



Edith and Alec slogged and slid through the muddy ruts that traversed the foothills of the Big Horns between Sheridan and Buffalo. This 2013 shot was taken from Massacre Hill above the old road. Credit: Jerry D. Sanders.

CHAPTER 3

WILD WEST

APRIL 23 TO APRIL 25, 1911

ARRIVING IN WYOMING – SHERIDAN – BUFFALO

Edith and Alec's train trip ended in Sheridan, thirty-five miles north of Buffalo. From there, the Chicago, Burlington & Quincy turned north to Montana to meet the transcontinental Northern Pacific. The Healys, however, were headed south to Buffalo so made the last leg of their honeymoon in a canvas-topped taxi after a heavy spring rain that resulted in a frightening five-hour skid up and down the steep foothills of the mountains. Today, even in a rainstorm, the trip only takes about twenty-five minutes on I-90.

Edith mentions that Alec got off the train at Clearmont to talk to the station master about whether trunks and packages they mailed had arrived. Buffalo and Clearmont were both established on Clear Creek and small ranches were built along the creek between Buffalo and Clearmont and beyond. Although the Healy Brothers Ranch was closer to Buffalo, they shipped by rail from Clearmont, not Sheridan. In the spring, the brothers sent wool east to the mills in Rhode Island and Massachusetts; in the fall they separated the mountain-fattened lambs, some to go to the markets in the Midwest, usually Omaha, the rest to be wintered in the lower-elevation rangelands by the ranch.

The Sheridan Inn
Warner & Canfield, Proprietors
Sheridan, Wyo.
April 23, 1911

Dear Mother.

Well here we are so far. Arrived at three o'clock this afternoon.

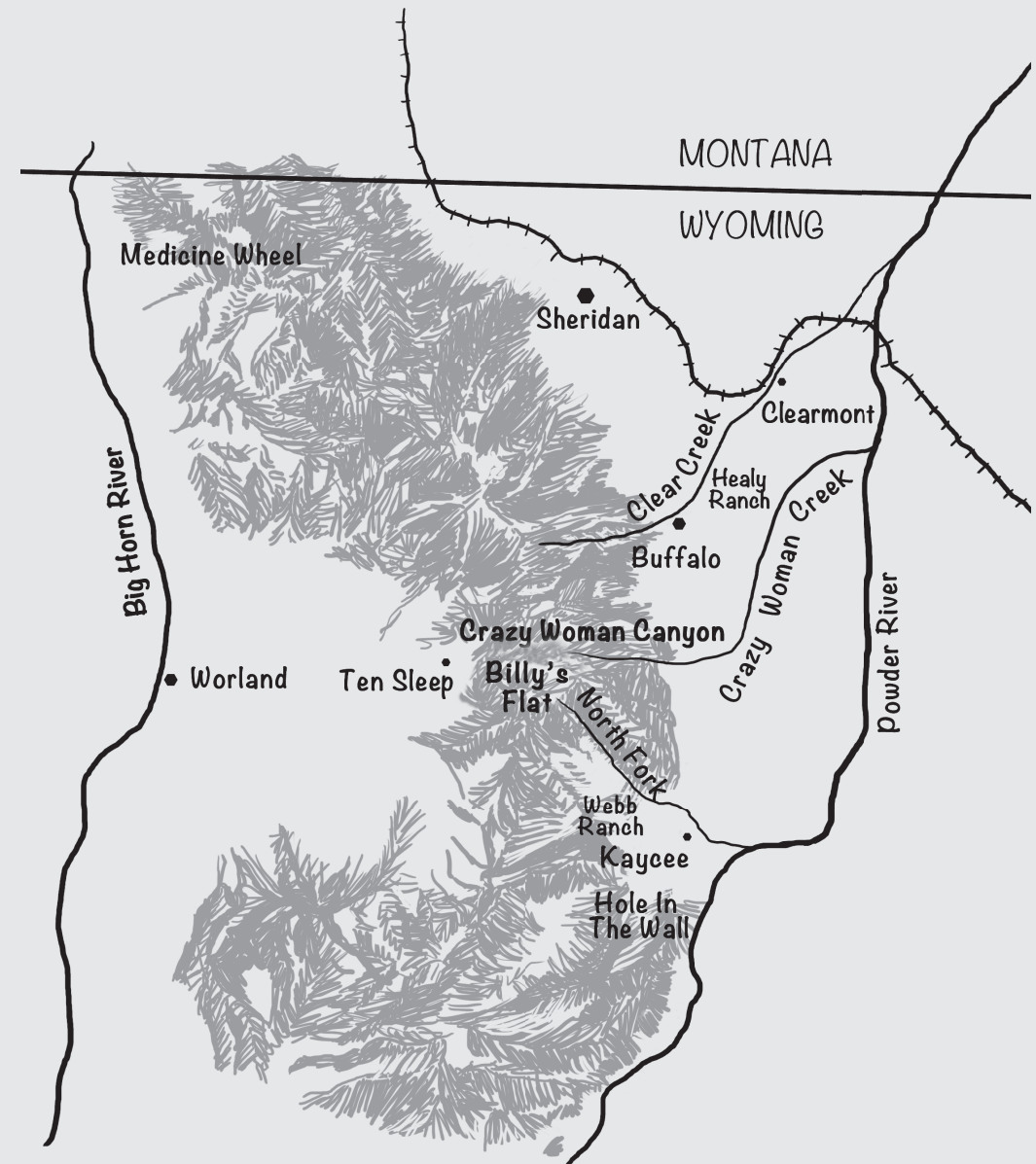
I felt pretty well when I wrote that letter to you that I mailed at St. Joseph Mo., but after that I felt sort of horrid. We had our lunch there at St. J. but they put on a diner at night. Alec could see I didn't feel very well, so instead of asking me every few minutes how I felt (you know how mad that makes me) suggested that as we had a fifty minute wait in Lincoln, Nebraska (Bryan's town³³) we take a cab at the station and drive up to the Lincoln Hotel and get something to eat and I wouldn't have to eat in the diner.

The cab to the hotel was a joke for as soon as we turned the corner at the station we saw the hotel, about two blocks from the station. We told the waiter how much time we had and he hustled and we had a fine meal which I could enjoy.

When we got back to the station we ran across a man Alec knew named Meyers. He used to have a Drug store in Buffalo. I sent him an invitation. He and his wife went fifty miles up the road on our train. Both about our age and very pleasant. She said she knew I'd like Buffalo. This morning I felt absolutely the limit. I got dressed while the train waited at the station. Alec had grapefruit and coffee sent in but it was all I could do to swallow it. Sleeping cars do finish me. Later in the morning I began to revive, and by noon, when I could get out on the platform at each station for some air I was all right. Had a good dinner and felt real well when we landed here.

I came right up to the room and got off my clothes and took a nap while Alec called up his brother to see if he could do anything for him here, and tried to fix up our trunks to go over tomorrow. He got off at Clearmont and saw the station agent, who said no trunks had arrived yet but two express packages,

CALLING BUFFALO HOME



Map: Meagan Healy

one from Boston and the other from Wash. D. C. Perhaps that is the stove, but I don't know what the other is. By the way, will you look up what people in Buffalo have sent me. I tore up the list and now I can't remember what name went with what present and when I meet them I would like to know.

After I had my nap, Alec came up and said he had just met a man whom he knew, who said his Mother knew a lady who knew me. I met him after dinner. Fine looking chap, whose name is Turnbull and his Mother is a great friend of Mrs Fairbanks up to our church. Isn't that funny. His mother is coming out here this summer.

Now about the country. If I hadn't seen Utah²⁴ it might be an awful shock to me. I know you will have a large sized fit over it. Stretches of sandy hills with just sagebrush and dried up grass.

However when we struck this town, those blessed mountains loomed up. They are magnificent, snow capped and look like Switzerland. We are, or rather Buffalo is, at the foot of them, and I know I shall never get tired of looking at them.

We may not be able to get out of here tomorrow. Looks tonight like a big rain storm. I shall take my little black hat out of the trunk and put my best one on if it rains. However if it rains too hard, the autos refuse to run, so we will be stuck here indefinitely. They need rain so, what will be Alec's loss in one way, will be his gain in another. We have come home with \$350.00 besides the \$200.00 his father gave him.

Ever since we struck the border of Wyoming he has watched each expression on my face. The poor boy is so afraid I'm not going to like his country. It was actually pathetic to see him. He needn't worry for I'm perfectly willing to take what goes with him, sagebrush and all.

Affec.
E.S.H.

The Occidental Hotel
Warren & Co., Props.
Buffalo, Wyo.,
April 25, 1911

My dear Mother.

Well I am actually in Buffalo at last and I know you are anxious to hear all about it from the very beginning, so I'll start there.

My last letter was from Sheridan saying it looked like rain and we didn't know whether we would be stuck there or not. Well it rained all night quite hard but it cleared in the morning so we started.

Six of us. Another girl and her husband, two other fellows, Alec and the chauffeur. It is, in ordinary weather and with ordinary roads, a two hour and a quarter ride.

Mother, never in my whole life have I had anything that could touch it. It certainly was a red letter day in my existence. In my wildest dreams I never imagined anything like it.

In other words I think if I thought I was going to have another like it, I'd lay right down and cheerfully die (provided Alec did the same) rather than go through that experience a second time.

To begin with, and end with, the roads were a mire of slippery mud and up and down curved and hilly places. The way that car skidded was enough to make your hair stand on end. By skidding, I mean slewing around in the mud when the brake has no hold on it. We ploughed through mud, up sides of hills, slipped and slid across bridges that had no side rails. In fact did everything but upset and that is what we (I anyway) expected any moment. When two hours of this had passed I thought to myself, well I don't believe I can stand much more and I asked how far we were from Sheridan. Twelve Miles!!!! was the answer. Forty miles between Sheridan and Buffalo and we had come twelve in two hours. Six miles an hour in an auto and we hadn't stopped once. Well I said to myself, I'm in the hands of Providence and I've got to take what's coming

to me and if I am in need of training in Western nerve, here's where I get it good and plenty.

There were two places where I thought we were gone sure. The first was where we were in a deep ditch like place. We tried to go ahead but the machine stuck so the driver backed and in backing the car skidded and went along backwards at an angle of forty-five degrees. One more degree and we would have gone over. Why we didn't I don't know but the car righted itself. The other place was when we were nearly in to Buffalo. You climb a long succession of hills and as we were almost at the top of the last one, it struck a slippery place and began to slide backwards across the road toward a ravine. It was there the other girl let out a scream. I think I should have, had I been on the side of the ravine. As it was I had all the sensations I wanted. The brakes caught and stopped us just a foot from the edge!! I said in a firm decided voice, I am going to get out and walk up this hill even if I get covered with mud. You should have seen those men jump. They were all dying to do it but each one didn't want the other to think him a coward so they didn't suggest it themselves but I never saw men so eager "to oblige a lady."

It took us five hours to make the trip, and when I happened to look down from the windows of the hotel on to the top of the canvas cover over the machine, I found it was thick with mud, so you can imagine what we went through to throw mud that height. That was the worst trip the driver ever had and he has been making trips every day this winter.

I think we girls behaved remarkably well. She only screamed once and I not at all. I never spoke from the time we started until we landed, so when Edith is silent five hours you may know there is something doing.

Lame and sore! My gracious when we weren't being flung from side to side we were being tossed up in the air, hitting our heads constantly against the canvas covering! Alec says in all his life he has never had such a strain on the nerves.

This is the day after and all the effect it has left on me is

that I am tired. I am going to bed now and will mail this, writing you the rest tomorrow.

Affectionately,
Edith

Alec has gone to the ranch and out on the range tonight and I am alone. He hated to go but it was necessary. This is what I have to get used to so I might as well begin.

Everyone says that's a fine ride when the roads are in ordinary condition, so don't imagine you will have to go through anything like that when you come out here, unless you choose the rainy season as I did. We should have gotten off at Clearmont and driven over.

You were the only woman I could think of who could have stood it without yelling. I don't think I could again.

CHAPTER 4

FIRST IMPRESSIONS

APRIL 26, 1911

BUFFALO – MEETING BROTHER AND SISTER-IN-LAW

Patrick, Jr., often called Patsy, like his father, and his wife, Mary, welcomed the newlyweds with dinner at their home on Wednesday evening, Edith and Alec's second night in Buffalo. Edith mentions the couple's two children, Patricia, 6, and Patrick Healy III, whose first birthday was the next Sunday. A son born in Buffalo on December 18, 1906, had died shortly after birth. Consequently, in 1910 Mary had traveled to Los Angeles to deliver Patrick, III, and returned to Los Angeles later in 1911 to deliver their last child, Stuart Sedwick Healy, on December 26.

In telling her mother about the welcome dinner, Edith mentions the bouillon cups and plates that Mary used, "like the ones that Helen did for me." Helen Healy Lynch's wedding gift to the couple was a set of white *Hutschenreuther Selb* Bavaria porcelain that she hand painted with gold bands. She initialed an "H" in gold on the serving dishes. Helen and her husband, John, manager of the Healy Hotel in Ogden, lived near her parents' ornate Victorian home. Helen kept a studio for her work in the third-floor turret with light from three directions. Her oil paintings, water colors, fancy needlework, and painted china were displayed throughout the nearly six thousand square foot, four-bedroom, gabled house.

**Occidental Hotel
Buffalo, Wyoming
April 26, 1911**



Freighters haul goods and barrels of water up Buffalo's Main Street. This photograph, probably taken from the bridge over Clear Creek, dates to the 1905-1910 era. Credit: Johnson County Library.

Dear Mother,

This is the next morning and I am sitting under a cottonwood tree on the bank of Clear Creek, which is rushing by me, and straight in front of me are the most wonderful mountains, all snow capped. I haven't gotten over the surprise in their beauty yet. Do you remember our ride into Chamonix, the last part of it, with that range of snow capped mountains ending in Mt. Blanc. Those with the glaciers down the sides. Well, this reminds me of them. These mountains are just as beautiful, leaving out Mt. Blanc. No, I won't say that either, for over to the right I have just discovered a new high peak. There are foothills in front of them, so you don't see such an expanse of snow as Mt. Blanc. They say here they are snow capped even in summer. Imagine what it will be to be up among them this summer.

Well, my last letter was telling you of the ride over, but I only told you the disagreeable part. I didn't tell you how beautiful the scenery was. Hill after hill without a tree and some of the hills were bright red in color, just like those pictures you see of the Grand Canyon or the Colorado. Such interesting scenery. Nothing like the southern part of the state that we struck first.

I certainly am pleasantly surprised with it all. I don't want to say too much, because I don't want you to be disappointed when you see it. All the trees there are, are cottonwoods and grow along the edge of the creek and into the town. The town was put here on account of the creek, as water is so scarce in this country. Well, we landed here at 1 o'clock, had dinner, and I went directly upstairs for a nap. The hotel is a nice clean looking place on the main street, right beside the creek. It seems to be run by a couple of men who look like college boys. I should say one is about 28, the other 26. O yes, there's another older one who doesn't look so like a college man, and he is about 35, I guess. He told me this morning he came from Omaha, had only been here a year, but wouldn't go back for the world. Going upstairs that day after dinner, Alec introduced me to a mighty nice looking fellow named Allen who informed

me he came from Gloucester. The next morning a young fellow stopped and spoke to Alec, who asked him to sit down and have breakfast with us. I don't know whether it was intentional on Alec's part, but I certainly was nonplussed when this one said he came from Providence. There certainly are a lot of Easterners in this country. The Gloucester man said he never was going back to stay. That fellow Turnbull, whom I met in Sheridan, who came from Boston, said the same thing. I guess it's in the air.

I told Alec one good thing that that ride did for me, was to make me contented to stay put for awhile and not try to get back home while the roads are like this.

Just after I started to lie down, a knock on the door, and a lovely lavender primrose in a brass jardiniere was handed in with a card from Mrs Patrick Healy, Jr. Alec wanted to call up his brother, so I told him to go down and do it, and thank Mary for the plant and find out what time they would like us to come over. I didn't know whether she had forgotten or not, that she had invited us to dinner the day we arrived. I got the letter in Boston and answered it in Atlanta.

He came back and said we were expected at 6 o'clock. He then went and got the mail. I had two nice fat letters from you and a D.A.R. one, and the pictures. I had my brown suit in the suitcase, so Alec took it across the street and they had it pressed and brought back by 4 o'clock. He went to the Express Office and saw your package there, but didn't take it, as we have no place to put it, but brought another one. It was a beautiful tall dish or vase-like thing, with a silver ladle. It is all open work silver and on a silver standard, and inside, with a half-an-inch edge showing, is an etched glass bowl. It would be lovely for berries, or you could use it for flowers. Really, it is a stunner. It was sent from Omaha to 1876 Beacon Street, returned to Omaha, and sent here. It came from a Mrs H. G. Cook. Alec nearly dropped dead when he saw it. It is from a man who has sheep and they are constantly having fights, he says, over the range. It is (Cook's) sheep that are always butting into theirs, etc.

Mary was extremely pleasant. Looks just about like her picture. I don't think Alec's brother looks like him at all, and yet when I saw him in the street yesterday, I could see the family resemblance in the way he stood and walked, and something too, in the general build. But nothing alike in features. We had a very nice dinner. Soup in bouillon cups like those Helen did for me, also plates like them. I admired them, and she told me Mrs Healy gave them to her.

The children are healthy and bright looking. We left at 8:30 as I was rather tired. Came home in the pouring rain.

The next morning Alec took me to the bank, and I deposited my check and he gave me power of attorney over his account there. It is a national bank, so you can draw checks on it. Then he had to get into his ranch clothes and start out for the sheep with his brother.

When he was dressed, he came in my room, and when he walked over toward me, and knelt down by my chair to say good-bye, I felt as if I were in some kind of a play with costumes and that I ought to have some lines to say. (It's lucky I didn't have them to say, as it would have been a physical impossibility.) He looked just great in his gray flannel shirt, leather belt, dark blue trousers tucked into high, tan riding boots, with his blue coat over his arm and broad-brimmed hat in his hand. I don't see how the girls out here ever let him get away.

Mary, the other night, said, "I know one young lady here, our music teacher, who is wild to see you. She intended to marry Alec herself, so I guess she won't love you an awful lot." If looks would kill, Mary would have been dead on the spot from the one Alec gave her.

I have seen this wonderful music teacher, and she's very attractive, and a hundred times better looking than I have ever thought of being. She was on the ground too. I wonder how I ever won out.

After Alec went, I tried to pick up things a little, and sat down for awhile to read the new Ladies Home Journal, when a knock came on the door, and there stood Mary and Patricia. I was in my kimono, but thank goodness I had fixed the room

up, so I asked them in. It was about half past eleven, and she said, she wondered if I didn't want to come up and have lunch with her, and eat up what was left of the dinner we had last night. I said yes, if she would be willing for me to leave right afterwards, as I had to write a long letter to you.

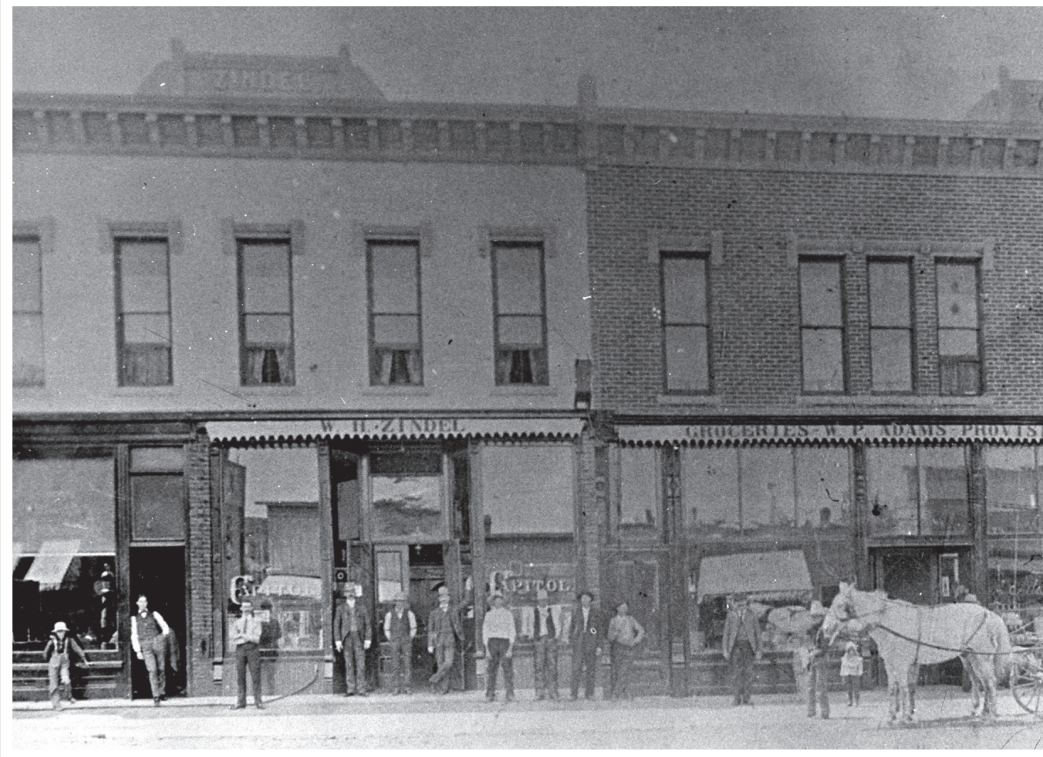
So they waited until I got dressed, and then they had several errands to do, so it was after one when we sat down to lunch. I stayed till about 2:30 and then came back and started my letter. I wanted to lie on the bed and write, so took off my skirt, and slipped on my kimono. A knock on the door, I opened it to find two ladies dressed in their best with their cards in their hands and me in a kimono! I laughed and said, "If you'll just step in the parlor (it was next door to this room) I'll slip on my skirt and be in in just a second."

Apparently they don't have bellboys here. If you want anything, you ring, and the clerk at the desk runs upstairs, three steps at a time, leaving the safe open, etc. and goes and gets what you want. These ladies were Mrs Mather and Mrs Kube, both about my age. Very pleasant and cordial. Wanted me to come right over and see them soon, especially when they found Alec was away, they were very urgent. They made quite a call. When they had gone, I came back, but in slipping off my skirt again, I put it where I could grab it on my way to the door. It is my brown suit and that skirt wrinkles awfully. I don't understand why.

Well, another knock on the door, and I took my time answering, getting properly clothed. This time it was the clerk, and he handed me a card, saying the lady was in the parlor. I wonder if those ladies spoke to him about their predicament when they went downstairs. This was Mrs Langworthy. Alex had said a lot about her, and said she wasn't young nor pretty, but he liked her best of anybody here in town. I had pictured her about 55, rather stout, etc. She's about 35 or 38 and slender. Not pretty, but sweet, and extremely pleasant. She came here as a bride from Buffalo, New York, about eight years ago.

She told me some funny experiences she had. One of them was when they were in the hotel. The old one before this

BUFFALO, WYOMING



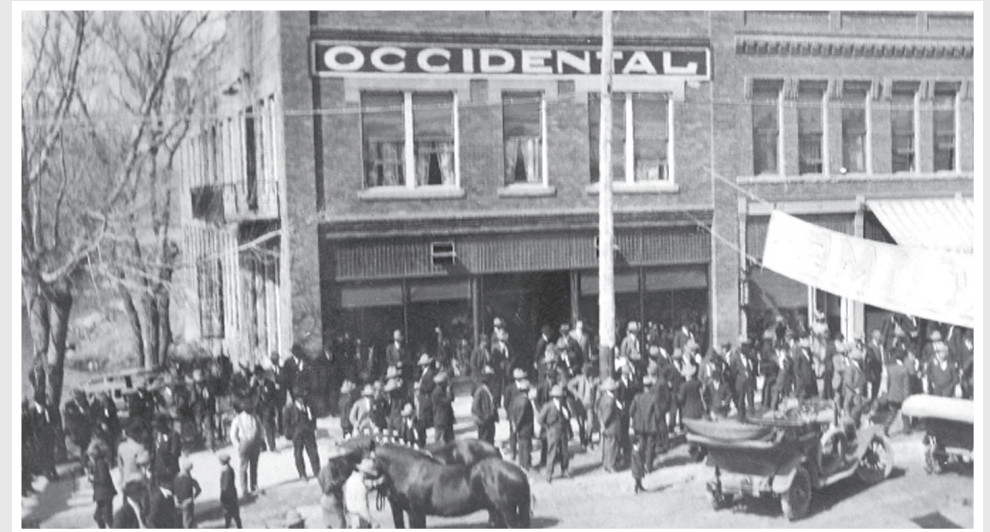
Left: Adams & Young Grocery's delivery buggy waits to be loaded, while a crowd of men seems to have nothing to do but stand and observe at W. H. Zindel's bar and hotel next door. The hotel also had an entrance from the alley for discretion, a herd of elk in a backyard pen, and a reputation for exceptional cleanliness.



Below: Edith wrote several letters from the balcony of the Occidental Hotel. The gathering outside was the 1912 Good Roads Convention, held the weekend before a flash flood in Clear Creek destroyed a large part of downtown. Edith was still in Boston with baby Alec, Jr. during the disaster. All photos credit: Johnson County Library.



Inside Adams & Young grocery store, a gathering place for men to solve the problems of the world, c. 1905-1910.
Credit: Johnson County Library.



new one was built. She had hung her husband's dress suit up against the wall, way in the back of the closet, which was an outside wall. He didn't need to use it for some time, and when she went to get it down, it was frozen solid to the wall! She had to get a lamp and thaw it out and pry it off the wall. It seems that there was a big snow bank on the other side, so that accounts for it some.

As I have been sitting here (I am now back in the hotel again and have had my dinner at noon!) I have seen cowboys dash past and just now, three carts lashed together passed, drawn by six pairs of horses. The first two carts looked like farm wagons, but a prairie schooner brought up the rear. Every man in sight has on either a black or brown sombrero.

After Mrs Langworthy went, I remembered the mail comes in at 4 each day, so I hurried downtown to see if I had any from you. I got stung, only an announcement of Sidney Garrigues' wedding. As I was coming back, met Mary on the street, and then we saw brother-in-law in auto, just in from the ranch. So we got in and sat there while he did his errands, and then he took us for a short spin, bringing me back to the hotel. After supper, I wrote that letter to you, and one to Mary, and then went to bed. I'm so sleepy all the time. They say it's change of air.³⁵ I guess it is. I feel just as I do at the beach the first few days.

This morning after breakfast, I strolled out and found that dandy place I described in the beginning of this letter, then came back for my writing materials. Found a package awaiting me. A present from Mr and Mrs Peter Balden. You know planked steak and fish are quite popular. You cook them, then put them in the oven on a certain kind of wood and finish cooking them. Well, this is a plank with grooves for the gravy to run in so you can get it easily. It has little silver knobs, one on each end (guess they are nickel though, silver might melt.) Then there is a filigree silver open work dish to set it in for the table. Mighty pretty. Has two handles, one on each end. I never saw one before. It came from the jewelry store here. And tied with this up-to-date cotton ribbon like we saw first in Europe.

I have written the three notes of thanks, to Mr Cook, Mr and Mrs Martin Hibbard, and Mr and Mrs Peter Balden. Will you enter these in the book.

It is now 3:30, and I think I have told you everything up to date.

I never saw so many young people in a town. I could count the fingers of one hand, any people over 50. More good looking young men between 20 and 30. When I was passing a stable, there was a fellow there harnessing a couple of horses into a farm wagon. Alec spoke to him. He said after we passed, that's one of our ranch hands. Graduated from the University of Minnesota, I believe. That Mrs Langworthy said during our talk she and her husband had planned a trip around the world in the spring. He is the president of one of the banks here, but a banker in a town of so few people, you wouldn't think could make such a lot of money. She was awfully nice and invited me to come anytime, if only to sit on the piazza and read a book. She's fond of bridge, and as soon as Alex gets back, wants us to come up for a game in the evening. Here I've been here only two days, yet I don't feel lonesome at all. People are so kind.

Before I forget it, I wish you'd send me those fancy cutters for potatoes and vegetables that we got Christmas time at the Mechanic's building and didn't give to the cook. They would be just the thing to dress up a plank steak with.

Mary has lots of dandy books, and I have borrowed one already. The Ordeal of Richard Federal by George Meredith. Alec subscribed for the Thursday and Saturday Transcripts, so I can keep track of what you are doing in Boston. What a long run that play at the Castle Square is having. Hope you go, and also that the girl who wrote it gets something more substantial than praise out of it.

Love to all,

Affect.

E.S.H.

There isn't a house in this town more than one story above the street. I can't get used to it. Everyone stares at me, and whispers to the person with them who I am. Hope they like the looks.