



Trips West, 1867 and 1868

Although the winter passed quickly, the travel itch persisted. With his earnings from the Eaton Gallery, Hull resupplied his black box. He included a copy of the 188-page 1867 edition of *Photographic Mosaic: An Annual Record of Photographic Process*, the most authoritative reference work for photography.¹³ It was often used and well worn in the forthcoming several years.

Late in the spring of 1867, Hull left Omaha on a train on the new railroad. He worked his way westward, going from station to station and from town to town. Wherever he sensed an opportunity to make and sell photographs, he stopped for a few days.

As the railroad built westward, stations were established about every twelve miles or so along the right of way. Initially these were nothing more than a siding track where the engines could take on water and fuel, and trains could pass one another. Most of them continued to be called

Photographer of the Early West

stations unless a town grew up around them; when that happened, the settlers either changed the name or dropped “Station” from the name. Some of them did ultimately become towns or cities, others disappeared entirely, and some remain only as sidetracks.

When Hull photographed Elkhorn Station, twenty- eight miles from Omaha, the first house had yet to be built. There were only the railroad section house, the freight depot, and a water tank with windmill. Hull soon learned that he would find few if any customers at stations.

In contrast to the stations, a few actual towns had been settled before the railroad construction. For example, both Fremont and Columbus, Nebraska, had been staked out in 1856 as company towns and became established stage stops. Organized companies recruited settlers from the eastern states with the promise of land and transported them to settle in their new towns.

When railroad construction stopped for the winter of 1865–1866, the tracks reached eleven miles beyond Fremont. During that winter, the construction effort was reorganized; it surged ahead when spring arrived. Forty-five miles down the line, the company town of Columbus became a railroad material depot and staging point.

When Hull stopped to photograph Fremont and Columbus in 1867, he was impressed by the future business prospects at both new towns and considered them both as places he might settle in permanently some day.

In his photograph of Fremont – the first ever taken of that town – he captured the railroad’s first depot building,



Town of Fremont, Nebraska

windmill, water tank, warehouse, and a scattering of wood-frame structures built by the settlers. It was a small community that had been growing for ten years and was now emerging as an active commerce center for the Elkhorn Valley.

As Hull traveled farther westward, he captured the first ever photograph of Grand Island.

He became aware that near Plum Creek (now Lexington), Indians had derailed a work train and murdered several workers early in August. By the time he arrived at Plum Creek the following month, however, the army had sent a detachment of Pawnee scouts to afford protection for the town and railroad workers. Hull took the first ever photograph of Plum Creek, which also shows the tent camp of the Pawnee scouts.

When he stopped at newly built Willow Island, Hull climbed atop a box car to get the very first photograph of

Photographer of the Early West

this town as well. He didn't stay long nor did he sell many photographs, since the town consisted of only the passenger station, telegraph station, windmill, a wood house or two, and a single tent.

Hull's several photographs taken at North Platte show the impressive beginnings of what was to become one of the railroad's most important facilities. Hull continued westward and took the first ever photos of Ogallala. As he approached the end of the railroad line, business slowed. Fewer and fewer people were interested in buying photographs. He turned south toward Denver and the Colorado gold country in search of new business.

The stage route followed an old Cherokee trail across desolate plains south of Laramie. Although the Indians were nearby and raids on whites still occurred along the road, Hull's stage passed unscathed.

The scenery changed as the stage route crossed over into the Cache la Poudre River Valley. The river is fringed with cottonwoods and willows and was a remarkable contrast to the dry open spaces of Wyoming. During welcomed rest stops along the way, Hull set up his "traps" and captured photographs of several dramatic landscape scenes.

High water often stopped the stages at the Cache la Poudre River. So entrepreneurial settlers living nearby had built toll bridges and charged outrageous amounts of five to eight dollars for a wagon to cross. Usually the stage passengers had to help satisfy the toll charges. They also encountered high water and toll bridges farther south at the Big Thompson River.



Stagecoach between Laramie and Denver

When Hull arrived in Denver, it appeared to him that the best opportunity for a photographer was in the gold country fifty miles to the west, around the towns up Clear Creek. He made his way along the toll roads from Denver west and became part of the steady stream of people, supplies, and livestock headed into the mountains. The gold towns of Central City and Black Hawk were only a mile apart, and Georgetown was only twenty more miles up a branch of Clear Creek. Once Hull had “followed the gold” up Clear Creek, he spent the next eight months traveling back and forth between these three towns.

Photographer of the Early West

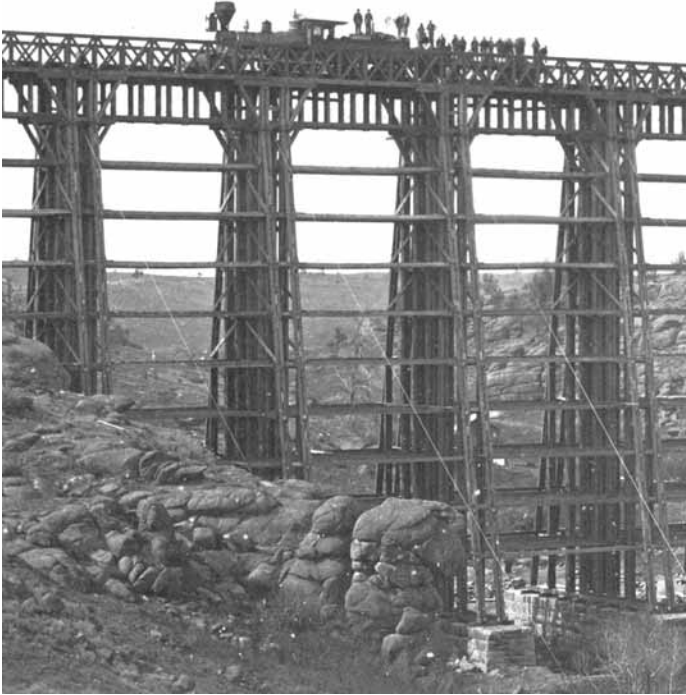
He took and sold photographs of towns in the gold country and of various mine workings and mills scattered through the mountains. In Georgetown one of his special subjects was the Barton House, a pretentious two-and-a-half story hotel. During General Grant's presidential campaign, Grant, Sherman, Sheridan, and Dent stopped at the fancy "three dollar hotel." One afternoon just as General Grant began his oratory from the hotel balcony and Hull prepared to photograph the scene, a sudden mountain shower drenched them all, ruining the speech and the photograph.

While in the mountains, Hull became aware, from pointed comments, that men were considered fledglings until they showed some facial hair. In no time at all, he successfully grew a moustache and a goatee. He thereafter kept some form of beard for most of his life.

Hull's photography was quite successful in the gold country. Many folks had money to spend and wanted to impress their families back home. And as a single, educated man, Hull found considerable social activity to interest him. There were seven churches, a Masonic organization, and various social clubs. A new hotel, Teller House, and an opera house were being planned for Central City.

As the fall of 1868 approached, Hull went northward, returning to the Union Pacific Railroad line and the construction activity that surrounded it. He captured and preserved several images of Cheyenne and the spectacular Dale Creek Bridge west of that town.

When Hull arrived at Laramie in mid October, he found a wild town less than six months old, where the vigilantes

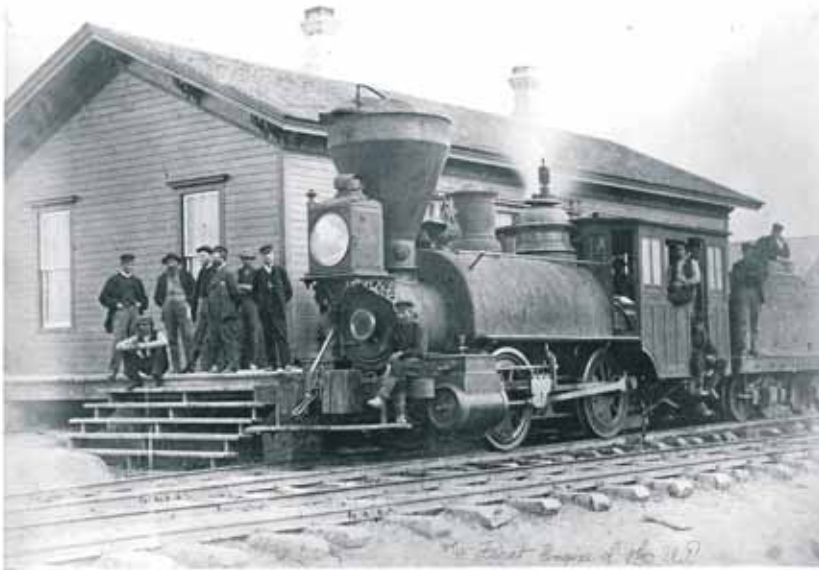


Dale Creek Bridge, Wyoming Territory

were busy. On October 18, 1868, they hanged three outlaws in one day: Big Ned, Ace Moore, and Con Wagner. A fourth outlaw, Steve Young, eluded the vigilantes initially but was caught and hanged the following day. Hull's photographs of both grizzly scenes starkly illustrate the rough life in the West at that time.

In the Laramie railroad yard, Hull climbed to the top of a giant windmill, which was still under construction, for

Photographer of the Early West

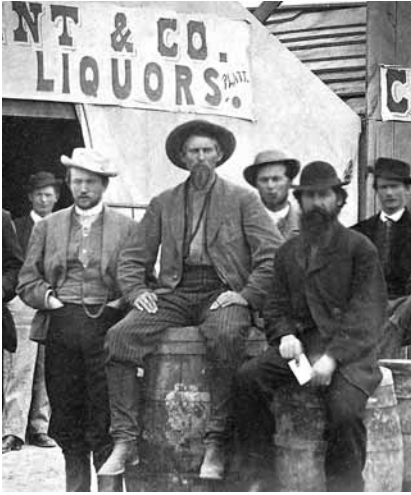


Engine No. 1 at Benton, Wyoming, 1868

his photographs of the settlement. His pair of side-by-side photographs recorded a sweeping panorama of the partially completed roundhouse, shops, rail yard, and Front Street. Hull's images are the first known photographs of the rail yards; they predate famous views, including the giant windmill, taken soon afterward by Andrew J. Russell, who is often referred to as the official photographer of the Union Pacific Railroad.

As Hull again traveled westward town by town, he found fewer customers for his photographs. In the Wyoming Territory he reached, and photographed, Green River before he turned around and headed eastward.

On the return trip, still in the Wyoming Territory, he photographed scenes in Benton, a hell-on-wheels town that



*Jack Morrow and friends,
Benton, Wyoming*

lasted only a few months after his visit. One of his Benton photos shows a dozen supposed businessmen, suited and hatted, posing with the legendary Jack Morrow, who commands the center of the group. Curiously, Morrow also appears prominently in a photograph Hull took in Green River only a short time before this.

That fall of 1868, Hull again visited Denver, where he photographed Sanford Dougan, who had reached his own end of the line. Dougan was one of two well-known Denver renegades who, in addition to some casual murders, had robbed a Denver judge in a rather cavalier fashion. Vigilantes tracked Dougan down, and at daybreak on December 1, 1868, when Hull found him, he was swinging gently from a tree. Another photographer arrived and began setting up his equipment. Both Hull and the interloper claimed exclusive rights to make the picture, but after a bit of a tussle, each photographer ultimately got a photograph. In his book *Picture Gallery Pioneers*, Ralph Andrews told Dougan's story thus:

Sanford Dougan was fit for hanging for murders committed in Cheyenne, Laramie and Central City. A posse in

Photographer of the Early West

Laramie held him but not tight enough or long enough. Dougan escaped and cheated the noose for several days.

Late in November, Judge Orsen Brooks, police magistrate in Denver, was held up and robbed by two men. Before the assailants fled, the victim saw them clearly enough to give U.S. Marshall Cook descriptions of both. They seemed to fit Dougan and Ed Franklin, well known Denver renegades.

Traced to Golden, where the pair had been drinking and spending freely, the Marshall [Cook] caught Franklin in a half drunken sleep. He drew his gun but Cook shot him first and Franklin's body was brought back to Denver for burial. Dougan eluded the pursuers until he reached Cheyenne where his luck ran out. Taken into custody he was lodged in Denver's Larimer Street jail.

Aroused citizens quickly formed a Vigilante Committee with the avowed purpose of "cooking this fellow's goose once and for all." Marshall Cook learned of the mob's intention and after dark started the prisoner on a march to a stronger building on the other side of town. The Vigilante Committee met them at the Larimer Street Bridge, overpowered the Marshall and seized Dougan.

A cottonwood tree stood handy on Cherry Street between 5th and 6th. A wagon was drawn up under it and standing on it, Sanford S. C. Dougan made his last speech. He admitted the Brooks robbery and the Central City murder, denied committing the other crimes and begged to be allowed to leave the country. Leave it he did—when the rope went taut and the wagon was pulled away.¹⁴

Hull undoubtedly rubbed up against a variety of unsavory characters during his travels but apparently managed to escape any real harm. A family story relates:

On one occasion he was traveling by stagecoach with his photographic gear when they were stopped and robbed by a band of highwaymen. They took the passengers' money, watches, jewelry, clothing and all their food. Later that same day they encountered a second band of highwaymen. When this group of robbers found that the passengers had nothing worth taking, and were even without food, they gave them a crate full of oranges. On both occasions Hull explained that his equipment was his means of livelihood and he needed to keep it. They saw this as reasonable and



The end of the line for Sanford Dougan, Denver

Photographer of the Early West

besides, what could they do with it? As they left, one of the robbers insisted that, at some time in the future, Hull would make three free photographs of him: one for himself, one for his parents, and one for his girlfriend.¹⁵

This may well be why two of Hull's preserved photographs included the notorious renegade Jack Morrow.



Arundel C. Hull's Travels, 1867-1868