

STAGES HELD UP ON BLACK CANYON ROUTE

(I. E. SOLOMON tells story)

I. E. Solomon for many years was one of the prominent citizens and merchants of Southern Arizona, residing at Solomonville, Graham County, this town taking its name from Mr. Solomon. He went to the site of Solomonville in 1876 from Clifton, where for a short time he was employed in the crude copper smelter then in operation there and owned by the Liszynsky Brothers, who were relatives of Mrs. Solomon. What caused Mr. Solomon to go to the Gila Valley was a contract for burning mesquite timber into charcoal for use in the furnaces of the Clifton smelter. At Solomonville he established a general store which grew into one of the largest mercantile establishments in Southern Arizona. He was also president of the firm of Solomon, Wickersham & Company, wholesale and retail merchants and government contractors at Bowie station, on the Southern Pacific Railroad. At Solomonville Mr. Solomon also handled government contracts, supplying hay and grain to the military posts at Fort Grant, Fort Thomas and San Carlos. To make settlement with the quartermasters' department of the army, at Prescott, was the business of Mr. Solomon at Prescott at the time of the stage hold-up incident related in the following, written by Mr. Solomon at the request of the state historian in January, 1923:

"In the early part of 1880 I had an exciting experience on the Black Canyon road, between Prescott and Phoenix, when two stages were held up, at their meeting place, by robbers, all the passengers relieved of their cash and other valuables.

"At that time I was president of the firm of Solomon, Wickersham & Company, merchants, government contractors and forwarding agents at Bowie, on the Southern Pacific Railroad, thirty-five miles south of my home at Solomonville. This firm held contracts for military supplies and the forwarding of supplies to the various army posts and camps in Southern Arizona, then infested by unconquered hostile Apache Indians. The incident I will relate occurred when I was returning to Bowie from Prescott, where I had been to make settlement with the army quartermaster. As a result of this settlement I received from the quartermaster two government checks, one for \$1,000 and one for \$960. As I needed some money for expenses of my trip home I went to Colonel Head's store in

Prescott and asked him to cash one of the quartermaster's checks. He asked me what size these checks were. I told him I wanted to cash one for \$960. He asked his bookkeeper, Mr. Cook, to cash my checks. Mr. Cook started to count the money out to me in nothing but fives and small bills, making a large pile of money. In those days one was always more or less concerned about the danger of hold-ups and it occurred to me that I should not risk this money on a trip home, a wise conclusion as events afterward proved. I then asked Mr. Cook if he had any larger bills he could give me. He said he had none, so I asked him to cash my personal check for a small amount to meet my expense to Phoenix. He said he would much rather cash my individual check as they desired to retain their own cash for which there was urgent demand in Prescott. I drew my check for \$25 and retained the draft. I started for my home on the same day, accompanied by Captain Gordon, of the U. S. Cavalry, who was stationed at Fort Grant. There was also a doctor in the stage coach with us.

"We left Prescott about two o'clock in the afternoon. As it got dark the captain, as if having a presentiment of danger, told me if I had any money with me I had better put it in my boots as we were liable to be held up along there. I told the captain what little money I had would not hurt me to lose but that he had better secrete what he had, which was considerably more than I had. I noticed the captain was getting more and more nervous. Finally he left the seat inside the coach and climbed up beside the driver, I remaining with the doctor on the inside. About one hour after the captain left his seat in the coach two masked men stopped the stage. One of them pointed a gun at me and told me to get out and, of course, I lost no time in obeying the order, as did the doctor. The captain was ordered down from the driver's seat. One of the men said "Throw up your hands!" and this order was obeyed without any loss of time. In those days I had a valuable gold watch, open face, to which was attached a silk cord. One of the men started to untie this silk cord. I asked him to cut the cord instead of trying to untie it. He cut the cord and took my watch. He also took the watches of the captain and the doctor. Next he went through my pockets from which he obtained some \$50 or \$60. The doctor had only about \$5.00 or \$10 but my friend, the captain, yielded up between \$200 and \$300 in cash. They returned what checks were taken from us, as they could be of no use to the bandits. In the meantime they ordered the Wells-Fargo box down from the seat of the stage, opened it and

took out the contents. During all this time there was good humored conversation between the robbers and the stage passengers, I taking occasion to compliment the robbers on the success of their enterprise in getting a substantial amount of cash and other valuables without doing bodily harm to anyone.

"After the express box had been rifled the stage enroute to Prescott from Phoenix was heard coming and we, of the Phoenix-bound, were ordered to stand quietly beside the road—(this incident occurred about two miles from Gillette Station). There were six men on the Prescott bound stage, among them three soldiers, a doctor and Dick Nagle, one of the best men in the United States marshal's force in Arizona at that time and who had previously been city marshal at Tombstone. These men were ordered out of the stage, the soldiers having previously thrown their guns to the side of the road, and with "hands up!" they were relieved of their valuables as we had been—money and watches. I think one of the robbers must have known me—at least he seemed to show unusual regard for me. The robbers remained until after the Prescott stage departed. Before the Prescott stage moved away I again took occasion to congratulate the bandits on the good success of their undertaking—holding up two stages without harm to anyone, other than the loss of cash and other valuables and thanked them for their courtesy and desire to avoid inflicting bodily harm. The two men seemed to appreciate my complimentary remarks and this emboldened me to ask the man who I was led to believe knew me if he would not be good enough to hand back my watch, as I regarded it as an heirloom, it having been given me by a relative and while it would be of little value to them I prized it very highly. There was no hesitation on the part of the robbers in complying with this request, one of them producing eight or ten watches. Mine being open-faced and with silk cord I readily recognized it and received it back, thanking the man who handed it to me. Captain Gordon asked them to return his watch also. I explained to them that Captain Gordon was a friend of mine and as he had yielded a goodly sum of cash I thought they could afford to return his watch, which was done without further remark. Then Deputy-Marshal Nagle said: "Gentlemen, I hope you will also return my watch. I prize it very highly because it was given me by prominent citizens of Tombstone after I had served that city as chief of police. The names of my Tombstone friends are engraved on the watch, also my own name. If you will return to me my watch I will leave, or send, \$100 to any place in Arizona for you and never attempt to make any trouble for you on account of

my watch. You just name the place and I will send the \$100 if you return to me this highly prized watch." They hesitated for some little time when, finally, one of the robbers said "Here, take your confounded watch" and he got it back and without any instructions as to where to send the money he had promised.

"Such good fortune as had come to us with the return of the watches was hardly to be expected from stage robbers and this caused me to ask for more, so after the Prescott stage had started I again thanked "the boys" for their liberality in returning our watches, telling them that they had been very nice to our friends. I then asked that they return to me enough money to pay for my breakfast in Phoenix and drinks for myself, the captain, the doctor and the stage driver. One of them pulled out a hand filled with silver with the remark that I take what I needed. I took \$7.00 or \$8.00, remarking, "Boys, you seem to be regular fellers." We parted, but I never was sure whether I was known to one of them or not."

Mr. Solomon, after many years of prominence in business at Solomonville, and Bowie, sold his holdings and retired. He, with Mrs. Solomon, now resides in Los Angeles. Their children were Charles F., now president of the Arizona-Southwest Bank, at Tucson; Harry now residing in the Imperial Valley; Eva, who married Julius Wetzler, of Holbrook, Arizona, where she now lives; Rose, who married Dave Goldberg, of Phoenix, residing here until Mr. Goldberg retired from business here and established a home in San Francisco; Lilly, who married Max Lantin, of Globe, now residing in Los Angeles; Blanche, who married Jacob Weinberger, of Globe, who, soon after serving in the Arizona Constitutional Convention in 1911 moved to San Diego, where he is now practicing law.