

THE CHEYENNE DAILY SUN-LEADER

May 15, 1897

HILL AND ARCHER

Two civil engineers whose history should be preserved

Work on the Union Pacific Road in 1867

Danger of the Service – Hill and Archer Attacked by Savage – Hill a victim – Escape of Archer – Other Early Day Episodes – The Hurlbutts and the Indians

A few words regarding the construction of the Union Pacific railway into and through Cheyenne may not be amiss at this time and will perhaps be of interest to most of the readers of the Sun-Leader.

This side of Sidney, Neb. work was pushed vigorously on the construction of the road during the summer and fall of 1867. Before the first building was erected in Cheyenne the graders were at work in the vicinity of Pine Bluffs. By the time the city of tents, as Cheyenne was often called in those days, began to be transformed to one of wooden walls, there was scarcely a mile this side of Sidney which had not been subjected to the shovel and plow and the scraper. This work was done under the general supervision of Gen. G. M. Dodge, the chief engineer of the road.

Although Gen. Dodge was a man of great push, energy and courage, there were, however, with him in the capacity of subordinate engineers and assistants several men whose names are destined to live in Cheyenne history. In this class the names of Ferguson, Eddy, Hill, Seymour, and others might be mentioned: men who constantly periled their lives in the dangerous service in which they were engaged for it must be borne in the mind of the Sun-Leader that hostile Indians were swarming these plains in those days and the scalp of the white man was in danger at all times.

The Sioux were constantly making incursions and raids into the country lying contiguous to the proposed line of the road, and frequent bloody and sanguinary were the encounters between the employees and graders along the line of the road and the savage foe.

In the employ of the road at that time were two engineers names William Archer and James Hill, both of them making Cheyenne their permanent homes, and each had become quite well known in society at the time of which we are now writing. On the first day of July, 1867, Hill and Archer rode out of Cheyenne eastward for the purpose of making an informal inspection along the line to see how matters were working. When near what is now Archer station, six miles east of Cheyenne, a band of mounted Sioux suddenly rode upon them from a point of concesiment behind a little swell just north of the site of the proposed station. As this band of hostiles dashed upon the two men they gave the war whoop and fired volley. Archer was terribly wounded by the fire and fell from his horse. The supposition of Hill and the Indians was that he fell dead from his horse and that he had been instantly killed instead of being seriously wounded. The Indians who had intervened

between Hill and Archer, now turned their attention to the former and leaving the supposed dead white man until a more favorable opportunity they gave instant chase to Hill and actually succeeded and intervening between him and Cheyenne. Not proposing to call into the hands of the savages so long as a chance yet remained, Hill turned his horses head into the direction of Pine Bluffs.

The Indians pursued and though for a time the noble steed bore its master swiftly before his savage pursuers animal endurance was not without experience equal to such an emergency on hot mid-summer day, and at length the ardor of Hill's horse began to lag. The Indians gained on him rapidly and at length he was overtaken at a point which is now known as Hillsdale station. Not only Hillsdale station, but Hill Street now known as Capitol Avenue in Cheyenne took its name from the man's whose fate we have described.

It should be explained that Archer was found alive and rescued that day before the Indians had time to return from the pursuit of Hill. His suffering however was terrible. From that day his hair, which had been dark, was ever thereafter as white as snow.

In the month of October, 1867, the Indians made a raid to the southeast of Cheyenne and three of them, more adventurous than the rest, dashed across Crow Creek and rode up to within fifty feet of the Union Pacific road sew stands. On the same day, they drove off several head of stock found by them just outside the city limits.

Not long after the incident just mentioned, Henry and Edwin Hurlbut, the later new speaker of the Colorado House of representatives then residents of the city; Ed being really a mere boy went not far to the southeast of Cheyenne to try their luck at shooting ducks. Henry, however, being the only one having firearms of any kind. While at a point which would now be within city limits, not more than 300 yards southeast of the present site of the Clark hose house on the south side, two dismounted Indians suddenly made their appearance and came toward them, apparently with the intentions of taking them prisoner. Commanding his younger brother to lie flat on the ground, Henry stood on the defense between his brother and the Indians who though armed did not seem disposed to fire their manifest intentions being to take them prisoner if possible, for the Indians had long before learned that the matter of received a ransom for prisoners was worth bearing in mind. On this occasion the resolute stand taken by Henry seemed to dampen the ardor of the Indians; they hesitated and even withdrew for a short distance, when at the command of Henry the two men ran for their lives for toward the city. The Indians pursued when Henry again faced them and offered battle. Another pause, another light and pursuit and still another until the two brothers reached a place of safety.

It seems from what was learned afterward that this occasion there was but a very small band of Sioux anywhere in the region and the two who had their horses secreted near the creek who that day made their appearance were the only ones who sought to make any attempt in the line of their savage work at or near Cheyenne. Had the Indians fired upon the Hurlbut boys, the town would have sounded the alarm and then the two Indians might have difficulty in escaping from the people.

Notwithstanding the entire disadvantage under which the work had to be done the Union Pacific road was completed and the first train reached this city, November 13, 1867, and early in the following month a side track was completed to camp Carlin.