

FIRST DRAFT

# 1885 murder in Unaweep Canyon among earliest sensational crimes

When Samuel Jones disappeared in Unaweep Canyon in May of 1885, those who knew him weren't worried initially. Jones traveled regularly to Silverton, where he had mining interests.

But as the weeks wore on with no word of Jones, concern developed and suspicion fell on Jones' ranching partner, John L. Campbell.

In late July, Jones' body was discovered on a narrow ledge below a cliff in the canyon, with a bullet hole through the ribs and shoulder. Campbell was immediately arrested.

There were threats of lynching, a sensational court hearing and a trial in which Campbell was portrayed as a conniving cowboy who had shot his partner in the back, carried his body to the top of a cliff, then tossed it over.

Campbell was found guilty of second-degree murder and sentenced to prison. But a decade later, he was pardoned, and suspicion turned on two brothers who had testified against Campbell.

Sometime later, the cliff where the body was found became known as Campbell Point.

Not a lot is known about the two men who became ranch partners in Unaweep Canyon in 1883.

They apparently met while mining in the Silverton area. Jones acquired land adjacent to West Creek, on the north side of the Unaweep Canyon near North Lobe Creek. He also purchased horses and 46 head of cattle. Campbell was to manage the ranch.

Jones was reportedly eccentric and prone to getting lost in the mountains.

Campbell cultivated a reputation as a tough guy.

"He is one of those men who is anxious to be considered a 'bad man,'" the Grand Junction News reported in August, 1885.

He carried a pistol with a coffin and grave etched on the handle and three notches on the butt, although whether he had earned the notches by killing men himself or someone else had done so was unknown.

On May 19, 1885, Jones told Campbell he was going to Silverton to conduct business on his mining claims. Riding a white horse named Old Bill, his route should have taken him down West Creek to the Dolores River at present-day Gateway. Then he would have headed southeast to Telluride and over the mountains to Silverton.

He expected to be gone three or four weeks.

That same day, Campbell reportedly headed to Piñon Mesa to check on the summer range he and Jones used, and to clean out their cabin there. He returned May 21.

As he got back into Unaweep Canyon, he claimed he saw Old Bill wandering without rider or saddle. Campbell wasn't particularly concerned, however. He figured the horse had gotten loose from where Jones tied it, and Jones had continued on foot.

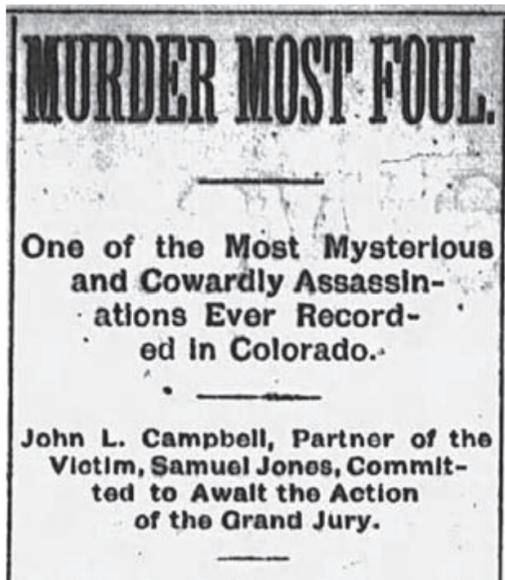
"He was a man who would sooner walk than ride," Campbell said.

Over the next few weeks, Campbell told people he had heard nothing



BOB SILBERNAGEL/Special to the Sentinel

Looking northeast from Colorado Highway 141, you can see Campbell Point, where the body of Samuel Jones was discovered in 1885.



This headline appeared in the Grand Junction News on Aug. 8, 1885, after the inquest into the murder of Samuel Jones.

from Jones. He sent a telegram from White-water to Silverton and learned Jones had never arrived there.

In mid-July, a search was organized, with Campbell participating. He told people he thought Jones had slipped in the waters of West Creek or the Dolores River and drowned. He also suggested there was little reason to continue searching.

However, the next week, another search was conducted, but this time Campbell didn't join. Searchers looked above Unaweep Canyon, near the trail to Campbell's cabin. Buzzards circling near Campbell Point apparently directed them to the cliff.

"First evidences of body being dragged was on cliff some distance from trail," searcher John Knowland told the murder inquest in August of 1885. "Campbell's summer cabin is four miles from the cliff."

He added that a button from a pair of pants was found on the trail.

Another searcher, Louis Harms, was lowered part way down the cliff face to a small ledge where he found a section of a gold watch chain and a vest. Eventually, that bit of chain was determined to match the watch chain worn by Campbell.

Later, two other men were lowered another 60 feet down the cliff and discovered Jones' badly decayed body, which they

identified by his clothes and abundant whiskers.

Harms rode to Grand Junction and notified Mesa County Deputy Sheriff John Spencer, who returned with him to Unaweep Canyon and arrested Campbell, then took him to Grand Junction.

Recalling the case 50 years later, Spencer said that shortly after the coroner's inquest, "the feeling of indignation among the cattlemen and citizens was so intense that there was strong talk of lynching him that night."

So, Spencer and Sheriff William Innes secretly moved Campbell from the county jail to the city jail that night, and the next morning took him by train to Gunnison.

The evidence from the inquest was reshaped at Campbell's trial in June, 1886, along with some new evidence. In Campbell's cabin, two bloody blankets were discovered, which he reportedly used to transport Jones' body from where he was shot to the cliff.

Also, information was presented at both court hearings that Campbell had attempted to have a new partnership agreement between himself and Jones witnessed after Jones disappeared. Jones' signature on that document was determined to be a forgery.

On June 19, 1886, Campbell was convicted of second-degree murder and sentenced to 33 years in prison. That might

have been the end of the case, were it not for a train robbery a year later.

On Nov. 3, 1887, four men robbed a Denver and Rio Grande train east of Whitewater. Lawman Cyrus "Doc" Shores tracked them over three months and arrested them in Utah. Brothers Bob and Jim Smith were sent to prison, along with Ed Rhodes and Bob Boyd.

James and Ira Smith, who reportedly went by "Bob," had testified at Campbell's trial. It was Ira who first spotted Jones' body on the ledge.

In 1891, a Denver newspaper reported that while the two Smiths were in jail in Denver after the train robbery, they told another inmate they had killed Samuel Jones at the behest of Telluride mining interests. They reportedly drew a map showing where Jones' saddle was stashed and where \$2,500 they had taken from him was buried.

Not everyone accepted that story, however. An article in the Grand Valley Star said multiple witnesses could place the Smith brothers in Grand Junction at the time of Jones' murder.

The Star added that most local citizens believed Campbell was "justly suffering the penalty for the awful crime committed."

However, others weren't so sure. By 1895, both the judge who conducted Campbell's trial and the district attorney who prosecuted him recommended to Colorado Gov. Albert McIntire that Campbell be pardoned.

McIntire agreed, and on July 4, 1896, Campbell was released from the state penitentiary in Cañon City. After that, he disappeared from newspaper records.

The money supposedly stashed by the Smith Brothers was never found.

Sources: *Historic newspapers at www.news-papers.com and www.coloradohistoricnewspapers.org; "The Campbell Point Story," by James E. Massey, included in the book, "Gateway/Unaweep Canyon at Some Point in Time."*

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# Denver Zoo apologizes a decade after visitor's death

BY THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

DENVER — The Denver Zoo has apologized more than a decade after a man died following a confrontation with police on zoo grounds.

Zoo President Bert Vescolani publicly apologized to Gail Waters for her son Alonzo Ashley's July 2011 death, The Denver Post reported.

The 29-year-old Ashley was visiting the zoo when he started acting strangely and ran to find a water fountain.

A zoo volunteer called for police, who tackled Ashley and shocked him with a stun gun.

According to the coroner's report, Ashley was placed face down on the ground with his hands cuffed behind his back and his legs crossed and pressed toward his buttocks.

He began convulsing and stopped breathing before paramedics arrived.

The coroner ruled Ashley's death was caused by cardiorespiratory arrest brought on by heat, dehydration and exertion during the struggle.

The district attorneys office cleared the eight officers involved, but the city paid Ashley's family \$295,000 in 2016 to settle a lawsuit. For years, the zoo refused to acknowledge any responsibility.

The death led to protests and calls for accountability for zoo staff and volunteers for failing to recognize that Ashley was in distress and not a danger to the public.

Many in the Denver's Black community boycotted the zoo.

On Friday, that boycott ended with the apology and the dedication of a water fountain and cooling station in Ashley's honor.

# Hiker, 79, rescued at Zion

BY THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

A 79-year-old hiker reported missing at Utah's Zion National Park has been found alive, authorities said.

John Fiske Burg was located Saturday afternoon above Lodge Canyon. National Park Service officials say Burg was treated at the scene and then taken to a hospital in St. George, Utah for further medical attention.

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