

Details of the First Wedding in Nevada

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Some of you may know that the settlement that was to become Dayton was the site of the first wedding in (what was to become) Nevada...followed soon after by the first divorce—or more accurately, the first dissolution of marriage. I recently came across the details of that event, and thought you'd all enjoy hearing about it as much as I did.

The initial description:

The [Placerville] Mountain Democrat, Saturday, April 8, 1854

Excerpt from the “Letter from Carson Valley.” This was provided periodically to *The Democrat* by a Mr. Dritt, who traveled back and forth over the Sierra from Placerville to Carson Valley carrying the mail:

The miners of Gold Canon are doing a fair business; and money is plenty.

In Gold Canon, a short time since, an hombre, taking advantage of the absence of her father, induced a motherless child aged some twelve years, to consent to marry him. Having found some one willing to perform the ceremony, he was congratulating himself that he had secured a wife, when a sensible old lady, a neighbor of the father, interposed and confined the young woman until the return of her father; who succeeded in convincing her that she was rather young to marry yet, and she very sensibly concluded to wait a little longer, and bade her disappointed spouse to 'move his boots,' as she was determined to remain with her father. The would be Benedict, next morning, mustered his friends for the purpose of regaining possession of his unwilling bride, when a few of the neighbors turned out, and he was forced to leave alone.

However, a resident of Gold Cañon, reading the description of the wedding in *The Democrat* when Mr. Dritt delivered it to Gold Cañon, felt Mr. D. could have done a better job of describing the incident. In his response this fellow reflects well the flowery style to be perfected by later luminaries such as Sam Clemens (Mark Twain) and William Wright (Dan DeQuille).

The [Placerville] Mountain Democrat, Saturday, April 29, 1854

GOLD CANON, Carson Valley, April 16, 1854.

MR. EDITOR: You may be somewhat surprised at receiving this epistle, which is written for two objects: To apprise the mourners on the other side that we have good diggings here, and that the people who live in them are, to use a favorite expression of the day, "some in a bar fight."

Some of your readers, who have been in this place, would no doubt be glad to hear from it again, and I shall endeavor to gratify their curiosity.

Nothing of very great importance has transpired to disturb the monotony of our busy diggings. This winter we have had a wedding— something unusual—one death, and recently a duel. The particulars of the duel I will give you in my next. My intention now is to give you the particulars of the wedding.

On the arrival of Mr. D., or as the cañon boys call him, "Old Daddy, Dritt," we were favored with your paper, which is always eagerly sought after, by us poor lucre seeking hombres of this Paradise. In looking over one of your last numbers, I perceived that you had noticed the wedding at this place; and as it seems that the person whoin you designated as the "hombre" is not at all

pleased with Mr. Drit's version of the affair I shall endeavor to mend matters by making them worse, and at the same time give a plain and simple statement of the whole affair.

It appears that an aged emigrant with a family of three motherless children stopped at the place for the purpose of passing the winter. He had been here but a short time when his business required his presence at "Eagle Ranch," fifteen miles above the Cañon. Thither he went, leaving his house in the charge of his eldest daughter, not quite fourteen years old. During his absence the girl was waited upon by a woman who acted as the agent of a love-stricken and verdant youth. The woman was successful in her mission, which was to persuade her to marry the verdant one above mentioned. The pair then went before an acting magistrate and were duly married. The verdant celebrated his marriage at the house of his respected agent. Supper being over the friends of the bridegroom, owing to the profuse distribution of bald fate, were quite numerous. They provided themselves with tin pans, camp kettles, stove pipes, &c., and proceeded to the house of the father, who had just then returned, and gave him both a vocal and instrumental concert. I am unable to give you the name of the piece performed, but suppose it was the Oratorio of the creation, as they had everything in creation with them. At all events, it was a masterly effort, and in point of composition would have made Mozart and Hayden bow their heads and weep.

A short distance down the cañon, on the right bank as you descend, stands a building which by a little stretch of the imagination can be called a house. Attached to it is a long shed, partially covered with canvas. The latter addition I think the proprietors call a ten pin alley. We enter the bar room, where a comfortable fire blazes in one corner, and around it are several miners talking about big licks, shaft sinking, &c. At the back of the room stands the counter, behind which can be seen a card with the following startling sentence: "No credit! It don't pay a cent to the pan!" My friend B., one of the proprietors, nevertheless does credit any one who asks for it. I have witnessed him on several occasions prospecting his notes and due bills, and am not aware of his having, in a single instance, raised the color. The understrappers, however, who are up to the dodge, patronize B.

The bridal party, after the winding up of their musical display, adjourned to the ten-pin alley. It would be useless to go into a detail of all the proceedings. Suffice it to say, the girl was found by her father and a few friends in the house of a respectable family, who were determined to keep the girl in their possession until the return of the father.— The girl was accordingly taken home by her friends, and the house guarded by a force of two men. No attempt to retake the girl that night was made, but on the morning following a messenger was sent by the father to some of his friends with the information that he was about starting for Eagle ranch with his family, and that a party of the verdants were preparing to pursue him.

On receiving this information a few of the neighbors turned out to assist the father in case he were molested. The party, after an hour's hard running, succeeded in overtaking the old gentleman, who informed his friends that the other party did not molest him, but merely asked permission to inquire of the girl if she were willing to live with the man she married. The request was granted, and the girl replied that she would go with her fether. The friends of the disappointed bride seeker, on learning this, sensibly concluded to give it up. The old man's friends accompanied him to Eagle ranch.

Drit is about starting and I must close. You shall hear again from the

PARSON.