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UTAH AND THE JESSIE JAMES GANG  
BY  
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Utah, no doubt, has as colorful a history as most any place in the country when it comes to events portraying the Old West and the building of the Western Empire. Some of these events make us proud of our heritage, while others, although interesting, add little or nothing of value to our way of life.

One such story is about a man by the name of Albert Ross Goodin who claimed to be a member of the Jessie James Gang. He settled in the Western portion of Tooele and Juab Counties in about 1885, where he hoped to make a new life for himself.

The author has attempted to obtain as much information as possible, from records, hearsay, and stories about Goodin from old timers in the area who knew him or had had heard stories about him.

Albert Ross Goodin was born of French and German descent in Orange County, Texas, in about 1850, he did not know the day, month or year. He received no schooling. In his early life he worked on ranches as a cow puncher in Texas, New Mexico, Arizona, and Montana. He was a cook on the famous "Chism Trail". Later on, he became a member of the famous "Pat and Joe Crow" Outlaw Gang who rode out of the Omaha, Nebraska area.

During the episodes of the Jessie James Gang, he became a member and rode with them, assisting with many robberies. Later when the James Gang was caught by the law, Goodin got away, thus the James Gang assumed

it was Goodin who had turned them in and they swore they would catch and kill him. With this knowledge, Goodin left the country, first going to Arizona for a time.

During this same period, in the Western part of Tooele County, Gold Hill was in full operation, producing hundreds of thousands of dollars worth of gold, with about 1500 people living there.

It was during this time that Albert Ross Goodin moved to Utah, settling in an area on the east side of Ibapah Mountains. on Trout Creek about 45 miles south of Gold Hill. Here he lived in a small rock cabin, later he moved down canyon about a mile to a one room cabin to isolate himself from the rest of the world. Both of these are still standing and the log cabin is used today for a sheep camp.

Little is known about the life of Goodin, except for the stories that have been handed down. He was short, stocky. and weighed about 160 pounds, with long black hair. Those who knew Goodin said he was a very interesting person, kind, friendly, generous, and the center of attraction whenever a bunch of fellows would get together to tell stories. For many years he used the name of Al Ross but later started using the full name of Albert Ross Goodin.

Goodin was an excellent shot with a rifle and pistol. It has been told that people actually saw him shooting chicken hawks out of mid air with a rifle, a feat which is almost impossible if you have ever had an occasion to try it. He could keep a tin can on a constant roll with a pistol. He said you never aim a pistol, you point with your finger.

On one occasion he and his neighbor, by the name of Parker, were having a dispute over water rights. One day as Parker was crossing the creek to turn the water from the head-gate, a bullet fired by Goodin landed in the stream right next to Parker's feet. Parker filed a complaint with the local Justice of the Peace. When the case came to court, the Judge asked Goodin why he had shot at Parker, Goodin said he did not "shoot at him", the Judge said, "What do you mean you did not shoot at him? You fired a shot which landed right at his feet." Goodin answered, "If I had been shooting at him, he would be dead.?" The Judge dismissed the case.

A Mrs. Sam Falkenberg, whose husband was the overseer for the Bamburger Gold Mine in Granite Canyon, and she, the local school teacher, did most of Goodin's shopping. On one occasion he ordered 24 cans of beans. She said, "You want a case then?" "No", he replied, "I want 24 cans".

Apparently his fear of the Jessie James Gang catching up with him preyed on his mind very heavily, which is evidenced by his building a series of fortresses around his cabin. These fortresses consisted of holes about 5 feet deep, 6 feet across the top, lined with flat rocks, with peep holes around the top which he could put his rifle through and shoot at intruders. Some of these fortresses still exist.

Finally Goodin became so possessed with fear and imaginings of seeing The Jessie James Gang, that his life became one of constant fear. In fact, he imagined James and his men were even coming down the chimney

to get him, even though the chimney consisted of a 6 inch stove pipe.

In June of 1936, two local Tooele couples, Delbert Hammond and his wire, and Lynn and Iva Price, the latter who were on their honeymoon, made a trip to Trout Creek to spend a week camping and fishing. They camped a short distance from Goodins cabin. Upon finding them camped nearby, Goodin threatened to shoot them if they did not leave. They were able to convince him they intended him no harm and he became quite friendly. Thereafter, for the remainder of the week, Goodin spent much time in their camp, visiting and enjoying each others hospitality and sharing meals.

Iva Price describes Goodin's appearance as being extremely rough looking, heavily bearded, with a beat up old hat and some kind of old grey boots which were different than anything she had ever seen before. She felt that it was evident the boots were homemade.

Because of the large number of rattle snakes in the area, Goodin advised the two couples to lay a rope on the ground circling their camp so as to keep the snakes away. When the women learned there were rattle snakes in the area, of course, the camping trip ceased to be enjoyable for them.

Lester Bolinder, a long time resident of Grantsville, Utah, and once a good friend of Al "Ross" Goodin, tells one interesting story concerning Mrs. Clara Tripp, who was the post mistress in Callao about 1923. She was in dire need of a large sum of money, around \$3,000. Les recalls) and did not know how or where she was going to come up with that amount of money.

Goodin said, "By Jesus Clara, I will give you the money". Les took Goodin to his ranch after the money. He states that after crossing the Creek just below Goodin's cabin, Goodin had him wait at the creek while he went to get the money. In about a half an hour Goodin returned with a large handful of paper money which they took back and gave to Mrs. Tripp. Les said he observed that the money was all in Gold Certificates, mostly in \$20. denominations.

Goodin also told Les that he had plenty of money and offered to buy him a truck if Les would drive him around since he could not drive himself. It is les's belief that Goodin's money came from the robberies committed while he was with the Jessie James Gang. I asked Les if he thought Goodin's money was still burried at the old rance. He said, "Oh, I think there is no question that he has more money up there."

I add a warning to treasure seekers' the area is all private property and permission must be obtained or an individual will be trespassing.

One day when Les Bolinder was planting trees on what is now known as the Neilson Ranch, Goodin came up to him, observed how Les was planting the trees and said, "By Jesus, Les, you are planting those trees too close apart."

The phrase, "By Jesus", seemed to be Goodin's favorite expression. The local ranchers began to fear for their own lives because of Goodin's apparent insanity, thus they contacted "Ed Winn". who at the time was the Deputy Sheriff of Juab County at Nephi, Utah.

Alexander Blight, a retired Superintendent, Tintic School District, and a long time friend who happened to have been present at the capture of Goodin, describes Goodin's capture as follows:

\*....."Sheriff Mellor received permission from the School Superintendent Mr. T.E. Bartlett, to excuse me from work for two days to accompany him and Mr. Winn when they went out on the desert to bring Mr. Ross to the County seat for a hearing. Some of the stories they had heard made them a little apprehensive about the task before them, and they hoped that by taking his friend along, results could be obtained much easier. We drove right up to the cabin with Mr. Winn at the steering wheel and no one seemed to be around. I opened the door of the car, walking up to the door, knocked and called out, "Mr. Ross." He immediately yelled back, "Who is there"? I replied, "It is Mr. Blight." He yelled back, "Wait a minute, Mr. Blight, I will unlock the door". And when the door opened, as he pumped my hand, he yelled to the top of his voice, "Why, yah! Those fellows have been trying to get me all night!"

The poor old fellow had spent the night sitting on the concrete floor, behind the stove, holding his gun leveled at the door. I made the Sheriff and his deputy acquainted and I give my word to all readers they didn't find a desperado willing to shoot it out or cause any trouble. Merely a little old man, cold, hungry, frightened, lacking sleep, hair and clothes ruffled and thrilled because he was with his friend and now was sure that he was safe.

\*Tooele Transcript, 4/1/77 issue.

That night in Delta while having dinner, tears came to his eyes and he said, "I guess you men are ashamed of having dinner with a funny looking, little old man like me." We gave him our assurances that we were not ashamed and waited while he continued to attempt to appease a starving body".

Goodin was taken to the Nephi Jail, where, after his first night in jail, it is reported he remarked that he had the best nights sleep he had had for years as "they" could not get at him. (Meaning the Jesse James Gang)

In 1939 Goodin was sent to the State Mental Hospital in Provo, Utah, where he spent the remainder of his life. Evidently while at the hospital, the people who he thought were trying to kill him, changed from the Jesse James Gang to the Pat and Joe Crow Gang.

The records show Goodin's concern for a mythical Gold Mine which he owned and he imagined that Pat and Joe Crow Gang were trying to kill him to get his gold mine. In fact, he said they had killed a woman just below his ranch and tried to blame it on him. Now, he said, they were trying to get him to kill him and rob him of his gold mine. He said the Sheriff had brought him to the hospital for safety and told him to stay there where he would be safe and he would come and get him as soon as he could.

A murder was committed at the Trout Creek Ranch which is about four miles below Goodin's cabin, just a short time before he was taken away. I would have to assume that this murder may have been the one he was talking about, although it had nothing to do with the Pat Crow Gang, but in Goodin's mind it may have been.

Goodin died on December 29, 1943, his age being about 90 years. The following letter was mailed to Sheriff Winn at Nephi, Utah on January 4, 1944.

"Albert Ross Goodin passed away at this hospital on December 29th. We have been unable to find any relatives of his and so had his body taken to the University of Utah where it can be claimed by anyone who wishes to claim it for burial for sometime. If it is not claimed, it will be used for study purposes.

If you know anyone who would be interested in him, will you kindly have them contact us?"

Later, upon hearing of Goodin's death, local ranchers at Trout Creek were disappointed they had not been notified as they expressed their desire that he be buried at Trout Creek where he had been a resident and friend for over forty years.