



America's Children



Seth of Colorado

by James Otis

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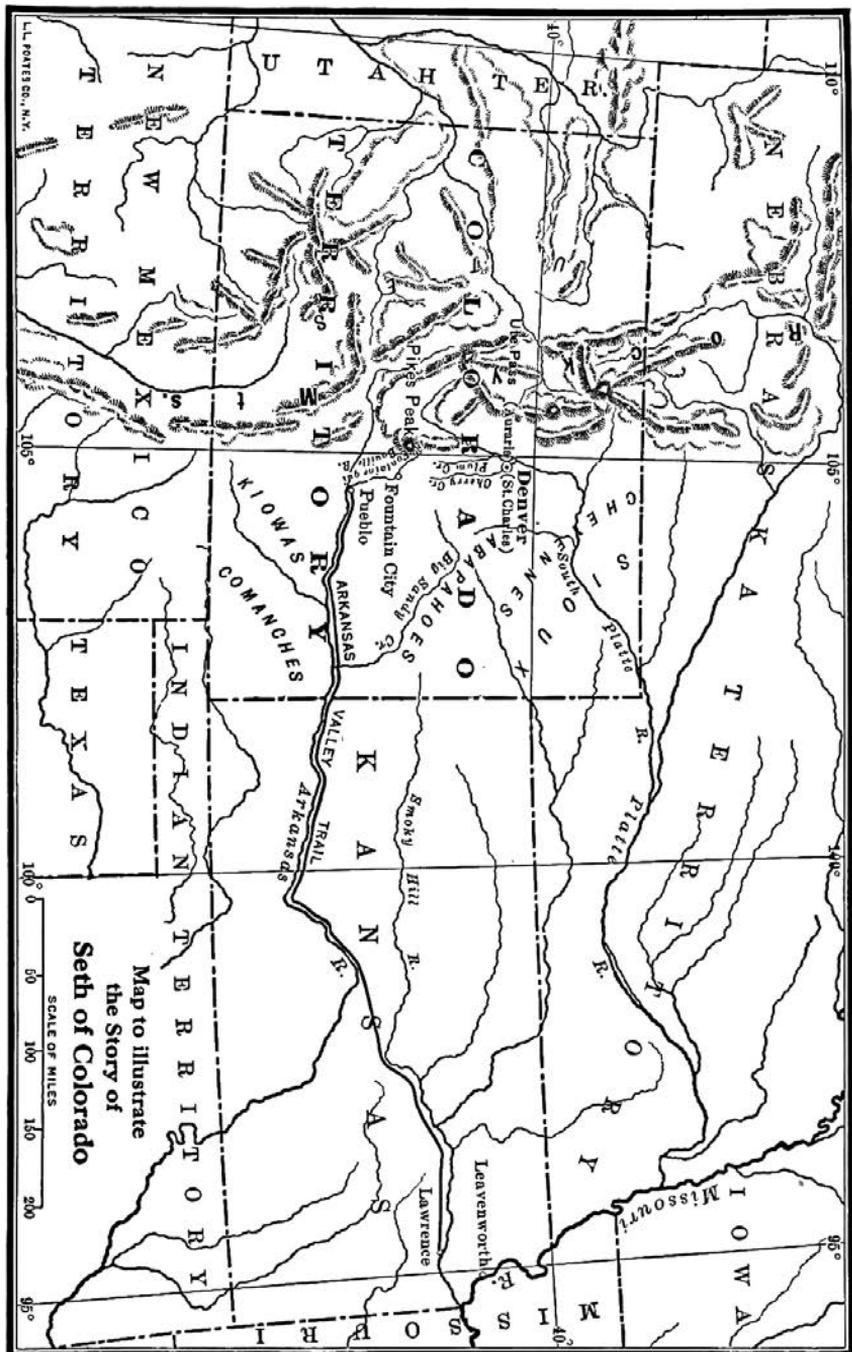
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A NOTE TO THE READER

This book was written in the early 20th century, a time when societal attitudes and language were significantly from what we recognize today. As you delve into its pages, you might come across terms and descriptions that our modern sensibilities find offensive or inappropriate. These echo the beliefs and biases of that era, some of which were fueled by ignorance, fear, and misunderstanding.

We've chosen to preserve the original text, providing an unvarnished window into the past. It's essential to approach this reading with an open heart and mind, recognizing the historical context that shaped these terms and views. While we've made progress as a society, the shadows of these old attitudes sometimes persist.

By recognizing and reflecting on the profound impact such perspectives have left on our culture, we can deepen our understanding of history and chart a course towards a more inclusive and compassionate future.

HOW I CAME TO WRITE MY STORY

IT concerns no one but myself if I choose to spend a portion of my well-earned leisure writing the story of how I happened to come into this country, which is now called Colorado, and of how I have grown up with it from the time it was taken possession of by men from the East, who in their eagerness for gold believed, poor, foolish souls, that they had but to dig in the sands for a few days in order to make themselves rich for life.

Some of my friends laughed at me when I told them of my plan, but I am not to be turned from a road, having once decided upon it, and those who have ridiculed the idea that I can make a readable tale out of my experiences need not trouble themselves to find out whether I have succeeded or failed.



WHO I AM

IN order to start properly, as practiced story-tellers do, I suppose I ought first to give some account of myself, so that in case others chance to scan what I have written, they may in that way become acquainted with the writer.

In the year 1857 I was living in Lawrence, Kansas,

with my father and mother, and a happier lad it would be difficult to find, for my home was a most pleasant one. I had as loving a mother as any boy could desire, and my father, while stern now and then, had a warm place for me in his heart I understood this well when, from time to time, without speaking, he would press me closely to his breast, then turn quickly away, as if ashamed of having shown any token of love.

Even then, before affliction overtook me, there was a strong desire in my heart to become a farmer, although both my father and mother insisted that I should do all in my power first to gain an education, with the idea that it might be possible for me to take my place among men of position in the land.

While I was not inclined to any other way of life than that of a farmer, loving outdoor work and finding my greatest enjoyment in seeing the seed I had planted spring up from the earth and bear fruit, yet I was obedient in doing as my parents would have me, believing that they knew best what would be to my advantage.

MY GREAT LOSS

IN those happy days when I would have changed places with no lad whom I knew or had ever heard of, the blow suddenly came which left me orphaned. Within one week both my father and mother died of a fever, and it was as if the sun had been blotted out from the heavens. I could see no ray of light anywhere, and young though I was, my one desire was to join my loved parents, for it seemed as if this world held no place for Seth Wagner.

There were many in Lawrence who befriended me in that time of sorrow, and the one who tried the hardest to comfort me was Mrs. Middleton, a dear soul who had boys of her own, although they were younger than I. I believe she was all the more tender to me because of asking herself what her little sons would do if, in the short space of a week, they should be deprived of both father and mother.



Kind though she was, and doing her best to lighten the sorrow which hung about me like a black cloud, there was small consolation for me from words; but in time I became accustomed in a certain measure to the loss which had befallen me.

MY WORLDLY WEALTH

To carry out the plan which my father had formed for me, and by gaining an education to take up the practice of law or of medicine when I was older, had now become an impossibility.

When all my father's property had been sold and the debts paid by Mr. Middleton, who did everything in his



power to guard my interests, I had one hundred and sixty-one dollars as the sum total of my father's estate. With this small amount I must make my way in the world until I should stand on a solid foundation.

Had there been money enough left to me, I should have bought a farm near

Lawrence, and there have set myself to work laying up sufficient of this world's goods to provide me with the necessaries, if not the comforts, of life.

It may be you will say that a youngster of my age would not naturally look so far ahead into the future as to realize that he must make provision against what people call a "rainy day"; but bear in mind that grief sometimes ages a lad wonderfully.

When the sharpest edge of my sorrow had been worn away by time, it was as if I had all at once become a man, with a clear sense of all that I must do in order to win a footing in the world. In a night, as it were, I had added twenty years to my twelve.

PLANS FOR THE FUTURE

My first resolve was that my tiny patrimony should be put carefully away, where it might earn me somewhat in the way of interest, and at the same time be kept as