

## **William Jefferson Thompson**

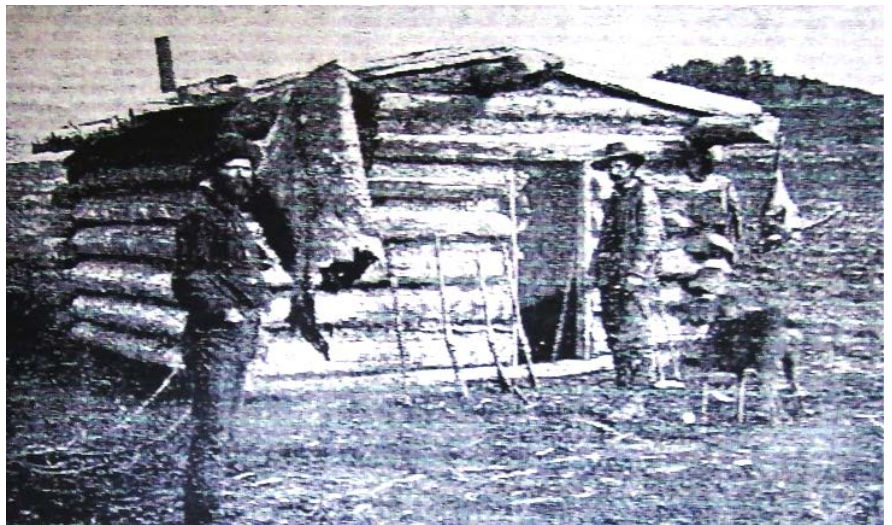
William Jefferson Thompson was born in March 26, 1849 in Preston County, Virginia (became West Virginia in 1863). As a child he may have been taken captive by Native Americans from a wagon train in Iowa, while enroute to Oregon. In Colorado Territory, in the Middle Park region (Grand County 1874), Bill was seen hunting by Len Pollard & W. C. Mellon who assumed Bill with his long hair and dark features was Native American. Bill identified himself as a white man. Thereafter, he was known as “Ute Bill” Thompson, since the region was the traditional home and hunting grounds of the Ute’s.

William Jefferson Thompson, known as “Ute Bill” arrived in Middle Park, near the headwaters of the Troublesome & Muddy Creeks in 1865 at age 16. He was a miner, hunter and trapper, selling wild game to the eastern slope meat markets. Also, he drove stagecoaches and freight wagons. In 1875 Mr. Thompson homesteaded a ranch east of Hot Sulphur Springs. In the 1880s he owned and operated a billiard hall and saloon in the town proper.



“Ute Bill” Thompson was one of Grand County’s most colorful historic characters and was named the 1<sup>st</sup> Pioneer of the Year in 1874. He raised and sold elk, was well known as an early day hunter and trapper in Northwest Colorado, which provided some remarkable photographs of Middle Park/Grand County in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early centuries. His life and experiences exemplified the true frontier spirit of the American West.

*(Article adopted by Mildred M Thompson)*



**Bill Thompson and John Crawford at their cabin.**

*The following is from a newspaper article announcing his wedding December 25, 1893*

W. J. Thompson reckon his age on the bachelor's calendar no more. He has turned over a new leaf and begun a new life. From early manhood up to the present (1893) he has "roughed it" on the frontiers and in the mountains of states and territories west of the Missouri River; hunting, trapping, scouting and guiding parties in times of peace and war. He is generally known as "Ute Bill". He was an early settler in Grand County and saw many hardships of pioneer life in the first days of Northwest Colorado and southern Wyoming. His many trips far out from any white man's habitation made by himself often would have been declined by men with less nerve, but to "Ute" it was part of his life and nature. At the crack of his rifle, the most fierce, or the fleetest or the noblest of all game that roamed the hills were brought to earth. Although he has seen every phase of life common to the incidents of all new countries he has never become profligate or ruffianly in his habits. A steady accumulation and having property resulted in the making of a fine ranch, well improved and fully stocked, lying near this town (Hot Sulphur Springs). The bride is a highly respected young lady who came to this community with her parents a number of years ago and has resided here ever since. She is very quiet and unassuming in public. She is such a lady as one would expect to make a good housewife and convert a bachelor's hall into a model home. For some time past the people of this vicinity have been on the lookout for a wedding between a well known couple residing near here. Their expectations were finally quieted and their curiosity gratified by the announcement that Mr. W. J. Thompson and Miss Mabel Smith would be married in the schoolhouse in public on the evening of Christmas. (the rest of this article is in Mabel Smith's story)

Mabel and William Thompson had five sons and one daughter; Fredrick Charles, William Preston, Otto Woodring, Marion Loman, John Henry and Mary Ellen.

Mary Ellen Thompson married a Keller and lived in Oregon

Bill, Otto and John lived in Denver in 1948 and Marion lived in HSS

Fred Thompson was married to Linda. Fred died Feb 11, 1948. He was injured while working in the timber and was caught under a fallen tree. Fred and Linda had a daughter Shirley who married a Dailey and a son Dale who lived in Hot Sulphur. Fred was a veteran of World War I and was given a military funeral

"Ute Bill" Thompson passed away at St Luke's Hospital in Denver on March 19, 1926. "Ute Bill" and his wife Mabel both entered the hospital for surgeries in late February. "Ute Bill's" first surgery went well but he had complications with the second one. Mabel was recovering from her own surgery and was not able to be with her husband. "Ute Bill" was buried at the Hot Sulphur Springs Cemetery off of Cottonwood Pass overlooking the original homestead.