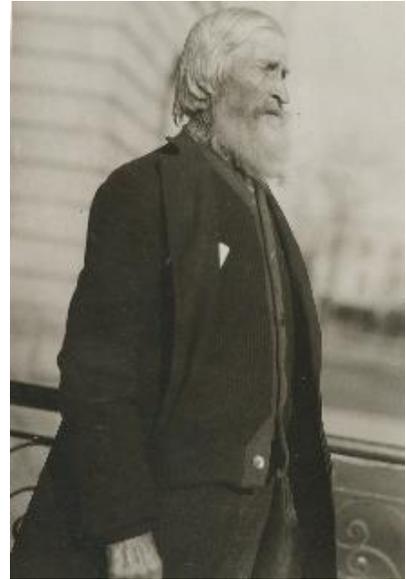


Rankin Scott Kelly (1826 – 1913)

Rankin Scott Kelly was born July 6, 1826. At the age of 14, Kelly ran away from his home in Houlton, Maine because he thought he had committed a murder from a fight he was in. He never returned or saw his family again. At 19-years of age Kelly volunteered to fight in the Mexican-American War. Private Kelly joined Co. B. 1st Pennsylvania Infantry, which saw action during the siege of Veracruz and later against General Santa Anna's Mexican Army during the bloody Battle of Cerro Gordo. After his one-year enlistment ended, Kelly was honorably discharged. Kelly met up with Robert Finley, who was from Pennsylvania at some point and they both made their way to Johnson County, located in the eastern Kansas Territory.



Rankin, or Scott Kelly as he became known, was a teamster, carpenter and a stonemason by trade. He traveled the Santa Fe Trail in the late spring of 1860 with his partner Robert Finley to the Pikes Peak Region prior to Colorado becoming a territory. Their party of a few other men, eight ox-drawn wagons, forty-eight head of cattle and a large supply of provisions, joined with a wagon train of about 50 men, women and children, headed west on the Santa Fe Trail.

In the back of his wagon were the components for a 12-horse powered sawmill. Finley was part owner in the sawmill, which had initially been operational back in Johnson County, Kansas Territory. After six-weeks of travel they reached their destination, Colorado City, a small gold mining supply town settled just the previous year at the base of Pikes Peak. Kelly arrived in Colorado City on June 5, 1860. The sawmill had been disassembled in the eastern Kansas Territory and rebuilt after their arrival, in the Black Forest, northeast of present-day Colorado Springs. What became known as the Finley (Weir) Mill was the first operational sawmill in the region and cut lumber for many of the early ranch houses, barns, businesses, churches and schools. In 1861, Rankin Scott Kelly was appointed the first Sheriff of El Paso County, in the Colorado Territory. He served from 1861-1867 and survived four shoot outs with outlaw gangs and several skirmishes with hostile Indians.

Kelly never married and spent his life in the west. Later on, Kelly made his home in Ouray, Colorado. He returned to Colorado Springs in 1913 at the age of 87. On November 27, 1913, the Colorado Springs Evening Telegraph reported that Kelly, age 87, would become the watchman at the Myron Stratton home which was open for adults who were to occupy the cottages. In an interview with Scott Kelly, he told of how he had been sitting on a park bench in Alamo Park, in downtown Colorado Springs, waiting for an electric trolley, when an elderly couple sat down next to him. The couple struck up a conversation, and they were from Houlton, Maine, Kelly's hometown. The conversation got around to who they may know in common and Kelly was shocked to learn that the young man he thought that he had murdered 73-years ago, was still very much alive! Kelly didn't have to run away after all!

On December 4, 1913, a record-breaking snowstorm struck the Pikes Peak Region. The frigid temperatures froze water pipes, including those underground at the Myron Stratton Home. Despite his age and frail health, the Home's faithful night watchman, 87-year-old Rankin Scott Kelly, put on both his suits of clothes, then donned several pairs of socks, before setting out to make his nightly rounds. From being out in the cold of night he caught pneumonia and died at the Myron Stratton Home on December 30, 1913.

At the time of his death, it was not known whether he had any living relatives. Several years prior he had a brother in business in Cincinnati, Ohio, and a sister, Miss Katherine Kelley, living in Chatham, New Brunswick, Canada. He had not heard from them for a long time. Kelly is buried in Colorado Springs, CO in Evergreen cemetery, Block 57. The modest tombstone reads, "R. Scott Kelly First Sheriff [sic] of El Paso CO Died Dec. 30 1913 Aged 87 Yrs."

Reference: "Rankin Scott Kelly & Robert Finley Hidden Heroes of the Pikes Peak Region" By John Wesley Anderson

Submitted by John Wesley Anderson