

# NEVADA HISTORICAL SOCIETY QUARTERLY

WILLIAM C. (HILL) BEACHEY  
NEVADA-CALIFORNIA-IDAHO  
STAGECOACH KING



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William C. (Hill) Beachey  
Nevada-California-Idaho Stagecoach King

VICTOR GOODWIN



*—Idaho Historical Society*

**William C (Hill) Beachey as he appeared at the height of his staging operations between northern Nevada and southeast Idaho.**

# WILLIAM C. (HILL) BEACHEY

## NEVADA-CALIFORNIA-IDAHO

### STAGECOACH KING

Surprisingly little effective, sustained research has ever been done, or informed, knowledgeable material prepared or presented, on the often enigmatic, always dramatic life of William (Hill) Beachey.

The neglect of such an important figure in the early histories of three important western States is in itself somewhat of an enigma, as Hill Beachey in his time stood tallest of all in the staging annals of northern California, southwest Idaho, and northern Nevada. Beachey's Railroad Stage Lines enterprise of the late 1860's and early 1870's, together with his antecedant or ancillary ventures in this field, was probably the most important single factor in the early growth and development of the territories it served. This was particularly true of northern Nevada and southern Idaho, whose histories of settlement early in the period of the white man's tenure in both areas were closely entwined. Both sections owed at least a major part of their dramatic flowering during the period 1864-1873 to Hill Beachey's energetic and visionary efforts toward linking together this widely scattered group of small straggling settlements and raw mining camps, lost in the immense vastness of the sagebrush plains, towering mountains and salt deserts of northern Nevada and south Idaho.

Perhaps some of the present ignorance of Hill Beachey and his enterprises can be ascribed to the reticence of the man himself. A taciturn individual of few words, often likened in his mature years to Ulysses S. Grant, not only in appearance but also in mannerisms, Beachey was more given to action than talk, especially talk about himself.<sup>1</sup> In 1869 Thomas Donaldson described him as "a thickset man of 50 years, with brown hair and blue eyes . . . He was a man of intense energy, indomitable when aroused."<sup>2</sup> As we shall see in the narration of Beachey's relentless pursuit of the murderers of his friend Lloyd Magruder across Idaho and Oregon Territories and throughout the length of northern California in 1863, the Donaldson description was, if anything, an understatement.

#### EARLY LIFE

This portion of Hill Beachey's life and times is particularly devoid of accurate factual material. Had James F. Abel, of the pioneer Paradise

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<sup>1</sup>Victor Goodwin and John A. Hussey, "Transportation Development between Nevada, California and Southwest Idaho," pp. 113-153, *History of the Sawtooth Range*, by the same authors, San Francisco, 1965.

<sup>2</sup>Thomas Donaldson, *Idaho of Yesterday*. Caldwell, Idaho, 1941.

Valley, Nevada family who knew Beachey well, been spared to this vale of tears a few more years, in all probability some badly needed light would have been shed upon this and other arcane chapters of the Beachey story, as Mr. Abel proposed writing a biography of his old family friend. However, such was not to be. The best Mr. Abel could do in his allotted span was to turn out in March 1952 an invaluable 13-page monograph, titled *Hill Beachey and the Railroad Stage Lines*, which is now deposited in the Nevada Historical Society's files at Reno, and which was duly consulted by this writer in the preparation of the instant paper.

There has been some confusion relative to Hill Beachey's birthplace. Henry Angew, the author of a recent magazine article on Beachey and the Magruder murders,<sup>3</sup> mistakenly ascribes the man's beginnings to the State of Missouri. The present writer, in the source previously cited,<sup>4</sup> himself committed the historian's cardinal sin by concluding, in the absence of more concrete information, that Mr. Beachey came from somewhere south of the Mason-Dixon Line, because of his marriage to Margaret Early. Miss Early, Donaldson, Abel, and other sources positively and unequivocally state, was the daughter of snarling, redoubtable old Jubal Anderson Early, who rose to the rank of Lieutenant General in the Confederacy's Army of Northern Virginia during the Civil War. However, as D. S. Freeman's *Lee's Lieutenants* and other reputable reference works on the armies of the Confederate States of America clearly point out, Early never married. Furthermore, he never lived any farther west than the Blue Ridge Mountains of his native Virginia! This writer's sin of inference, then, was a triple one: (1) accepting without further research the premise that Margaret Early was the daughter of Virginian Jubal Early; (2) Ergo, Miss Early was herself a Southerner; and (3) that Hill Beachey, then, was himself probably of Southern abstraction.

The Abel monograph, however, positively dispels all doubt about Hill Beachey's birthplace by citing his obituary in the San Francisco *Evening Bulletin*, as well as drawing upon Mr. Abel's own knowledge of the man's life. According to these sources, Hill Beachey was born in Lebanon, Ohio, about 1819–1820. As was the case with so many fiddle-footed youngsters along the old Northwest Frontier during this time, he left home at an early age—13, in this instance—and went steamboating on the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers.

In 1846, when the Mexican War broke out, according to Abel, young

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<sup>3</sup>Henry T. Angew. "Beachey's Murderous Dream", pp. 38–40, 64–66, *Real West*, vol. VIII, no. 39. Jan. 1965.

<sup>4</sup>Goodwin and Hussey, *op. cit.*, 126.

Beachey followed the northernmost of the two American armies overland through Texas to the Rio Grande, where he baked and sold bread to the soldiers.<sup>5</sup> After the war was over, Beachey went back to steamboating, and in less than two years had achieved the much coveted goal of all good river steamboat men—the lofty status of pilot.<sup>6</sup>

Tiring of steamboats and the river late in 1848, Beachey and three companions started across Mexico to Guaymas, from whence they proposed to sail to the Hawaiian Islands—then known as the Sandwich Islands.<sup>7</sup> While awaiting a ship at Guaymas, the three companions learned of the discovery of gold at Sutter's Mill on California's American River. Proving they were no different than thousands of their contemporaries, the footloose fortune seekers abruptly scuttled all previous plans, and took ship forthwith for San Francisco, arriving there in the spring of 1849.<sup>8</sup>

By 1858, our friend Hill had settled in Marysville, the river town on the Sacramento River which was one of the principal points of departure for the northern Mother Lode gold camps. He married Margaret Early there that year, and shortly thereafter the young couple removed to adjacent Red Bluff on the Sacramento, where they became proprietors of a hotel.<sup>9</sup>

As near as may now be ascertained, this marked Hill Beachey's first appearance as a hotel entrepreneur, but certainly not his last. With the onset of the Civil War in April 1861, Beachey and his wife emigrated to the new (September 1860) Clearwater gold discoveries, in the northern portion of what was soon to become Idaho Territory. They settled in the booming river town of Lewiston, point of departure for the new mining district, and by early 1863 had become the owner-managers of the Luna House, Lewiston's finest hostelry. At the same time, Hill embarked upon the staging career which was to occupy him for most of the remainder of his life, with the opening of a line of stages between Lewiston and Walla Walla, Washington, on the Columbia River.<sup>10</sup> Here at Lewiston the Beacheyes became fast friends with packer-merchant Lloyd Magruder and his wife, and the scenes were set and the actors took their places for that bizarre, mysterious, and even supernatural climax in Hill Beachey's life. We refer, of course, to our subject's eerie, blood-soaked dream about the murder of Lloyd Magruder and all the

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<sup>5</sup>Abel, *op. cit.*, 3.

<sup>6</sup>Abel, *ibid.*

<sup>7</sup>Abel, *ibid.*

<sup>8</sup>Abel, *ibid.*, 3.

<sup>9</sup>Abel, *ibid.*, 3.

<sup>10</sup>Abel, *ibid.*, 3; Angew, *op. cit.*, 39; John Hailey, *The History of Idaho*, Boise, 1910, 66.



members of his pack-train party, complete with a clear view of the actual murderers as they went about their grisly work, months before the fell event took place.

### THE MAGRUDER MURDERS AND THEIR AFTERMATH

Hill Beachey's famous dream about the murder of his friend Lloyd Magruder on the trail between Lewiston, Idaho Territory, and the Virginia City, Montana, mines (then located in Idaho Territory) before the crime was committed (fall, 1863), and his subsequent long chase and final apprehension of the murderers as identified in his dream, was to make him well known all over the West, although in later years he became extremely reluctant to discuss his part in the Magruder affair.<sup>11</sup>

Limitations of time and space will not permit here an extended discussion of this case; only enough details will be narrated to properly flesh out the Beachey story. For further material on the Magruder tragedy, the reader is invited to consult several sources. Among them are Hailey, *op. cit.*, who has a chapter, pp. 66–76, on the murder and Beachey's part in the apprehension of the murderers. Another development of the case, and perhaps the best, is to be found in N. P. Langford's *Vigilante Days and Ways* (University Press, Missoula, Montana, 1951), and a newspaper article in the *Elmore Bulletin*, Mountain Home, Idaho, April 14, 1894, which offers a good resumé.

All these sources agree in the main details, although they differ on many minor points. More recently available is the Angew article in *Real West* magazine previously cited here (footnote 3), although it contains several marring errors. Among them are: (1) the mistaken allusion to Beachey's birthplace already noted; (2) stating that Beachey's dream occurred the night of the murder, rather than weeks before the event. Also, the author of the piece makes several slurring references to Beachey's character (flighty; being often shamed into silence by his wife, etc.), which are clearly not substantiated in any other source consulted by this writer.

It was during Beachey's proprietorship of the Luna House at Lewiston that he and Lloyd Magruder first became acquainted. According to Angew, the register of the old hotel reveals that Magruder first stopped there on July 24, 1863.<sup>12</sup>

The two families soon became good friends, and the foursome attended the military balls given frequently by the Army officers stationed at Fort Lapwai, the military post located on the Clearwater about 20 miles above Lewiston. The lights at the Luna House blazed brightly

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<sup>11</sup>Clarence F. McIntosh. "The Chico and Red Bluff Route", in *Idaho Yesterday*, vol. 6, no. 3, 15, 19.

<sup>12</sup>Angew, *op cit.*, 39.

and late on all these festive occasions, and the two couples enjoyed one another's company to the fullest.

Lloyd Magruder, whom one source describes as "a genial, whole-souled Hercules,"<sup>13</sup> had served in the Mexican War as a Second Lieutenant.<sup>14</sup> He married a Colonel's daughter after the war, and came to California with the 1849 "Golden Horde," as Dale Morgan colorfully describes the gold-seekers of 1849–1850. Magruder had no bent for mining, evidently, but aspired to make his fortune selling supplies to the argonauts. According to the *Elmore Bulletin*, by 1853 he was running a general merchandise store in St. Louis, a now long-defunct and forgotten Mother Lode mining camp located north of Downieville, Sierra County, California.

From all indications, Magruder prospered in his California merchandising ventures, and moved to Idaho's Clearwater country with the onset of the boom there, probably in 1861 or 1862. He settled first at Elk City, according to Langford,<sup>15</sup> but by 1863 had moved the seat of his operations to Lewiston.<sup>16</sup> His combined enterprises of general merchandising at Elk City and Lewiston had made him a wealthy man, by the standards of that day, at the time he became acquainted with Hill Beachey in July 1863.

Early in August 1863 the enterprising Magruder decided to take a pack-train loaded with goods and supplies over the Lolo Trail of Nez Percé fame across the Bitterroot Mountains to the Bannack mines, in that part of Idaho Territory later included in Montana. The night before Magruder's departure, Hill Beachey had his celebrated dream, in which he saw Chris Lowry, a shiftless, tough, hanger-on around the Lewiston saloons, knock Magruder's brains out with an axe, somewhere in the mountains.<sup>17</sup>

The next morning Hill confided his dream to his wife, who urged him to tell Magruder about it, as Magruder was due to stop by the Luna House before his departure for the Bannack mines. However, Hill refused to burden or unduly alarm his friend with what was, after all, only a dream, so he decided to say nothing when Magruder did stop by as he was leaving town. Beachey went so far, however, as to urge Magruder to be careful of road-agents and hi-jackers, and loaned him a fine rifle to take along for his protection.

On the morning after Magruder's departure, Lowry and two others of the murderous quartette who were to become implicated in the case,

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<sup>13</sup>*The Elmore Bulletin*, April 14, 1894, p. 2, cols. 2–3.

<sup>14</sup>Angew, *op. cit.*, 39.

<sup>15</sup>Langford, *op. cit.*, 253

<sup>16</sup>Hailey, *op. cit.*, 66.

<sup>17</sup>Hailey, *ibid.*, 66; Langford, *ibid.*, 253.

James Romain(e) and David Howard, left Lewiston along with four other Lewiston toughs, loudly announcing to all that they were going to Oregon. However, as soon as they had proceeded far enough from Lewiston to escape detection, they switched directions and hit the Lolo Trail, overtaking Magruder when he was yet three day's journey from the Bannack mines. (Bob Page, an old mountain teamster who became the fourth man of the murder gang, had joined the crew a day or so prior to their overtaking Magruder.)

The group of eight men offered to accompany Magruder to Bannack, helping him with his pack-train chores enroute. In return, they asked only for their "keep." Magruder, who was short-handed anyway, was glad to accede.

Upon arriving at the Bannack mines, Magruder was surprised and disappointed to find them practically deserted; everyone had left for the new placer boom on Alder Gulch at Virginia City, 75 miles farther east. He decided to go onward to that camp, especially since his newly-acquired crew were anxious and willing to accompany him there.

Magruder, upon his arrival at Virginia City, was pleased to find a booming mining camp of about 6,000 inhabitants, most of whom were long on gold-dust but woefully short of supplies. As Langford phrased it, the miners "were all eager to purchase his wares, as rapidly as they could be displayed".<sup>18</sup>

Magruder remained six weeks in Virginia City; during his stay there he had the use of a building to live in and display his merchandise, and, according to Langford, furnished quarters and employment for Lowry, Romaine, Howard, and Page. (The remaining four of the eight-man crew which had so obligingly helped him enroute to Alder Gulch had gone to work in the placers there.)

Now we return to Hill Beachey. He was much relieved to hear in September 1863 from Virginia City travellers arriving at Lewiston that his friend Magruder had arrived safely in the new camp, and was prospering mightily in the disposal of his merchandise. Hill probably dismissed his dream as just another lurid nightmare.

However, by the end of October 1863 Magruder had not returned, and Hill Beachey began once more to worry about his friend. His worries were suddenly brought to a head in the lobby of his hotel one dark and stormy night when a tall, heavily muffled stranger came into the lobby and requested four tickets on the stage for Walla Walla that night from the hotel clerk, paying for passage with three 20-dollar gold pieces.

Beachey, who witnessed the transaction, had his suspicions aroused by the man's furtive actions, and his obvious wish to remain unknown

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<sup>18</sup>Langford, *op. cit.*, 253.

or unrecognized. Accordingly Hill and several of his friends were on hand when the stage pulled in and the four passengers boarded it for Walla Walla. Hill suddenly flashed his dark lantern in upon them as the coach pulled out, catching the passengers by surprise. He noted that two of the four travellers had well-filled saddlebags on their laps, and recognized Howard, Lowry, and Romaine before they could cover their faces. After the coach had left, he turned to his friends and told them positively that Lloyd Magruder was murdered for sure, and that the men in the coach were his murderers.<sup>19</sup> The saddlebags they had with them in the coach, Beachey was certain, were obviously stuffed with gold and other valuables taken from Magruder by the thieves.

Here the various accounts previously cited differ markedly as to what transpired next. At any rate, about three days later two of the mules which had brought the men to Lewiston were located on an adjoining ranch. The animals were quickly recognized by Beachey and others as having belonged to Magruder. To cinch matters, an Indian boy who had been Magruder's hostler for several years identified the saddle which had been on one of the mules as belonging to his former employer.

Hill Beachey's worst fears received further confirmation the next day when a pack train pulled into town from Virginia City. When queried as to what they knew of Magruder or his whereabouts, the new arrivals expressed surprise that he was not already in Lewiston. According to them, Magruder and his pack train, accompanied by five passengers and Howard, Lowry, Romaine, and Page, had left for Lewiston three days before they themselves had departed. As the new arrivals had not passed Magruder enroute, they naturally assumed that he and his outfit had already arrived in Lewiston.

All this evidence, even though it was entirely circumstantial, was enough to convince even the most doubtful. Hill Beachey, armed with a temporary commission as a deputy sheriff and a warrant for the arrest of the four fugitives, set out on his long, classic chase to capture them, and to see that they were returned to justice. He was also carrying an extradition warrant from Idaho's territorial Governor for their return, addressed to the Governors of Washington Territory, Oregon, and California.<sup>20</sup> (This requisition was not particularly hard for Hill to obtain, of course, as Lewiston was then the Idaho territorial capital, and the Governor was in residence there.)

## THE CHASE, THE CAPTURE, AND THE RETURN

So now, at least five days after the hurried midnight departure of the murder suspects from Lewiston, Hill Beachey, accompanied by one of

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<sup>19</sup>Langford, *ibid.*, 261.

<sup>20</sup>Langford, *ibid.*, 263; Hailey, *op. cit.*, 69

his employees, Tom Pike,<sup>21</sup> set forth by private conveyance in a delayed but hot pursuit. The description of the long, strenuous, and harried trip from Lewiston to Walla Walla, Washington Territory, changing horses at Beachey's own stageline stations, and the equally fast, hard midnight drive from Walla Walla to Wallula must of necessity be passed over in this resumé. At Walla Walla Beachey and Pike learned the fugitives had left four days previously for Portland, with the avowed intention of taking an Oregon Steam Navigation Company steamer from there to San Francisco. Hill was also told that the quartette had lost a considerable quantity of gold dust at the Walla Walla faro tables, indicating that the outlaws were beginning to spend their blood-stained loot.

At Wallula the story was the same; the fugitives were still several days ahead. As the Columbia River was then at flood stage, Beachey and Pike could find no riverman willing to risk the 22 miles of roaring, rapid-filled river between Wallula and Umatilla, the first town in Oregon. Finally Captain Ankeny, an old river pilot, upon learning of the desperate nature of their chase, consented to take the pursuers down the river. Accordingly, early the next morning the three shoved off from Wallula in a small boat, with everyone in the large crowd along the shore predicting disaster before the craft got anywhere near Umatilla.

After a rough trip, however, the three men reached Umatilla about two hours later. From there to the Dalles the pursuers went first by boat, then by team and wagon, arriving at the latter place about 1:00 A.M. the next day. Here it was found they had gained two days on the fugitives. Taking the next steamer for Portland, they learned that they were now only 25 hours behind the objects of their pursuit; the suspects had taken the O.S.N. steamer for San Francisco just the day before, after spending time and considerable gold dust in Portland's gambling halls. However, to Beachey's dismay, he found there would not be another steamer out of Portland for San Francisco for ten days.

Beachey, realizing that such a great time-lapse would be almost fatal to his plan for a quick, successful capture of the four wanted men, decided upon desperate measures. He left Pike at Portland, with orders to proceed downriver to Astoria, on the coast, searching each river hamlet as he went, to be sure the fugitives had not holed up somewhere enroute. From Astoria, Pike was to take the next steamer for San Francisco.

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<sup>21</sup>The writer is using the name as given by both Hailey and Angew; Langford calls the man Tom Farrell, and describes him as a "harum-scarum devil of the town". Here are only two instances of the varying versions of this classic western chase. Langford and Angew, for example, state that the murdered Magruder party rode horses, which were then appropriated by the outlaws and later found by Hill Beachey. Hailey, equally as positively, describes them as the best of the mules comprising the Magruder pack string.

Beachey himself immediately set out by horse and buggy on another long, exhausting drive, this time up the Willamette Valley, on the mud-choked 700-mile stage and freight road between Portland and San Francisco.

At Salem, Beachey caught up with the Portland-San Francisco stage, and boarded it. However, when the coach was slowed to a walk on the rain- and snow-soaked reaches of the pass over the Cascade Range between Oregon and California, he deserted it for a fast horse supplied by a friend at one of the stage stations. Twenty miles farther on, he deserted the horse at the next station for a buggy, and the next morning caught up with an advance stagecoach, which he rode into Yreka, California, two hard days and nights after leaving Portland.<sup>22</sup>

As Yreka was then the northern terminus of the telegraph line from San Francisco, Beachey sent a telegram to the San Francisco Chief of Police, describing the four wanted men, the time of arrival of the O.S.N. steamer they were on, and asking the Chief to apprehend, arrest and hold the four until his arrival in the Bay City.

Beachey was overjoyed upon his arrival at Shasta, California, 24 hours later, to receive a return telegram from Chief Lees (Angew gives the Chief's name as Burke). The telegram's terse message stated that the four men had been rounded up, and were being held in jail pending Hill's arrival.

At midnight of the second day following, Beachey was admitted to the prisoners' cell in San Francisco. He had ascertained from Chief Lees that Howard and Lowry were escaped California convicts; they had tried to bribe the arresting officers by promising them a large amount of gold which they had just left at the San Francisco Mint to be converted from gold dust to gold coins. Here was further corroboration of Beachey's suspicions.

Beachey immediately accused the four of the murder of Magruder and the men with him; he was met with nothing from Lowry, Romaine, and Howard but blasphemous denials, defiance, and threats of what the three would do to him when they obtained their speedy release. However, Page, the fourth man, made a sign to Beachey, by scratching his hand as they shook hands in parting, as a way of indicating that he might be ripe to "spill the beans" if he could be sequestered somewhere away from the other three.<sup>23</sup>

It took Hill Beachey four additional weeks of legal skirmishing to get the suspects out of San Francisco and headed for Idaho. As Langford states it, "As fast as one court would decide to surrender them, another

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<sup>22</sup>Langford, *op. cit.*, 273. Hailey says the Portland-Yreka trek took three days and nights.

<sup>23</sup>Langford, *ibid*, 273; Hailey, *op. cit.*, 70; Angew, *op. cit.*, 64.

would grant a writ of habeas corpus for a new examination". These maneuvers, of course, were all being financed by the prisoners' ill-gotten gold. The Governor of California was loath to honor the Idaho extradition warrant; according to Langford,<sup>24</sup> it took a decision from the California Supreme Court to finally untie the legal snarls.

To avoid similar legal complications in Oregon on the return journey, according to Langford, Beachey, before leaving San Francisco, obtained from General Wright, commander of the Department of the Pacific at the Presidio, an order on the Astoria military post, at the mouth of the Columbia, to meet the party there and furnish a military escort to Lewiston.<sup>25</sup> To aid him and Pike—who had rejoined him in San Francisco—in guarding the prisoners to Astoria, Beachey, according to Hailey, hired Captain Lees to accompany them to Lewiston.<sup>26</sup>

Not much remains to be told in this resumé of the return trip to Lewiston, the arrival there about December 7, 1863,<sup>27</sup> the lynching-bent crowd which met the returnees, and Hill Beachey's quiet reminder to the angry Lewistonites that the prisoners had been promised a fair trial; furthermore, he was determined they should have it. Impressed by their friend's stern, determined manner, the crowd then melted away, and allowed the guards to lodge the heavily ironed prisoners in the Lewiston jail.

Bill Page was jailed separately from the other prisoners, and as per Beachey's expectations, turned State's witness against his companions, in return for a promised lighter sentence. As brought out in his confession, Page himself was not directly involved in the actual murders of Magruder and his five passengers; he had been detailed by the murderers to guard the livestock the night the murders were committed. (Here again, accounts differ; Langford states that Page never left his bed during the murders.<sup>28</sup>) He was told the murderer's plans, and threatened with death should he ever reveal even the slightest detail.<sup>29</sup>

According to Page's story of what happened that cold, snowy night at Lolo Pass on the windswept heights of the Bitterroot Mountains, Lowry had split Magruder's skull with an axe as the latter was bending over to tend the campfire. Then, upon Lowry's whistled signal, Howard seized up an axe and killed three of the five passengers as they lay sleeping. Romaine shot the other two when they were awakened by the noise of Howard's bloody activities.<sup>30</sup>

<sup>24</sup>Langford, *op. cit.*, 273

<sup>25</sup>Langford, *ibid*, 273–274.

<sup>26</sup>Hailey, *op. cit.*, 71.

<sup>27</sup>*Ibid*, 71.

<sup>28</sup>Langford, *op. cit.*, 258.

<sup>29</sup>Hailey, *op. cit.*, 68.

<sup>30</sup>The Elmore Bulletin, *op. cit.*, p. 2, c. 3.

Belts, wallets, purses, and jewelry were then stripped from the corpses, and all their baggage was burned. Blankets were tightly wrapped around each victim, and they were all rolled into an 800-foot deep canyon nearby. All the mules and horses excepting those the murderers kept for their escape were led to the brink of the same chasm, shot, and rolled down with the human victims. To further direct suspicion away from themselves, the murderers wore Indian moccasins as they went about their grisly work.<sup>31</sup> The metal items not consumed in the cleanup fires were then carefully collected and thrown over the canyon wall also.<sup>32</sup> The falling snow further aided the work of concealment; as Langford phrased it: "When morning dawned, not a vestige of the ghastly tragedy was visible."<sup>33</sup>

Page's confession was checked against the evidence and additional facts known to Beachey and the law enforcement people at Lewiston; everything dove-tailed together neatly. The three murderers were then indicted by a grand jury and brought to trial for the six murders on January 19, 1864. After a bitter, hard-fought trial lasting four days, the three prisoners were found guilty of first-degree murder; Page was let off because of his non-complicity in the actual killings, and because he had turned State's witness.<sup>34</sup>

On January 26, 1864, Lowry, Romaine, and Howard were brought before Territorial Judge Samuel C. Parks and sentenced by him to hang by the neck until dead. Before passing sentence, the judge, in a ringing polemic, roundly condemned the three murderers and their crime.<sup>35</sup> They were hanged together on the same scaffold erected at the edge of Lewiston on March 4, 1864. In his last words, on the scaffold, Howard proclaimed his innocence, as did Romaine; Lowry blamed all the murders on Page, and, according to two sources, after taking a big chew of tobacco and turning to the sheriff, said loudly: "If you'll let us kill that ..... Page first, you can hang and be damned! Launch your boat! She's nothing but a mud-scow anyway!"<sup>36</sup> Then, in the words of *The Elmore Bulletin*, "they all swung off".

## EPILOGUE

In the late spring of 1864, when the snow had left the Bitterroot high country, Bill Page led Hill Beachey and a sheriff's posse to the canyon below Lolo Pass where the murderers had rolled their victims, both

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<sup>31</sup>*Ibid*, p. 2, c. 3; Hailey, *op. cit.*, 68.

<sup>32</sup>Langford, *op. cit.*, 258.

<sup>33</sup>*Ibid*, 258.

<sup>34</sup>Hailey, *op. cit.*, 72.

<sup>35</sup>*Ibid*, 72.

<sup>36</sup>The Elmore Bulletin, *op. cit.*, p. 2, c. 3.; Angew, *op. cit.*, 66.



human and animal. Everything was as he had described it in his confession; Hill Beachey even found the rifle he had loaned Magruder, now coated with rust.<sup>37</sup>

Page, according to Langford, remained in the employ of Beachey for several months after the trial, but never ceased to be an object of general scorn and rejection. About a year later he was shot and killed by a Mexican in a drunken saloon brawl in Lewiston.

In due course of time Hill Beachey, after repeated official rebuffs and much unravelling of red tape, finally succeeded in getting the \$17,000 the murderers had deposited at the San Francisco Mint to be converted into coinage from the stolen gold-dust. This money Hill then presented to Magruder's widow and heirs.<sup>38</sup>

What reward ever accrued to Hill Beachey for his epic part in this stark frontier drama? Hailey states that Idaho's First Territorial Legislature was in session at Lewiston during the trial of the murderers, and thus became fully acquainted with Hill's protracted struggle to see that justice was done. Hailey states that without any prompting action at all on Beachey's part the Legislature passed an act appropriating \$6,244, to be paid to Beachey out of the territorial treasury.<sup>39</sup> This sum, of course, was to compensate our friend for his services rendered and personal funds expended in the pursuit, capture, and return of the criminals.

So ended this bizarre and in many ways enigmatic, supernatural, and unexplainable event in Hill Beachey's career.

The reader will doubtless be struck with the thought that such highly unorthodox proceedings, if attempted against present-day criminals, would not get very far. This is especially true when viewed in the light of the courts' perhaps over-scrupulous solicitude about any possible broaching of a suspect's constitutional rights, and their anxious concern that the accused be granted a completely free, fair, and unbiased trial. However, on the remote Idaho frontier of 1864, justice was rendered in what was then considered to be a fully fair and adequate fashion by the direct, rough-and-ready standards of the time. At this far remove, who is there now to gainsay what was done? The criminal killers were brought to a just retribution, even though the methods employed and the procedures used were bizarre, even for that day and time.

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<sup>37</sup>Angew, *ibid*, 66.

<sup>38</sup>Langford, *op. cit.*, 277; Hailey, *op. cit.*, 74.

<sup>39</sup>Hailey, *ibid*, 74.

## THE APOGEE OF HILL BEACHEY'S CAREER: STAGING OPERATIONS IN NORTHERN NEVADA AND SOUTHWEST IDAHO

### THE OPERATIONS OF BEACHEY AND OTHERS, NORTHEAST CALIFORNIA-NORTHERN NEVADA-SOUTHWEST IDAHO, 1864-1865.

The discovery of placer gold in the Boise Basin in 1862 and of gold and silver deposits in the Owyhee Range and the South Boise country in 1863, all in southwest Idaho, turned Hill Beachey's attention to this part of Idaho Territory. Sometime in the latter half of 1864, Beachey transferred the seat of his operations to southwest Idaho, and immediately became enmeshed in the protracted struggle for transportation supremacy between enterprises originating south of the Owyhee-Boise settlements and those serving them from the north. In the main, this was centered in the rivalry between the California Steam Navigation Company and the Oregon Steam Navigation Company, and their various ancillary operations. As a vigorous proponent of routes into southwest Idaho from northern Nevada and eastern California, Beachey was to play a stellar role in the eventual triumph of the California-Nevada access road proponents.

By late 1863 the people of southwest Idaho were feeling the pressures of high transportation costs from the Columbia, the Oregon Steam Navigation Company's high rates and highhanded ways, and of isolation during the winter months, when the Columbia was frozen over and the Oregon Trail across the Blue Mountains was choked with snow. More and more emigrants were reaching Idaho from California over the California Trail along the Humboldt River. There was also an increase in freighting and pack train travel. In short, the terrain between the two areas was consequently becoming generally much better known.

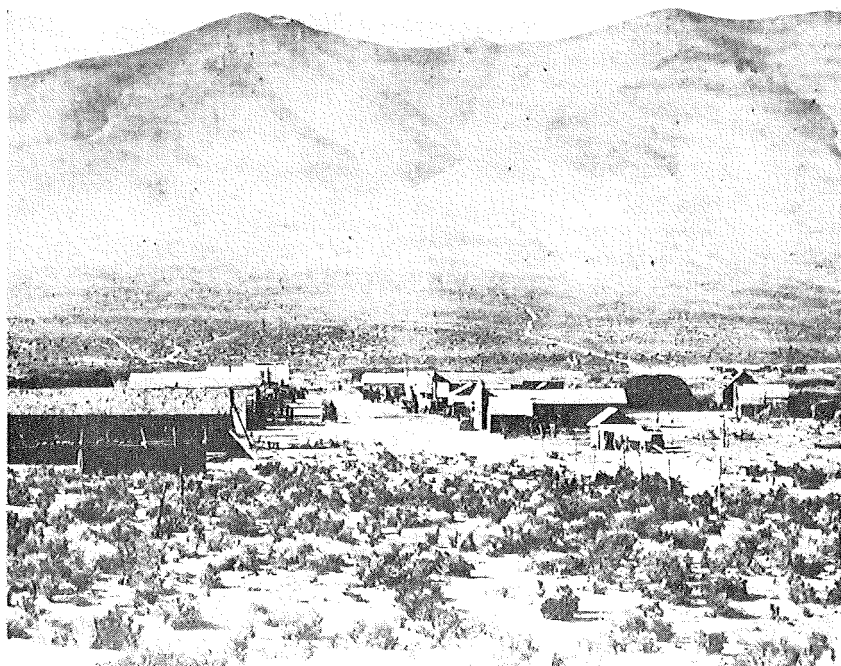
Accordingly, during the winter of 1864-1865, four well-known Idaho men pioneered the organization of staging between Idaho Territory and the State of California.<sup>40</sup> They were J. B. Francis, of Boise, who had made an Idaho-California exploration trip early in 1864, with this in mind; E. D. Pierce, party leader of the group which had made the first gold discovery in Idaho, on the Clearwater, and who bore no love at all for the Oregon Steam Navigation Company; G. C. Robbins, mine superintendent of one of the large Owyhee mines at Silver City; and last, but certainly not least, our old friend, William C. (Hill) Beachey.

The first three partners favored a route to either Chico or Red Bluff

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<sup>40</sup>Clarence F. McIntosh, "The Chico and Red Bluff Route," in *Idaho Yesterdays*, vol. 6, no. 3, pp. 12-19.

in the Sacramento Valley. Beachey's interest was in forming a company to operate from southwest Idaho to the Humboldt mines in Nevada (Humboldt City, Star City, Dun Glen, Unionville). Here, connections could be made with stages running southerly to Virginia City, and thence to California via Donner Pass and the Dutch Flat-Donner Lake Wagon Road (Pioneer Stage Lines).



Winnemucca, Nevada as it appeared from the Central Pacific grade, circa October 1868. The view is north down Bridge Street, looking toward Winnemucca Mountain. The stages for Paradise Valley and Idaho left from the Winnemucca Hotel (left rear) crossed the Humboldt River and proceeded out of the picture (right center) toward Paradise Valley.

Space does not permit a detailed account of the brief life of these freighting and staging operations from the Sacramento Valley to southwest Idaho. For a more complete narrative, the reader is referred to Dr. Clarence F. McIntosh's treatise in *Idaho Yesterdays*.<sup>41</sup> Summarized briefly, there were two attempts made to establish such a service.

The first attempt, the Idaho Stage Company, ran its initial saddle trail from Chico, the point of transshipment from the steamers of the California Steam Navigation Company on the Sacramento River, on April 3, 1865; it reached Susanville, California, four days later and Ruby

<sup>41</sup>Ibid, pp. 12-19.

City, Idaho, on April 30. By the end of June saddle trains were making the trip in 13 traveling days, Chico-Ruby City and Silver City. This was indeed a vast improvement over the travel time from California to Idaho on the roundabout route via the Pacific Ocean, the Columbia River, and thence by stage.

The exact routing of the earlier Idaho Stage Company saddle trains east from Susanville is not known; Dr. McIntosh surmises that the final route went east to Granite Creek, in Nevada's Smoke Creek Desert, then north-northeast past Summit Lake, the later site of Fort McGarry, and on to Jordan Creek and the Owyhee River in Idaho.<sup>42</sup> In early July stagecoaches were operating between Chico and Susanville. However, from all accounts it appears that the Idaho Stage Company failed before staging could be extended across northwest Nevada to the southwest Idaho camps.<sup>43</sup> A combination of insufficient military protection from Indian attacks in the summer of 1865, plus mounting financial difficulties, did the enterprise in.<sup>44</sup>

The second operation, this time under the aegis of John Mullan's California and Idaho Stage and Fast Freight Company, May, 1866–March, 1867, was more successful. (Hill Beachey was not involved in this second enterprise, but it is outlined briefly here in order to complete the story of these early California-Nevada-Idaho freight and stage operations.) In spite of the opposition of the lobbyists for the Oregon Steam Navigation Company and the Central Pacific Railroad, as well as the Nevada Senators, Representative John Bidwell of California and Idaho Delegate E. D. Holbrook early in 1866 succeeded in getting Congressional approval for a mail contract from Chico to Boise City. In California, John Mullan then organized the California and Idaho Stage and Fast Freight Company, capitalized at \$200,000, with himself as President.<sup>45</sup> The news of new mineral discoveries in northwest Nevada's Black Rock Desert lent a further spur of optimism; heavy Concord coaches were imported, to be used from Chico to Black Rock, while the lighter Concord "mud wagons" were to be used from Black Rock to Idaho.<sup>46</sup>

On June 1, 1866, a working party was sent out on the old Idaho Stage Company road from Chico by John Mullan. The party consisted of mechanics, workmen, and approximately 200 Chinese, captained by J. B. Francis, one of the previously described original California-Idaho road promoters in 1864. The crew was equipped with mowers, tools,

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<sup>42</sup>McIntosh, *ibid.*, 15.

<sup>43</sup>McIntosh, *ibid.*, 15.

<sup>44</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>45</sup>*Ibid.*, 16–17.

<sup>46</sup>*Ibid.*, 19.

and implements for stage station and road construction; Mullan left for Idaho, to prepare the route from the Owyhee end. Stage drivers in the meantime were using the Chico streets to break in their horses; it was said that the streets looked "like a perpetual stage line."<sup>47</sup>

About June 20, 1866, stages began triweekly operations between Chico and Susanville. On July 1, at 12:01 a.m., when the new mail contract went into effect, the first through coach left Chico for Idaho; the fare was \$60. The stage arrived in Ruby City three days and five hours later.<sup>48</sup>

Indian attacks around Fort McGarry in Nevada and "road agent" activity in the Sierra Nevada became of some concern; however, the line continued to operate successfully between Chico and Ruby City until the first heavy snows, in November, 1866. On November 18 the last stage trip was made between Ruby City and Fort McGarry. It was announced at that time that the stages would run only from Chico to Fort McGarry, with mail delivery on horseback from there to Ruby City.<sup>49</sup> However, after November 18 mail delivery from Chico to Ruby City became very irregular; in March, 1867, the Post Office Department cancelled the contract.<sup>50</sup> In April, the draft stock and equipment of the newly defunct company were sold at auction in Chico.

Thus was ended Chico's dream of becoming the western terminus of stage and freight roads to Idaho. The Chico-Idaho route was soon forgotten; Fort McGarry was shortly abandoned by the Army (December 1868), and today the knowledge that such a line ever operated, or that such an Army outpost existed, is largely limited to a few dedicated Idaho, California, and Nevada historians.

Beginning in 1861, with the discovery of silver in the East and Humboldt Ranges in Nevada's Humboldt Basin, and the ensuing "rush to Humboldt," as it was called, the boom towns of Humboldt City, Star City, Unionville, and Dun Glen sprang to lusty life. As a result, a counter-surge of travel developed along the old emigrant trail from the Mother Lode Mining camps in California and the Comstock towns in Nevada, which at this time were suffering one of their recurrent periods of borasca. This west-to-east migration counter-movement was further augmented in 1862 by the discovery of placer gold in the Boise Basin, and in 1863 by the discovery of gold and silver in the Owyhee Range and the South Boise placer and quartz gold mines, all in Idaho Territory. The flood of hopeful miners and prospectors from both California and western Nevada to these new southwest Idaho diggings grew heavy

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<sup>47</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>48</sup>McIntosh, *ibid.*, 19.

<sup>49</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>50</sup>*Ibid.*

along the California Emigrant Trail through the Humboldt Basin. The emigrant road afforded the best access corridor to southwest Idaho, by way of French Bridge (Winnemucca), Paradise Valley, Paradise Hill Pass, Quinn River, and Reynolds Creek.

During the entire period of the 1860's this eastward flow of travelers, pack trains, and freight along the Humboldt continued, to both the Humboldt and southwest Idaho mining districts. All this increased mining activity soon caught the attention of would-be freight and staging entrepreneurs. With the full flowering of the Humboldt mining boom in 1861, John Bidwell—of Bidwell-Bartleson party fame—and other enterprising citizens of Chico, California, spent \$40,000 to build a road across the Sierra Nevada from Chico to Honey Lake (Susanville). Here it joined the Fort Kearny, South Pass, Honey Lake Federal Wagon Road—approximately the Nobles Road—to Lassen Meadows, between present Mill City and Imlay, where the Lassen-Applegate-Nobles routes left the Humboldt, and thence eastward along the Humboldt. The next year (1863) Red Bluff, California followed the lead of its neighbor down the Sacramento River and built a road, known as the Tehama County Wagon Road, over the Sierra, which joined the Chico-Humboldt Road at Mountain Meadows, west of Susanville. From Mountain Meadows eastward to the Humboldt mines, the Chico and Red Bluff Roads shared a common route.

Where the Chico-Red Bluff-Humboldt Wagon Road approached the Humboldt River's north bank, just west of the present Mill City-Tungsten Road, about two and one-half miles northwest of Mill City, the booming tent city of Lancaster sprang up in 1863. Being closely dependent upon the Chico-Red Bluff route for its well-being, Lancaster declined concomitantly with that road. By 1865 it was largely a memory.

By means of these two wagon roads, freight and passenger traffic flowed from northern California to the Humboldt mines without having to traverse the California Trail below Mill City, as the miners and prospectors from the Mother Lode and Comstock towns were forced to do. However, use of the Chico-Humboldt and Tehama routes did not last long. By the end of 1863, the Humboldt mines were proving a disappointment, and by the late 1860's these short-lived, expensively constructed northern California access routes to central Nevada were largely abandoned.

Another road, projected to link Virginia City and the Comstock with the Humboldt mines, and avoiding most of the Forty Mile Desert and the lower Humboldt portion of the California Trail, was developed about 1863. At that time this route, which came to serve as both a stage and freight road, was opened between Virginia City, Ragtown, Unionville, and Star City.

The road left the Carson branch of the California Trail at Ragtown (later called Leeteville) and passed eastward, immediately north of present Fallon, to the Stillwater area. From there it turned north along the western base of the Stillwater Range at Antelope Valley, and thence along the west side of Buena Vista Valley to Unionville and Star City. (Except in the Fallon-Stillwater area, where much of it has been obliterated by cultivation, this road is still negotiable. It is shown on the 1954 Buffalo Mountain and Unionville Quadrangle maps, but on them is mislabeled as an old emigrant road.)

The previously noted discovery of rich gold deposits in southwest Idaho Territory in 1862–1863 had a baneful effect on the Humboldt mining camps in Nevada; they suffered a rapid drop in population in the stampede to the new bonanzas. However; as old Humboldt James F. Abel pointed out in his definitive manuscript prepared in 1952 for the Nevada Historical Society regarding the development of stage lines in this part of the Humboldt Basin, the business men of Star City and Unionville could see a silver lining to their dark cloud. The Idaho camps, which were most easily reached via the great bend of the Humboldt at Ginaca's Bridge (Winnemucca), would need supplies of all kinds, and means of communication; this called for the rapid establishment of mail, stage, and freight routes.

In March 1864 John Verzan, Star City restaurant owner, made a six-week trip to the Idaho diggings. On his return to Nevada in late April 1864, he wrote a letter to the *Humboldt Register* at Unionville, in which he described the route to Idaho, living conditions in the camps, and noted in conclusion that newspapers were in demand at \$1.50 per copy.

Abel states that Verzan's article, plus the fact that newspapers could be placed in Boise City from Star City several days sooner than from any other point, brought quick results. Messrs. A. B. Cutler and William J. (Billy) Westerfield immediately began laying out pony express relay stations on the Star City-Idaho City route. This pony express line used the main gold-seekers' route to Idaho, which followed up the Humboldt from Buena Vista Valley to Ginaca's (French) Bridge, then north to Willow Point in Paradise Valley on the Little Humboldt, thence northwest over Paradise Hill Pass to Quinn River, and from there to Idaho City by way of the Owyhee River crossing, Reynolds Creek, Ruby City, and Boise City.

On May 4 the first Cutler & Westerfield pony express left Star City for the Idaho towns, according to Abel. Regular service was established immediately; one six-day trip each way was scheduled per week, with two riders using a total relay of 12 horses. Going north from Star City, the pony rider made it to Paradise Valley the first day, to the head of

Quinn River the second, to the Owyhee River crossing the third, Booneville (near Ruby City and Silver City) the fourth, and Boise City and Idaho City on the fifth and sixth days.

The partners arranged a regular service of California and Nevada newspapers; Abel says that within two months their riders were carrying 1,000 to 1,200 papers per trip, and 200 or more letters. At this point, the volume of business grew so great that a pony express could not handle it. Accordingly, in July 1864 Cutler & Westerfield set up the Humboldt Express Company, equipped the line with passenger wagons, as Major Chorprenning had done with his 1858–1859 express along the Humboldt in 1858–1859, and shortened the Star City-Boise City-Idaho City time from six days down to four days.

The Humboldt Express Company continued to prosper for almost a year, until the Paiute-Bannock uprising of 1865 summarily ruined it for all time. By August 1865 this pioneer express and passenger line was but a wistful memory along the Humboldt.

In June 1865 Hill Beachey opened a short-lived stage line from Unionville and Star City to Ruby City and Silver City in Idaho, via Ginaca's Bridge (Winnemucca) and Paradise Valley. James Abel, whose Paradise Valley family was personally acquainted with Hill Beachey, is in disagreement with this June 1865 date. He states, in the 1957 Nevada Historical Society treatise previously alluded to, that Mr. Beachey was in Unionville as early as April 20, 1865 with four coaches and a band of horses, to open this Unionville-Silver City service. According to Abel, the first stage, loaded with through passengers for the Idaho gold fields, went out that day.

By this means, Idaho gold-seekers from California and western Nevada had yet another route to choose from in reaching their destinations. However, because of the same 1865 Indian troubles north of the Humboldt Basin which had ruined Cutler & Westerfield's Humboldt Express, Mr. Beachey was forced to abandon the Unionville-Idaho link two months later, in June 1865, after two stagecoaches and several stations were burned and the company's livestock was run off by Paiutes in the Quinn River-Reynolds Creek area.

Hill Beachey was severely hurt financially by the June 1865 failure of his Unionville-Star City-Silver City stage line. However, he had not by any means given up the idea of running stages between the Humboldt mines and southwest Idaho. In fact, he was thinking of even bigger and better things in this respect. The *Humboldt Register* at Unionville, in its issue of August 18, 1865, had this to say about Mr. Beachey and his plans for a projected long-distance stage line from Unionville-Star City to Virginia City, Montana, via the southwest Idaho mining camps.



Hill Beachey has stood subject for more newspaper items this summer than any other man in the country save only the Indians—they have beaten him out of everything save his indomitable will. The last course of items was to the effect that Beachey was keeping a hotel in Idaho. He is not. He passed through the other day for San Francisco and says that the road he meant to be running from Humboldt to Montana is far better than he thought, and if General McDowell will guarantee him protection from the Indians he will soon have the road stocked again and keep it open for travel the year round. Beachey is a persevering man. We hope he will get the encouragement he asks.

Mr. Beachey soon gave up the southwest Idaho-Virginia City, Montana portion of his proposed line, however. The Post Office Department in July 1864 had awarded a contract to Ben Holladay's big staging outfit to carry the mail between Salt Lake City, Utah and Umatilla, Oregon, by way of Boise City, Idaho. Without this mail contract, Beachey realized he could not hope to compete with Holladay on the Boise-Virginia City leg of his proposed enterprise. (For a fuller discussion of Holladay's operations vis-a-vis Beachey in Idaho at this juncture, see this writer's discussion of the development of early transportation ventures between northern Nevada and southern Idaho in *The Sawtooth Mountain Area History*, Goodwin and Hussey.)

#### SILVER CITY—BOISE OPERATIONS

Mr. Beachey never lost sight of his main goal: the establishment of a going stage line between the Humboldt country and southwest Idaho. As a first step in this operation, in December 1865 he had bought out Barnes & Yates' Boise City-Silver City stage line. (Abel states that Beachey purchased this line from Joseph Leatch, but Hailey's *History of Idaho* lists Barnes & Yates as the sellers. As "Uncle John" Hailey was himself a larger-than-life and colorful figure in Idaho staging operations at this very time, the writer has chosen to accept his rendition.)

Beachey's Silver City-Boise stage line, except for a short period in 1867–1868, was to remain as one of the principal links in the staging empire he built up during the next five years. In 1868, under the guidance of his brother-in-law John Early, the Boise-Silver City line grew and prospered.

This portion of Hill Beachey's operation, along with the Reno-Virginia City line acquired from Wells, Fargo & Company in December 1870, were the last of the Beachey staging enterprises disposed of by Hill after he had given up or sold off his other lines late in 1870.<sup>51</sup> Equipment

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<sup>51</sup>Donaldson, *op. cit.*

and draft stock on the line were always the finest. According to Donaldson, it was one of two short stretches of stage road in Idaho where the large, heavy Concord coaches, always drawn by six horses, were used. Everywhere else the smaller but more rugged "mud-wagons" carried all Idaho passenger traffic.<sup>52</sup>

A BRIEF BUT HECTIC SILVER CITY MINING INTERLUDE—  
THE GOLDEN CHARIOT VS. THE IDA ELMORE

The events to be narrated at this point did not take place until 1867–1868, at the time Hill Beachey was busily engaged in the prospering operation of his Railroad Stage Lines. However, they are inserted at this point in our story, in order to avoid breaking into the continuity of the main theme in Hill Beachey's career during that time—his staging ventures. (Note: to avoid footnoting, it should be stated here that the material for this section was developed from information found in Dr. Merle W. Wells' *Gold Camps & Silver Cities*, Bulletin 22, Idaho Bureau of Mines & Geology, Moscow, 1963, 40–42.)

In the summer of 1867 Beachey became associated in a mining syndicate prospecting on War Eagle Mountain, south of Silver City, at the Golden Chariot Mine. Great excitement prevailed at the Golden Chariot when a rich strike was made, early in September of that year.

As had happened in the Poorman-Hays & Ray controversy on War Eagle two years earlier, it became apparent that the Golden Chariot strike was on the same vein being developed by the rich Ida Elmore Mine, although Hill Beachey and his Golden Chariot associates argued that they were on a parallel, separate vein.

As Dr. Wells notes, before development work on both the Ida Elmore and the Golden Chariot progressed very far, all mining activity came to a halt because of a miners' strike late in 1867. By early 1868, however, the miners had settled for what wage increases they could get, and development work started in earnest at both the Ida Elmore and the Golden Chariot.

By January 1868, it was apparent that both mines were working the same vein. To head off trouble, the two rival groups held a meeting, and agreed to leave a strip of neutral ground between the two mines. All went well for a short period; however, big trouble developed late in February 1868 when Hill Beachey's Golden Chariot violated the neutral strip, and broke through into Ida Elmore ground.

Both sides prepared for armed conflict; it finally developed on March 25, 1868, when the Golden Chariot forces, led by our redoubtable subject himself, advanced underground on the Ida Elmore workings. They were met by the Ida Elmore "army," and heavy firing ensued, deep in

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<sup>52</sup>*Ibid.*

the Ida Elmore. Dr. Wells states that only two casualties ensued from all this shooting, but that the danger of serious cave-ins from the shooting was great. The Golden Chariot forces were victorious in this underground affray, and drove the Ida Elmore belligerents from their own mine.

This battle, and subsequent events which led to the only death in the affair—that of J. Marion Moore—eventuated in a callout of troops from Fort Boise by Territorial Governor D. W. Ballard. A force of 95 soldiers, complete with a brass cannon, marched from the fort to Silver City, and occupied that place from April 4–8, 1868. As a result of Ballard's firm action, the "Owyhee War," as it was called, was over, so far as actual physical conflict was concerned.

However, action was just barely joined on the legal front; this phase drug on for many months. According to Dr. Wells, during the year 1868 the Golden Chariot had netted about \$200,000, after paying for the installation of a new hoisting works. Most of this potential profit to Hill Beachey and his associates was lost, however, in footing the bills for the Golden Chariot's part of the shooting war, plus the prolonged legal skirmishing which followed. It is doubtful if Hill Beachey himself ever realized much of a financial gain from this rather belligerent interlude in his career, although here again there is a gray area in our knowledge of this remarkable man. An article recently unearthed in the December 19, 1868 issue of the *Humboldt Register* (p. 3, c. 1) announced that Beachey had just sold his interest in the Golden Chariot for \$300,000. The paper, in speaking of the transaction, had this to say: "We rejoice to learn of his good fortune; Beachey has an army of friends, who will also rejoice at his success."

#### 1866—BEACHEY RESUMES STAGING BETWEEN THE HUMBOLDT CAMPS AND THE SOUTHWEST IDAHO SETTLEMENTS

According to Abel's treatise, Mr. Beachey early in 1866 proposed to the Post Office Department that it award him, beginning July 1, 1866, a contract to handle all the mail between Boise City-Star City. He backed his proposal with a hefty petition, signed by more than 600 people in the area affected.

Abel states that the Department ignored Beachey's proposal. Instead, it directed that mail for the Humboldt mines-Idaho area be sent via the Overland Stage Lines (Simpson Route) from Salt Lake City to the nearest station on the Overland—probably Sand Springs—and thence northward to Unionville, Star City, Ginaca's Bridge, Paradise Valley, and southwest Idaho.

1866—THE VIRGINIA CITY, NEVADA-BOISE LINE; FULL  
FLOWERING OF THE RAILROAD STAGE LINES

This typically "far-out" Eastern bureaucratic decision made everyone unhappy, and especially Hill Beachey. However, he was not through yet, and from his perseverance was to emerge his greatest triumph—The Railroad Stage Lines. To get at his problem with the Post Office from another angle, according to Abel, early in 1866 the redoubtable Beachey wrote to Charles Crocker, of the Central Pacific's Big Four, and advanced an interesting proposition. In essence, the proposal featured the establishment of a stage line connecting the advancing C. P. railhead in California's Sierra Nevada with the Humboldt mining camps in Nevada and the mines of southwest Idaho.

Mr. Crocker, who recognized in Hill Beachey another man of action like himself, and who was always on the lookout for any opportunity to best the Oregon Steam Navigation Company in the continuing struggle between that organization and the Central Pacific-California Steam Navigation Company interests for the booming southwest Idaho freight and passenger traffic, went into action. On March 28, 1866, in his reply to Beachey, Charles Crocker cordially endorsed the latter's proposal, and promised any help within reason to further the plan. Shortly after this, the C. P. construction chief's brother, Judge E. B. Crocker, made the initial move in what was to result in the establishment of the Railroad Stage Lines.

Judge Crocker notified Mr. Beachey that later in 1866 the railroad would have progressed eastward over the Sierra far enough to take over the traffic to the Idaho and Humboldt mines then travelling the Chico-Red Bluff and Humboldt Roads. This traffic, according to Judge Crocker, was to be diverted over the C. P. to Dutch Flat (or stations farther eastward, as the railhead progressed), and thence over the railroad's 1864 Dutch Flat-Donner Lake Wagon Road. The latter road would then connect in the east Sierra foothills with Beachey's stage line to central Nevada and southwest Idaho. To prevent a repetition of Beachey's Indian-induced staging debacle of 1865, Judge Crocker also promised to secure the Army's cooperation in protecting Beachey's staging operations from the Paiutes, should such protection be needed.

From this beginning, then, began the climax period of Hill Beachey's career, when he and his Railroad Stage Lines acted as the Central Pacific's chosen transportation link between the Humboldt and southwest Idaho mines and the Big Four's advancing C.P. railhead across Nevada. (For a fuller discussion of the long, hard-fought struggle between C.P.—C.S.N. and O.S.N. as well as the antecedent moves preceding the eventual C.P.—Railroad Stage Lines hookup, see the Abel

treatise and the writer's and Dr. John Hussey's Sawtooth study, both previously cited.)

Before proceeding further with the interesting affairs of Hill Beachey and his Railroad Stage Lines another of his antecededent staging operations involving the establishment of a passenger and mail route between the Humboldt mining camps and those in southwest Idaho should be documented here. This was an interim stage enterprise for Beachey in the summer of 1866, sandwiched between his abortive 1865 Star City-Silver City staging effort and the establishment of the Railroad Stage Lines in the fall of 1866. According to Abel, it was originally started in June 1866 by Jesse D. Carr, who at that time was awarded a contract by the Post Office Department to carry the mail between Virginia City, Nevada and Boise City, Idaho Territory.

As Abel points out, this mail contract was practically identical with the one Beachey had sought and failed to get from the Post Office just a few months earlier. Perhaps in the meantime the Big Four had been using a little political "muscle" in behalf of Carr and Beachey, through Collis P. Huntington, the Big Four member who took care of such items in Washington during the Central Pacific's construction years.

Mr. Beachey's part in the new stage operation became evident late in July 1866, when Mr. Carr made a trip from Sacramento, California to Ruby City, Idaho. It was then announced that Hill Beachey was part owner of the line, that he would be its general manager, and that he had been awarded a \$4,000 mail contract between Ruby City and Boise City for the stage line he had purchased from Barnes & Yates in December 1865, as outlined earlier.

The route used by Beachey and Carr followed the road from Virginia City along the old emigrant trail down the Carson River to Ragtown, then to Stillwater, Antelope Valley, Unionville, Star City and Winnemucca, and from thence northward to Idaho Territory. At Virginia City, the Beachey coaches met those of the Pioneer Stage Line, which, from the advancing Central Pacific railhead, traversed the Sierra Nevada via the Dutch Flat & Donner Lake Wagon Road to Lake's Crossing (Reno), and thence to the Comstock.

So, finally, after nearly 18 months of losses, disappointments and hard work, Hill Beachey had a going stage line. Furthermore, it was a better operation than his disastrous 1865 venture. Instead of terminating at Star City, where it had been planned to tie in with a branch of the Overland Mail running from a station on the Simpson Route, the new line extended across central Nevada to Virginia City, where it had a through connection to California via the Pioneer Stage Line, as cited.

In August 1866, until through stagecoach service could be instituted, Beachey put on a pony express to handle the mail between Silver City,

Ruby City and Star City. According to Abel, Robert "Pony Bob" Haslam, the hero of the famous May 1860 380-mile ride between Friday's Station, Lake Tahoe, and Smith Creek, Nevada and return, in the days of the original Pony Express, was one of the riders.

Then, as had happened in 1865, the Paiutes became troublesome. On August 23, 1866 Beachey wrote his partner Carr they had killed one man at Summit Springs Station in southeast Oregon, and were raising hell generally below Willow Springs and Camp McDermitt on Quinn River. However, as Abel points out . . . "they could not raise hell enough to keep Beachey from putting his stages on the road by September 1, and running them on time."

Now Hill Beachey, with a stage line in being, and with the full resources of the Central Pacific Railroad behind him, was ready to make his big move. Before August was out he had bought out Carr's interest in the line. On September 7, 1866, western Nevada and southwestern Idaho newspapers carried a news item announcing that on that day the Railroad Stage Lines had been organized. The incorporators were Beachey, George and Henry Greathouse, John Hailey, and a Mr. Kelly, all of Boise City.

Beachey's old friend Charley Combs took over as Superintendent, and A. B. Cutler, of Humboldt Express Company memory, was Division Agent from Unionville to the western terminus of the new stageline at Hunter's Station, a crossing on the Truckee River a few miles east of the Nevada-California line.

So, instead of the former connection with the Pioneer Stage Line at Virginia City, the junction point became Hunter's Station. Beachey arranged with the Pioneer Stage Line to carry the mails between Hunter's and Virginia City; accordingly, that difficult section of the old Beachey and Carr line between Unionville and Virginia City became surplus, and was abandoned.

Perhaps a fuller description of Hunter's Station is germane to the discussion at this point. This station, located on the Truckee River at the old Mayberry Ranch approximately five miles west of present-day Reno, was a stop on the previously mentioned Dutch Flat-Donner Lake Road.

At this point Mr. Beachey's new line could pick up not only C.P.-forwarded Idaho freight and passengers from the Pioneer Stage Lines via the Dutch Flat & Donner Lake Road to the Truckee Meadows and Virginia City, but also Idaho-bound traffic from the California Stage Company and Woodruff & Ennor's Nevada Stage Line over the Henness Pass Wagon Road, which at Hunter's Station was coincident with the Donner Route. Also, mail and passengers over the Railroad Stage Lines from Idaho and bound for Virginia City or California points could be transferred to the latter lines. Passengers from California to Idaho via

the California Stage company's other route, the Placerville-Johnson (Echo) Pass-Virginia City line, could also be picked up there.

From Hunter's Station the Railroad Stage Lines followed the Truckee branch of the California Emigrant Trail, along what would become the Central Pacific's Truckee River and Humboldt River route, as far as Junction House (now Oreana), on the lower Humboldt. Here, to avoid bad spring-time flooding along the Humboldt bottoms between present Oreana and Winnemucca, the stageline and wagon route swung eastward through Limerick Canyon and over the Humboldt Range to Unionville, Star City, and Dun Glen.

From Star City the route led northward to the Humboldt again at Mill City. It proceeded upstream from there along the Humboldt to old French Bridge, renamed Winnemucca on February 1, 1866. Out of Winnemucca, the route led northward to Willow Point Station in Paradise Valley on the Little Humboldt River, thence over Paradise Hill Pass to Quinn River, thence to Rattlesnake Creek on the Owyhee drainage, and after crossing the Owyhee, up Jordan Valley to Reynolds Creek, and thence to Silver City, where it connected with Beachey's brother-in-law John Early's Owyhee and Boise Stage Line to Boise City. Highway U.S. 95 from Winnemucca to Boise roughly parallels this portion of the stage route.

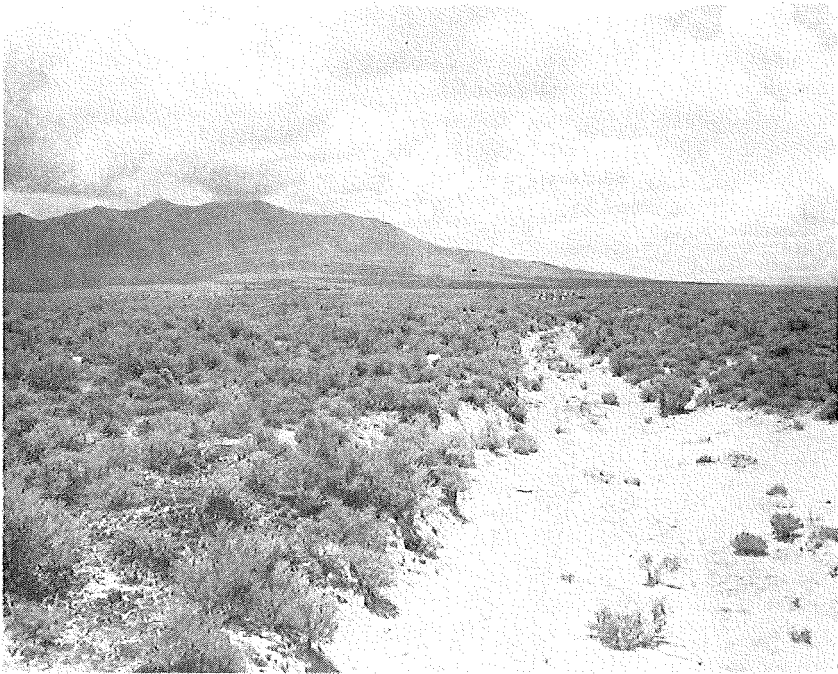
Then, late in December 1866 the capricious Post Office Department handed Hill Beachey another jolt. Secure in his mail contract, and with his Railroad Stage Lines now fully in operation and functioning smoothly on a tri-weekly basis, his friend the Post Office announced that it was calling for bids over the route used by Beachey on a *once-weekly basis*.

Editor Forbes of the *Humboldt Register* (Dec. 29, 1866, p. 2, c. 2) roundly and rightly denounced this new development for the shabby trick it obviously was. California's Congressman John Bidwell, in an obvious attempt to save his and John Mullan's failing California and Idaho Stage Line from Chico to the Idaho mines previously discussed in these pages was using political "muscle" on the Post Office Department. The whole intent, of course, was to weaken the C.P.-Hill Beachey operations and build up Bidwell's Chico-Red Bluff route.

Forbes concluded his angry diatribe with a comparison between Beachey's smoothly efficient operation and the asthmatic, rickety Bidwell line. He called the latter a "miserable abortion", and noted that "the mails formerly sent scattering along the Chico route now came regularly and with no delay by the way of the railroad (C.P.) and the Railroad Stage Line."

Evidently the public outcry, coupled with the Central Pacific's undoubted political counter moves in Washington, killed this last attempt to hamstring Beachey and save the California-Idaho Stage and Fast Freight Company. Nothing more was heard of the Post Office's proposal.

Soon after service was instituted by Beachey over his Railroad Stage Lines route, the station keepers along the road began adding to and improving their accommodations for travellers, and straightening and improving the road. According to Abel, in the spring of 1867 the enterprising stagecoach king began adding the larger, more comfortable Concord coach models to his fleet of smaller "mud-wagons." He bought more horses, arranged to build more stations, hired more drivers and hostlers, and generally fitted the Railroad Stage Lines to offer the highest quality service. By the winter of 1867-1868, Beachey had four hundred horses in service on the line.



—Humboldt River Basin Field Party

**The trace of the cutoff road built in the late winter of 1867 between Thacker's Station on the Humboldt (just north of present Inlay) and Cane Springs Station on Quinn River, bypassing Winnemucca (see text). The view is south toward Inlay, with the Humboldt Range's Star Peak in the background. Thacker Station was located in the middle distance, just in front of the cloud shadow.**

In the late winter of 1867 Beachey built a cut-off road which shortened the distance from Hunter's to Ruby City and Silver City by forty-five miles, according to Abel. It took off from the old route near Blake's Station in Big Meadows (now Lovelock), and followed the Emigrant Trail on the west side of the Humboldt River to Junction House, where



a post office called Oreana was established on the east bank of the river February 26, 1867, with Uriah Mayo in charge. Over the new Oreana bridge built by Weaver and Mayo the new road crossed to Oreana on the east side, and followed the Humboldt thirty miles to J. W. (Johnny) Thacker's Crossing and Station, just north of present Imlay. (Thacker, a well-liked young man who since April 1867 had been the proprietor of the large Exchange Saloon in Unionville, in later years became a detective for Wells, Fargo.) There the road returned to the west side of the Humboldt, left that stream completely, and ran northward past Blue Mountain and through Bloody Run Valley along the west slope of the Santa Rosa Mountains to Cane Springs, where it joined the road from Paradise Valley. (This road, from the Thacker Ranch north to Bloody Run, is still negotiable, at least by pickup or four-wheeled drive vehicles. It is shown on the U.S.G.S. Eugene Mountains Quadrangle map, and identified there as "Old Idaho Stage Road.") To accommodate Unionville, Star City, Humboldt City, Dun Glen, Winnemucca and Willow Point—all now off and to the east of the main route—Beachey ran side lines equipped with light vehicles.

Each of these places had a post office, and Beachey's move was not pleasing to the Humboldts. They would lose trade; freight teams also might use the cut-off road. They complained about the irregularity of the mails, though they were inclined to blame the postmasters at Hunter's and Oreana rather than the stage line, according to contemporary news items in the *Humboldt Register*.

Recent research by this writer with respect to the use of the Thacker Station-Cane Springs cutoff road by Beachey's Railroad Stage Lines, however, has revealed that Abel is palpably in error in this point. Ads for the Beachey line have been carefully checked, week by week, in the 1867–1868 files of the *Humboldt Register*. Without variance, they all point conclusively to the fact that Railroad Stage Lines coaches, until the advent of the Central Pacific rails, continued to go from Oreana to Unionville by way of Limerick Canyon and Buena Vista Valley. From Unionville the stages crossed the valley to Dun Glen, and thence rolled to Winnemucca, where an overnight layover was scheduled at the Hotel Winnemucca before starting northward toward Paradise Valley and the Idaho mines the next day.

It is known that Thacker's Bridge and Station—near which the Southern Pacific division point of Imlay later was laid out—was an important freighter's stop in the years 1867–1868, and that the road was intensively used by the Idaho-bound freighters. The station was a large, elaborate affair, complete with a horse racing track, and a large outdoor picnic area. During the Independence Day festivities, July 3–5, 1868, it was the scene of the greatest public gathering and celebration in Humboldt County to that date. However, a Beachey stage station it never was, nor

was the cutoff road stretching north from there to Cane Springs ever used by the mainline Beachey coaches. If the stagecoach king did use the route, it must have been only for high-priority bullion shipments and special mail consignments between the C.P. railroad and southwest Idaho, where speed in transit was a necessity.

In the meantime, the Central Pacific's Summit Tunnel on Donner Pass finally was holed through in August 1867, and the rush was on to join the two separate sections of the railroad east and west of Donner Pass. On June 18, 1868, the railroad from west of Donner Pass was joined above Coburn's Station—soon renamed Truckee—to the section built in 1866–1867 down the Truckee to the California-Nevada state line. Before these two sections were joined, however, the railhead of the eastern section on May 5 had reached Lake's Crossing, on the Truckee River in the Truckee Meadows. Hill Beachey then moved his Railroad Stage Lines interchange to that point.

As the Central Pacific railhead advanced from eastern California across Nevada during the summer and early fall of 1868, the Railroad Stage Lines moved its western rail-stage interchange points accordingly. As noted, by May 5, 1868, it was at Fuller-Lake's Crossing—soon renamed Reno. Next it was moved to Wadsworth in late July 1868, then to Brown's Station, on the west shore of Humboldt Lake (early August 1868), then in late August 1868 to the Blake Stage Station in Big Meadows, operated by George Lovelock, which was then renamed Lovelock's by the Central Pacific. About September 15, 1868 the rail-stage interchange point was moved to Humboldt City Station (Humboldt House), and finally to Winnemucca in late September, after the Central Pacific reached there on September 16.

From this time until May 1870, Winnemucca continued as the southern terminus of Mr. Beachey's Railroad Stage Lines to Idaho. On that date he abandoned his Winnemucca-Silver City-Boise City route, and shifted coaches, horses, and stations to the new Elko-Cope-Boise City road. However, even earlier than this, in April 1869 Beachey opened his first Railroad Stage Lines route out of Elko. This line ran south from Elko over the Gilson Road to the White Pine Mining District (Hamilton, Treasure Hill).

Concerning the development of freight and staging enterprises between Elko and the White Pine Mines at Hamilton, Treasure Hill, and Shermantown, W. Turrentine Jackson's *Treasure Hill* (University of Arizona Press, 1963) contains a wealth of new, carefully researched information.

Mr. Jackson points out that Len Wines, for many years a Superintendent of the Overland Stage Lines and the developer of that company's famous Overland Ranch in Ruby Valley east of Overland Pass, pioneered staging operations to the new district. In December 1868 Wines opened up stage lines into the Hamilton area, both from Austin

and the future site of Elko. This first travel from Elko to White Pine was by way of Colonel Frank Denver's and George Shepherd's Elko & White Pine Toll Road. (Mills notes that Denver filed a notice of construction for this road at Austin, the Lander County seat, on December 27, 1868; Elko County would not be carved out of Lander County until several months later.)

Mr. Wines held his Elko-White Pine staging monopoly for approximately two months; after that, unbridled, cut-throat competition developed thick and fast. First came the Pacific Union Express Company, a subsidiary of the Central Pacific Railroad, early in February 1869. A week later, Wells, Fargo & Company entered the picture, introducing twice-daily stages between Elko and Hamilton. All this travel was by way of the Denver-Shepherd Road, which continued to enjoy a toll-road monopoly until the advent of Hill Beachey in April 1869, and his development and use of the Gilson Toll Road for his Railroad Stage Lines.

At first, the competition between rival Elko-Hamilton stagelines was beneficial. As Jackson points out, it produced cheaper fares, better service, and faster time; travel time, within a month, had been reduced from 20 hours to 18 hours. However, by March-April 1869 it appeared that every western staging outfit aspired "to get into the act" between Elko and Hamilton, and staging matters soon built to a frenetic climax.

Woodruff & Ennor, then staging out of Virginia City, were the first to join the existing two companies in March 1869 (by this time Wines had merged with Pacific Union Express, reducing the former three competitors to two), dispatching three six-horse Concord coaches, along with a large string of horses, from their Virginia City-Reno-Austin operations. They proceeded to open their new line, using the Denver-Shepherd Road (usually termed the Elko-White Pine Toll Road) between Elko and Hamilton, and were followed in short order by Hughes & Middleton late in March, who started with a periodic schedule, upped to daily runs in April.

The first week in April Hill Beachey departed from his home base in the southwest Idaho gold fields with 100 head of horses, to open a line from Elko over the Gilson Road, the newly developed rival to the Denver-Shepherd route. (At this time, Hill Beachey was still operating his Railroad Stage Lines route from Winnemucca to Idaho, but was already planning to move that enterprise to Elko, and operate northward from there to Idaho by way of the Elko & Idaho and Idaho Central Toll Roads. By so doing, he planned to have, and shortly did put into operation later in 1869, a continuous line of stages stretching from Boise City, Idaho to Hamilton-Treasure Hill, Nevada, with Elko as its hub.)

At about the same time in April 1869 that Beachey started operations south from Elko over the Gilson (now usually referred to as the Hill

Beachey) route, two well-known California stagers, Thomas & Hall, instituted a like service; probably over the Elko-White Pine Road, although this is not certain. They stocked their line with several coaches and over 250 head of horses, according to Jackson. Leander Swasey, a freighter from California, in April 1869 also started a stage line from Elko to Hamilton.

Hughes & Middleton, one of the stage lines which joined in the keenly competitive Elko-Hamilton staging, is of more than passing interest here. The second of the two partners, Alex Middleton, until the time of his association with Hughes early in 1869, had been an employee of Hill Beachey's. He kept the historic Willow Point stage station in lower Paradise Valley, on the Winnemucca-Silver City division of Beachey's Railroad Stage Lines. His hostelry was renowned among travellers all over northern Nevada-southern Idaho for its host's hospitality, the excellence of the food, and the fine quality of its whisky. Now Middleton had become a staging rival of his former boss! (Abel infers that Middleton and Beachey conducted their Elko-Hamilton operations as partners, but Turrentine Jackson's research definitely shows they had become rivals.)

Jackson indicates that Hughes & Middleton started their Elko-Hamilton enterprise in March 1869, using the Denver-Shepherd Toll Road, approximately a month before Hill Beachey started his operations between the same two points, using the Gilson Toll Road.<sup>53</sup> At first the Hughes & Middleton coaches ran weekly, but by April 1869 they had stepped up their service to a daily coach each way between Elko and the White Pine mines. The partners boasted in advertisements in both the Elko and Hamilton newspapers that their line was newly stocked, and promised their stages from Hamilton would always arrive in time to connect with the Central Pacific passenger trains at Elko. The editor of the *Inland Empire* at Hamilton, taking note of the fast Hughes & Middleton time schedule, advised all passengers wearing wigs to take seats on the inside of the coach, to avoid having their hair-pieces blown off.<sup>54</sup>

Counting the Payne & Palmer stages out of Carlin and up Pine Valley to Eureka and Hamilton, in a period of six weeks at least six new stage lines had blossomed out between the Central Pacific and the White Pine mines in the spring of 1869, to compete with Wells, Fargo and the Len Wines-Pacific Union Express operations.

With such a host of competitors, racing soon developed; travel time between Elko and Hamilton was periodically reduced, from the originally scheduled 24 hours over the 120-mile distance to 17½ hours by late April 1869. For a short period competition became so keen that the

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<sup>53</sup>W. Turrentine Jackson, *op. cit.*, 38.

<sup>54</sup>*Ibid*

coaches of three rival lines—Wells-Fargo, Hill Beachey, and Len Wines—were arriving in Hamilton neck-and-neck.

Competition did not end with racing; soon it extended to fares also. The original fare of \$40 from Hamilton to Elko was in a few weeks down to five dollars, and it was bruited about that a really enterprising traveler could secure a ticket from Hamilton to Elko for as little as two dollars.

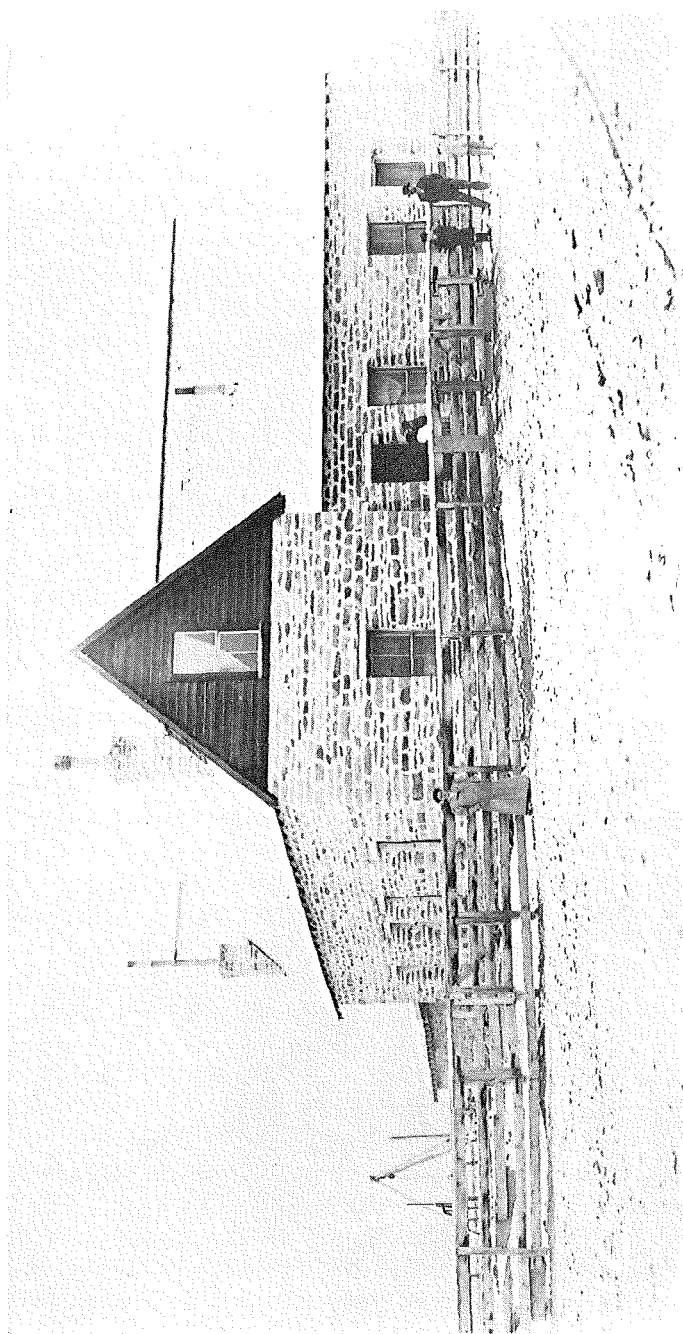
Such competition, coupled with the slackening of the bonanza period in the Hamilton area beginning in the summer of 1869, was ruinous. In June 1869 the Central Pacific's Pacific Union Express forced Wells, Fargo to buy them out, under threat of refusal by the railroad to carry Wells, Fargo Express on Central Pacific trains if the consolidation was not made. This forced Len Wines out of his liaison with Pacific Union; after a hiatus of a few weeks, he bought out the Thomas & Hall stage line, and resumed operations.

At the close of September 1869 Wells, Fargo & Company surprised everyone with the announcement that the colorful old firm was withdrawing completely from the staging business, except for their line between Reno and Virginia City. Hereafter, the company stated, it would concentrate exclusively on its express business. The stages, horses, and stageline equipment which had been brought over from Wells, Fargo's soon-to-be defunct Overland Stage Lines on the Simpson route early in 1869 to begin the Elko-Hamilton service were sold to Hill Beachey. (The reader will recall that Wells, Fargo had bought out John Butterfield in the Overland Mail Company in 1866, and proceeded to operate the old company until its final demise in 1869, coincident with the junction of the Union Pacific and Central Pacific Railroads that spring.)

Hill Beachey's Railroad Stage Lines, fortified with this new infusion from Wells, Fargo in September, was further strengthened by the shortly announced merger with Beachey's erstwhile keen rival, Len Wines. The new firm, known as Beachey & Wines' Railroad Stage Lines, thus fittingly united two of the most experienced and prominent stagers in the West. It is of interest to note here that although this later association of Len Wines and Hill Beachey is generally known, their earlier keen rivalry in Elko-Hamilton staging affairs was, until Jackson's research, a forgotten page in Nevada's history.

By this series of mergers and sales during the summer and early fall of 1869, the crowded Elko-Hamilton staging business was reduced to two principal lines: Woodruff & Ennor and Beachey & Wines.

In July 1869, Beachey and his associates, with their eyes on the burgeoning Cope District and a new route for Beachey's Railroad Stage Lines to southern Idaho, had completed the construction of the Elko & Idaho Toll Road to Cope (present Mountain City, Nevada). Half of the construction costs of this toll road (\$10,000) had been raised in three days by the merchants of Elko, formed into a cooperative titled



The Dinner Stage Station north of Elko, on the Elko-Mountain City-Boise highway, as it appeared in 1907. Originally the Coryell Station during the Beachey period, the first wooden structure burned and was replaced with the stone building shown here, which is still standing and in use. The historic structure has passed through many ownerships since that of Alex Coryell, the first station manager. It is now ranch headquarters for one of the far-flung E. L. Cord ranching units. The present name stems from the long period of time the building served as a noon meal stop for passengers on the Elko-Tuscarora stage route.

the Elko & Idaho Toll Road Company, with S. P. Wyman as president; Hill Beachey and his Railroad Stage Lines put up the remaining \$10,000. The road ran north from Elko over Adobe Summit and along the North Fork of the Humboldt to the Owyhee River's East Fork and thence to Cope and the Idaho line. Here it was to be joined at the bridge over the Owyhee by the Idaho Central Wagon Road from Silver City and Boise City.

By November, Beachey had stocked the stations and opened a stage-line along this road as far as Mountain City. At first coaches were run once a week, but traffic soon increased to twice weekly. This route paralleled or was coincident with the present Nevada Highway 43 over Adobe Summit and as far north as Owyhee Meadows at the present Wildhorse Reservoir site.

To care for the needs of the toll road patrons and the Concord stages, as well as the long strings of "sagebrush clipper" freight wagons plying the road, nine large stage stations were established between Elko and Mountain City. Five of these stations were in the meadows of the North Fork of the Humboldt: North Fork; Ganz Creek (Idaho Ranch Station); Pie Creek (Milk-and-Pie Station, from which Pie Creek was named); Coryell's; and Dorsey Creek (Sixteen Mile Station, established and used somewhat later). One of these stations, Coryell's, is still in use. Known now as the Dinner Station, it is the headquarters for the E. L. Cord Dinner Station Ranch. In addition, stations were located at Adobe, Owyhee Meadows, Mountain House, and one near the present Haystack Ranch.

Perhaps a few lines should be written concerning the Idaho Central Wagon Road. As first projected during the summer of 1868 by Colonel Preston and a Mr. Walbridge, who ran a sawmill across the Owyhee's War Eagle Mountain from Silver City, this road was to run south from Silver City to Nevada. It was planned to hit the Central Pacific on the Humboldt near Maggie Creek, at what shortly was to become Carlin; anticipated construction cost was approximately \$30,000.

As finally constructed, however, the road went south from Silver City over War Eagle Mountain to Walbridge's Sawmill (near Flint), thence by way of Steel Creek, Snow Creek, and over the South Mountain ridge to Big Springs, Battle Creek, Blue Creek, and the east Fork of the Owyhee, where it joined the Elko & Idaho Toll Road from Elko at the Idaho-Nevada Line. South from Silver City, stage stations on this road were located at the sawmill; at Major Brooks' Big Springs Hotel; at Battle Creek; and at the Owyhee Bridge House.

By November 1869, Hill Beachey and Len Wines had taken over Morgan & Enright's line of express wagons on the Cope Road, had built and stocked nine large stations between Elko and Cope, and were running stages between those points. However, the difficult winter of

1869–1870, coupled with the lack of a bridge over the Owyhee at the State line, delayed the establishment of through stages between Elko and Silver City until the spring of 1870. By that time Hill Beachey had put a boat into service at this Owyhee crossing for ferrying passengers and mail; by May 15, 1870, the boat was replaced by a bridge. By May 21 Beachey & Wines had a line of buckboards similar to the former Morgan & Enright Express, Elko to Cope, running through from Elko to Silver City.

By the end of May 1870, Mr. Beachey and his associates in the Railroad Stage Lines were ready to make their big move. At that time Beachey abandoned his Winnemucca-Silver City operations and transferred the Railroad Stage Lines to Elko, running a through line of daily U.S. Mail, Wells, Fargo Express, and passenger coaches over the Elko & Idaho and Idaho Central Roads from Elko to Silver City and southern Idaho. The U.S. Mail franchise was transferred from Winnemucca-Silver City to Elko-Silver City at the same time. Winnemucca was left with a small outfit, W. T. Clark's Idaho Stage Line, running tri-weekly between Winnemucca and Silver City. Considerable freighting business was still carried on between these two points, however.

At about this same time, Mr. Beachey acquired through default the Elko-White Pine operation of his rival at Elko, Woodruff & Ennor. This firm had become increasingly attracted by the emergence of the Eureka and Mineral Hill Silver mining districts south of the proposed but rejected townsite on the Central Pacific in Palisade Canyon approximately 30 miles west of Elko, where Pine Creek joins the Humboldt, and by the natural access corridor south from there through Pine Valley to those districts. The Central Pacific was finally prevailed upon to develop a townsite at that location.

By January 15, 1870, the railroad had completed freight-loading platforms and had appointed a resident freight agent. During the last week of February, Central Pacific engineers laid out a townsite, and the sale of lots commenced. By May 1, 1870, a new passenger depot and hotel were open for business. The new town, first called Palisades, later Palisade, soon became a formidable rival of both Elko and Carlin for the business of the southern Nevada mines.

At this time, then, Woodruff & Ennor turned over the operation of their Elko-Hamilton stageline on the Denver-Shepherd Road to Beachey & Wines, and concentrated on developing a new stage road south from Palisade. This left Beachey with a clear field in the staging business out of Elko, both north and south.

However, this happy state of affairs was not to continue long for Beachey & Wines and their Railroad Stage Lines. At least part of the trouble probably can be ascribed to their erstwhile friend and cooperator, the Central Pacific Railroad. With the Central Pacific-Union Pacific



junction at Promontory, Utah, on May 10, 1869, two other locations with more direct and favorable access routes to southern Idaho sprang into prominence: Toano, Nevada, and Kelton, Utah.

The U.S. Post Office Department, with its capricious habit of awarding bids and then cancelling them a short time later, was also a probable factor in the downfall of Hill Beachey and his staging empire. The September 10, 1870, issue of the *Owyhee Avalanche* at Silver City noted in its columns that a special Post Office Department agent was investigating the relative merits of both the Kelton-Boise City and Elko-Silver City-Boise City mail routes. It was rumored that one of the two routes would be eliminated. "Old Hill," the paper's well known editor, stated that Silver City wanted the Elko route, and that the heavy winters and the high country traversed by the Elko route would not unduly handicap it. Boise City and the Boise Basin-South Boise camps, on the other hand, favored the Kelton route, as it was more direct and would not be so subject to winter closures.

A desperate effort was put forth during the summer of 1870 to shorten the 11-day freighting and two days-plus staging time between Elko-Silver City-Boise by eliminating the steep grades and sharp curves over the War Eagle summit between Walbridge's Sawmill and Silver City. A. J. Stucker was put to work building four new stations on the new road which was routed over the Scotch Bob Toll Road between the Big Springs Station and Anderson's Ranch, on lower Sinker Creek. By swinging this portion of the Idaho Central Wagon Road to the northeast from the sawmill, in effect the Railroad Stage Lines would be making an end-run around the Owyhees, instead of across their crest.

The original plan in this route shift was to run the Elko stages directly into Boise City, cutting John Early's Silver City-Boise line to a stub run between the Anderson Ranch Station and Silver City. However, on September 24, which seems to have been about the initial date for the switch-over to the new Scotch Bob route, O. B. Johnson, Beachey's hard-working and resourceful superintendent on the Elko-Silver City route, announced a change in this portion of the schedule. He stated that the Elko stages would climb Sinker Creek from the Anderson Ranch to Silver City and would then run from Silver City to Boise City via Reynolds Creek, as in the past.

At this time the mail schedule between Silver City-Elko was triweekly, but the accommodating Mr. Johnson was carrying it daily. "Old Hill," the *Avalanche* editor, commented on Mr. Johnson's remarkable feat of swinging the draft stock, furniture, etc., from four stage stations on the old War Eagle route to four stations on the new route without interruption to schedules or connections.

## DECLINE AND FALL OF THE BEACHEY STAGING EMPIRE

This route changeover, although undoubtedly a beneficial one, came too late to do Hill Beachey and his Railroad Stage Lines system any good. On October 15, 1870, it was announced that the Northwestern Stage Company was taking over all operations of Parker, Toller and Company. This latter company seems to have been a "front" for the Northwestern Stage Company for bidding purposes for U.S. Mail contracts; according to Hailey, on July 1, 1870, it had secured the Beachey Elko-Boise City mail contract. At any rate, Beachey continued in charge of all operations until October 15, when Northwestern took over, buying out Beachey and Early, along with John Hailey's Kelton-Umatilla line, the Walla Walla branch, the Pinkhams' Boise City-Boise Basin route, etc. From ads in the Boise City and Silver City papers at the time, John Early, Beachey's brother-in-law, seems to have continued to operate the Silver City-Boise stageline. (Some sources refer to Parker, Toller and Company as Parker, Tuller and Company; Hailey calls this antecedent company to Northwestern, Teller, Barlow, and Parker.)

Hill Beachey's stagecoach kingdom was falling apart. On October 8, a news item in the *Elko Independent* announced that Beachey, Wines & Company had sold out their Elko-Hamilton staging operations to Woodruff & Ennor, including Woodruff & Ennor's original Elko-Hamilton line over the Shepherd-Denver Toll Road recently turned over to Beachey, as previously detailed. (As a followup sidelight, it might be noted here that the December 21, 1870, issue of the *Elko Independent* stated sepulchrally that all staging operations south from Elko to the White Pine mines, then running into borasca, were being suspended by Woodruff & Ennor. They were transferring their Elko headquarters to Palisade, and concentrating entirely upon their Palisade-Pine Valley-Mineral Hill-Eureka staging.)

Mr. Beachey was to receive yet another blow. Late in October a Washington, D.C. dispatch carried in the *Avalanche* stated that the Post Office Department had annulled his mail contract from Oroville, California, to Portland, Oregon, and reissued it to Bradley Barlow, one of the Northwestern officials. Commenting on this action, "Old Hill" observed, "There's a screw loose somewhere." About the only optimistic note in all this discord was struck in December, when Wells, Fargo and Company turned over their last company-operated stageline (between Virginia City and Reno, Nevada) to their old friend Beachey.

The Northwestern Stage Company continued to operate the Elko-Silver City-Boise City stageline until the end of the year, with a few changes. On December 24, 1870, it was announced that the Elko-Boise

stage would on that date withdraw from running to Silver City and thence down Reynolds Creek to Boise City. Instead, it would run directly from Anderson's Ranch down Sinker Creek to Boise City, with a stub line running from Anderson's Ranch up Sinker Creek to Silver City, as had been originally projected back in October.

However, the Elko & Idaho Toll Road and the Idaho Central Wagon Road had almost run their course as through stage and freight routes. Staging was suspended for the winter between Elko and Boise City by the Northwestern at the end of December 1870. For the 1871 season, the January 28, 1871 issue of the *Elko Independent* announced that six new light Concord stages belonging to Northwestern had arrived in Elko the previous day. The new coaches, according to the news item, were to be placed upon Northwestern's Elko-Cope-Silver City-Boise City route as soon as the road was reopened in the early months of 1871. These "mud-wagons," as the lighter type of Concord coach was colloquially known all over Nevada, Utah, and Idaho at the time, were described by the *Independent* as being "light, strong, and just the thing for winter and early spring travel."

As far as may now be ascertained, the summer and fall of 1871 rang down the curtain on through stage and freight service between Elko and the southwest Idaho mining communities. The route never again was to see the sturdy "mud-wagons" plying its rutted length. Even its old friend and protagonist, the *Owyhee Avalanche*, had turned against it. In an October 15, 1870, editorial the paper, completely reversing its earlier stand, plumped for Winnemucca as against Elko as a shipping point on the Central Pacific for the Owyhee country. Regarding its merits as a freight road, the editor waxed even more "poor mouth," stating that teamsters who had once been over the Elko route refused to travel it ever again.

By 1874 much of the Elko & Idaho and Idaho Central Toll Roads, especially the Idaho Central, which was that portion of the route north of the Idaho line, had fallen into decay. On April 4, 1874 the *Elko Independent* carried an item about a Sheriff's sale to be held at Elko on April 7 for the State of Nevada against W. D. Walbridge and the Elko & Idaho Toll Road—that portion of the Elko-Boise City route in Nevada—for execution of a judgment for approximately \$115.

#### THE RENO-VIRGINIA CITY LINE, 1870-1872— HILL BEACHEY'S FAREWELL TO STAGING

After taking over the Reno-Virginia City stage line from Wells, Fargo in September 1870, as noted earlier in this discourse, Hill Beachey operated this last segment of his once far-flung staging empire with his usual alacrity, verve, and dispatch. This line, the route of which is now

preempted by U.S. Highway 395 south of Reno as far as Brown's, ran past Huffaker and Brown's Stations, and then twisted its way up the original Geiger Grade alignment to Virginia City. It continued to flourish and do well during 1870–1871, hauling mail and passengers between Reno and the booming, bustling Comstock Lode cities.

However, even at the time he took over the line from Wells, Fargo, Hill saw the handwriting on the wall: the standard gage Virginia & Truckee Railroad had been opened to passenger and freight traffic between Carson City and Virginia City on January 29, 1870, and it was only a question of time before William Sharon, Hume Yerington, and the other members of the Ralston Ring extended their railroad from Carson to a connection with the Central Pacific at Reno.

Contrary to a commonly held but erroneous assumption, shared in even by dedicated V. & T. rail buffs who should know better, the Virginia & Truckee Railroad, in spite of its title, was not built as a complete unit between Reno and the Comstock cities. As John Debo Galloway, David Myrick, and Gilbert Kneiss have all pointed out, the railroad, as originally projected in 1868 and constructed in 1869 by William Sharon and his cohorts of the Bank of California's Ralston Ring, ran from the Comstock mines on Sun Peak to stamp mills strung along the Carson River, 1500 odd feet below, and terminated, at least temporarily, at Carson City.<sup>65</sup> Sharon, Ralston, and their crew were primarily intent on obtaining a cheaper means of transporting their own Comstock ores to their Carson River reduction mills, and in the process forcing the independent Comstock mines to use the Ring's Carson River stamp mills. Then, as envisioned by Sharon, on the return haul from Carson City to Gold Hill and Virginia City the railroad would capture the immensely profitable wood-hauling traffic to the voracious Comstock mines and mills by bringing in cordwood, square-set mine timbers, and lumber from the immense lumber yards at Carson City and Empire (Dutch Nick's) on the river.

No doubt the Ring's intention was to ultimately build the line from Carson City to connect with the Central Pacific at Reno, but Ralston was in no hurry. Let the citizens and merchants of Reno and Washoe County stew in their own juices for awhile; they would then be more amenable to coming up with a large and juicy subsidy to aid and expedite the construction of the missing rail link between Carson City and Reno. After all, the Ring had a good thing going for them in their Virginia-Carson line, and they were content to sit tight and await developments.

Such was Sharon's comfortable little plan, but he was rudely jolted out

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<sup>65</sup>John Debo Galloway, *Early Engineering Works Contributory to the Comstock*, Nevada State Bureau of Mines, 1947; Gilbert Kneiss, *Bonanza Railroads*, pp. 49–71. Stanford University Press, 1941. David Myrick, *Railroads of Nevada and Eastern California*, Vol. 1, pp. 136–162. Howell-North Books, 1962.

of his euphoric state by none other than our old friend, resourceful and fast-acting Hill Beachey. According to Myrick, while Sharon was stalling along during the entire year of 1870, . . . "waiting for the people of Washoe County to demonstrate their generosity and donate a set of nicely engraved bonds . . .",<sup>56</sup> Beachey brought things to a head.

Doubtless realizing that the completion of a V. & T. link between Carson City and Reno, with its resultant semimonopoly of all passenger and freight traffic between the Central Pacific at Reno and Virginia City, would sound the death-knell to his staging enterprise between those points, Hill Beachey decided to get into the railroad act himself. Accordingly, Hill and his associates applied to the 1871 Session of the Nevada State Legislature for a right-of-way franchise for a narrow-gage railway between Reno and Virginia City. In February 1871 the Legislature obliged by issuing them the said franchise.<sup>57</sup> A route for the proposed line was quickly surveyed, which partly paralleled the present route of the Geiger Grade auto highway over the Virginia Range.<sup>58</sup>

As Beachey and his friends were asking for no construction bond subsidy from Washoe County, their proposed railroad enjoyed widespread support from the taxpayers of the county. Myrick states that by June 1871 construction of Beachey's narrow-gage line appeared to be a sure thing.<sup>59</sup>

However, this was not to be. Sharon and his gang, finally stung out of their smug complacency, in July 1871 started building from the Central Pacific main line at Reno toward Carson City, and finally joined the 1869 line just west of Carson City a year later, on August 24, 1872.<sup>60</sup>

#### THE LAST YEARS: 1872-1875

Hill Beachey's last staging venture was irrevocably finished with the final linkup of the two Virginia and Truckee Railroad segments in August 1872. The complete story of what occupied our subject's restless energy and driving ambition following the demise of his Reno-Virginia City stage line is not fully known at this time. However, an article recently uncovered in the *Pioche Raily Record* has helped to at least partially clarify this period; it appears that Beachey, now through forever with stagecoaching, went back to mining once more.<sup>61</sup>

According to the Pioche news article, Beachey was busy in 1874-1875

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<sup>56</sup>Myrick, *ibid*, 155.

<sup>57</sup>*Ibid*.

<sup>58</sup>*Ibid*.

<sup>59</sup>*Ibid*, 157

<sup>60</sup>*Ibid*.

<sup>61</sup>*Pioche Daily Record*, May 9, 1875, p. 2, c. 2.

working his mining claims in the Washoe and Eagle Valley Mining District, about four miles north and west of Carson City. This mining district, according to Lincoln,<sup>62</sup> was also known as the Eagle Valley or the Voltaire District. It was first discovered and developed in 1859, but no mine of any importance was developed at that time. However, a sudden resurgence of interest and activity occurred during the period 1874–1880, with the development of the Athens and the Voltaire Mines, and it was in this reawakening that Hill Beachey participated.

Abel and the *Elko Independent* (1871 file), state that during the period 1871–1873, Hill Beachey also served as a consultant for both the Eastern Nevada Railroad at Elko in 1871 and the Eureka & Palisade Railroad at Palisade in 1873 in the location of their railroad alignments.<sup>63</sup> As Hill had been over practically every foot of those portions of Elko and Eureka Counties where the railroads proposed to build during his staging days of the 1860's, he was doubtless of great service to both railroad groups, even though one of the proposed lines, the Eastern Nevada Railroad, never got much past the surveying stage.

Hill Beachey finally ran out his string in May 1875. Donaldson<sup>64</sup> states that he fell dead from an apoplectic stroke while walking along a San Francisco street, but this is in error. According to his obituaries in practically every important newspaper in northern California, northern Nevada, and southwest Idaho, he was stricken with apoplexy on a San Francisco street Thursday, May 20. However, his death did not occur until the morning of Sunday, May 23, three days later. By Friday May 21, his entire left side was paralyzed, his speech had failed him, and it was obvious that he would not recover. Even then, our courageous friend still remained conscious until the last, and was able to write his last will and testament; his death, when it did come, was quiet and painless.<sup>65</sup>

On May 24, 1875, Hill Beachey's remains were taken by train from San Francisco to Marysville, California, the Mother Lode starting point of his western adventure a quarter-century before. The body was met at the train by his many friends and acquaintances; the Marysville Blue Lodge of Masons took charge of the funeral and burial services, which proceeded forthwith from the Marysville railroad station.<sup>66</sup> The burial was in the family vault in the Marysville cemetery, beside his wife and children. He left a twelve-year-old daughter, Gray Beachey; his wife,

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<sup>62</sup>Francis Church Lincoln. *Mining Districts and Mineral Resources of Nevada*. Newsletter Pub. Co., Reno, 1923.

<sup>63</sup>Abel, *op. cit.*, 12.

<sup>64</sup>Donaldson, *op. cit.*

<sup>65</sup>*Carson Daily Appeal*, May 25, 1875, p. 2, c. 2.

<sup>66</sup>*Ibid.*

Margaret, had predeceased him at Virginia City, Nevada, almost eight years earlier, on October 11, 1867, of childbed fever. Their other children had died during the earlier years of their marriage.

So passed from the western scene one of the region's truly colorful, inspiring, and interesting, albeit remarkably little-known and ambiguous figures. His death was mourned at all his former haunts in Nevada, California, and Idaho. By this time, the contributions he had made toward the opening up and early development of the Idaho and Nevada frontiers stood out sharply in retrospect, and many were the eulogies spoken in his behalf. "Uncle John" Hailey, his old Idaho friend and fellow staging entrepreneur, summed up the general feeling about Hill Beachey perhaps as well as any when he said:

"... he was a man possessed of a high grade of intelligence, was the soul of honor, and was untiring and undaunted in his efforts toward what he believed to be right. I never knew him to go wrong. In short, he was one of the noble works of God—an honest, industrious, good man."<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>67</sup>Hailey, *op. cit.*, 74.





A native of Colorado, Victor Goodwin has enjoyed a 16 year tour of duty with the U S Forest Service in Nevada. His first Nevada assignment was as District Forest Ranger on the Carson City District, Toiyabe National Forest. Beginning June 1960, he was reassigned to Elko, where he spent almost six years as Forest Service representative on the USDA-Nevada Humboldt River Basin Survey, a study of the water and related land resources of the basin. During this period he avidly researched and collected, whenever time permitted, historical facts and data concerning this area of northern Nevada, from Lake Tahoe on the west to Pilot Peak on the east.

Mr. Goodwin is the author of an unpublished definitive history of the Verdi-Truckee-Dog Valley section of western Nevada-eastern California. He is co-author, along with Dr. John Hussey of the National Park Service, of a history of the Boise Valley-Sawtooth Mountains portion of southwest Idaho, which was issued in 1965 as a joint publication of the Forest Service and the National Park Service. He has authored many Nevada historical feature articles for the Elko newspapers and the *Graphic* section of the *Carson Daily Appeal*.

At present Victor Goodwin is assigned by the Forest Service as Forester on the USDA Nevada-California Central Lahonton Basin Survey. He now resides in Carson City.