



The DENVER WESTERNERS
ROUNDUP

March - April 2021



Courtesy Tom Noel Collection

The House of Mirrors in 1942. Painting by Herndon Davis

Shady Dames of Denver

By Katy Ordway

(presented January 27, 2021)

George H. Holliday--On the Plains in '65. The 6th West Virginia Volunteer Cavalry in the West edited by Glenn V. Longacre. Ohio University Press, Athens, OH, 2021. 220 pag appendices, notes, bibliography, index. Hardcover \$39.96

George Holliday begins this story, originally published in 1883, as a fifteen-year-old soldier in the Union Army, underage and eager to participate in the Civil War. Joining up in August 1863, he fought in several battles in the vicinity of West Virginia. In June 1865, the Regiment was ordered to move West, based on their having signed up for three-years service. Eighty-five men deserted, and more when they reached Fort Leavenworth. On July 15, there was a mutiny, but Holliday did not take part. They moved to Fort Sedgwick, and then to Fort Laramie. Soon they were engaged with many fights with the Sioux, Cheyenne, and Arapahoc.

Along the way, he records many adventures. The crash of their train near Carlisle, IL; the steamer on the Missouri that grounded on a sandbar; fight with Standing Elk's band; Powder River Expedition; playing poker with some Pawnee; a buffalo hunt in winter; a freezing cold winter with travel through high snow drifts; and many other tales that reflect the hardships and the adventures that these young men experienced.

They were in the West for only a year, and then returned to Wheeling, West Virginia to be mustered out with a great celebration in April 1866. Along the way, the 6th West Virginia Cavalry lost 301 killed in action, 214 died of wounds, and 233 discharged as unfit for further duty. A further 137 men died of disease, most of this during the Civil War. The two appendices are also most interesting. Holliday went on to become a Congressional Representative for Ohio in later life.

Longacre's editing and notes are generally exceptional, except for this comment regarding Sand Creek as being an "unprovoked massacre." This is a truly important and interesting account of life and experiences on the Great Plains in the mid 1860s. A very enjoyable read.

- Alan Culpin

