

First Packer Confession
Los Pinos Agency
5/8/1874

Old man Swan died first and was eaten by the other five persons, about ten days out from camp; four or five days afterwards Humphrey died and was also eaten; he had about one hundred and thirty three dollars. I found the pocket-book and took the money. Some time afterwards while I was carrying wood, the Butcher was killed as the other two told me accidentally and he was eaten. Bell shot "California" with Swan's gun, and I killed Bell; shot him - covered up the remains, and took a large piece along. Then traveled fourteen days into the "Agency" Bell wanted to kill me, struck at me with his rifle, struck a tree and broke his gun.

I A.G. Packer do solemnly swear that the above statement is true and nothing but the truth So help me God.

A. G. Packer

Sworn to and subscribed before me this 8th day of May A.D. 1874. James P. Downer
J.P.

The above is noted to be a "copy of statement made by Alfred Packer at Los Pinos Agency 1874" which was "filed April 4/83" Arthur P. Cook, Clerk.

Second Packer Confession
Denver
3/16/1883

I, Alfred Packer, desire to make true and voluntary statement in regard to the occurrences in Southern Colorado during the winter of 1873 - 1874. I wish to make it to General Adams because I have made one once before about the same matter.

When we left Ouray's camp we had about seven days of food for one man, we traveled two or three days and it came a storm. We came to a mountain, crossed a gulch and came onto another mountain, found the snow so deep, had to follow the mountain on the top and on about the 4th day we had about a pint of flour left; we followed the mountain, until we came to the main range, do not remember how many days we were traveling then - about 10 days - living on rosebuds and pine gum and some men were crying and praying. Then we came over the main range we camped twice on a stream which runs into a big Lake, the second time just above the lake. The next morning we crossed the lake cut holes into the ice to catch fish, there were no fish so we tried to catch snails, the ice was thin, so some broke through. We crossed the lake and went into a grove of timber, all the men crying and one of them was angry - Swan asked me to go up and find out whether I could see something from the mountains - I took the gun and went up the hill. Found a gulch and came onto another mountain, found a big rosebush with buds sticking through the snow, but could see nothing but snow all around. I was a kind of a guide for them but I did not know the mountains from that side. When I came back to camp after being gone nearly all day I found the redheaded man [Bell] who acted crazy in the morning sitting near the fire roasting a piece of meat which he had cut out of the leg of the German butcher [Miller] the latter's body was lying the furthest off from the fire down the stream, his skull was crushed in with the hatchet. The other three men were lying near the fire, they were cut in the forehead with the hatchet some had two some three cuts - I came within a rod of the fire, when the man saw me, he got up with his hatchet towards me when I shot him sideways through the belly, he fell on his face, the hatchet fell forwards. I

grabbed it and hit him in the top of the head. I camped that night at the fire, sat up all night, the next morning I followed my tracks up the mountain but I could not make it, the snow was too deep and I came back, I went sideways into a piece of pine timber set up two sticks and covered it with pine boughs and then made a shelter about three feet high, this was my camp until I came out. I went back to the fire covered the men up and fetched to the camp the piece of meat that was near the fire. I made a new fire near my camp and cooked the piece of meat and ate it. I tried to get away every day but could not so I lived off the flesh of these men, the bigger part of the 60 days I was out. Then the snow began to have a crust and I started out up the creek to a place where a big slide seemed to come down the mountain of yellowish clay there I started to get up but got my feet wet and having only piece of blanket around them I froze my feet under the toes and I camped before I reached the top of the hill making a fire on top of a log - and on two logs close together [and] I camped [there]. I cooked some of the flesh and carried it with me for food. I carried one blanket. There was seventy dollars amongst the men I fetched it out with me and one gun. The redheaded man had a 50 Dollar Bill in his pocket all the others together had only 20 Dollars. I had 20 Dollars myself. If there was any more money in the outfit, I did not know of it and it remains there. At the last camp just before I reached the Agency I ate my last pieces of meat This meat I cooked at the camp before I started out and put it in to a bag and carried the bag with me, I could not eat but a little at a time. When I went out with the party to search for the bodies, we came to the mountains overlooking the stream but I did not want to take them further. I did not want to go back to the camp myself. If I had stood in that vicinity longer I would have taken you [Mr. Adams] right to the place, but they advised me to go away [refusing to tell the names of the parties]. When I was at the Sheriff in Saguache I was passed a key made out of a pen knife blade with which I could unlock the irons I went to the Arkansas and worked all summer for John Gill 18 miles below Pueblo, then I rented Gilberts ranche still further down, put in a crop of corn, sold it to John Gill and went to Arizona.

State of Colorado

County of Arapahoe

I, Al Packer, of my own free will and voluntarily do swear that the above statement is true, the whole truth and nothing but the truth

So help me God

(s) Alferd Packer

Subscribed and sworn before me this 16th day of March A.D., 1883

Sim. W. Cantril

Notary Public

Third Packer Confession
Letter to D. C. Hatch of Denver
Rocky Mountain News 8/7/1897

Mr. D.C. Hatch, 842 Larimer Street, Denver, Colo.:

My Kind Friend - Your welcome favor of the 22nd inst. Has been received, and in reply to your request I gladly comply by giving to you as complete a statement as it is possible for me to, viz: In the fall of 1873 a party of men left Salt Lake City by wag on, there being teams and pack animals. In leaving we were deficient in supplies for the entire journey. But this matter can hardly be attributed to either myself or anyone else of the party of twenty one (21), for the agreement was that the men who owned the teams were to furnish our sustenance. But unfortunately our supplies were exhausted by the time that we reached the Green River, at the head of the Colorado. And now, my kind friend let me impress upon you the painful fact that thus early in our journey we were suffering most terrible from the pangs of hunger. For about five days we had been surviving on horse feed, which was chopped barley. Just at this point we ... Ouray and a band of fifty Indians, from whom we received assistance. And, being informed by Chief Ouray that the mountains were impassable, owing to the great amount of snow, we availed ourselves of his invitation and camped within two mile of him, and from whom we purchased supplies.

After having been in this camp for about one week a man by the name of Lutzenheiser and four other men started for the agency, having been informed by Chief Ouray that from his camp to the Indian Agency it was forty miles, while in fact, by air line, it was eighty miles. Lutzenheiser and his party had no other provisions, only what each man carried, they being on foot.

As a result their provisions soon became exhausted. And these five men had concluded to cast lot to see who should be food for the others. But just at this time a coyote was seen, which was immediately killed, and was the means of saving one of that party from a tragical fate. And, as this party neared the cattle camp where Gunnison now stands, Lutzenheiser saw a cow fast in the snow and he crawled up to

her and shot her with his revolver. The man who had charge of the cattle, happening to be out looking for his herd saw the tracks which Lutzenheiser had left, and, following these tracks, he soon found Lutzenheiser in an exhausted condition. He took him into this camp and followed his trail back and found the remaining four of the party, whom he also took into the camp, a man by the name of George Driver being the last, who was carrying the head of the coyote. Here they remained until they had become physically recruited, when they started for the Los Pinos agency, which was forty miles into the mountains, at which place they were again picked up in a fainting condition. All of which was sworn to at the time of my trial and is a matter of court record.

And now I return to my own party, which composed six men, myself included. There being two trails to the agency, about one week after Lutzenheiser's party left, we took the upper trail for the purpose of reaching the same destination. We also were on foot, and carried what provisions we could in blankets. After nine days our provisions were entirely exhausted. The snow being deep, we were compelled to keep on top of the divide, in order to travel at all. And these divides led to the top of the Rocky mountains. Our matches had all been used, and we were carrying our fire in an old coffee pot. Three or four days after our provisions were all consumed we took our moccasins, which were made of raw hide, and cooked them, and, of course, ate them. Our suffering at this time was most intense, such, in fact, that the inexperienced cannot imagine. We could not retrace our steps, for our trail was entirely drifted over. In places the snow had been blown away from patches of wild rose bushes, and we were gathering the buds from these bushes, stewing them and eating them. In following these divides we soon gained the tip of the Rocky Mountains, and the snow being blown away from the top of the mountains and our feet encased in pieces of blankets, we were enabled to travel along steadily. Now my friend, you can imagine our condition, on top of the mountains, with nothing to kill for food and not even any of those rose bushes.

Starvation had fastened its deathly talons upon us, and was slowly but most tortuously driving us into the state of imbecility; in fact, Bell, the strongest and most able-bodied

man of our party, had succumbed to the power of mental derangement and was causing the party to be very much afraid of him, as well as that which they felt to be the inevitable doom of each, mentally. I am at a loss to fully express our feelings at this stage, but we consulted each other and conclude to come down off the mountain. For we could not tell whether we had passed the agency or not, for it was either snowing or blowing constantly. And, as it happened, we descended to the lake fork of the Gunnison river. We camped one night just above the lake. In the morning I ascended the mountain for the next purpose of ascertaining if there were any visible signs of civilization on the opposite side. The snow being very deep, it required the entire day to make this trip and return.

As I neared the camp on my return I was confronted by a terrible sight. As I came near I saw no one but Bell. I spoke to him, and then, with the look of a terrible maniac, his eyes glaring and burning fearfully, he grabbed a hatchet and started for me, whereupon I raised my Winchester and shot him. The report from rifle did not arouse the camp, so I hastened to the campfire and found my comrades dead.

Can you imagine my situation - my companions dead and I left alone, surrounded by the midnight horrors of starvation as well as those of utter isolation? My body weak, my mind acted upon in such an awful manner that the greatest wonder is that I ever returned to a rational condition.

In looking about I saw a piece of flesh on the fire, which Bell had cut from Miller's leg. I took this flesh from the fire and lay it to one side, after which I covered the bodies of my dead comrades. I remained here with them during the night. In the morning I moved about 1,000 yards below, where there was a grove of pine trees. I distinctly remember of taking a piece of the flesh and boiling it in a tin cup. I also know that I became sick and suffered most terribly. My mind at this period failed me. But I am satisfied that I must have eaten some of the flesh, but my mind was a total blank for a considerable period of time. When my mind returned I found, by my tracks, that I had been visiting around the adjacent territory, seeking rose buds, which I apparently found, for I noticed that by force of habit I had been stewing them in my tin cup. The

record of time now becomes a nonentity. I do not know how long I remained here. I did not know how near I was to the close of the year. I could not tell how near spring was. But the weather began to moderate and I wandered around seeking rose buds for food, when all of a sudden I was confronted by the Los Pinos agency. It would be a mild assertion for me to say that I was surprised. And most agree able it was, too. I found out that in my searching for food and civilization I had traveled forty miles from the lake fork of the Gunnison.

For three weeks I was taken care of at the agency. I have learned that Lutzenheiser and his party had crossed the mountains into Siwatch. The remaining of the twenty-one men now at the end of this three weeks came through with a band of Indians. They questioned me as to where my comrades were. I replied that I had killed Bell and that evidently he had killed the others. In a day or two we left the agency and started with the teams to go over to Siwatch. We remained in Siwatch until General Adams, the Indian agent, returned from Denver. I then explained to the general all I knew about my dead comrades, and an expedition was fitted out to return and bury them. We had not gone far on this journey before we were compelled to turn back to the agency, owing to the great depth of snow and the crust which was upon it. After returning to the agency I was turned over to the sheriff of Siwatch, with whom I remained until the middle of July. At this time the sheriff, Amos Wall, asked me if I could realize what I had passed through. In reply I gave him as complete an explanation as I could, after which he told me to go away and not permit it to longer worry me.

I did as he advised, so far as to the going away, and after the lapse of ten years I was arrested in 1885 upon the charge of having murdered my companions. The result of my trial is well known to all; how the supreme court granted me a new trial, and how I was convicted of manslaughter upon five different indictments, tried by one and the same jury, receiving an accumulative sentence of forty years, being eight years for each.

Now, my kind friend, in conclusion permit me to say that I am to-day, as ever before, a member of the human family, although isolated and away from that which is dear to

the heart of every man. Am I the villainous wretch which some have asserted me to be? No man can be more heartily sorry for the acts of twenty-four years ago than I. I am more a victim of circumstances than of atrocious designs. No human being living can say that I in cold blood, with evil intent, murdered my companions upon that awful occasion. What could be the object of my taking their lives in a wanton manner? I bear no malice towards living man. Even though I may feel that I have been unjustly dealt with, still that Supremacy which rules over all knows that I forgive as I would wish to be forgiven.

In this the darkest hour of my earthly existence I feel, as I have long felt, that I would have far better off had my execution taken place years ago, and I might now be with those companions, whose ghosts, I assure you do not haunt me, for if the soul has existence beyond this mortal life, each and every one of those unfortunate men knows that I am innocent. As it is there is some unexplainable power which restrains my hand from freeing my soul. Hence all the brightness in the firmament of my earthly future is centered in the hope that I may eventually be given an opportunity of proving to the world that I am "less black than has been painted." And to all my kind friends I can but reiterate that my heart to-day, as before, abounds with thankful gratitude for your many expressions of good will. I should like to be set at liberty under the banner of a pardon, but if that should not be deemed best, I would gladly avail myself of the opportunity that a commute would give of showing that I came into existence under circumstances similar to that of others, and that I still possess a desire to live and do right. O! my friend! Were it not for the flame of hope which forever burns within the human heart, life would certainly be beyond endurance. Gratefully Yours,

Alfred Packer