

Oakley A. Seymour

Born Cannonsville, Delaware County, NY

30 Jan 1861 – 12 Jul 1936

“A History of the Seymour Family” by Oakley A. Seymour, 1933:

Oakley A. Seymour, first child and son of Alonzo and Josephine Seymour was born on the Seymour homestead on Sands Creek in an old log house on Jan. 30th, 1861. He thrived and grew and was a very ambitious child from the time he was large enough to do anything there was to do. He learned to read at an age so young that he could not remember of ever learning it at all. I think that he went to school for the first time the summer after he was six years old, and his first lessons in reading were in the Second Reader, and the first summer he learned so easily that he could read very good in the Fourth Reader. In those days mathematics was one of the most prominent studies in the common schools, and Oakley and his brother Irvin both learned the multiplication tables up to and including the twelves and their father drilled them on these tables the following winter so thoroughly that they never forgot them. His education was all acquired in the district schools on Sands Creek, of which he attended three different ones, but mostly in the Christianville School, to which district he belonged. The schools were run differently in those days than they are now, having 2 terms of about 16 weeks each, one in the summer and another in the winter. He attended the summer schools most of the time until about 14 years old, after which he went to school only in the winter, in the summer helping with the work on the farm and in the mill where he began to help his father when only 10 years old. His last 5 years of school consisted of only about 6 to 8 weeks of the winter term, when at the age of 17 years he quit, with the honor of being the best scholar in that school.

He had a roving disposition and from a small boy he always had a desire to go west. Accordingly, when he was past his 18th birthday, his father gave him his time and told him that he could go. On June 16th, 1879 he left home and went to Osborne Co., Kansas, working on farms and other work until some time in April, 1880 when he went on farther west to Colorado where the great silver mining camp of Leadville was booming, and the Denver & Rio Grande Railroad was beginning to push its lines of steel to the southern and western part of the state, the main objective point at that time being Leadville, the greatest silver mining camp at that time in the world. He went to the end of the track a few miles above the Royal Gorge where he began his work in that great state near a place called Pleasant Valley, helping to lay the first ties that were laid on that grade from there up the Arkansas river to a place called Cleora, where he quit the railroad, and in company with three others, went to making ties on the northern slope of Mount Shavans, a prominent peak of the Rockies in that locality. After a short time at this work, a couple of old prospectors camping there for a day or two took a notion to have him go along with them prospecting. Accordingly, he went with them, but the snow was on the mountains in such quantities that they could not do very much at prospecting, so they got the young man a job

in a mine on Mount Princeton a few miles farther up the river, and about the 1st of June 1880, he was working in a silver mine at an altitude of about 10,000 feet above sea level, just above the timber line. Working in this and other mines the rest of the summer, in the fall he went down lower in the valley and drove a team for awhile, quitting that for a job in a shingle and sawmill where he worked most of the winter, and then the mill shutting down, he went away from there up on what was known as South Park, where he worked in another sawmill for awhile, quitting and going on still farther and working in another mill. After working there a month or two, and hiring by the month for the summer, he and two others were summarily discharged one day, without any apparent cause. He left the place that afternoon and two days later was back at the shingle mill that he left in the winter, and worked there until the mill finally shut down and the man that ran it bought a team, harness and wagon, loaded up his household belongings, his family and the young man who had worked for him, and started on the long trip of about 200 miles to the Uncompahgre Valley, where the Ute Indians had a reservation that was soon to be thrown open to the whites for settlement. The trip in some respects was very enjoyable, as the weather was fine and going from the Atlantic to the Pacific slope of the Rocky Mountains, over the Majestic Marshal Pass, at an altitude of between 10,000 and 11,000 feet, was a trip never to be forgotten. Of course, on such a trip there was bound to be some accidents, the worst of which was breaking a tire on one of the wagon wheels, and the man having to wheel it back up the road several miles by hand to get it mended. The trip was finally ended at a small village called Portland, where they made their home the rest of the summer and the next winter, sawmilling part of the time and cutting and putting up wild hay that grew on the uplands around there.

The next spring the young man hired out to a couple of bachelor brothers on a farm (or ranch as they were called there) near Portland, and worked for them that summer, going back late in the fall to the man that he came into the valley with, who in the meantime had purchased a ranch farther down the valley. Becoming dissatisfied after awhile with the way the man acted, he left him and hired again to the two brothers that he worked for the previous summer. The next fall, about the first of October, he hired to a man to work in a mine and after working there about 8 months he quit, getting beat out of all his pay but sixty dollars, by the man he worked for and another man in a land deal. He kept on in this way, working on farms and sawmills for several years, renting farms and going behind until about the first of January, 1890, he hired to Mr. Foster (the man that he came to the valley with) for one year. He worked for him until a year from the next November, when, having paid up his debts and saved a little money, his thoughts turned longingly to the old home on Sands Creek, N.Y. and on Nov. 3rd, 1891 he took a train in Olathe, Colorado for the long trip to the old home that he left a little more than 12 long years before. He took a side trip down into Arkansas, where he visited about a week, then he pursued his journey eastward again, taking another side trip down to the city of Washington where he had relatives, staying there with them nearly a month taking in the sights of that beautiful city, and shaking hands with the only president that he had helped to elect up to that time, Hon. Benjamin Harrison. Then one evening about 5 o'clock, having said goodbye to his relatives (some of them for the last time in this world), he again took the train, the "Congressional

Limited," and after an all night ride and several changes of cars, he landed in Deposit, N.Y. the next morning about 7 o'clock. Leaving his grip at a hotel with instructions to have it sent on the stage that night, he struck out on foot for Cannonsville, where his parents lived at that time, arriving there about 9 o'clock A.M. Oh, the joy of that meeting. As the son opened the door without knocking, he faced his mother, sitting in her little rocking chair by her sewing table at the farther end of the room, and with shining eyes she arose and started towards him saying, "This must be Oakley," and an instant later they were in each other's arms. The son reminded her that he had not eaten anything since he left Washington the day before, and that as he had walked most of the way from Deposit that morning (about 8 miles), his appetite for good old fashioned buckwheat pancakes was immense, and he would be very much pleased to see some of them forthcoming. Immediately she and the hired girl, Mary Williams (who fell in love with him right on the spot, and who afterward became his wife), proceeded to procure the desired edibles which the son partook of with evident appreciation and delight. The father was in Philadelphia at that time on business and did not arrive home until a few days later, when he took the horse and buggy and went to Deposit to meet the father whom he had not seen in all those long years. He knew him as soon as he saw him in the hotel where he was waiting, even though his back was turned towards the son who said, "Good Morning, Pa," the name he had always called him since he was able to talk. The father turned and they shook hands and the father said, "Oakley, I'm proud of you." A few days after the son's return, his mother and he went over on Sands Creek to the place where he was born. When they got to a place where they could see that the old log house, in which he was born and which was still standing when he left home 12 years before, was now gone, he lifted up his voice and wept. For a long time he could not control his emotions, and on their arrival at the old homestead where his sister June and her husband and their two children were living, he could hardly control his voice enough to speak to them. However, the feeling wore off after awhile and they had a very enjoyable time together. After visiting all the family relations for about a month, he went over to Fish's Eddy where his brother Irvin was, and worked there in an acid factory a couple of months, after which he returned to the old place on Sands Creek, and worked for his brother-in-law six months. Meantime, he had become engaged to Mary Williams, and shortly afterward they were married, and she stayed with her parents who lived on the next farm, until they started for Colorado on Sept. 6th, 1892. They arrived in Olathe, Colorado on Sept. 10th just at dark to find Mr. Foster, his wife and one son all ready to start for Seattle the next day, having sold off their goods that they did not want to take with them, and not having hardly enough to keep house overnight with. However, they got along some way and the next day they left for Seattle, leaving Oakley and his wife with all their worldly belongings in three small trunks and 21 cents in his pocket. In three days they were very comfortably settled in the original log house on that farm, the owner of a fine young cow giving milk, also a few chickens, also potatoes and other stuff to live on all winter, and a job working on that farm at \$40.00 a month, from the man who had rented the farm from Mr. Foster.