

FIRST DRAFT

Fabulous stories surround the ol' Hermit of Pat's Hole

There's little question that Pat Lynch's life was unusual. He spent most of his last 35 years living in caves near the mouth of the Yampa River in Echo Canyon in what's now Dinosaur National Monument. But just how extraordinary his life was depends on how much one believes the stories he told.



BOB SILBERNAGEL

For instance, did he really have a pet mountain lion that brought dead deer to Lynch's cave for him to eat? Lynch told that story to several people, and it was repeated in a 1942 Colorado Magazine article about him.

Lynch also claimed he heard voices of spirits much of his life, one urging him to do good and one promoting mischief.

Lynch was born sometime after 1818 in Ireland. He told friends later that he left home as a teenager rather than face punishment for stealing bread. He found work on a merchant ship that headed to France, the Mediterranean and Africa.

He was either shipwrecked off the coast of Africa, or he jumped ship after a fracas with another crew member. He was taken in by a group of African natives and lived with them several years, marrying one of the young women of the tribe. They had several children.

Eventually, Lynch tired of Africa. He found another merchant ship that took him to the United States in 1853.

He enlisted in the U.S. Navy in 1860 as the Civil War was approaching. However, because he'd been involved in more altercations, he gave his name as James Cooper.

His stories are largely corroborated by military records. His leg was badly injured early in the war when a bomb went off on the deck of the ship on which he was serving. He was hospitalized, but sought to be released to continue serving. Instead, he was honorably discharged. So he re-enlisted, this time as Patrick Lynch, and served on three different ships.

After the war, he enlisted again, this time in the Army, and came west during the Indian wars. It was said by some that Lynch moved west after killing or nearly killing a man in Chicago or Pittsburgh. But a long-time friend, James H. Templeton, disputed that.

"Pat Lynch was not a murderer," he wrote to a newspaper in 1927.

In fact, Lynch loathed killing so much that he got his meat entirely from animals that had drowned in the river, making jerky from the carcasses, friends claimed. Tame deer, beaver and other animals reportedly hung around his cave.

While living near Hahn's Peak in the late 1870s, Lynch got lost in a snowstorm and wandered for four days until he found an abandoned ranch, Templeton wrote. He huddled under some old cowhides while the storm raged until he was



PHOTOS SPECIAL TO THE SENTINEL/Used by permission, Uintah County Library Regional History Center, all rights reserved
Pat Lynch's cave near the Yampa River, as it appeared in the 1940s.



Pat Lynch and two of his horses near his home at Echo Park, date unknown.

rescued by ranchers.

"Always of a superstitious nature and a strong believer in spirits, this trip and exposure proved to be too much for his mind, and to a certain extent, unbalanced him," Templeton said.

Lynch lived at Colorado City (near Colorado Springs), before moving to Hahn's Peak near Steamboat Springs.

Next, he moved to Ashley, Utah, north of Vernal, where he began to raise horses and cattle. Eventually, he moved into Echo Park, which locals came to call Pat's Hole.

My wife Judy, some friends and I recently hiked a trail in Dinosaur National Monument that overlooks the confluence of the Green and Yampa rivers

at Echo Park. Although river rafters frequently float by, it remains an isolated place. It's hard to imagine someone living there and raising livestock.

Lynch's horses, sired by his blue-roan stallion, were his pride and joy.

"Pat's horses were to him as some beloved human being," friend Fray Baker reported.

As he grew older and incapacitated, the horses became feral. Wild blue roans were seen in the region for decades after.

Lynch died in February 1917 at the home of Mr. and Mrs. W.S. Baker in Lilly Park, Colorado, east of Dinosaur National Monument. They claimed he was then 98 years, 10 months old.

Lynch spent the last few

years of his life with the Bakers and became good friends with their son, Fray.

He told Fray that during the Civil War, he accidentally shot a bullet through the hat of Gen. Ulysses S. Grant. When Lynch rushed to apologize, "The General's only reply was, 'Return to your duty, watchman, and be more careful in the future.'"

During his time in Echo Park, Lynch often traveled downstream on the Green River to visit friends at Island Park about six miles away.

He would use a homemade raft, or in winter, walk on the ice, then borrow a horse to return home. He rode across the mountains to his home, then he turned the horse loose and it wandered back to Island Park.

In 1893, Lynch began seeking a pension for his Civil War service. But because he had served under two different names, that proved difficult. There were numerous forms, approvals and rejections. Colorado Congressman Ed Taylor joined the effort on Lynch's behalf, along with Templeton, the Bakers and a friend named F.C. Barnes. He finally received \$30 a month beginning in 1913.

Long after he died, a memorial was erected in the Civil War section of the Craig Cemetery. But the Hermit of Pat's Hole was actually buried in Lilly Park.

Information from: "Patrick Lynch," by Shannan Kouche- rick, courtesy the Museum of Northwest Colorado at Craig; "The Story of Pat Lynch," by Iva Carroll Gray, and "Pat Lynch, Alias James Cooper," by Mrs. Fray Baker, both courtesy of the Uintah County Library Regional History Center in Vernal, Utah; "The Hermit of Pat's Hole," by Edgar C. McMechen, The Colorado Magazine, May, 1942; "Patrick Lynch of 'Pat's Hole,'" by James H. Templeton, The Steamboat Pilot, Aug. 24, 1927.

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REGION SENTINEL WIRE SERVICES

I hurt in accidental shooting at gun show

DENVER — Authorities say a vendor setting up at a Colorado gun show accidentally shot an employee.

The Adams County Sheriff's Office says the incident occurred Saturday afternoon at the Tanner Gun Show.

The employee was taken to a local hospital and is being treated for a non-life threatening injury.

The incident is under investigation.

Man falls to death near Capitol Peak

ASPEN — A 25-year-old man fell to his death while climbing a mountain in western Colorado.

The Pitkin County Sheriff's Office says Jake Lord of Parker died at 7:40 a.m. Saturday after falling near Capitol Peak while climbing with a friend.

The victim fell about 164 to 330 feet. Rescuers declared him dead at the scene.

11-year-old dies after falling at parade

NEPHI, Utah — An 11-year-old girl died after falling off a truck that was participating in the Ute Stampede Western Heritage parade.

Nephi Police Chief Michael Morgan said the girl was hit by the trailer the truck was pulling after she fell off on Friday. Morgan said the girl was attempting to exit the truck when she fell. Morgan said the truck was moving very slowly, but "the driver was not aware of the situation and continued moving."

The girl's name was not immediately released. She was taken to a nearby hospital where she died from her injuries.

25 homes evacuated in mountainside fire

ALPINE, Utah — Utah officials say 25 homes were evacuated as crews work to control a fire on a mountainside east of Alpine.

The Alpine residents were asked to leave their homes early Sunday. Utah Fire Info's website says the Saturday brush and grass fire was caused by a group shooting guns in the area.

Officials say the fire spread to about 300 to 400 acres and is 3 percent contained.

As of Sunday, no injuries or damaged structures caused by the fire were reported.

Utah County, Lone Peak and other fire departments in the area are responding.

Cities criticized for relying on user fees

SALT LAKE CITY — Utah cities are quietly balancing their budgets by raising fees on electricity, water and other services instead of raising property taxes, a politically difficult process that requires elected officials to host public hearings.

Some residents and legislators say the process isn't transparent and should be curbed, but officials say it's an easier, cheaper way to balance budgets and ensure that tax-exempt organizations like churches pay, too.

Republican Rep. Jefferson Moss of Saratoga Springs and Sen. Howard Stephenson of Draper say a bill they drafted to end the practice had to be scaled back after it was met with intense opposition.

The bill was changed to continue allowing the transfers as long as cities send out notices and hold public hearings regarding each transfer.

Man gets 9 years in murder-for-hire plot

DENVER — A Pueblo man was sentenced to nine years in prison for trying to arrange the murder of a witness against him.

Ricardo "Rico" Estevan Suazo told the judge in Denver that the plot was "one of the stupidest things I've ever done."

The Pueblo Chieftain reports that 27-year-old Suazo allegedly shot the intended murder victim last July, but the victim survived.

Two months later, Suazo hatched the murder-for-hire plot because the victim was going to be a witness against him in Pueblo District Court. The plot fell apart when a Pueblo detective heard about it and posed undercover as a hit man.

Suazo entered a plea deal and agreed to a nine-year term to settle the murder-for-hire case and also pending drug charges in Pueblo.

The Daily Sentinel (ISSN 1445-8962)
Published every morning at 734 S. Seventh Street, Grand Junction, CO 81501.
Periodical Postage paid at Grand Junction, CO.
Carrier home delivery prices: 13 weeks - \$65.00, 26 weeks - \$130.00, 52 weeks - \$260.00.
Weekend delivery packages: Wednesday thru Sunday - \$244.40, Friday thru Sunday - \$197.60,
Saturday & Sunday - \$163.80, Sunday only - \$163.80.
Weekend Delivery includes the following date in 2016: Nov. 24.
Single Copy: \$1.00 daily and \$2.00 Sunday.
Mail (USPS): \$30.00 per week, \$1,560 per year. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to The Daily Sentinel, 734 S. Seventh Street, Grand Junction, CO 81501.

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Sex assault conviction

A 37-year-old man has been convicted by a jury of repeatedly sexually assaulting a young boy two years ago, despite what a Mesa County judge described as his attempts to delay his own trial through disruptive behavior.

A Mesa County jury on Friday returned guilty verdicts for Gabriel Lee Muniz on four counts of sexual assault. Muniz was largely absent during his own weeklong trial before Mesa County District Judge Valerie Robison, after his repeated interruptions and rambling statements, according to earlier reports.

While Robison tried to bring Muniz, who was initially self-represented, back to

the courtroom several items, he refused to confirm that he would behave appropriately. Robison eventually appointed advisory counsel Jason Conley to represent Muniz during the proceedings.

Muniz faces a prison sentence. He is scheduled to be sentenced at 8 a.m. Sept. 28, according to the Mesa County District Attorney's office.

According to the Grand Junction Police Department:

- Police are investigating a sexual assault reported in the 200 block of North Ninth Street on Tuesday.
- Kevin Meadows, 38, and Kehlle Rowls, 29, are each accused of theft, unlawful possession of financial devices, obstructing an officer and resisting arrest Wednesday.

- A business in the 2500 block of Rimrock Avenue was defrauded on July 10.
- Property valued at less than \$100 was stolen from vehicles in the 2400 block of Fountain Greens Place on Thursday.
- Alyson Garrett, 27, is accused of forgery and theft Thursday.

According to the Mesa County Sheriff's Office:

- Brett Swank, 36, is accused of assault and domestic violence July 8.
- A man was assaulted in the 500 block of Pauline Street on July 9. He had minor injuries.
- An assault was reported in the 3200 block of Rood Court on Tuesday.
- Multiple vehicles were broken into near the intersection of 25 and I Roads on Friday.

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We're wearing jeans for charity at The Daily Sentinel. Ask me how you can help!

we've got heart!

The employees of *The Daily Sentinel* have joined together to adopt a local non-profit organization/charity of the month. We want to help raise awareness and badly needed funds for these organizations that are dedicated to helping people in our community.

JULY JEANS FOR CHARITY ORGANIZATION:

Kids' Aid

While adults are going through difficult days, it seems children end up paying the highest price.

Right now - in our community - there are elementary and middle school children who have little or nothing to eat over the weekend. They must make the school lunch on Friday stretch to lunch on Monday.

Kids' Aid was founded to help. Children in the program are given backpacks of food and snacks to take home to share with their family over the weekend. We invite you to join with us and help this deserving program feed children.

Please send your tax deductible donation to:
Kids' Aid, P.O. Box 2569, Grand Junction, CO 81502 or call (970) 712-2847