

Box 74, Denver, Colo. Jan. 2, 1921

Dear Miss Tarbell--

Thank you very much for your kind note; I appreciate it greatly, and it makes the Holidays better. In my "visit" letter--I also appreciate that adjective you so generously used--I said in ending that it needed no reply, so as not to imply that you were expected to give time and effort needed for better things merely to a personal letter, just for the sake of being polite. But I would enjoy a letter from you whenever you might feel like writing one--just to keep in touch, if mine could be of no particular use to you. Needless to say, any time I can aid you at this end of the line--such as information, if I have it or can get it?--in your work, I am always at your command, glad to do it.

As for me trying that "History of the Rockies"--Well, it does no harm to dream, even think and plan a little about it, but boiled down, it is simply a matter of cold cash. I have to live, and such a work would take all my time for years--and even Rocky Mountain scenery makes a poor belt lining. First I would of course have to repolish my Spanish, no doubt make a trip to Spain, as a great deal of American history is still buried in the Spanish libraries--and altho to that cheerful idiot, the present-day over-preached optimist, the Atlantic is only knee deep, still if I tried to wade it I might get cold feet. All of which is but a detail. No, at least ten years and not less than \$10,000 in sight would be needed--and I haven't got it; hence the history will probably have to be written by another hand. Altho I will unblushingly admit that probably those people who have told me that today I am the best qualified man to do so are probably right--as today very few know much about the old frontier conditions in the West. Most of those who did know

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are dead or withered, and the few others who know today cannot write, or lack the education to make a balanced whole of it all. Most old timer tales are trivial, as a rule, because they deal only with personal details of no importance--and sad to say, most of them are just commonplace liars, like proverbial old soldiers and sailors. Knowing the feel of such yarns by inborn instinct, I know of course how to discount them, or pan out the good from the made-up; so might get nearer the truth than some others trying to do Western history. Take the Custer fight, for example. I personally knew a scout that left Custer's tent about 2 A.M., if I recall the hour right? for Bentine's command eight or ten miles away, because all the officers were drunk, and he was afraid of what actually did occur--the featherheads would wipe that part of the regiment out. And they did. (Ribbons jammed...) I published a few hundred words once, just to get it on record for some future historian, to that effect, and of course was roundly abused for telling the truth. One ex-army officer calmly assured me and the public in reply that Custer never drank: and my father has drunk with him here in Denver when Denver was a camp; also I've eaten out of Reno's dinner pail when a youngster; he too was an old friend of my father's. You know the "legend" now accepted as "historical truth" about Custer, etc--all of which is pure bunk. The army records incidently bare me out, by the way, but are hidden along ago in dusty files.

"Frontier hardships" were largely those of poverty, not danger, and exist right here today the same as ever under the same financial conditions. My brother today in Middle Park, Colorado, as an example. My own folks were the 8th white family in Denver, and we should know from our own experience, as we do.

Pike's trip was not so much to explore for the U.S.--as near as I can learn so far-- as to look over things for Arvon Burr, and aid in his plan to found a separate Western Empire.

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"Cherry Creek", flowing thro Denver and joining the Platte here, was not so named by the ^{English} whites, but has carried that name in Spanish for over two centuries. The Grand Canon was discovered, partly mapped, and so named by the Spanish monks before the Mayflower or the Half Moon timbers were axed from the forest. Said maps still in existance, I understand. The buffalo was drawn and his picture published in Europe before the Pilgrim Fathers were born--1532 about, I believe the date is, but could easily get it exact, as we have a copy of it here. And I'm intrested in all this for several reasons--the Truth Itself, the false position asumed in American history by New England as being the first in so many things, the Rocki-s are my Native Hills--my real country-- and all that. The Grand Canon, for instance--My uncle Jack was the first man to go thro it; he was Powell's scout on his first trip. Powell left the canon half way down, due to wrecked boats, and took across the desert to Yuma, Uncle Jack staid in his canoe and faced the rapids alone, and Powell found him unconcious with fever at Yuma, where he had come by river weeks before. See Powell's works. So I have a sort of personal interest in it all here; and as I have two ancestors in metal on the Bostom common--Chas Sumner and Gen. Thomas-- I can't very well be accused of prejudice a gainst New England's claims, which are largely not true, in many ways, especially as the school children are mistaught. For example, the first road across the U.S. ran north and south, not east and west. And the Indian uprising of 1864-5-6 were probably due to the Southern military agents organizing the tribes to attack and hold back the building of the Union Pacific as a Civil War measure--a perfectly legitimate military move of course; but not yet published with authentic proof. Much of the Indian troubles were fermented by Canada, ^(the English) too, in days before that, especially in Iowa, Illlinois, etc. Even there

I have dose personal contact, as my grandfather--or rather his father-- was then governor of Iowa, and governor of Ohio before that and my mother as a little girl was friendly with the Indians in Iowa when they were there--and Black Hawk and our family were friends -- in fact Grandfather got back his skeleton from a band of whites that dug it up and stole it, and returned it to his tribe. And he also practically saved the Mormon Church that first winter after Smith was lynched, by opening Iowa to them--and I can get the inside of much early Mormon history thereby that some others might have trouble seeing--and the Mormons were the real pioneers in the Rockies, not my own people into Colorado, or rather Denver. I wish they were, but they are not--so be it. ~~The~~ flat facts first, personal wishes, family sentiment, etc second, or fourth as the case may be.

And my father was credited with "knowing more unwritten Western history" than any man of his time--being the pioneer editor of the Rockies--"W.R. Thomas of the Rocky Mountain News, and C.C. Goodwin of the Salt Lake Tribune" as I've seen it in type several times-- these two had things in their memory from meeting most of the leading men, local and travellers, of that time. And of course I remember a lot of what Dad used to tell me-- in fact, recently at the Colorado State University I personally filled in empty spaces in the records the history department is collecting from my own recollections of affairs on the frontier, or from my father's recollection of them, that the college had been trying a long time to discover.

But for want of three meals a day, and a sack of silver, that would hardly pay for the back to a sable auto coat, I suppose most of this will die when I die, as much of it died with dad. Tickets cost coin, and hotel men don't give a whoop about history. I've noted -- as no doubt you have too?

With Holiday greetings, Yours sincerely

Chauncey Thomas