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DONALDSON BUILDING  
MINNEAPOLIS, MINN.

Cole Younger's Story of the Northfield Raid  
in his own handwriting.

History of the Document.

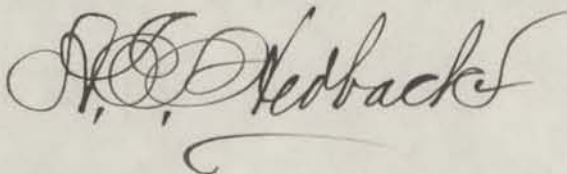
In 1897 I was Prison Physician at Stillwater and Cole Younger was assigned to help in my office and occupied a cell in the hospital.

At that time, the first effort to secure a pardon for the Younger brothers was made. Warden Henry Wolfer, who I believe started, and certainly favored this action, advised Cole to break his silence of twenty-one years relative to the raid at Northfield and tell his own story of what took place. This he did, and when later he was about to throw the original into the waste basket, I asked for it and have kept it in my possession up to the present. At the solicitation of Professor William W. Folwell, I am now pleased to turn it over to the State Historical Society.

There was much curiosity and conjecture about the "man on the buckskin horse" in this story. Cole never told me who he was but stated that the James brothers were not there.

Cole Younger had a charming personality, was a giant intellectually as well as physically and had a good command of the English language frequently using quotations from Shakespeare in conversation. I shall never forget his admonition: "You can run away from everybody else but you can never run away from yourself".

June 7th, 1921.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, reading "A. E. Hedback". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, ornate initial "A" and a long, sweeping underline.

Sir:- For the first time I will now write out, and give the facts, of the raid made on Northfield, September 7<sup>th</sup> 1876:

We left Mankato Sept 2<sup>d</sup> for Northfield. We had been informed that ex-Governor Ames of Mississippi, and Gen. Benjamin Butler of Mass, had deposited \$75,000 in the national bank of that place, and it was the above information that caused us to select the Bank of Northfield. I have seen it stated several times in newspapers that we were frightened away from Mankato owing to the recognition of one of the members of our party, but such was not the case; for, if anyone thought they recognized any of us at that time, we knew nothing of it. That we talked about the banks of that part of the State, is true, but we came to the conclusion that they had enough to do to care for the farmers, who had already suffered too much from grasshoppers to be troubled by us; therefore we went to Northfield in expectation of getting the \$75,000 belonging to ex-Gov. Ames and

Gen. Butler. In going to our destination we went by different routes. Four, including Bob Younger, went the Southern way, Jim Younger, myself and the other two, by the northern route. On the 6th of Sept. we staid at Ganesville, and on the following morning we went to Northfield where we met the other half of our party. We got our dinner in different places; some, including myself at a restaurant on the west side of the river. Early in the afternoon we rode back on the Ganesville road two or three miles to consult and arrange our plans. We agreed, by a majority vote, to rob the bank, our plan, as agreed on by all the party, was to get into the bank and make our retreat before the alarm was given, if possible, but if we failed and an alarm was given, what shooting was to be done should be for the purpose of frightening the people from the street, and in no case were there to be an attempt to kill.

For order to carry out the above agreement the following arrangement was made. Three were to ride ahead and enter the bank as soon as Clall Miller and myself had crossed the bridge leading into the square, provided too great a crowd was not on the street.

One fourth of a mile behind the first three were Clall Miller and myself who were to take our position directly in front of the bank in order to call the three in the bank out in case the alarm was given. Another quarter of a mile behind us the remaining three, including Jim Younger, were to take up their stand near the bridge. In case no alarm was given, when the three men in the bank came out, the men at the bridge were to mount their horses and we were all to retreat on the Jamesville road; but, if the alarm was given, I was to signal those at the bridge and they were to give the rebel yell and fire their pistols in the air to scare the people off the street.

It was understood that I was to remain in front of the bank during our stay in town, so that in case the citizens began to get together and arm themselves, I was to call the men out of the bank and are sure to immediately retreat, for there was at no time any intention of making a fight of it. The first part of our plan was carried out up to going into the bank, but it was at this point that the first mistake was made; for, as I said above, if too many people were on the street the attempt was not to be made, and the three men were to ride straight through the town on the Dundas road. When Miller and myself crossed over the bridge I saw a crowd of citizens about the corners, also our boys sitting there on some boxes. I remarked to Miller about the crowd, and said: "Surely the boys will not go into the bank with so many people about. I wonder why they did not ride on through town." We were half way across the square when we saw the three men arise and walk up the sidewalks towards the bank.

Miller said, "They are going in," and I replied, "If they do the alarm will be given as sure as there's a hell, so you had better take that pipe out of your mouth;" The latter part of my remark was called out because Miller was so sure that there would be no trouble that he had lit his pipe just before we crossed the bridge, saying as he did so that he was going to smoke through the entire proceedings. As we rode into Division Street the three men ahead entered the bank, and we looked back and saw the other three crossing the bridge. As we took our position in front of the bank, I noticed that the bank door had been left open, and I could hear men talking inside. I got down from my horse to fix my saddle girth, and while so doing I told Miller to get off his horse and close the door, which he did. Just at this time some one across the street shouted, "Robbers in the bank!"

I jumped into my saddle and fired my  
 pistol in the air to let those at the  
 bridge know that the alarm was given.  
 at this moment a man came up to the  
 bank, and then started to run away,  
 whereupon Miller drew his pistol down  
 on him and cried out, "Stop or I'll kill  
 you!" The man halted, but soon began  
 to move off slowly, and seeing that Miller  
 intended to shoot him I called out, "Don't  
 shoot him; let him go!" Miller then  
 turned and mounted his horse, the man  
 meanwhile running off down the sidewalk. As  
 this happened the three men left at the  
 bridge entered the <sup>street</sup> on a full run, Stiles,  
 as he is called, met the man whom Miller  
 had permitted to go, and commanded him  
 to stop, threatening to shoot him if he did  
 not. I shouted to Stiles to let the man  
 go and not to shoot him, whereupon  
 Stiles and the man on the buckskin  
 horse passed on up the street fifty or a

hundred yards south of the bank, Jim  
 stopping in front of the bank with me.  
 Now, to return to the man who first  
 discovered what was going on in the bank,  
 I told him to get off the street, which  
 he did. I have learned since that the  
 gentleman was Dr. Wheeler, and the other  
 gentleman was J. S. Allen. Both of them  
 heard me call to Miller not to shoot,  
 and both of them could have heard me  
 repeat the command to Stiles. I will  
 now return to my narrative where I  
 broke off by this digression. Jumping  
 off my horse I ran to the bank  
 door and told the boys to hasten out  
 as the alarm was given and I thought  
 the citizens were arming themselves.  
 Bob Younger came out and I, thinking  
 all were coming, got on my horse  
 and started north to the corner of  
 Bridge square when I saw a man up  
 stairs across the street with a gun.

To frighten him away I shot a pane of glass out above his head, whereupon he stepped back out of sight. This man was, I think, Dr. Wheeler, I then fired into the corner of the building on Bridge square to frighten the people away from our houses, and they ran around the corner out of sight. Bob went on down the sidewalk to the stairway intending to get his horse at that point. I noticed that Bob was the only one who had answered my call, so I again turned and ran back to the bank, and shouted to those inside, "For God's sake come out!" Just then Miller called to me, saying he was shot, and looking at him I saw blood running down his face. The firing by this time had become general, and as the two men in the bank had not yet come out I was forced for the third time to ride to the bank and call to them to come out,

and this time they did so. In the meantime Miller had been shot again and had fallen from his horse. I jumped from my horse, ran to Miller to see how badly he was hurt and, while turning him over, was shot in the left hip. I took Millers pistols, remounted my horse and rode towards Bob, who was standing near the stairway, Jim being with me. At this moment Bob was shot. I saw him change his pistol from his right hand to the left, and from the way his right arm hung limp at his side I knew it was broken. I called to him to come from there, and ~~turning~~ <sup>turning</sup> to Jim I told him to catch Millers horse for Bob. This was done, Bob ran up the street and Jim helped him to mount. I then called to Pitts to help me get Miller up on my horse, it being my intention to carry him before me. On lifting him up we saw that he was dead, so I told Pitts to lay him down again and to run up the street out of range and I would take him up behind me.

I then cried out to the rest of the party to  
 move on ahead and they started, Jim leading  
 the horse that Bob rode. Pitts run up the street  
 about a hundred yards where he mounted behind  
 me and we rode out of town on the Dundas road.  
 Up to this time I did not know that a citizen  
 had been shot, nor did I know that any of our  
 party had shot with the intention of hitting any  
 one. I know that I never fired a shot at any  
 one intending to hit, nor did Jim. The fact is,  
 that all of the trouble was caused by a quart  
 of whisky, which as I learned afterwards, one of  
 the three men that went into the bank had concealed,  
 and between where they left us in the woods  
 and town they had drank the most of it  
 and were drunk. That accounts for them  
 not shutting the door of the bank and not  
 coming out according to agreement when I  
 called to them that the alarm was given  
 and the people were arming themselves. Had it  
 not been for the whisky there would not,  
 in all probability, been a man killed,

and I can truthfully say had I known they had whiskey I never would have gone into the town; for with all my faults, and I am sorry to say they were many, whiskey drinking was not one of them, and I never had confidence in a man that he would do the right thing or what was expected of him when he was under the influence of whiskey. When we got out of town the last man to leave the bank told me that as he jumped on the counter as he was leaving the bank he saw Miller lying in the street, and at the same moment one of the clerks sprang up and ran towards a desk. Thinking he was going for a pistol, he ordered him to stop and sit down, but he kept on, and as my informant jumped from the counter he leveled his pistol and fired. The man fell, but how badly he had hurt him he could not say; we learned after we were captured that it was Mr. J. L. Heywood. I can truthfully say that throughout our retreat it was my most sincere wish and hope that—

he was not seriously wounded, that that I expected  
 to be captured, not through fear of personal safety,  
 but because I did not want to be in any way  
 connected with the death of a man who had  
 never wronged me or mine. The death of  
 Mr Heywood was never considered in our plans,  
 and neither my brother nor myself were connected  
 with the deed either in thought or act; we were  
 of the party and to that extent responsible.  
 After we had got out on the road I learned  
 Jim had been shot through the shoulder,  
 and as it was a large bullet I presume it  
 came from the gun of Dr. Wheeler or Mr Manning.  
 I was shot in the left hip; it was a pistol  
 ball and was probably fired at me from  
 up stairs north of the bank. Bob's arm was  
 broken through the elbow joint by a large ball,  
 presumably fired by Dr Wheeler, and two of our  
 party had been killed. Now I saw a good deal  
 in the newspapers at the time about our friends  
 or ourselves wishing to retaliate upon those  
 who did the shooting. Statements of that nature were not true;

we never had, nor have we now, any ill will toward those who shot us. Had I been in the position of those citizens, I should have acted as they did, that is, if I could.

I will not give a description of our long weary flight to Mankato during which we suffered death, almost, wading through mud and water under a continuous downpour of rain. In the vicinity of Mankato, between daylight and sunrise, we met a man, whose name I have forgotten, in a woodland pasture. We compelled him to go with us for about a mile, and then, realizing the risk we took but not knowing what else to do with him, we turned him loose. We learned from this man, for the first time, that there had been one man killed and two wounded at Northfield, and we were at a loss to make out who the third one could be, but we learned after our capture that a man had been shot somewhere in the south part of the city;

The man's name I have forgotten. Dr Wood, of Faribault, examined the wound and said that it was caused by a bullet which had struck and glanced from a brick house near by. Of this I know nothing only on hearsay, but I know that neither Jim nor myself fired a shot in that part of the City. We were in front of the bank and our stray bullets went north over Bridge square; I believe the bullet that wounded him was fired by a citizen at us, the ball passing up the street southward.

Now as to the man we took prisoner near Mankato. The story he told in the presence of Captain A. Barton, at Faribault, was true. He said that my brother and myself had saved his life. The question of how to dispose of this man was discussed and in view of our desperate situation it was proposed by one of our party that we shoot him, to which I said: "No, we will not kill him."

It will be easier to run away from all the men he can put on our track than it would be to get rid of the memory of having killed an innocent man who has never wronged us, and who said he had a wife and children depending on him for their support." The one who made the proposition compromised by leaving the man's fate to the decision of Bob Gounger.

We walked up to where Bob and Jim Gounger was sitting with the man and the following statement of the situation was made to Bob: "If we turn this man loose he will have the whole country after us in twelve hours, and with your broken arm we cannot possibly get away." To this Bob replied. "I would rather be shot dead than to have that man killed for fear his killing might put a few hundred men after us. There will be time enough for shooting if he should join in the pursuit." In the meantime the man was swearing by all the

gods that he would never speak of having seen any one, & cut the cords from his wrists and told him that we knew that no oath that we might administer to him would have the least weight, so that to swear him would be but a waste of time; but of course we would be glad and thankful if he would say nothing of having seen us. However, whether he would or would not he was free to return to his home, and we saw no more of the man until he came as a witness before the grand jury at Faribault. "That night we all together crossed the Blue Earth river on the railroad bridge, and the next night we separated, Pitts remaining with myself and brothers.

As regard to our capture at Madelia. (Sept 21, 1876) I only wish to say that the account of it which appeared recently in certain newspapers to the effect that a Sheriff McDonald with a hundred and fifty men of Sioux City, Iowa, took us prisoners, is incorrect

We were captured by about fifty Citizens  
 of Wataman Co. led by Sheriff Gillespie and  
 Captain W. W. Murphy of the same County;  
 Captain B. S. Gates, now of St. Paul, was also  
 one of the party. At the time of our  
 capture Pitts was killed and my brothers and  
 myself were badly wounded. Bob has  
 since died and Jim and myself, for more  
 than twenty years, have been prisoners.  
 I will leave it to Sheriff Barton and  
 the wardens of this institutions to  
 speak of us during the past twenty years.  
 I have often met Captain Gates, and also  
 most of the men several times that  
 were directly concerned in our capture. They have  
 been most kind in word and feeling toward us,  
 and since our capture we have never felt  
 toward them any other feeling but that of  
 friendship. The above is a true statement in so  
 far as I can speak from personal knowledge;  
 what occurred in the bank I can speak of only as it  
 was told to me. Cal Younger, Stillwater, Minn.  
 1897

A. C. Hedback  
Keep

COLUMBIAN BOND