inspire. No knight or squire ever bestowed upon the lady of his love a more chivalrous affection than Daggett gave the Big Horn. Even his writings were moulded and shaped by the environment in which the better part of his useful life was passed. His style was distinctly and essentially western. His articles breathed the odor of the sage and the freedom of the wind-swept waste. In his breadth of view, liberality of thought, his hatred of bigotry and intolerance, his love of freedom of thought and action, he voiced the heart and the spirit of this great, young, growing country.

Fate had dowered him with a brilliant genius. Genius, however, often exacts a heavy holocaust of those she favors with her gifts. The crown of the genius has almost always been a heavy one for the wearer. To this sad fact the history of our own, and of a the lit-

erature of other lands[,] bears sorrowful witness. Milton in his old age, blind and fallen on evil days; Chatterton dying in a garret alone in penury, Camoens who may be said to have created the literature of Portugal spending his last days in wretched poverty; Dante bewailing in the sweet language on which his genius has shed undying luster, the bitterness of the bread of independence—all these afford shameful testimony of the base ingratitude of which people and their so-called leaders have been guilty. And our dear, dear friend was no exception to the shameful rule. He too learned the bitter lesson of how swiftly forgetful communities are of services such as genius like his can render. Like all men who have unselfishly given the best that was in them, lavished their very souls for the good of their fellow man, Daggett received but scanty meed of praise, but poor reward.

And that was the *short* version. Gebhart's more extensive reprint in the *Basin Republican* continued:¹

No more kindly soul than that which animated the frail body of Tom—as he liked to be called—ever shed its soothing radiance on this sordid, sad old world. His was a kindly nature that nurtured no enmities, cherished no revenge, harbored no hatreds. For injuries he had the waters of forgetfulness; favors or benefits were enshrined in a sanctuary of perpetual remembrance. As a friend his loyalty was deathless and changeless. In the early days of his residence at Bonanza he was associated, I believe, in a business way with W. A. Richards of Red Bank. Out of this association was born in the heart now mouldering in Worland soil a feeling of friendship for Mr. Richards to which the passing of the years only lent an added strength and luster. At all times and all places [he] made profession of his admiration and esteem. He knew well that I who write this did not view the gentleman from Red Bank through the same lenses with which he regarded him. This fact never for a moment could even by a degree lessen the warmth of his praise of his old-time friend. It may well be that my estimate was false, and that his, in the light of more intimate acquaintance, was correct. Be that as it may, one thing is certain. There must be some loveable trait, some nobility of mind or soul in any man who can inspire and retain such unswerving loyalty, such unwavering devotion, such deathless friendship as poor Daggett gave to his friend at Red Bank.

Magill went on, then concluded, "Sadly and sorrowfully I lay on his grave this small wreath of appreciation and esteem. ...May he rest in peace!"

Notes from Daggett's history of the basin were featured in the *Grit* a year after his death, on the front page of the November 16, 1911, issue. It begins with the tribulations of early settlers and a history of irrigation. It was supposed to be continued, but apparently was not.

TOM GEBHART, two years younger than Daggett, outlived him by many years. Like Daggett, he moved around the basin and there are gaps in his record. In 1898 the *Basin City Herald* was sold to the Big Horn Publishing Company, which had been incorporated by Pickett and others the previous year as a Democratic voice. At least two Republican papers claimed that behind the move were forces working for John E. Osborne, the former Democratic governor who had taken Frank W. Mondell's congressional seat in the 1896 election, among them the *Sheridan Post*.² But wouldn't a Democratic paper campaign for more offices than just congressman?

For his part, Magill had thanked Mondell for his "distinguished service" to Wyoming. The *Sun-Leader* and at least one other paper had praised the *Herald's* comments, copied in part: "[Mondell's] efforts in behalf of every movement which would in any way promote the prosperity and progress of the state were untiring."³ Below that item the *Sun-Leader* ran a reprint criticizing Osborne for voting against the sundry civil bill, which contained appropriations that would benefit Wyoming.

The *Herald*, renamed the *Wyoming Dispatch*, continued to be published in Basin until it

was moved to Cody in 1902.¹ Though Magill was a Democrat, he did not remain with the *Dispatch*. He had returned to Thermopolis by January 1898.² One author³ wrote that once the county seat battle was won, putting out the paper “became too humdrum” and “the rapidly developing Basin City had no further need of Magill’s promotional abilities.” He began touting Thermopolis instead. His favoring of Mondell may have been another reason.

Gebhart moved to Meeteetse after losing a bid for county surveyor in 1898 on the doomed Democratic ticket. He joined the *Big Horn County News*, which had started life at Cody as the *Shoshone Valley News* in 1896. It absorbed the *Otto Courier* sometime after 1898.⁴

Tom’s writing was straightforward and not highly quotable. An example concerned Richards, by then the assistant commissioner of the General Land Office, who was “now taking a well earned vacation in Big Horn county, the county of his home and the portion of the globe he loves best.” Above this caption was a two-column engraving based on the photo of Richards taken in 1882. The engraving would illustrate later articles as well.⁵

The fall 1902 issues of the *News* prior to the election repeat the Republican message frequently and loudly if not eloquently, reflecting Gebhart’s own views and/or those of A. C. Thomas, the publisher.

Gebhart continued to move around. In October 1902, right before the election, he left the *News* to pursue other interests, said his successor, F. W. Freeman.⁶ Gebhart would do surveys for W. H. Pearce of the Yellowstone Forest Reserve, and was also given charge of Wood River district. In a few years he circled back to Basin City (renamed “Basin” upon its incorporation in 1902) to work once again for Collins, now owner of the *Rustler*.⁷ In April 1905, Gebhart became manager and editor, according to the *Laramie Republican*,⁸ but the paper was bought by Democrats the following month. Tom may have stayed on as editor or in the press room. Three years later⁹ Tom entered into partnership with Pressley P. Anderson and leased the *Basin Republican* plant, later purchasing it outright.

Anderson bought out Gebhart in 1912,¹⁰ and on August 16th Tom’s name was gone from the masthead. The following month, his wife became proprietor of the Rogers House,¹¹ built by Barney Rogers in 1905.¹² We are told that Tom continued in the employ of the *Republican*¹³ in an unspecified capacity for an unspecified time, perhaps as reporter or pressman or both.

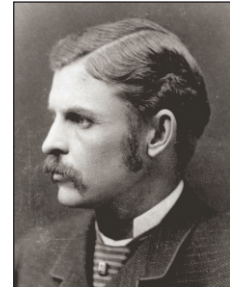
Another run for county office ended the same way as his earlier bid for county surveyor. When Gebhart ran for county clerk in 1912 against five others in the Democratic primary, he placed fourth after Blakesley, Alex Lucas, and C. F. Robertson. Blakesley ultimately claimed the prize. Years later, in November 1921, Gebhart was appointed postmaster of Basin and apparently held the post until his death.¹⁴ In 1928 Anderson purchased the *Rustler* and merged the papers into the *Basin Republican-Rustler*.

Tom died in Basin on August 22, 1929, at age 69. From the time of his demise to her own, on July 7, 1938, Sallie Gebhart served as the telephone operator in Hyattville.¹⁵

In the 1920 *Rustler* article, Gebhart was said to be the “only man living in Basin who was there when it started.” That wording is cagey: his wife and children were also there when it started. And though they seem to have been separated at least for a time, they ended up side by side in the Basin cemetery.

GEBHART’S FORMER COLLEAGUE, Joseph Magill, was not interviewed for the big 1920 pioneers’ article in the *Rustler*, perhaps because he was in faraway Thermopolis. After his return there he tried to make a living selling town lots and as a notary and fire-insurance agent, according to news items in the *Big Horn River Pilot*.¹⁶ Ever the promoter, “Magill was loud in his praise of the new town and paints its future in glowing colors,” reported the Thermopolis correspondent in the *Wind River Mountaineer*.¹⁷

In April 1898, at Magill’s urging, the town became the first in the country to hold a memorial for the 260 (out of 400) crew members killed when the *USS Maine* exploded in Havana



Richards in 1882
Wyoming State
Archives

harbor on February 15, touching off the Spanish-American War. Joe was among the four cowboys who herded 78 Embar horses to Casper for delivery to Cheyenne. The mounts would be used by their owner, Col. Jay L. Torrey, for his "Cowboy Cavalry" regiment,¹ the Second U.S. Volunteer Cavalry Regiment. One of the first to volunteer, Joe signed on as a war correspondent and sent reports that the *Wyoming Derrick* (Casper's Democratic organ) featured on its front page.

Expecting to chronicle the cavalry's brave exploits in freeing the Cubans, Joe found himself describing only preparations, first in Wyoming and then at Camp Cuba Libre. The camp had been set up outside Jacksonville, Florida, amid heat, humidity, and mosquitoes. The troops spent their time in military drills while waiting for orders that would at last send them to Cuba—orders that never came. Joe's last published report, OUR BOYS IN FLORIDA (July 21), managed to sound a positive tone despite torrential rain.

Like others, Magill contracted typhoid fever, and his condition was reported to be "hopeless."² Though he recovered and expected to join the occupation forces, Magill returned instead to his ranch at Thermopolis.

In September 1898 stage coach service from Thermopolis to Casper and other points was launched, and it lasted until late 1903 or early 1904, well before the arrival of the railroad. We are told that Joe drove the stage on the Thermopolis-Casper run, 30 hours in good weather, but no word of when or how often. He also handled jerk-line teams on freight wagons.³

More illness was in store for Magill, this time mental. In January 1900 he became demented, and it was E. T. Payton who helped him out. As we have seen, Payton bore his old comrade no ill-will for the handling of his own madness in 1895. When Magill was judged to be insane, Payton obtained charge of him and took him to his own homestead. Wanting better treatment for his friend than what he had received, Payton and another friend decided Magill should be taken to a Catholic institution in Council Bluffs, Iowa, St. Bernard's Hospital.⁴ In a prominent article on page one, the *Laramie Republican* reported that Magill⁵

was practically without means and was in a sad plight. Payton took him in charge and gave him every care and attention. Col. Torrey and another man secured transportation, and Payton stayed with him day and night.

Payton was reluctant to talk to the reporter, though he did issue a sympathetic general statement. Magill soon wrote Payton a letter saying he was "deeply grateful" to him "for tolerating my vagaries and whims."⁶

In *Behind the Scenes at Evanston*, though, Payton gave a detailed account of their journey.⁷ Magill would sometimes seem normal, other times fearful or suspicious. When they stayed at ranches, Payton would not disclose Magill's condition. One night "[m]y friend, who in his right mind is a fit companion for a king, seemed...to outdo himself as he regaled us with good stories," recalled Payton. "The plan worked so well that I tried it again the next night with equal success." Since the *Denver Republican* was paying Payton a salary, he felt he could not accompany Magill from Casper to Council Bluffs. He secured Joe's cooperation for the train trip ahead by assuring him he was being sent to a Catholic institution that would help him, not to the state asylum at Evanston.

During his time at St. Bernard's, the *Omaha World-Herald* published poems about the beauty of Wyoming, one of them on next page.⁸ It took five years for him to be released. On May 5, 1905, The *Thermopolis Record* reported on page one:

Joe Magill returned to his home in Thermopolis last evening, much to the satisfaction of his many old friends. He has entirely recovered from the protracted illness that caused him to leave here several years ago. He owns a valuable piece of land down the river which will be improved and made productive now that he is able to give it his personal attention.

He was soon chosen trustee of School District 7 for a three-year term.¹

MAGILL TURNED his talents as a talker into a career of boosting the Bighorn Basin that lasted for years and took him to the East and Midwest. In November 1906 he gave an "eloquent address" at the Worland opera house "about Robertson and Collins's successful work in transforming barren waste into a hustling, busy, growing community."² The following year he promoted the Big Horn County fair³ and Daggett published a daily paper about it.⁴

In 1908 the Burlington Railroad's Immigration Department hired Magill for a touring exhibit car whose mission was to interest potential settlers in the new country being brought under irrigation.⁵ On display were agricultural products from the Bighorn Basin, Sheridan County, the North Platte Valley in Nebraska, and Billings, Montana.

Magill sent a description of the car and its visitors to the *Basin Republican*.⁶ He first reminded readers that Basin is the "city of which Gebhart and I were the first inhabitants, white or of any other color."

I believe before we get back everybody in the United States will be acquainted with the pioneers of Billings and Basin, of the Yellowstone and the Big Horn. Certainly the beauties and wealth of those sections were never heralded to the world in such a fashion as is now being done by the Burlington.

A man comes into the car who perhaps has never heard of Billings or Sheridan or the Basin. To his left as he enters is a fine, tall, upstanding bunch of oats labeled with the name of Col. W. F. Cody. The visitor has heard of course of the colonel. Who hasn't and lives? Then by degrees he gets acquainted with [more. There's] golden grain from Paint Rock and Shell and Nowood. The eight-foot alfalfa from Lovell and Welling takes his breath away, and before he has entirely recovered he is thrown into another spasm of surprise by the Lovell sugar beets. If he has any breath left it is taken away by the Worland exhibit. ...Time and again men have come and told me that the exhibit was the most magnificent they had ever seen and that we people around the Big Horn and Yellowstone and Goose creek must have the richest land in the world. And so it goes. The name and fame of what was once the "wild west" are being spread before the world at large.

The *Republican* recognized Magill's importance to the mission in what sounds like an attempt to emulate him, as noted in its commentary about Daggett:⁷

And with Joe Magill—who has the linguistic ability to persuade an angel to abandon heaven for the Basin or to talk a millionaire out of his beautiful and much beloved daughter—to extol the excellencies of this favored country we may look for a perfect flood of homeseekers in the near future.

Magill, now age 60 (if he was indeed born in 1848) still hoped to find a bride. In his letter to the *Republican* he added:

I'll be married myself before I get back. Don't laugh! I am going into the country where schoolmarms and farmers' daughters are neglected and forlorn. Can I see them wan-

a few stanzas from
A BIG HORN COWBOY'S PRAYER
(By One of Them) [his name not given]

Better a day on her wind-swept dunes
Than a year in the rich man's halls,
I'd barter the gold of the Indies old
To be back where the gray wolf calls.

I have roamed the classic Rhine
Mid castle and keep and hall,
But its beauties pale, compared to the vale
Where Shell creek's waters fall.

Paris and Rome are grand, 'tis true,
And their mansions are fair to see;
Were they twice as fair, 'tis naught I'd care
Thermopolis Basin for me!

Oh! let me sit once more
On a "night-horse" old and slow,
And the longest "relief" would seem
to me brief

Tho' ice-laden winds should blow

Ould Ireland's dear to me,
In her cause I would gladly die,
But still be my home where the wild
steers roam,
'Neath that matchless west'rn sky.

Then ho for the west again,
For her fearless men and free!
Give others the east—I envy them least,
Give the dear "wild west" to me!

dering around lonely and loveless? Not me! If I can annex some good, strong, industrious agricultural woman you fellows at Basin can have the rice ready and the old slippers.

That same year he wrote his old colleague Gebhart,

By the way, does ever the flood of memory lift you in its swell and take your mind back to the days when you and I were contributing to the gaiety of some of our neighbors by talking of Basin as the county seat? When the gates of memory roll back, I remember tearing out by the roots the not too numerous hairs on my head in a desperate effort to furnish you copy. You, I say it with sorrow, were slinging type or pumping the old press to the accompaniment of swear words that shocked my sensitive soul. I sincerely hope that you have since then, washed out your delinquencies in the swearing line with copious tears of not too tardy repentance. ...I live to chant the praises of the Basin to a listening world. I shall not have lived in vain if, in my own, poor, humble way, I shall have lent a hand in the progress and development of the land I love so dearly and well.¹

Tom Daggett would surely have shaken the hand that put those sentiments in writing.

Magill's name made Wyoming papers less in the years that followed, but in 1911 he was reported to be hale and hearty and living on his Thermopolis ranch.² Saban tells us that when he was in Minnesota promoting the basin, those who heard him were so impressed that they gave him a gift of some wolfhounds, and he began raising the breed.³ After Hot Springs County was created, he served county assessor,⁴ but resigned because he found the work irksome and confining.⁵ Returning to the road, in 1915 he gave lectures and exhibited slides of the Rocky Mountains in all of the principal towns between New York City and Sioux City, Iowa, reported Cheyenne's *Wyoming Stockman-Farmer*. His siren song inspired the boosters' club of Sioux City, some forty members, to plan a visit to the Majo ranch near Cody on their trip through Wyoming,⁶ That same year the Meeteetse *News* reported a visit from Magill and said he "possesses an enviable reputation as Wyoming's cowboy orator" and "is a real live-wire booster for Wyoming and particularly this portion of the state."⁷ Other papers described him as an entertaining lecturer, poet, journalist, wit.

As of 2024 the last sighting of Magill on wyomingnewspapers.org was in the October 26, 1922, *Thermopolis Record*: someone was running for county treasurer after Magill's resignation. Saban's article tells the rest of Joe's story:

As land was settled, Joe Magill, with all his verve and brilliance, was no longer needed to tout the basin. And the ill health which he had whipped in these western climes overtook him once more.

He spent his last Thermopolis years with the Frank Milek family. Always afflicted with an inherent instability his erratic personality problems hadn't decreased with the years. He became just plain cantankerous.

Sent to a hospital and then a Catholic nursing home in Denver, she continues, he died in "the mid-thirties" and was buried in Denver. Another source says 1947;⁸ if true, he would have been aged 99 or 100 years. Hopefully he could still see the "matchless west'rn sky" till the end. No obituary has been found in Colorado papers or elsewhere.

High praise for Magill came from a wealthy New York dog breeder who also was from the Emerald Isle, Saban noted:

Much impressed by Magill's letters, the man invited him to spend a month in New York City. This eastern friend later declared that no man with Joe Magill's ability should have wasted his life by punching cows in Wyoming. He said that Magill's knowledge of the English language was so great that he could easily have filled a professorship at Harvard University.

Like Tom Daggett, Joe was firmly planted in the West and the Bighorn Basin. He might have found Harvard as irksome and confining as the county assessor post. In the poem on p. 38, published in the *Omaha-World Herald* toward the end of his stay at the mental hospital, his homesickness is palpable. In its 24 stanzas Magill names many of the people he misses, but the country most of all.

FELLOW THERMOPOLITE Edward T. Payton was a decade younger than Magill but died about the same time after a tragic life. As we have seen, after his first bout of mental illness he resumed publication of the *Big Horn River Pilot* in 1897. Insanity overcame him again in July 1898, and after his release from the Evanston asylum on November 20 he began writing articles recommending changes in treatment of its inmates. His initial article, on January 11, received a respectful comment from the *Rawlins Republican*:¹

E. T. Payton, editor of the Thermopolis Pilot, who was twice confined in the insane asylum at Evanston, announces he will publish articles in his paper giving in detail accounts of the treatment of patients at that institution. Mr. Payton was there but a short time before returning to his normal condition, and during the remainder of the time spent by him in the institution he made a careful study of many of the methods and conditions. He advocates furnishing work for such patients as are able to perform it and that they be paid for their labor. A number of the patients are insane only at intervals and the rest of the time enforced idleness or being obliged to work without pay aggravates their troubles.

His charges included brutal beatings of himself and other inmates.

Other papers dismissed Payton's articles as "vaporings"² or ignored them. An investigation by the State did not validate his position.³ By March of 1909 he was on the road again, and the *Sun-Leader* wrote,⁴

Mr. E. T. Payton, the enterprising newspaper man, is in Cheyenne, having resumed his position on the Denver Republican. Mr. Payton is unexcelled as a solicitor and his friends are glad to see him back in his old position. His health is fine and his weight more than it has been in years.

Some joy came into Payton's life when he married Della Badger, a Minneapolis woman and alumna of Wellesley, on July 3, 1900. Their first child was born the following year, a year that saw the Paytons working together to solicit subscriptions for *The Denver Post*. Described as "the official organ of the people,"⁵ the *Post* was headed by John F. Carroll, former editor of the Cheyenne *Leader*. Payton soon left the *Post* to resume publication of the *Pilot*, but that only lasted until June 1903.⁶ He claimed that his writings got him into trouble with the school board and city council, which led to a boycott of his paper. He also attacked the State Board of Charities and Reform over their asylum investigation record. He wrote in *Behind the Scenes at Evanston*,

By April (1903) my mental condition still being frequently abnormal, my paper under boycott and my finances in wretched condition, I was nearing the end of my newspaper career. Failure was in sight but I would go down with my true colors flying.

The last straw was his assistant quitting on fifteen minutes notice, "taking with him some small tools without which it was impossible to get out the paper again. Thus ended the career of the *Big Horn River Pilot* established April 18, 1895, and after a checkered career of eight years ending its existence June 3, 1903." And thus ends Payton's account.⁷



Joseph Magill in an unidentified newspaper clipping, "ca. 1935"

Courtesy of the Hot Springs County Historical Society

In November Payton was back in the Evanston asylum after another violent episode, during which time he "suffered the tortures of hell at the Basin City jail" while awaiting judgment of his insanity, according to a letter he wrote.¹ His wife had to cope with that trauma as well as care for their two children.

Recovered once again by early 1904, E. T. and his family went to Laramie to solicit for the Democratic *Boomerang* and then, by April, to Cheyenne for *The Wyoming Tribune*, a Republican paper. The *Trib* claimed that Payton, "the best solicitor in the west," and he "will proceed to materially increase the value of advertising the the Tribune by adding a few hundred more subscribers to a list that is already two times as great as any other paper in state."²

To meet that goal, the Payton family left no potential subscriber unsolicited in the remotest corners of Wyoming. In August 1904 the *Tribune* ran a letter³ sent from Jackson by the

talented and courageous wife of The Tribune's solicitor. During this summer Mrs. Payton and two children have traveled hundreds of miles overland, threading narrow mountain trails and fording rivers with Mr. Payton....

Mrs. Payton is a very remarkable woman and takes the greatest interest in Mr. Payton's work, acts as his private secretary en route, looks after her children and apparently enjoys the experience. Among other things she says:

We placed either the Daily or Semi-Weekly for a year in every home but one in Pinedale and vicinity. ...There are not more than 125 heads of families in Jackson Hole but we shall have 100 of them or more.

Since leaving South Pass we have had all our things soaked over and again in the rivers and creeks. I do not know how many times after swimming these swift mountain streams we have stopped and spread our bedding and the contents of our grips on the grass and bushes to dry, or how many times I have gotten out and carried both babies while Mr. Payton has coaxed and helped the horses along over stretches of road that a mountain goat could hardly travel. ...

Notwithstanding the trials of the road we are all well and still persuaded that we are traveling for the best paper that circulates in Wyo.

DELLA B. PAYTON

When it is realized that The Tribune has been sending out solicitors for four years by rail road, stage coach, on horseback, in buckboards and on foot and that no settlement was too remote or inaccessible for its energetic men in the field some of the "Doubting Thomases" who have slept on their oars and assumed that a newspaper could not succeed in Wyoming unless subsidized by politicians will realize there is yet something for them to learn.

That's the last known word in available papers about Payton as a solicitor. He and his family are unlikely to have kept up that life as winter came on. A year later, in October 1905, the *Trib* had a different solicitor.⁴ Mrs. Payton was expecting another child, and a second daughter joined the family in February 1906.⁵

In an October 1906 article about the coming of the Burlington Railroad to the Owl Creek valley, Payton was listed as a settler, and a local paper said he was "[n]ow living in this secluded valley in the enjoyment of peace and happiness with his family."⁶

Payton tried to make his ranch a place where those who were "mentally deficient but not fit subjects for the insane asylum" could be self-supporting.⁷ He toured the state, giving lectures on insanity and the care of the insane in the average state asylum.⁸ Unfortunately in 1909 Payton "became violently insane from worry over the affairs of his enterprise, which was proving entirely successful," according to the June 11, 1909, *Big Horn County Rustler*. He sought help at a private sanitarium in Council Bluffs, Iowa, according to the *Rustler*, but on his return a jury at Basin ruled that he was insane, and ordered him sent back to the Evanston asylum.

His confinement was, of course, devastating to his family. Mrs. Payton and her three little children were reported to be living on the ranch, "and it is a struggle for them to keep up."¹ He was released after a few months on condition that he give up his attempts to treat the mentally ill² and returned to canvassing for the *Tribune*, according to the paper itself.³ His wife advertised for a housekeeper and companion in the summer of 1910,⁴ which suggests her husband was on the road.

PAYTON'S PEREGRINATIONS for the *Leader*, as noted earlier, had put him in the right spot to send out the first hard news about the Johnson County invasion. In 1911 he was near the scene of another sensational event, the violent deaths of the daughter and son-in-law of William A. Richards at Red Bank ranch. The former Wyoming governor had retired to his ranch in March 1907 after eight years in the U.S. General Land Office as assistant commissioner and then commissioner, during which time his wife died. Called out of retirement to become Wyoming's first state tax commissioner, he served from March 1909 until his resignation as of December 1910; other officials also resigned prior to Carey taking office as governor.⁵ Once back at Red Bank, Richards was living with his recently married daughter Edna and her husband, Thomas W. Jenkins, in a secluded canyon some distance from the main house that was occupied by his partner, "Bear George" McClellan, and his wife, Mary. In September 1911, while Richards and McClellan were away on a hunting trip, Edna and Tom were found shot to death at their cabin under baffling circumstances. The coroner's jury ruled that Tom had shot Edna twice in the lungs and then himself; she ran outside and shot herself in the left temple.⁶

Richards began his own investigation and detailed his findings extensively in letters to Willis Van Devanter,⁷ who had been appointed to the U.S. Supreme Court the year before. On October 5 Richards told him that Payton

was one of the very first at the cabin after the discovery of the bodies. He insisted at once that Edna had done all of the shooting, and but for Oscar [McClellan, George's brother] his first report would have been to that effect.

He has since said that he would send out another "story" giving his own views soon. He has remained in this neighborhood since the tragedy was discovered, and last week became violently insane, was locked up at Lost Cabin, and has been taken in charge by the Big Horn county officers. We will find out where he was upon the nights upon one of which this occurred. The Sheriff knows him of old and suspects him in this case, and is convinced that some third person was there.

In a letter to the business manager of the *Tribune*,⁸ Mrs. Payton explained what had brought on her husband's latest breakdown:

It was the Richards horror that threw him off. He was there three days and nights and not able to sleep in the excitement at all.

Payton was exonerated, but the tragedy coupled with press reports linking him to the crime sent him back to the Evanston asylum for his fourth confinement. *Bill Barlow's Budget* (Douglas) summarized developments on page one of its October 11, 1911, issue under the headline SOME YELLOW JOURNALISM and subheads:

E.T. Peyton [*sic*]...was taken to Evanston last Friday. He refused to discuss the yellow newspaper work which was so freely indulged in by various papers of the state which had endeavored to connect his name with the Jenkins mystery at Red Bank[,] merely stating that he would discuss it at the proper time. ...[Payton] said that he was insane while at Lost Cabin, but was sane now. He talked very rational....

He said that he was working for the Cheyenne Tribune soliciting and collecting and was working in the neighborhood of Red Bank when word came of the tragedy there. He arrived at the scene shortly after the coroner arrived and prepared a story for the Tribune, which he sent in over the phone. This story, under the circumstances[,] had to

be rather meager and did not do justice to the matter. He decided to prepare a story covering the event thoroughly and started for Moneta where he could send it out by telegraph. In going over the matter and following out the investigations made he came to the conclusion that the Jenkins woman was insane when the crime was committed and he said that the thought struck him that by explaining that he had been insane he could treat the story more sympathetically. That he brooded on that fact until he again became mentally unbalanced. He said, however, that he felt all right now and in answer to the question by Commissioner Booth said, "feel as if I was just as good as the best man in the state of Wyoming." When asked if he thought he should be committed he said, "I see no necessity for it. I am saner now than when I was discharged two years ago."

There is not the least suspicion by the authorities connecting him with the tragedy at Red Bank, as his time is accounted for up to the minute he came to the place after the coroner arrived. He was soliciting for the Tribune and his receipt book shows just where he had been after leaving home until he started for Moneta to report the tragedy. He said that he had not the trained mind of a reporter never having had practical training along those lines. The tragedy evidently preyed upon his mind until reason left him.

This article does not mention that "the Jenkins woman" was the daughter of former governor Richards, and the one below doesn't give her name at all. As for her alleged insanity, the coroner's jury revised their verdict to murder by an unknown third party after new evidence came to light.

Some papers continued to suspect Payton because of his erratic behavior and even suggested he had it in for Richards because he was governor at the time of Payton's first confinement at Evanston. One wrote,¹

He was the first correspondent to reach the Richards' home and his accounts of the tragedy were well written but in a few days he began acting queerly and kept continually talking about it.

...His insanity has not been of a homicidal character so far as can be learned.

Payton criticised the management of the Evanston asylum very harshly during Richards' administration as governor[,] and the ex-governor thinks that possibly his antipathy to Dr. Solier who was appointed under Richards might have furnished a motive for the crime.

Nothing in Richards's letters about his investigation of the tragedy supports this claim. The shootings occurred sixteen years after Payton's first confinement at Evanston, and Richards was no longer governor when Payton first started his public criticisms of the conditions at the asylum under Solier's management. Later news reports set the matter straight:²

In none of his allegations, however, is the governor held responsible for the evil conditions which Payton alleged to exist. In fact the governor is not even mentioned. It seems therefore that the theory of Payton's ill feelings towards Richards as an incentive to the alleged murder of Mr. and Mrs. Jenkins, is unfounded.

Once his investigations were concluded, Richards moved to Cheyenne and spent Thanksgiving with friends. He had written Van Devanter on October 21,³ "I find that I must get away from this locality, and if possible do something to occupy my mind, and get it into another channel." It's unlikely his mind left that channel for long, and it surely rushed back when he met with Payton a few months later. By January 26 Payton was out of the asylum and back at the *Tribune*, writing articles and probably soliciting subscriptions again, as much as that could be done in winter. Newspapers ran an article about him and a book he planned entitled *My Mental Machinery*.⁴ He also had

publicly thanked all the newspaper men of the state who expressed unbelief in the story

that he was in any way responsible for the terrible tragedy at Red Bank. "My connection with that tragedy," says Payton, was simply that of a newspaper correspondent and it was because of failure to do my duty, as I saw it, that I lost my mental equilibrium. Until my book is printed, some years hence, the public will have to wait for my version of that sad affair."

In an undated letter to McClellan on Plains Hotel stationery,¹ Richards had said that he had a long talk with Peyton yesterday but got nothing new from him except that after the inquest he hired Bob Nicholson to pilot him back to the cabin through the canyon, where they made a diagram and took measurements. He talked very sensibly.

In 1913 Payton was living at his ranch when he suffered another breakdown. He was taken into custody, but it's unclear whether he was sent back to the Asylum. Occasional news items indicate he was soliciting at least through 1923. In 1918 he wrote a big article boosting Lucerne, his neighborhood near Thermopolis.² Banners at the top of editions of the *Tribune* in 1920 show he was quite famous: One, on April 5, "We'll say Riverton is some town—E.T. Payton says so too, what do you think?" Below it were Riverton's attributes listed from A-Z. The mayor of Riverton later claimed that someone in London got so interested in Riverton that he was willing to invest \$50,000 in it.³

When the *State Leader* and the *State Tribune* came to be published from the same office under the same ownership, the circulation of both "materially increased," according to a statement from Payton, who was state solicitor for both.

Payton ran for Hot Springs County representative to the Wyoming legislature on the Progressive ticket that year against a Republican; no Democrat was listed. He would try again in 1922 as a Democrat, again with no success.⁴

In November 1921 his wife of twenty-one years filed for divorce. She charged that Payton brought home people of "unsound mind[,] dangerous, and who were not fit" to be around her and her children,⁵ three of whom were teenage daughters. He denied the allegations, but court granted the divorce on grounds of "incompatibility of temperament."⁶

Never abandoning his crusade for reform of treatment of the mentally ill, in 1923 he published *Mad Men* and *Behind the Scenes at Evanston*. Over the years his charges of maltreatment of inmates there had led to investigations of conditions and management, but nothing ever came of them. Finally, after other former inmates reported worse charges, the Wyoming legislature in 1925 passed a law against harsh, cruel or abusive treatment of insane persons. Whether Payton was aware of it is unknown: from January 1924 on, he struggled with his malady and ended up at Evanston again in late November, 1925, never to be released again. Payton attempted to get released in 1931, and was working on a manuscript about wyo history 1807-1899. When he died on January 3, 1933, there was only one short obituary, in the *Wyoming Press*, Evanston, January 4, 1933. A fuller account of Payton's crusade for better treatment of the mentally ill is on wyohistory.org in an article by Rebecca Hein.

How RICHARDS occupied himself during his winter in Cheyenne is unknown. When he heard that the post of U.S. surveyor general for Wyoming might become vacant, he wrote the members of Wyoming's congressional delegation to say he was interested. As he told Van Devanter in a letter of January 17, 1912,⁷

I know that this is retrograding but I have but little pride or ambition remaining, and must have employment, for its own sake and because I cannot live any where but at Red Bank without it, and I feel that I can never live there again....Cheyenne seems most like home to me and I could be reasonably content here if employed.

The post did not open up, but an intriguing invitation arrived that same month from the other side of the world. Richards's old friend Elwood Mead was in charge of developing irriga-

tion and attracting settlers to Victoria, Australia. He and Richards had pursued the same goals in Wyoming when Richards was governor. As Territorial and State Engineer Mead had formulated water laws that were used all over the West and beyond. Now in the southernmost province of Australia, Mead proposed offering a trip at government expense to "experienced men of the land" from America who might spread the word to other potential settlers. Forty signed up including Richards, and their ship arrived there on May 3.¹ Pleased with what he found, Richards decided to sell his Wyoming property and settle on irrigable lands in this new country,² just as he had in the Bighorn Basin a quarter century before.

As Richards and Mead were leaving a valedictory luncheon for Mead on the eve of his return to the United States, Richards developed chest pains and died a few days later, on July 25,³ at age 63. Despite his desire to start a new life in Australia, it's possible that grief over his daughter's death hastened his own. Mead accompanied his body across the ocean to the United States and to Cheyenne. After lying in state at the Capitol the former governor was interred in the plot he and Mead had purchased in 1897 upon the death of Mead's wife. Richards was laid to rest next to his own wife, Harriet. Also interred there were Edna and Tom and his grandson, William Richards McCreery. Mead outlived his friend by many years; upon his demise in 1936 he was buried in Arlington National Cemetery.

RICHARDS WOULD HAVE ENDED his days in the Bighorn Basin had not fate intervened, and so would most of the others in this account. Only Joe De Barthe left soon after his arrival, partly because he and his wife, Harriett, were living in "constant dread and fear."⁴ She recalled, "When we decided to move to Buffalo I was more than thankful—little dreaming of the horrible experience that lay ahead of us." As editor of the *Buffalo Bulletin* before the Johnson County invasion, her husband backed the small ranchers who were branded as rustlers by the cattle barons in the area. He even served as secretary of their Northern Wyoming Farmers and Stock Growers Association and let them meet in the *Bulletin's* office. The paper's masthead ("Republican in Politics—Progressive in Principle") gave De Barthe considerable freedom to roam editorially. In the months before the invasion, he fiercely defended the people of his district against newspapers in southern Wyoming and beyond that kept spreading false stories about Johnson County as a hotbed of rustlers.

Just a few weeks before the invasion, De Barthe reprinted an item from the now ironically named *Bonanza Rustler* on the front page of the *Bulletin*. Referring to the lynchings and attempted lynchings of alleged cattle thieves by the cattlemen's minions, the item was headed "More Murder Promised." In *Wyoming Range War*, John W. Davis excerpted the article in his coverage of De Barthe⁵ without naming Tom Daggett. Here is the full item, from the March 17, 1892, *Bulletin*:

In looking over the state papers one unconsciously runs upon vague hints of the intention of the "big stockmen" to begin a war of extermination in the spring against the so-called rustlers in the state. A few of these sanguinary hints bear the mark of having been inspired by certain knowledge based upon authentic information. The Rustler hopes that they may be wholly imaginary, but recent events refute that belief. It has reached a deplorable stage in our civilization if certain men, strong only in the possession of wealth as represented in large herds of cattle, can with impunity arrogate to themselves the right to judge, convict and execute punishment upon those whom they may regard as in the way of their money-making schemes. A casual glance at recent events justifies the belief that this is the condition of affairs in Wyoming. If "big stockmen" hope through such means to right their wrongs they will rue in sorrow their mistake. For every drop of blood they shed, be it innocent or guilty, a curse will rise more remorseless than death. There are laws in our statutes, bad though some of them be, for the punishment of the crime of stealing stock. Let them be enforced with justice. The state

has had enough of the shoot in the back policy, and, heaven knows, more than enough for her good.

De Barthe agreed in print and in person. "Joe De Barthe, the incendiary of Johnson county, was the first man to volunteer to go out and meet the 'invaders' as the cattlemen are called." according to the *Sun*.¹

His tenure at the *Bulletin* ended with the invasion: As of the issue of April 14, just a week after the invasion, his name and title had disappeared from the masthead. The only published explanation was that he was sick and unable to work.² His wife thought he had been poisoned by one of the cattlemen: More about the story is in the Richards, Invasion and Politics PDF file.³

Joe helmed a new paper, *The Free Lance*, and during the electoral campaign it "did good work for the people's party" as the "noble champion" of settlers in the North, said the Sheridan *Enterprise* in announcing his departure, this time to work on a book.⁴ He edited and then published the *Enterprise* itself from March 4, 1893, until he retired from the post in August 1894. Sommers returned as editor and manager.⁵

In 1894 his classic *The Life and Adventures of Frank Grouard, Chief of Scouts, U.S.A.* was published, and is still available today.

Changing careers entirely, De Barthe became a partner of attorney A. M. Appelget in Sheridan.⁶ After that the papers only show a legal notice of a sheriff's sale of his property.⁷ Mrs. De Barthe bitterly remembered:

While writing his book he employed a woman stenographer, who later succeeded in breaking up my home, thus depriving me of my husband and home and the [five] children their father's care and guidance. ...women are artful and the male is weak.

After mortgaging our home and selling our furniture Mr. De Barthe decided he could make more money by being advance agent for a traveling specialist, Dr. [McHugh or McHaigh].

She divorced her errant husband "four or five years later and he married the stenographer."

At some point Joe had taught himself medicine, and became involved with an Oregon correspondence medical school that got in trouble with the Post Office for selling fraudulent diplomas.⁸

De Barthe lived in Washington, D.C., for a time, according to a few newspaper sightings, his occupation unknown. In 1928 he was living in Marion, Ohio, the hometown of President Warren G. Harding. Harding's paramour, Nan Britton, claimed in *The President's Daughter* that she had borne Harding's illegitimate child. De Barthe tried to refute her charges in *The Answer to 'The President's Daughter,' and other Defamations of a Great American*. Britton sued and lost, but De Barthe did not succeed in salvaging Harding's reputation. Soon afterward, Joe died in Marion on March 6, 1928.⁹ DNA testing in 2015 indicated Britton's claims were true.

That same year, 2015, De Barthe was the inductee of the Wyoming Press Association's Hall of Fame for his defense of the small ranchmen before the Johnson County invasion.

Harriett lived in Sheridan the rest of her life. It's rather ironic that she spent her last days in the Bighorn Basin, dying at Lovell on February 11, 1935.¹⁰ Staunchly loyal to the basin till the end of their lives were Richards, Daggett, Gebhart, Magill, and Payton. Only Gebhart was allowed to die there.

SURVIVING THEM is the newspaper launched by De Barthe, bought by Richards, and steered by Daggett into the turbulous waters of the twentieth century, when it merged with the paper owned and edited for a time by Gebhart. The *Basin Republican-Rustler** was still bobbing along well into the twenty-first century, and so was the *Buffalo Bulletin*. The *Grit* became the *North-ern Wyoming News*, still published today. As of this writing all were issued in print and online.

*The *Republican-Rustler* is one of several Wyoming papers remaining from territorial days, thanks to mergers. The *Laramie Boomerang* (founded in 1881) and the *Lusk Herald* (founded in 1886) continue to be published under their original names. (The author may have missed any others.)

SOURCES AND NOTES

Page 1

1. Word space in De Barthe per his own treatment on the mast-heads of *The Rustler* (see p. 6) and *Buffalo Bulletin*.
2. Gebhart photo from *The Midwest Review*, Vol. VII, No. 2, February 1926. Published by the Department of Industrial Relations, Casper. De Barthe from Wyoming State Archives (WSA), Daggett courtesy of the *Northern Wyoming News*, Worland, Wyoming.

Page 2

1. Letters cited are from the William A. Richards Collection, H 82-61, WSA, unless otherwise noted.
2. *Sentinel*, Oct. 19, 1889.
3. *The Sundance Gazette*, Oct. 25, 1889.
4. *Big Horn County Rustler*, Aug. 6, 1920, quoting Gebhart.
5. A section is a square mile, 640 acres. The Act did not require potential claimants to live on the land.
6. Richards's diary, Monday, Oct. 19, 1885. This conflicts with Tom's recollections in 1920 and news items from 1885. The 1920 *Rustler* article says Gebhart was working in Cheyenne when Black wrote him to suggest he join the Richards party, and the *Fort Collins Courier*, May 7, 1885, said that Gebhart returned from Cheyenne, not having gone to Dakota, as was reported. "He and C. E. Black will leave with a party for northwestern Wyoming in a few days." Yet Richards's diary, Sunday, May 10, 1885, says, "Laid over in Denver. Tom Gebhardt joined the party." Tom might have returned to Denver. Not that it makes much difference.

Tom was employed in Cheyenne two years later at Asa Shinn Mercer's *Northwestern Live Stock Journal*, according to the *Fort Collins Courier*, March 18, 1886.

A discrepancy that does matter concerns what Tom did the winter of 1885-86. Richards's diary, Oct. 19, 1885, says: "Settled up [the boys] in evening, agreeing to have their checks sent to them at Fort Collins." An account by H. R. Ridgely in the *Basin Republican*, June 30, 1911, claims Gebhart stayed at Red Bank that winter. In fact, it was Coleman. Gebhart was part owner of the *Republican* at that time.

The Ridgely account also says Tom was in charge of the ditch most of the time, and that there were 45 men working on it; this high number seems hard to believe. The article unfortunately contains numerous errors, such as Red Bank being the first Post Office in the basin.

7. *Fort Collins Courier*, Dec. 17, 1885.
8. Letters from Mrs. Richards, WSA.
9. Ditch claim #4682, May 24, 1889, 123-124, Johnson County misc records E, copy at Washakie County Courthouse, Worland, Wyoming.
10. Lylas Skovgard, *Basin City: The First County Seat in the Big Horn Basin*; Basin, Wyoming, 1896-1918. 2nd ed. (Basin: Timber-trails, 1988), 126.
11. Hyattville History Committee, *Paintrock Tales and Bonanza Trails*, July 2008, courtesy of Big Horn County Library.
12. The sisters were Callie Donahue of Hyattville and Mrs. Jennie Carothers of Ten Sleep; the brothers were James and Eldridge Hatten of Hyattville. They were from Pocahontas County, Ohio, and Tom and Sallie returned to Jackson, Ohio, for the wedding. *Paintrock Tales*.
13. Per *Sun* Feb. 10, *Boomerang* Feb. 2; dates of later sources give 1891 or 1892. Johnson in Jan 12 *Boomerang*.
14. *Big Horn County Rustler*, Aug. 6, 1920.

Page 3

1. No issues of either paper survive from this period, so advertising inches cannot be compared. By 1893 *Bonanza* would have had more businesses than it did in 1890, when the *Rustler's* pages carried a few local ads and many from the towns noted above, but the latter probably outnumbered the former.
2. *Sun-Leader* 8/12/95
3. Tynan seems to have moved too. "Thomas T. Tynan, one of best educated men in state. Running for state superintendent of schools." *Otto Courier*, Oct. 1, 1898. Also *Sheridan Enterprise*, Dec. 12, 1922.

4. O.T. Gebhart to William A. Richards, Aug. 14, 1895, letter, box 2, RG 0001.14 Governor William A. Richards Records, WSA.
5. Daily edition, Aug. 19, 1885.
6. Reprints in the *Boomerang*, Aug. 10, Sept. 26.

Page 4

1. Wyoming State Archives MSS 274.
2. *Sun-Leader*, Oct. 23, 1897.
3. nysun. com and other sources.
4. One latter-day basin historian says says Daggett was the *Sun's* assistant city editor. Marvin B. Rhodes, "The Road of Yesteryear," *Annals of Wyoming*, V. 24 No. 2, July 1952, 77. And Daggett discussed its publisher with Richards in 1897: Tom F. Daggett to William A. Richards, Oct. 27, 1897, letter, box 2, RG0001.14 Governor William A. Richards Records, WSA.
5. Harriett De Barthe's memoir.
6. Ibid.
7. Aug. 9, 1889.
8. Sept. 7, 1889.
9. Harrett De Barthe's memoir.
10. *Boomerang*, Oct. 7, 1887.

Page 5

1. Feb. 11.
2. *Worland Grit*, Aug. 5, 1909.
3. Library of Congress, Edison Sheet Music Collection, 1830-1958, www.loc.gov/item/2023792026, accessed May 5, 2024.
4. measuringworth.com purchasing power calculator
5. Merris C. Barrow of *Bill Barlow's Budget*, Apr. 11, 1888.
6. *The Big Horn Sentinel*, Apr. 7, 1888.
7. Lawrence M. Woods, *Wyoming's Big Horn Basin to 1901: A Late Frontier*, (Spokane: The Arthur H. Clark Company, 1997), 174, 176.
8. *The Rustler*, June 1, 1889, courtesy of the Fremont County Library.

Page 6

1. *The Big Horn County Rustler*, Nov. 3, 1904.
2. Microfilms at Coe Library, University of Wyoming.

Page 7

1. *The Big Horn Sentinel*, July 27, 1889, said Gebhart was editor. By Sept. 14 it had De Barthe as editor.
2. Deduced from multiple sources. Daggett in his 1904 article says that a couple of weeks before his arrival, De Barthe had switched his political allegiance. The switch occurred in the summer of 1890. (See p. 9 of this document.) The *Sheridan Enterprise* of July 29, 1893, said Daggett had editorial charge for "the past two years and a half." That would place the switch in late January 1890, probably too soon. Joe had only started the paper in June 1889, and might not have been in a position to hire anyone yet. If Daggett had been at the *Rustler* then, why would Joe have needed to hire Gebhart as editor pro tem? Daggett is consistent in his math, however: the 1889 date is supported by his February 1895 letter to Richards (Tom F. Daggett to William A. Richards, Feb. 15, 1895, letter, box 3, RG0001.14 Governor William A. Richards Records, WSA) in which he speaks of living in the basin for six years. In a letter the next year he says seven years. Possibly he was in the basin, just not at the *Rustler*, but in what capacity?
3. Paul Frison, *Calendar of Change*, (Worland: n.p.) 1975, 167. Frison also said Daggett and A.S. Mercer visited his family in 1906, when Paul was 13. Frison can be unreliable, but despite his young age his story makes some sense.

Page 8

1. *Sun* Apr. 26, 1890, *Carbon County Journal*, Apr. 12, 1890, reprinted from the *Leader*.

Page 9

1. Woods, 165.
2. *Boomerang*, Jan. 7, 1891.
3. About \$83,000 in 2022 dollars, per Measuringworth.com purchasing power calculator.
4. *Herald* Aug. 7, *Enterprise* Aug. 9.
5. Reprinted in the Jan. 8, 1891 issue of the *Bulletin*.
6. *Republican*, Nov. 11.

7. Rhodes, "The Road to Yesteryear," 72, 77.
- Page 10
1. Tom F. Daggett to William A. Richards, Oct. 27, 1897, letter, box 2, RG0001.14 Governor William A. Richards Records, WSA.
 2. Various accounts, mostly obituaries.
 3. Wikipedia.
 4. *Grit*, Nov. 5, 1908.
 5. Reprinted in *Sheridan Enterprise*, Nov. 15.
 6. *Park County Enterprise*, Nov. 16, 1910.
 7. Nov. 17.
 8. Frison, *Calendar of Change*, 167. Daggett began editing the *Grit* in 1906, so the date could be right.
 9. Renée Jean, "Wyoming Historian Works to Reveal Inspiration For Owen Wister's Mysterious 'Virginian,'" *Cowboystatedaily.com*, Jan. 14, 2024, accessed May 8, 2024.
 10. *Billy LeRoy, the Colorado Bandit; Or, The King of American History* (Franklin Square, NY: R. K. Fox), 1881. Fox was publisher of the *Police Gazette*.
 11. *The Outlaw Brothers, Frank and Jesse James*, (New York: Richard K. Fox), 1881. Both books are listed on Google books, accessed May 5, 2024.
 12. *Sundance Gazette*, July 3, 1891; *Wyoming Weekly Republican*, July 1, 1891.
 13. *Newcastle Journal*, Jan. 8, 1892.
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1. Dec. 29, 1893.
 2. *Laramie Weekly Sentinel*, July 7, 1894.
 3. *Boomerang*, July 11, 1895.
 4. *Crook Co. Monitor*, Feb. 12, 1896.
 5. *Laramie Republican*, July 13, 1898, from *Crook County Monitor*.
 6. *Wyoming Industrial Journal*, June 1, 1900. "Basin City" became "Basin" when it was incorporated in 1902. <https://www.thetownofbasin.com>, accessed June 17, 2024.
- In 1900 the front page banner of the *Big Horn County Rustler* stated it was published in "Basin." But newspapers including the *Basin Republican* and the *Rustler* itself continued to call it Basin City off and on into the 1920s.
7. The Panic of 1893 in the spring led to a depression, but reasons for the hiatus are unknown.
- Page 12
1. William A. Richards Family Papers, ACC 118, American Heritage Center, University of Wyoming (AHC)
 2. *Boomerang*, Oct. 22, 1894. Note that plural "papers." Did Payton ask the rancher which papers? The *Rustler* isn't mentioned, and there were also the *Paint Rock Record* and *Otto Courier*.
 3. Tom F. Daggett to William A. Richards, Feb. 15, 1895, letter, box 3, RG0001.14 Governor William A. Richards Records, WSA.
 4. Tom F. Daggett to William A. Richards, Jan. 14, 1895, letter, box 3, RG0001.14 Governor William A. Richards Records, WSA.
 5. A. A. Conant to William A. Richards, Jan. 18, 1895, letter, box 2, RG0001.14 Governor William A. Richards Records, WSA.
 6. Woods, 174.
- Page 13
1. Daggett to Richards, Feb. 15, 1895.
- Page 14
1. Reprinted in the *Budget*, Mar. 27, 1895.
- Page 15
1. Aug. 6, 1920.
 2. *Cody Enterprise*, June 15, 1923. More about this story is in "William A. Richards and the Battle for Big Horn County.pdf" on WilliamARichards.com.
 3. Aug. 6, 1920.
 4. *Paintrock Tales*.
 5. *Cheyenne Daily Sun*, Mar. 13, 1887; *Cheyenne Daily Leader*, Apr. 28, 1889.
- Page 16
1. *Cheyenne Sun*, Jan. 23, 1889, has a poem presented by Magill at a pioneers' banquet.
 2. *Daily Leader*, Apr. 28, 1889.
 3. Feb. 8.
 4. *Wyoming Weekly Republican*, Sundance, June 11, 1890.
 5. Sept. 27, 1890.
 6. *Sun*, Jan. 29, 1891.
 7. Vera Saban, "Joe Magill, Promotion Man," *Real West*, Apr. 1984, courtesy of the Hot Springs County Historical Society.
 8. *Ibid*
 9. E. T. Payton, *Mad Men*, Payson's self-published biography, 1923, 11–12. Also *Thermopolis Record*, Sept. 30, 1920. He is listed as Circulator beginning Aug. 5, 1890.
- Page 17
1. Payton, *Mad Men*, 11–12.
 2. *Boomerang*, Oct. 22, 1894.
 3. The Act was an amendment to HR 53-5575, Aug. 18, 1894, Ch. 301, Sec. 4, 28 Stat. 422, 43 U.S.C. 641.
 4. Payton, *Mad Men*, 11–12.
 5. *Boomerang*, Nov. 10.
- Page 18
1. *Sun*, Nov. 13, 1894.
 2. Reprinted in the *Sun*, Dec. 1.
 3. *The Daily Boomerang*, Nov. 10, 1894.
 4. *Boomerang*, Jan. 17, 1895. The exact name of the publication is uncertain; *Cheyenne Democrat* is in italics per Rick Ewig, "E. T. Payton, Savior or Madman?," *Annals of Wyoming* 79:1, Winter 2007.
 5. *Mad Men*, 15.
 6. Apr. 6.
 7. *Mad Men*, 19.
- Page 19
1. President Theodore Roosevelt to Secretary of the Interior E.A. Hitchcock, Mar 1, 1907, Theodore Roosevelt Papers.
 2. According to Magill himself in Saban, "Joe Magill." That the robbery happened is confirmed by *The Fremont Clipper*, Nov. 9, 1894.
- Joe was Thermopolis's second Justice of the Peace according to Tacetta B. Walker, *Stories of Early Days in Wyoming: Big Horn Basin*. (Casper, WY: Prairie Publishing Co., 1936), 143.
3. Saban, "Joe Magill," possibly quoting one of the three women interviewed.
 4. *Mad Men*, 7.
 5. *Ibid.*, 24-25
 6. E.T. Payton, *Behind the Scenes at Evanston*, self-published, 1923, 6.
 7. *Wyoming Derrick*, June 17.
 8. Payton, *Evanston*, 6.
- Page 20
1. Saban, "Joe Magill"
 2. *Big Horn County Rustler*, Aug. 6, 1920.
 3. Aug. 26.
 4. Oct. 24, 1896, Warren papers, AHC.
- Page 22
1. Mar. 31
 2. Apr. 8.
 3. Tom F. Daggett to William A. Richards, Aug. 4, 1897, letter, box 2, RG0001.14 Governor William A. Richards Records, WSA.
- Page 23
1. The quote is known only from a reprint in the *Wind River Mountaineer*, Dec. 2, 1896, copied from the *Sheridan Enterprise*. It begins, "The intelligent and gentlemanly editor of the *Otto Courier* describes his beloved brother scribe of the *Basin City Herald* in the following courteous and endearing terms." If reasons were given, they weren't picked up.
 2. *People's Voice*, Aug. 21, 1897.

3. Tom F. Daggett to William A. Richards, Oct. 27, 1897, letter, box 2, RG0001.14 Governor William A. Richards Records, WSA.
4. Sept. 13, 1900, issue, the only one known to exist from this period.
5. Gebhart: *Wyoming Dispatch*, Cody, Feb. 28, 1902; Daggett, *The Cody Enterprise*, Feb. 6. Issues of the *Big Horn County News* before Sept. 1902 are not available on wyomingnewspapers.org as of this writing except for several in 1898, which do not mention Daggett or Gebhart.

6. *Thermopolis Record*, Aug. 22, 1912.

Page 24

1. *Big Horn County News*, Jan. 10, 1903.
2. Jan. 24.
3. *Wyoming Tribune*, Aug. 20, 1904.
4. Daggett was reported to be taking "Earl Houx's place as printer on A. A. Anderson's paper" beginning next week. *Big Horn County News*, July 1, 1905.
5. Jan. 8, 1906.
6. C. F. Robertson, *Historical Review: Development of the Worland Valley*, (Washakie County, Wyoming: Daily News), 1941, 37.

Page 25

1. *Worland Grit*, March 8, 1906.

Page 26

1. Mar. 14, 1906.
2. Apr. 18, 1906, quoting issue of Mar. 22.
3. *Grit*, Apr. 19.
4. *Basin Republican*, Apr. 19, 06.
5. *Cody Enterprise*, Apr. 26, 1906.

Page 27

1. Nov. 15
2. Jan. 10, 1907
3. Apr. 11.
4. *Grit*, May 30, Aug. 1, 1807
5. Feb. 27, 1908.
6. May 21, 1908.
7. Jan. 21, 1909.

Page 28

1. *Wyoming Tribune*, Dec. 17, 1910.
2. *Ibid.*, Aug. 3, 1908.
3. Robertson, 53.
4. *Grit*, Feb. 25, reprinted from *Rocky Mountain News*, Denver.
5. Alan A. Beetle, "Bert C. Buffum—Pioneer Range Manager,"

Journal of Range Management (University of Arizona: Society for Range Management), 5(2), 81-83, 1952. <https://journals.uair.arizona.edu/index/pht/jrm/article/viewFile/4475/4086>, accessed May 16, 2024.

6. *Rustler*, Nov. 3, 1904.
7. Oct. 20.

Page 29

1. As of March 10, 1910 issue.
2. *Grit*, Aug. 25.

Page 30

1. Nov. 18.
2. Nov. 4.
3. Multiple papers.
4. Aug. 4, 1910.
5. In the Nov. 1, 1910, issue the masthead says that it's "Published by The Basin Publishing Co. Lewis & Coons." The editor was probably A. W. Coons, who began to be identified in the masthead as editor a few months later.
6. Nov. 4.

Page 31

1. Nov. 11. The *Republican*, published by Phillips & Co., was begun in May 1905 in response to the *Rustler* being purchased by Democrats. The *Rustler* announced the new management in its issue of May 18.
2. The identity of the editor was not found by this author; the paper's new proprietor was Reyn Leedom, who was congratulated by Gebhart in the October 14 issue.

Page 32

1. Nov. 25.
2. Nov. 16.

Page 33

1. Nov. 16.
2. Nov. 17.
3. Nov. 18.
4. Dec. 17.

Page 34

1. Nov. 17.

Page 35

1. Nov. 18.
2. Jan 27, 1898.
3. Apr. 10, 1897.

Page 36

1. Jan. 3, 1902 *Dispatch*, letter from W.H. Hunt, president.
2. *Big Horn River Pilot*, Jan. 19, 1898.
3. Saban, "Joe Magill."
4. Per masthead. The *Shoshone Valley News* was apparently founded after Cody City lost the bid for county seat, since the only known surviving issue, No. 2, is dated Dec. 3. Issue #1 might have been before the election, but that seems unlikely, and no other paper mentions the new paper until December. Daggett in the Nov. 3, 1904, *Rustler* said of Frank I. Rue: "Coming to the basin when youth made the future bright, his were the hands that pitched the first tent on the site where Cody now stands, his the mind that portrayed to the world through the columns of the Shoshone Valley News the first newspaper published on the banks of the Shoshone River, the vision of W. F. Cody."
5. Sept. 27, 1902. Neg. #21421, Frison Collection, WSA.
6. *News*, Nov. 11. Freeman wrote on Oct. 11, 1902, that Gebhart was with the paper three years, but that doesn't add up. The earliest available issue is Sept. 6, and Tom is editor until October 11, 1902.
7. *Rustler*, Aug. 6, 1920, which says 1904.
8. April 11, 1905.
9. *Basin Republican*, July 3, 1908.
10. *Rustler*, Aug. 6, 1920.
11. Ads in the *Rustler* and the *Basin Republican*, in the latter as Mrs. S. L. Gebhart and in the *Rustler* as Mrs. O. T. Gebhart.
12. *Rustler*, Aug. 6, 1920.
13. *Ibid.*
14. *Midwest Review*; Skovgard, *Basin City*, 126
15. *Paintrock Tales and Bonanza Trails*; obituary in July 13, 1938, *Basin Republican-Rustler*; email from Woods, Dec. 18, 2013.
16. Jan. 19, 1898; Feb. 15, 1898; Mar. 2, 1898 and beyond.
17. Jan. 3, 1898.

Page 37

1. *Wyoming Derrick*, May 26.
2. *Sundance Gazette*, Sept. 16.
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