

LEST WE FORGET... A SPOTLIGHT ON GRAND COUNTY VETERANS

The Middle Park Five

by Donald Dailey "The Spoke" Feb. 2019
GCHA Member

On May 24, 1869, Major John W. Powell embarked on an expedition to fill in the final unknowns on the map of the American West. Among his nine-man crew were five veterans from Middle Park, unaware that by joining Powell's discovery expedition they would find their own immortality.

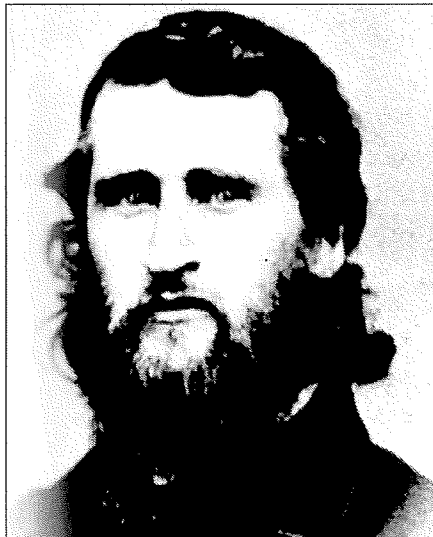
Corporal John C. "Jack" Sumner served in Company E, 32nd Iowa Volunteer Infantry in the Civil War. His sister Elizabeth Byers brought him to Colorado in 1866. W.N. Byers, editor of the Rocky Mountain News, employed Jack as caretaker of the Middle Park Hot Springs.

Sumner set up a trading post for hunters and trappers. Bill Dunn, Billy Hawkins, Oramel Howland, and Seneca Howland were all customers.

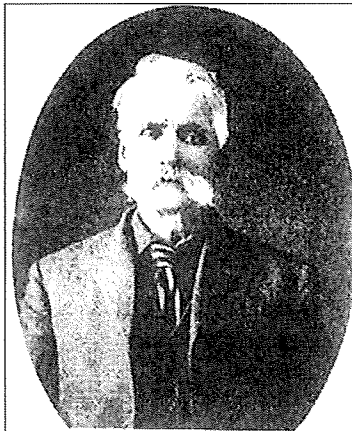
Major and Mrs. John Wesley Powell visited the springs in 1867. Nearby, the headwaters of the Grand River flowed. Powell and Sumner planned to navigate the Grand, Green, and Colorado Rivers to the Gulf of California. Sumner convinced his colleagues to join the Colorado River Exploring Expedition. Only Sumner made it to the Gulf. He died July 5, 1907, leaving a widow and three sons.



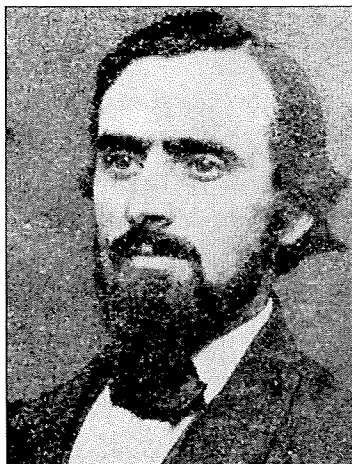
Private William H. "Bill" Dunn served with Co. K, 15th Ohio Vol. Inf. After service, he came to Colorado. Powell said of Dunn, "He dresses in buckskin with dark luster, and has a contempt for razors and shears." Dunn left the expedition at Separation Rapid, Arizona, and was subsequently killed. No photos of Dunn exist today. Artist's interpretation courtesy of Hannah George.



Oramel G. Howland was a printer at the Rocky Mountain News, and VP of the Typographical Union. He was associated with the Methodist publication *The Sunday School Casket*. Powell said Oramel had a "King Lear" look. At age 36, he was the expedition's mapmaker. His fate was the same as Dunn's.



Pvt. William R.W. "Billy" Hawkins enlisted with Company D, 15th Missouri Vol. Cavalry. Hawkins came to Colorado as a bullwhacker. He was the expedition's cook and last survivor, passing away in Arizona at age 70, on June 7, 1919.



A half-brother of Oramel, Seneca B. Howland was a member of Co. G, Vermont Vol. Inf. Brigade. At age 26, he shared the same demise as Oramel and Bill Dunn.

The 150th Anniversary of the Powell Expedition kicks off on April 27, with a new exhibit at the Pioneer Village Museum in Hot Sulphur Springs. Celebrations are planned throughout the summer, so stay tuned for more information!