

Annals of
WYOMING

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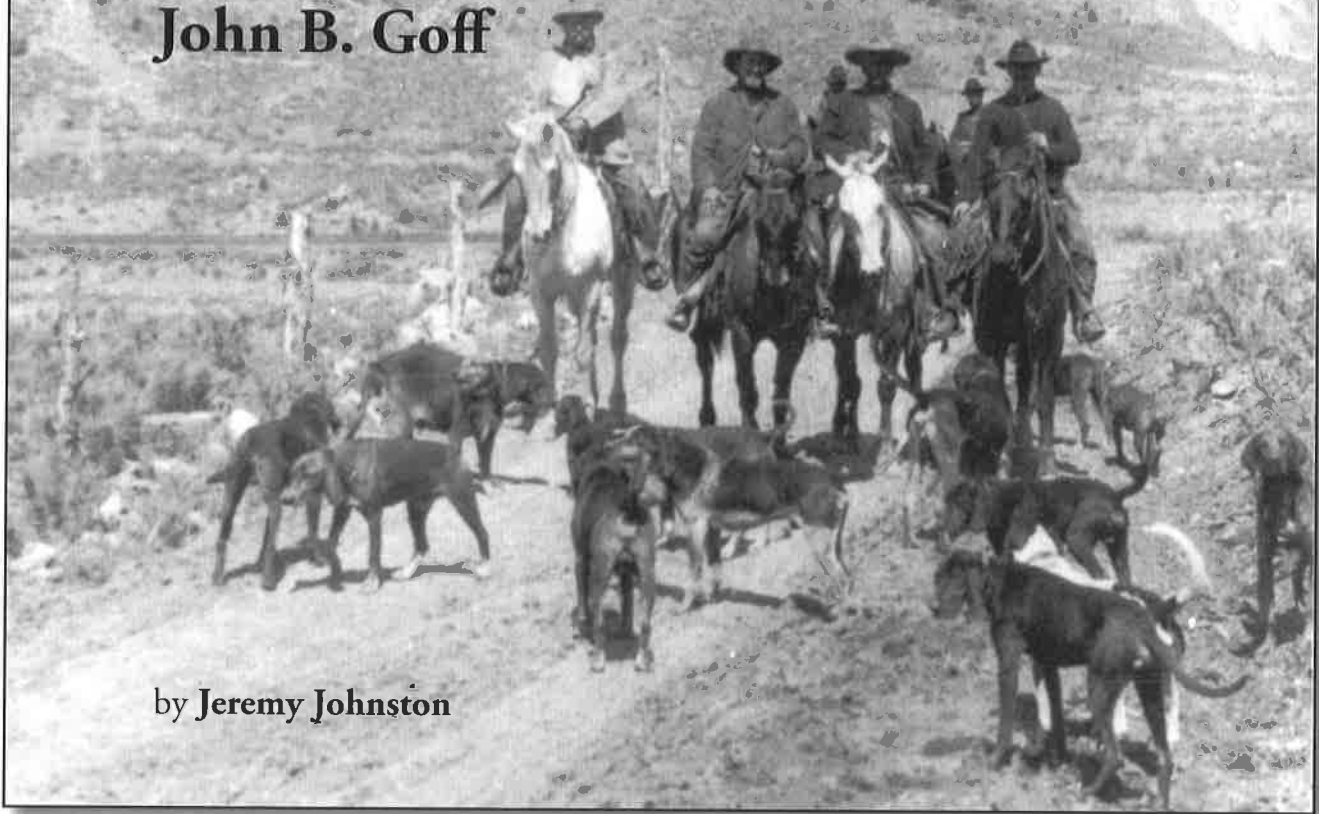
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Theodore Roosevelt's Hunting Guide: John B. Goff



by Jeremy Johnston

"Starting out on the hunt." Left to right: Theodore Roosevelt, Dr. Alexander Lambert, Jake Borah, and John Goff. Photo taken in the spring of 1905. Courtesy American Heritage Center, University of Wyoming.

In January 1901, John Goff prepared for what would become one of his most exciting cougar hunts. Goff's guest was an important individual, former Rough Rider and then Vice-President-elect Theodore Roosevelt. After a number of years of working several homesteads in Kansas and Colorado and a supplemental career as a wagon freighter, Goff decided his economic success would be found in the hunting guide business. Before the Roosevelt hunt, Goff reportedly killed eighty to a hundred bear and some three-hundred mountain lions in the Colorado region.¹ Now, he was about to embark on a hunt that would bring him national fame as Theodore Roosevelt's hunting guide, and bring him to the pinnacle of his success

as a hunting guide. Little did Goff know at the time, he would forever be known throughout the annals of American Western history as Roosevelt's hunting guide, a moniker that would overshadow his other accomplishments and his failures.

Early Life as a Homesteader and Freighter

John Byron Goff was born on May 27, 1866, to Byron and Frances Goff in Montgomery County, Indiana, where John's father worked as a farmer and wagon maker. Byron Goff was born in Owens County, Kentucky, in 1833. At a young age, Byron's family moved to Indiana where he met his future wife, Frances Daugherty. Frances' family moved to Indiana from Ohio where she was born in 1834. Frances

¹ John B. Goff, "The Roosevelt Lion Hunt," *Outdoor Life*, Vol. 7, number 4, May 1901, pages not marked. The author would like to thank Ester Murray, Paul Schullery, and Lee Whittlesey for their assistance in researching Goff's experiences in Wyoming, and Iva Kendall and Vern Rader from the White River Museum in Meeker, Colorado, for their assistance in researching Goff's life in Colorado.



Theodore Roosevelt on a hunting trip near Glenwood Springs, Colorado, during spring of 1905. Courtesy American Heritage Center, University of Wyoming.

and Byron married in Crawfordsville, Indiana, on January 30, 1855. While residing in Indiana, the young couple had five children, including John. Shortly after John's birth, the family moved to Osage County, Kansas, where white settlers homesteaded on recently opened lands removed from the Sauk and Fox Indian Reservation. Byron filed on 160 acres of former reservation land east of the town of Lyndon, Kansas. It was here that Byron and Frances had three more children, bringing the total to eight children.²

In Kansas, John grew to maturity amongst the prairie fires, droughts, and locust plagues that haunted all "Sodbusters." At age fifteen, he began work as a farm hand outside of the family's homestead, probably due to the necessity of supplementing the family's household income. The family's future began to change in 1882 when John's older brother, William, left Kansas seeking work in Colorado, where he became a range rider for famed Wyoming and Colorado rancher Ora Haley. In January 1884, William Goff moved to the newly established town of Meeker, Colorado, where he took on the job as a mail carrier between Meeker and Grand River, Colorado. The prospects of this new town would soon appeal to John's interests.

The town of Meeker was founded in the aftermath of the Meeker Indian Massacre. In 1879, the White River Ute Indian tribe rebelled against Indian Agent Nathan Meeker and paved the way for the development of the town of Meeker. Nathan Meeker had attempted to "civilize" the Indians; however, the Indians did not want to give up their traditional ways. The Utes became more vocal against Meeker's actions, which provoked him to call in the United States Army from Fort Steele, Wyoming. The Utes attacked the army when it crossed the reservation boundary, forcing the troops to halt and defend themselves. After stopping the invaders, the Utes returned to the Indian agency, located near the present-day Meeker, killed Nathan Meeker along with his employees, and kidnapped his wife and daughter. Eventually the Utes were subdued and the women returned. The "massacre" led the government to split up the Ute reservation which opened lands for future white settlement. During the break up of the reservation, the army marched east of the burned Indian agency and proceeded to build a fort which became the town of Meeker.³ Like their father before them, both John and William Goff homesteaded land acquired from newly opened Indian reservation

² Information on John Goff's early life and family was compiled from: *Progressive Men of Western Colorado*, no author listed, 1905, pages 786-88; 1860 census material and Byron and Frances Goff's wedding certificate, Montgomery County Historical Society in Crawfordsville, Indiana; 1870 and 1880 census material along with 1879 Osage County, Kansas Atlas, Osage County Historical Society; John Goff's obituary, *The Cody Enterprise*, March 31, 1937; Byron and Florence Goff's obituaries, provided by the White River Museum, Meeker, Colorado.

³ For further information on the Meeker Massacre, see Marshall Sprague, *Massacre: The Tragedy at White River* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1957).

lands.

In 1884, the seventeen-year-old John followed his brother to Colorado and began working as a mule-freighter. This work required him to travel from Meeker north to Rawlins, Wyoming, and also south to Rifle, Colorado. John also took advantage of recently opened Ute lands by homesteading on Strawberry Creek, six miles west of Meeker. However, John soon sold off his land and returned to Osage County, Kansas, near his parents.⁴ Shortly after his return to Kansas, John married Mattie Myrick.⁵ Mattie was born one of twelve siblings in Des Moines, Iowa, on August 9, 1865. At the age of five, Mattie's family moved to Kansas in a covered wagon, most likely to take advantage of the opened Sauk and Fox Reservation lands similar to the Goff family. The newlyweds remained in Kansas for about one year and Mattie soon gave birth to a daughter, whom they named Lola.⁶ With his new family, Goff returned to Meeker where he leased a ranch and resumed his career as freighter for J. W. Hugus and Company.⁷ In Colorado, John and Mattie had three boys; Byron born in February 1890, followed by Walter in September 1892, and finally John, nicknamed Earl, born in June 1896.

The Life of a Hunting Guide

In 1888, Byron and Frances Goff left Kansas to join John and Mattie in Colorado. The reunion with John's parents marked a new career path for the family. Byron proved to be familiar with coon dogs and assisted his son in training a pack of cougar and bear hunting dogs.⁸ Numerous cougars resided in the Meeker region, each one worth a ten dollar bounty.⁹ This proved beneficial for John Goff, for not only did he have ample game to train his dogs, he could also make a tidy profit from a combination of cougar bounties and guiding wealthy clients. Soon, John spent more time hunting and guiding while his



John Goff as a young man. Courtesy White River Museum, Meeker, Colorado.

homestead became a secondary chore.

Goff's pack of hounds soon became well known in the Colorado locality. Goff offered a number of tips to the readers of *Outdoor Life* regarding the training of hunting dogs:

I am often asked "What kind of dogs are best adapted to bear and lion hunting?" My answer has been that common curs have often done me more service than the finely-bred dogs of any breed. I have in my pack - and name them here in the order of their efficiency - foxhounds, bloodhounds, crosses between these two, bull-terriers, fox-terriers, fox-terrier crosses with

⁴ *Progressive Men*, pp. 786-88.

⁵ The author found three different dates for when John and Mattie married. *Progressive Men* lists the couple's wedding date as March 1885. John Goff's obituary lists that date as October 1885. Martha "Mattie" Goff Hempstone's (Mrs. Goff was remarried after John's death) obituary, found in *The Cody Enterprise*, October 16, 1952, lists the date as 1884.

⁶ Martha Goff Hempstone's obituary, *The Cody Enterprise*, October 16, 1952.

⁷ *Progressive Men*, p. 787. Note: J. W. Hugus and Company is misspelled in *Progressive Men*.

⁸ J. A. McGuire, "Hunting Lynx in Colorado," *Outdoor Life*, Vol. 19, July 1907, 591.

⁹ "Famous Lion Hunter, Guide and Trapper Dies at Advanced Age," *The Cody Enterprise*, March 31, 1937.

other terriers, and canines that can only be called just "dog."

While the greatest essential of a bear dog is the sense of scent, yet there are other qualifications that crowd this one awfully close, such, for instance, as that of worrying a bear and causing him to lose time by fighting off the dogs, which, in grizzly hunting especially, is a valuable aid. Then the hunter can come up and get a shot, or if a black bear, this worrying process will soon cause him to tree, when of course the chase is ended.

With the fighting and worrying of the bear by the dogs is combined the essential of being able to run in and nip and then get away before the powerful paw of the bear can land. This habit is only acquired by actual bear-hunting, and is one of the dearest lessons the bear dog learns, for nearly all my dogs have at one time or another - in some cases many more times than one - received chastisement from bears which impresses vividly on their minds that they must hurry after biting the bear if they would continue to grace this terrestrial sphere with their presence.

A bulldog or bull-terrier is one of the hardest dogs to teach this lesson of self-protection. Owing to their disposition it is hard for them to let go in time to save themselves, while they will rush in (at first) on a bear or lion, absolutely unmindful of the consequences.

The first lesson is invariably taught by the despised little porcupine, but even this does not remind them that they must be careful of bears. After one or two clouts from the big paws, however, they realize that care must be taken - that is, if they survive the blows.¹⁰

Goff's pack was divided into two basic groups, the trackers and the "seizers." The trackers were used to locate and "tree" the prey where it could be shot, with camera or gun. One of Goff's clients, J. W. Garret, described the trackers in action: "They [the trackers] struck a cold lion track . . . and followed it four miles. The trail 'grew hot,' then the fun began in earnest, up and down ravines and over fallen trees.

Finally, after an exciting chase of an hour, the lion was treed. Kodaks were brought forth and pictures taken."¹¹ Shooting cougars from trees did not always end with a quick and clean kill and in this case, the wounded cougar fell out of the tree amongst the pack of hounds. "Together they rolled down the mountain side," wrote Garret, "the lion, although wounded to death, made a splendid fight for about ten minutes. He was a beauty. They soon had him skinned and the dogs feasted on his carcass. In camp that night we measured his lionship, and found he was just nine feet long from tip to tip."¹²

To protect the trackers from such dangerous events, Goff acquired stronger dogs to act as the defenders of the pack. These fighters, called "seizers"



John Goff and his pack. Photo is from Theodore Roosevelt, *Outdoor Pastimes of an American Hunter*, courtesy American Heritage Center, University of Wyoming.

by Goff, were used to hold the animal down after it was shot to protect both the trackers and hunters. The seizers carried many scars from their duties within the pack. J. A. Ricker, who Goff guided in 1899, described the seizers during his hunting trip to Meeker: ". . . we were first shown the seizers . . . looking every inch the fighters they were cracked up

¹⁰ John B. Goff, "The President's Bear Hunt, Third Paper" *Outdoor Life*, Vol. 8, number 3, September 1905, pp. 715-16.

¹¹ J. W. Garret, "A Colorado Deer, Lion, and Bear Hunt," *Outdoor Life*, Vol. 3, number 2, February 1899, pages not numbered,

¹² *Ibid.*

to be. The most remarkable specimen among the lot was Jack, a big brindled colored animal, whose head and body were a mass of scars received in encounters with bear and cougar. It is Jack who always takes the first hold and immediately thereafter the rest of the pack closes in on the animal attacked making it as interesting as possible."¹³

Goff's pack became dedicated to their job and occasionally the pack would set out on their own hunts. *The Meeker Herald* described one such event: "That John Goff's dogs are up to their business has never been disputed, and just recently another bit of proof was added to their staying qualities. While up near the headwaters of Coal Creek with his pack of hounds about two weeks ago Mr. Goff lost two of his best dogs, and before coming home left word with James Henry to keep on the look out for them. A week later [the dogs were found by a local rancher] at the foot of a cliff of rocks with a mountain lion at bay above them. [After the rancher killed the cougar] the dogs evinced signs of satisfaction when the lion fell dead at their feet, and joyously followed Mr. Henry home with the lion. The dogs were nearly starved . . . and no doubt they would have died in their tracks rather than give up the lion."¹⁴ Incidents like this made Goff's pack famous. One sportsman from Colorado Springs offered to match Goff's dogs against any other pack, betting up to \$5,000 that Goff's dogs would be more successful.¹⁵

Goff frequently appeared in *Outdoor Life* articles, which increased his notoriety as one of Colorado's best hunting guides. Gradually he moved away from ranching and dedicated most of his attention to his hunting guide business. In the summers he would manage the Marvine Lodge, located 35 miles east of Meeker on Marvine Creek. Fisherman and hunters traveled by train to Rifle, Colorado. From Rifle the travelers boarded a stagecoach which transported them to Meeker. Once reaching Meeker, sportsmen could stay in the Meeker Hotel, or board another

stage destined for Marvine Lodge. For \$2 a day, the sportsmen and sportswomen could enjoy fishing the many lakes and streams nearby, or pursue deer, elk, bear, and mountain lions. More than fifty horses were available for use by wilderness adventures, wanting to travel to the Marvine Lakes for fishing or try their luck at hunting in the nearby hunting grounds of Lost Park or Salt Park.¹⁶

In the winters, snow prevented access to the Marvine Lodge causing Goff to move his operations back to his homestead. Nimrods (an early slang word for hunters) traveled to Goff's ranch twelve miles northwest of Meeker. Small and primitive log cabins were found at the ranch. "There is nothing fancy about the house at Goff's ranch," wrote W. B. Wilson, "but it is comfortable, which is the main point to be considered."¹⁷ The main house was heated by an open fireplace, over which hung a mounted deer head with an impressive set of antlers. On the side of the fire place was a rack used to hold Goff's guns. Drinking water could be obtained by a spring located behind the ranch buildings. Although the ranch was primitive, so many hunters flocked to the guide's ranch that an additional cabin had to be built to accommodate their needs.¹⁸

The Roosevelt Mountain Lion Hunt

By 1901, many praised Goff as a successful hunting guide in northwestern Colorado. Goff's ranch and the Marvine Lodge were becoming well known in Colorado and he had a quantity of "dudes" and "nimrods" requesting his guide services. Goff's dogs also became famous through their constant success on the trail. Many sportsmen were beginning to request Goff's services, including Theodore Roosevelt.

Roosevelt arranged a cougar hunt with Goff through his friend P.B. Stewart, who Goff guided on a hunt in 1899. Roosevelt and his guests, Dr. Gerald Webb and Stewart, arrived in Meeker on

¹³ J. A. Ricker, "An Outing in Colorado," *Outdoor Life*, Vol. 4, number 5, November 1899, pages not numbered.

¹⁴ *The Meeker Herald*, December 22, 1900.

¹⁵ J. A. McGuire, "Through the Marvine Lodge Game Country," *Outdoor Life*, Vol. 6, number 4, October 1900, pages not numbered.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ W. B. Wilson, "Incidents of the Roosevelt Hunt," *Outdoor Life*, Vol. 8, number 8, September 1901, pages not numbered.

¹⁸ Ibid.

January 11, where they met Goff at the stage station. The next morning, the hunting party left for Goff's ranch. The hunters quickly sited a bobcat shortly after leaving Meeker. Roosevelt received the honor of the kill and he quickly dispatched the bobcat. The group continued their trip to the ranch where Mattie, who acted as the cook throughout the hunt, prepared supper for their guests. After a night's rest, they once again hit the trail to the Keystone Ranch, fourteen miles north of Goff's ranch. When the party reached their destination they were met by the foreman, Mr. Wilson, and Mr. Saby, an employee. The Keystone Ranch became the main headquarters for the hunt.¹⁹

When the hunters awakened the next morning, they immediately began to hunt the locality near the ranch. The dogs soon "treed" a mountain lion and barked noisily for the hunters to come, but Stewart noticed a rabbit and stopped to photograph the

small animal. The mountain lion, not wanting to wait for the hunters, jumped from the tree and took off running with the pack of dogs in pursuit. The cougar soon needed a rest from the chase and climbed another tree for safety. Eventually, the hunters arrived hoping to finish off the cougar, but she bolted away from them again. This time the seizers stopped their prey and fought to hold it down against the ground. Being a small mountain lion, Roosevelt felt that the dogs would surely kill it, but he feared that mountain lion could inflict great damage on the pack. To protect Goff's dogs, Roosevelt "ended the struggle by a knife-thrust behind the shoulder."²⁰

Goff was impressed by the vice-president-elect's actions and stated that he "would not care to tackle them [cougars] in the off-hand, fearless manner in which the colonel did on this trip."²¹ Roosevelt killed yet another mountain lion with only his knife, but this prey proved to be feistier than the others



Theodore Roosevelt killed the first cougar during the January 1901 hunt. Photo is from Theodore Roosevelt, *Outdoor Pastimes of an American Hunter*, courtesy American Heritage Center, University of Wyoming.

¹⁹ Goff, "The Roosevelt Lion Hunt," pages not numbered.

²⁰ Theodore Roosevelt, *Outdoor Pastimes of an American Hunter* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1905), p. 36.

²¹ Goff, "The Roosevelt Lion Hunt," pages not numbered.

and tried to bite Roosevelt's leg. The future vice-president saved himself from a nasty cougar bite by jamming the stock of his gun into the cougar's mouth. Roosevelt remained unscathed, but the stock of his gun was left with deep teeth marks. This was the last mountain lion Roosevelt attempted to kill with his knife.²²

In the following weeks, the hunt did not slow down. Both Webb and Stewart each killed one cougar. Bad luck did come to haunt the hunters when two of Goff's dogs were lost in a vicious fight with a cougar. The cougar hoped to find refuge from Goff's hounds by crawling into a hole; however, the dogs faithfully went in after her. One dog, "Baldy," was killed in the cougar's den while another dog, "Tony," returned to Goff's ranch where he died from his wounds. The hunters tried to smoke the mountain lion out of the hole in the ground; still it refused to leave and was smothered to death. The hunters "returned to the ranch carrying its skin," wrote Roosevelt, "but not over-pleased, and the pack much worse for wear."²³ The next day, Stewart and Webb left the hunt to return to their homes. Roosevelt stayed for another three weeks to hunt with Goff alone.²⁴

After Webb and Stewart left, snowfall kept the two remaining hunters at the ranch. When the snowstorm ceased, Goff and Roosevelt were ready to resume their hunt for cougars. Nearing sunset, the pack located the trail of two cougars and began their pursuit. The two mountain lions, one male and one female, gave the dogs a good workout. The female was the first to be "treed," but the dogs ignored her to chase the male. The male cougar sought safety under an overhang located on the face of a cliff. Roosevelt shot at the cougar, only to wound it and drive it deeper into its refuge. Roosevelt described what happened next:

The cliff was about a hundred feet high and the top

overhung the bottom, while from above the ground sloped down to the brink at a rather steep angle, so that we had to be cautious about our footing. There was a large projecting rock on the brink; to this I clambered down, and, holding it with one hand, peeped over the edge. After a minute or two I made out first the tail and then the head of the cougar, who was lying on a narrow ledge only some ten feet below me, his body hidden by the overhang of the cliff. Thanks to the steepness of the incline, I could not let go of the rock with my left hand, because I should have rolled over; so I got Goff to come down, brace his feet against the projection, and grasp me by my legs. He then lowered me gently down until my head and shoulders were over the edge and my arms free; and I shot the cougar right between the ears, he being in a straight line underneath me.²⁵

Goff was impressed by Roosevelt's past escapades, but the cliff hanging stunt made killing a cougar with a knife look tame. Goff exclaimed, "[for] once in my life my heart stood still for a while, so completely thunderstruck was I at the nerve of the man."²⁶

After Roosevelt's feat on the cliff, the hunters left the Keystone Ranch to hunt at the Mathes and Foreman's ranch west of Keystone Ranch. At this new location, Roosevelt killed eight more cougars to bring his hunt to a conclusion. The last cougar killed was a male cougar weighing 227 pounds and measured eight feet long. After wounding the trophy cougar, Roosevelt and Goff finished off the mountain lion with clubs in an attempt to prevent the killing of any of Goff's dogs.²⁷ This mountain lion remained a world record until it was tied in 1954, and then surpassed in 1964. In 1973, it dropped again to third place. As of 1993, it was tied for sixth place with three other mountain lions.²⁸

Roosevelt and Goff returned to Meeker on February 15. The following day, Roosevelt returned home and shortly assumed his term as vice-president;

²² Roosevelt, *Outdoor Pastimes of an American Hunter*, pp. 38-41.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 45.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 1.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 48.

²⁶ Goff, "The Roosevelt Lion Hunt."

²⁷ Roosevelt, "With the Cougar Hounds," pp. 49-67.

²⁸ Wm. H. Nesbitt and Philip L. Wright, eds., *Records of North American Big Game*, 9th Edition (Alexandria: The Boone and Crockett Club, 1981), p. 146. Jack Reneau and Susan C. Reneau, eds., *Records of North American Big Game*, 10th Edition (Missoula: The Boone and Crockett Club, 1993), p. 178.

later that year President McKinley was assassinated, and Roosevelt became President of the United States. Goff and Roosevelt came to be close friends during their hunt together and Goff felt like he "was separating from some dear friend."²⁹ Even as president, Roosevelt kept in touch with Goff to plan other hunts and requested that in "two years hence we have got to make that trip after bear."³⁰

Fame and Scandal

Guiding Roosevelt greatly increased Goff's fame as a hunting guide, not only in Colorado, but across the western United States. Goff soon received requests for his services from a variety of individuals, including famed naturalist author and illustrator Ernest Thompson-Seton. Seton and his wife, Grace Gallatin Seton, requested Goff's services during a visit to Colorado to study fauna in the Colorado region. In the middle of the field expedition, both men decided to resolve the question of the mythical fantail deer. Some hunters and naturalists believed the fantail deer to be extinct while others claimed it still existed. Goff convinced Seton that if one did exist he would be able to locate a specimen for the naturalist.³¹

During the search, the party came upon a blacktail deer that had been wounded by a cougar. Grace shot the deer to end its suffering for her husband only carried a camera. Goff then noticed what he believed to be a fantail deer. Mrs. Seton shot the deer, believing she would soon solve the mystery of the fantail's existence; unfortunately, the specimen turned out to be the recently killed blacktail deer's fawn. Three days passed before a local game warden rode into Goff's camp to place both Goff and Seton under arrest for baiting cougar traps and driving deer with dogs, using the two dead deer as evidence.

The suspects paid one hundred dollars bail and then proceeded to Craig, Colorado, for trial.³²

Newspapers quickly picked up on the story of the arrest and headlines of the arrest appeared nation wide. The *Denver Times* put the story on the front page with the headline, "Naturalist Ernest Seton-Thompson Arrested: Charged, with Roosevelt's Guide, With Baiting a Bear and Deer."³³ Under the threat of bad publicity, both men hoped the trial would restore their reputations. Goff was furious at the charges and stated that he would "pay any man \$50 who can make any of his hounds follow a deer scent."³⁴

Mrs. Seton recorded the almost comical proceedings of the trial in her semi-fictional book, *Nimrod's Wife*. According to Mrs. Seton's account, a number of fellow hunting guides served as jurors in order to protect the guiding business interests of northern Colorado. The arresting game warden found himself defending his own actions when the defense accused him of murder. Angered by the accusations, the warden attempted to draw his pistol and fire upon the defense lawyer only to be stopped by one of the jurors. This event caused the presiding judge to request all participants of the case to be disarmed. Due to the jury's willingness to protect one of their fellow guides, and the questionable behavior of the arresting warden, Goff and Seton were found innocent of both charges.³⁵

Goff returned to his busy guiding schedule which led him outside of Colorado to new destinations in New Mexico and to Jackson Hole, Wyoming.³⁶ Seton returned home to see his name in all the newspapers criticizing his fantail deer hunt; still the trip was beneficial for the naturalist. Goff was able to provide Seton with general information on deer, antelope, coyotes, gophers, and, of course, cougars.

²⁹ Goff, "The Roosevelt Lion Hunt."

³⁰ Letter to John Goff from Theodore Roosevelt, May 7, 1901, Theodore Roosevelt Papers, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

³¹ Betty Keller, *Blackwolf: The Life of Ernest Thompson Seton* (Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, 1984), p. 148.

³² *Ibid.*, p. 148.

³³ *The Denver Times*, October 10, 1901, p. 1. Note: Ernest Thompson-Seton changed his name from Ernest Seton-Thompson, the paper did not mistakenly rearrange his name.

³⁴ *The Rocky Mountain News*, October 12, 1901.

³⁵ Grace Gallatin Seton, *Nimrod's Wife* (New York: Doubleday, Page and Company, 1907), pp. 167-212.

³⁶ *The Meeker Herald*, March 22, 1902, and October 18, 1902.

Seton published the guide's information, along with others, in his series of books titled *Lives of Game Animals*?³⁷

A Proposed Yellowstone Hunt

Shortly after the Seton scandal died down, Roosevelt contacted Goff regarding their future hunt. Roosevelt was unable to travel to Meeker for a hunt, due to a planned visit to Yellowstone National Park that would comprise part of his nationwide tour of the United States. The president planned to relocate his hunt with Goff to Yellowstone National Park. Roosevelt wrote Goff,

"I am sorry to say that it appears to be out of the question for me to get to Colorado. I shall however visit the Yellowstone Park. The superintendent of the Park [acting military superintendent Major John Pitcher] has asked if it would not be possible to send you and your dogs up there to help in thinning out the mountain lions. I do not know whether this can be done at government expense, but if there was a chance of my getting off on a hunt with you in that neighborhood I would gladly pay the expense of you and the dogs up to the Park . . . Of course if you go, don't say a word about me to anyone, but simply state that you are going to the Park to serve under the superintendent in killing out mountain lions... Of course in the Yellowstone Park it would [be] an unpardonable sin to run deer, elk, or sheep, so you must only take dogs that are absolutely trained and would follow nothing but the varmints."³⁸

Roosevelt hoped Goff could be in Yellowstone so he could kill a few cougars with his former guide; however, fearing any negative publicity from such a hunt, many cabinet members of Roosevelt's administration requested the president forego any hunting in America's first national park. Roosevelt expressed his frustration with the matter to acting-superintendent Major Pitcher, "Secretary [of War,

Elihu] Root [one of Roosevelt's trusted advisors] is afraid that a false impression might get out if I killed anything in the Park, even though it was killed, as of course would be the case, strictly under Park regulations, and though it was only a mountain lion - that is, an animal of the kind you are endeavoring to thin out."³⁹

Roosevelt considered possible changes that would avert any negative public outcry regarding his hunting in Yellowstone. "Now I have thought of this," Roosevelt conspired, "Would it be possible, starting from within the Park, to go just outside the border and kill any mountain lions? Could you send a good man to explore right across the border and see if you could not get some located? Can you have this done at once and let me know what the chances are? If favorable, perhaps I might take a week or two traveling around the Park first . . . then go off for a week or ten days' hunt in the mountain-lion country just outside."⁴⁰ Roosevelt stressed the urgency of this matter to Pitcher, "Do let me know about this, Major. I know if anyone can put the thing through you can. If I can fix it all right I will have Johnny Goff and his dogs get in ahead of me, and probably shall send you my rifle in advance so as to avoid any talk on my taking it with me."⁴¹

Roosevelt's presidency created a hunter's nightmare for Roosevelt and Goff for now public opinion became the driving factor in planning future presidential hunts. Roosevelt finally gave up on arranging a hunt in or near Yellowstone during his visit. Roosevelt wrote Goff that the hunting trip was off: "I am very sorry but it seems evident that I shall have to put off anything like a regular hunt. With regard and great regret, [signed] Theodore Roosevelt."⁴² Roosevelt decided to visit Yellowstone with his friend, the famed naturalist and author John Burroughs, who was also widely known as a non-hunting naturalist.⁴³

³⁷ Ernest Thompson Seton, *Lives of Game Animals* (New York: The Literary Guild of America, Inc., 1937), Vol. 1: 63, 69, 92, 385; Vol. 3: 12, 352, 361, 466; Vol. 4: 410.

³⁸ Letter to John Goff from Theodore Roosevelt, January 26, 1903, Theodore Roosevelt Papers.

³⁹ Letter to John Goff from Theodore Roosevelt, January 26, 1903, Theodore Roosevelt Papers.

⁴⁰ Letter to John Pitcher from Theodore Roosevelt, February 18, 1903, Theodore Roosevelt Papers.

⁴¹ Letter to John Pitcher from Theodore Roosevelt, February 18, 1903, Theodore Roosevelt Papers.

⁴² Letter to Goff from Theodore Roosevelt, March 4, 1903, Theodore Roosevelt Papers.

⁴³ Jeremy Johnston, "Preserving the Beasts of Waste and Desolation," *Yellowstone Science*, Spring 2002 10(2): 16-17.

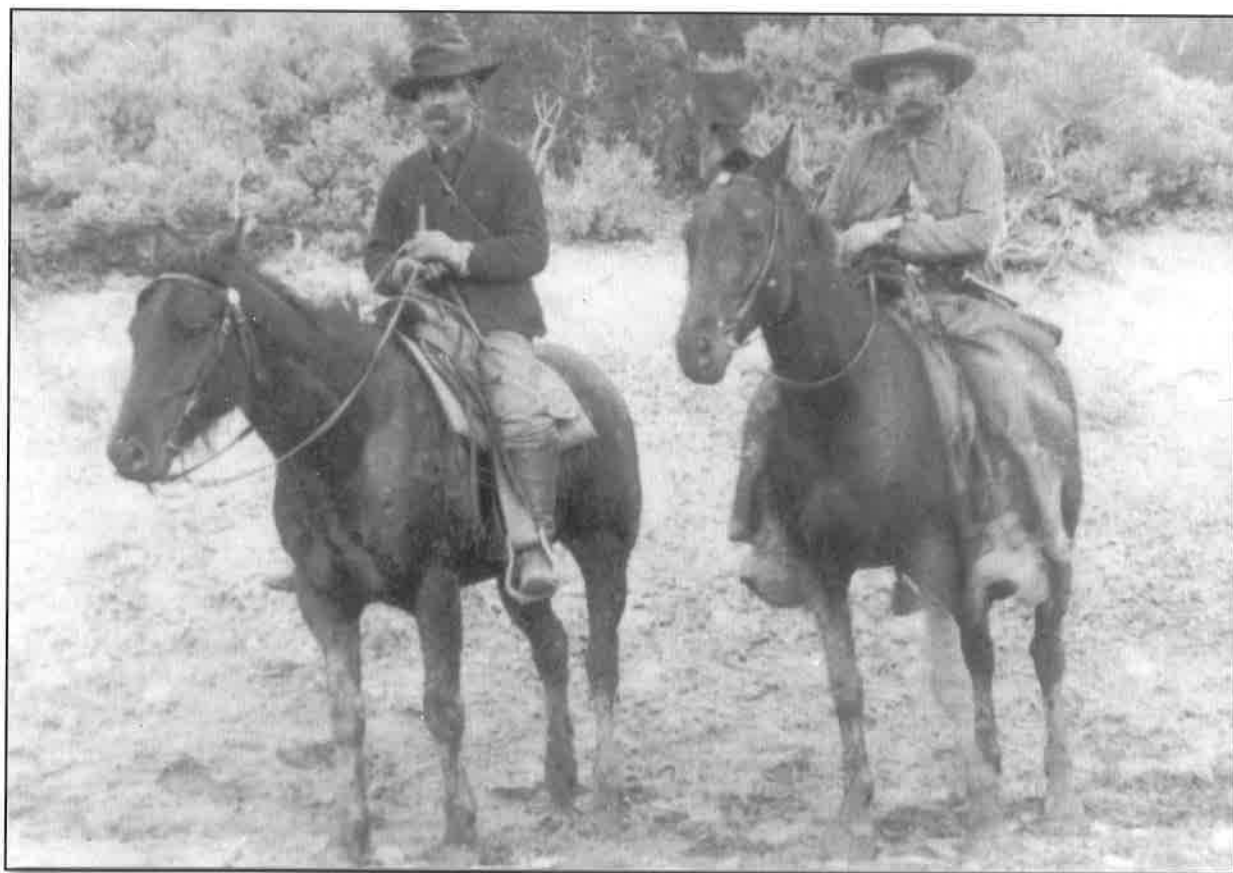
In 1904, Roosevelt tried once more to arrange a hunt with Goff, this time near Cody, Wyoming. Goff arrived in Cody in October 1904 and proceeded to the Palette ranch, owned by A. A. Anderson. Goff's visit excited the residents of the town of Cody and the local paper reported on the rumors of an expected presidential visit.⁴⁴ Due to a busy work schedule and upcoming presidential elections, Roosevelt cancelled yet another hunt with Goff, much to the disappointment of Cody's residents.⁴⁵

The President's Bear Hunt of 1905

Roosevelt finally succeeded in getting away from Washington, D.C. for a hunt near New Castle, Colorado, with Goff and his pack. Goff and another guide, Jake Borah, acted as the main guides for the

presidential hunt. Two other guides, P. "Brick" Wells and Al Anderson, assisted Goff and Borah. The atmosphere of the 1905 bear hunt greatly contrasted with Roosevelt's first lion hunt with Goff. Now that Roosevelt was president, the guides fretted that the hunt must be an unqualified success to augment the president's image as a great hunter. The fear of failure was taken into consideration even during the planning stages of the trip. "If I come out [hunting] as President," Roosevelt wrote Goff, "we must be dead sure that there is no slip-up and that I get the game. I think the thing to do is to say we were after mountain lions, and we could make sure of killing one or two of them."⁴⁶

On April 15, 1905, Roosevelt traveled in a private railroad car to New Castle where he met both



John Goff (left) and Jake Borah guided Theodore Roosevelt's 1905 bear hunt. Courtesy American Heritage Center, University of Wyoming.

⁴⁴ *The Cody Enterprise*, October 20, 1904.

⁴⁵ *The Cody Enterprise*, October 27, 1904.

⁴⁶ Letter to John Goff from Theodore Roosevelt, November 11, 1904, Theodore Roosevelt Papers.

Goff and Borah. Philip Stewart, who accompanied Roosevelt during the lion hunt, and Dr. Alexander Lambert, the president's physician from New York, were to accompany the president. Although the president's party had arrived at eight o'clock, the hunters could not leave until the president's mail arrived at eleven o'clock. After receiving the mail, the hunting party proceeded the eighteen miles to camp on horseback. Upon reaching their destination, the sportsmen enjoyed a dinner of chicken pot pie, stewed tomatoes, mashed potatoes, hot biscuits, cream corn, canned peaches, and pumpkin pie cooked by Jack Fry. Goff noticed, "the President ate heartily, remarking as he finished: 'This is better than we have at the White House.'"⁴⁷

The next morning, the hunters began their pursuit for bear and after an eleven hour ride, the hounds found a fresh bobcat trail and began to give chase. The hunters followed the dogs until Stewart noticed a black bear being pursued by two lone dogs separated from the pack. Goff and Borah investigated the situation and decided the bear could wait until morning so the hunt for the bobcat continued. When the pack treed the cat, "Shorty," one of Goff's dogs, climbed the tree and knocked the prey down to the ground. Another dog caught the bobcat on the ground and the pack began, in Goff's words, "making short work of her."⁴⁸

The next day, the hunters returned to where the bear had been seen by Stewart. The dogs wasted no time in finding the bear's scent and tracks. The pack began their chase and soon had the bear at bay. The hunters located the bear standing on a large rock in the middle of a talus slope. From its place of refuge, the bear swatted at any dog that ventured within range of its claws. Borah, fearing for the president's safety, directed Al Anderson to chase the bear down the hill so Roosevelt would not have to climb the loose rock covering the hill. Eventually, the guides positioned the bear so the president could have an

easier shot from a safer location. Roosevelt's first shot wounded the bear in the thigh, causing it to roll farther down the rocky hill. The dogs chased after their prey until Roosevelt fatally shot the bear in the neck. Roosevelt's first bear weighed 350 pounds, making a fine trophy for the first kill of the hunt.

The first bear encounter of the hunt wounded many of the dogs. One of Borah's dogs was found holding tightly to the bear's skin with its mouth, but the dog's back was broken in the scuffle and it had to be shot. Goff's dog, "Shorty," was also badly crippled in the fight with the bear. Upon looking closer at the bear's hide, Goff "found its upper lip all cut up where 'Shorty' had locked teeth with it."⁴⁹ Goff carried the dog to a nearby stream hoping to encourage it to drink some water. "Shorty" remained at the stream being unable to make it back to camp. The next day Goff and his partner Brick Wells returned to check on "Shorty's" status. Goff found the wounded dog "huddled up on the hillside too stiff and sore to walk home but too nery to die."⁵⁰ Both guides were able to coax the dog to walk back to camp where he recovered; however, due to "Shorty's" mangled face, the camp renamed the canine the "Toad Faced Dog."

The next week of the hunting proved to be uneventful. Snowstorms kept the hunters in camp, and when the weather broke and they could hunt, bears were not to be found. "The presidential party spent most of the time reading and playing whist," wrote Goff.⁵¹ The guides decided to move the camp, hoping to find more bears for the president. During the move, Roosevelt contracted a touch of the "Cuban fever," a stomach ailment that plagued him since the Spanish American War. The illness continued to haunt him for the remainder of the trip.⁵² "My fever really bothered me very little," wrote Roosevelt to his daughter, "simply keeping me in camp a few days, and I would not have minded it in the least if it had not been that I was afraid the newspapers would

⁴⁷ John B. Goff, "The President's Bear Hunt," *Outdoor Life*, Vol. 16, number 1, July 1905:543.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 545.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

⁵¹ John B. Goff, "The President's Bear Hunt: Second Paper," *Outdoor Life*, Vol. 16, number 2, August 1905, p. 619.

⁵² *Ibid.*

make a hullabaloo over it."⁵³

Roosevelt managed to cover-up the more serious nature of his illness. During one spell of "Cuban fever" the president's secretary, William Loeb, found the president disoriented by his high fever, wandering barefoot outside in the snow holding onto "Skip," one of Goff's dogs. Loeb helped the ailing president back to bed and brought in Dr. Lambert to treat the sick man. Goff and others never suspected a thing.⁵⁴ Goff's later account noted the president's illness, but described Roosevelt as "jolly and [Roosevelt] thought we were getting along swimmingly."⁵⁵

On April 24, the hunting party's luck changed with the discovery of a sow bear's trail. The pack led the hunters to a treed bear cub left behind during the chase. Dr. Lambert quickly killed the small bear and the hunters resumed the chase for the sow. The hunters found their prey high in a tree and the president successfully killed the bear.⁵⁶ When the hunters returned triumphantly to camp, Stewart looked at Lambert's bear skin and stated that it could only be used as a doily. From then on, yearling cubs were called "doily bears" by the hunters.⁵⁷

The next day, Stewart returned home while the president and Dr. Lambert continued to hunt bears. The party returned to the area where the bear from the previous day had been killed. This strategy proved successful for soon the dogs were in pursuit of another sow and two cubs. The pack of hounds treed the two cubs together in the same tree, where they were killed by Dr. Lambert. The hunters then continued after the sow, until she climbed up a tree to escape the dogs. Roosevelt killed the bear with one shot through the heart.⁵⁸ The day after Roosevelt shot his third bear, the hunters remained in camp to rest. On April 27, Lambert and the guides left camp without Roosevelt for he had another attack of

Cuban fever. Lambert successfully killed three more cubs and one more sow. These were the last bears killed during the hunt.

On May 6, the hunting party rode to Glenwood Springs where Roosevelt treated his hunting guides and assistants to a banquet in the Hotel Colorado.⁵⁹ Before the president returned to Washington, he presented Goff's sons with fifty dollars each. Goff noted that "it is needless to say that this money will ever be prized by these boys and their parents - not particularly for its intrinsic value, but from the fact that the greatest President the United States has ever known was thoughtful enough and kind enough to remember them in so liberal a manner."⁶⁰ Goff's son, Byron (Barney), later recalled that his father "was a good Republican after [the hunt], and so have I been."⁶¹

Goff returned Roosevelt's favor by making a present of one of his dogs, "Skip." Roosevelt described Skip as "a funny little black and tan [terrier] ... a most friendly little fellow, especially fond of riding in front or behind the saddle of any one of us who would take him up, although perfectly able to travel forty miles a day on his own sturdy legs if he had to, and then to join in the worry of the quarry when once it had been shot... Skip adopted me as his special master, rode with me whenever I would let him, and slept on the foot of my bed at night, growling defiance at anything that came near."⁶² Skip accompanied the president back to Washington, D.C. where he quickly adapted into the menagerie of the Roosevelt family's pets. Skip was later killed by an automobile and buried at Sagamore Hill, Roosevelt's family home at Long Island, New York. Skip's marker can still be viewed today at the Roosevelt pet cemetery located on the grounds of Sagamore Hill.

⁵³ Letter to Alice L. Roosevelt from Theodore Roosevelt, May 6, 1905, Theodore Roosevelt Papers.

⁵⁴ Edmund Morris, *Theodore Rex* (New York: Random House, 2001), pp. 382-83.

⁵⁵ Goff, "The President's Bear Hunt, Second Paper," p. 620.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 625.

⁵⁷ Roosevelt, *Outdoor Pastimes of an American Hunter*, p. 89.

⁵⁸ Goff, "The President's Bear Hunt, Second Paper," pp. 625-26.

⁵⁹ John B. Goff, "The President's Bear Hunt, Third Paper," *Outdoor Life*, Vol. 16, number 3, September, 1905, pp. 717-20.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 721.

⁶¹ Interview with Barney (Byron) Goff, *The Cody Enterprise*, July 21, 1961.

⁶² Theodore Roosevelt, *Outdoor Pastimes of an American Hunter*, pp. 71-72.

Lions in the Yellowstone

During the 1905 hunt, Roosevelt offered Goff the job of gamekeeper for Yellowstone National Park. On May 6, 1905, the president wrote to Major John Pitcher, acting-superintendent of Yellowstone National Park; A. A. Anderson, forest inspector; and Ethan A. Hitchcock, Secretary of the Interior; requesting that Goff be "given all the privileges that can be given for killing lion within or without the park."⁶³ Goff left for Yellowstone in June 1905. Accompanying Goff was Mattie, his sons, John's brother Homer with his immediate family, B. P. Wells an assistant guide from Roosevelt's bear hunt, and two other settlers, Galatia Sprague and W. H. Purdy, joined the entourage. Barney Goff later recalled that the Goff family herded more than one hundred horses and forty dogs to their new home in Montana.⁶⁴ Goff expected the job of thinning out the Yellowstone lion population would take four years.⁶⁵

Goff's outfit reached the Buffalo Fork of the Snake River after thirty days travel. Goff and Wells proceeded to the park to meet with the park officials while the others remained in camp. After the meeting, the two partners decided to locate headquarters at Gardiner, Montana.⁶⁶ "We wanted to be located some place close to the winter range of the park game," wrote Wells, "thereby being in touch with the lions which follow the game to their winter feeding grounds."⁶⁷ The two hunters returned to the Snake River and moved their families to Gardiner, where Goff and Wells soon leased a ranch for their new headquarters.⁶⁸

In December, the guides packed their supplies and rode to Yancey's Pleasant Valley Hotel, a small private hotel operated by "Uncle" John Yancey in Yellowstone National Park. This was to be the headquarters for their first lion hunt in the park. The

hunters met very little success.⁶⁹ "Goff did not like the idea of hunting three days in Yellowstone Park without turning loose on a single track,"⁷⁰ noted Wells.

Upon returning to the camp, the two hunters met a park soldier who had found a cow elk recently killed by a cougar, only two miles away. Goff immediately rode out to check the carcass and look for tracks. Although it was late in the evening, Goff decided to trail the cougar, after two miles the dogs treed their prey. While riding to the scene, "one of the boys who had gone along to see the fun"⁷¹ fell with his horse and nearly lost it when it became wedged between two trees causing the hunters to postpone their chase until they could free the horse. Eventually, they reached the lion, but it bolted from the tree. The dogs kept after their prey and treed it again fifty yards from the original tree. Goff shot the lion through the breast, killing the cougar upon impact.

The day following their success, the hunters split up to search for other lion tracks. Wells, during his return to camp, found one cougar's trail and told Goff of his discovery. The two hunters returned to the area, and began trailing their intended prey. After following the cougar's tracks for a distance, the hunters located another trail left by two cougar cubs. The hunters continued their pursuit until one of the dogs began howling. Goff turned to follow the dog's bark and found the hound chasing a cougar. The hunters put the rest of the pack on the lion's trail; soon they had their prey treed. Goff quickly dispatched the lion.

The two lion cubs remained. This time, the hunters had another idea for the cougars' fate. Goff and Wells packed two boxes onto horses. Three dogs, who were not much for fighting, were the only pack used for the day's hunt. The hunters returned to the area where the tracks of the lions were found. Soon

⁶³ Letter to Major John Pitcher from Theodore Roosevelt, May 6, 1905, Theodore Roosevelt Papers.

⁶⁴ Interview with Barney (Byron) Goff, *The Cody Enterprise*, July 21, 1961.

⁶⁵ *The Meeker Herald*, June 3, 1905, Courtesy of the White River Museum.

⁶⁶ B. P. Wells, "With Goff for Lions in the Yellowstone," *Outdoor Life*, Vol. 17, number 5, May, 1906, p. 449.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 449-50.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 450.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p. 452.

the dogs cornered one cougar against a rock, where Goff captured the animal and placed in one of the boxes. The other one was treed and Goff roped the animal, dragged it out of its refuge, and packed it into one of the boxes. The guides returned to camp and tied-up their new found pets to one of the cabins. Soon the animals fed from their capturers' hands.⁷²

"Roosevelt was misinformed about the lion situation,"⁷³ Byron Goff later told an interviewer. Goff and Wells quickly discovered that the mountain lion population was not as numerous as expected. After less than a year of service, Goff moved his family into the northfork valley of the Shoshone River, forty-five miles west of Cody, Wyoming. The family settled near a small creek later named Goff Creek, in honor of the guide. Goff continued hunting from this location until a conflict erupted with Dad Pierce, acting forest supervisor for the Shoshone National Forest, possibly over Goff's use of hunting dogs on a forest reserve. Homer Goff returned to Meeker.⁷⁴ B. P. Wells remained in the park to work on the newly established buffalo ranch on Rose Creek, a site selected by Goff and Wells.⁷⁵

Life in Northern Wyoming

Goff continued guiding in the Cody area from a hunting camp on Goff Creek. Eastern sportsmen continued to contact Goff for his services. In October 1907, Mr. Alan D. Wilson, a member of the National Geographic Society, and his wife, employed Goff for his guiding services in pursuit of bear and wolverine on the Shoshone River. In his article to *National Geographic Magazine*, Wilson noted "the wolverine and bear we ran with John B. Goff's pack, which we followed on horseback, and which by the way, is the greatest sport I have ever had."⁷⁶ Wilson noted that Goff's pack "were the cleverest, gamest lot of little

rascals I ever saw, and they were always the ones who had to bear the brunt of trouble."⁷⁷

The famous guide soon began managing the Wapiti Inn, owned by William F. "Buffalo Bill" Cody, who intended the inn to be a half-way stop between his Irma Hotel in Cody, Wyoming, and his tourist/hunting lodge, Pahaska Teepee, located near the Yellowstone National Park's eastern boundary.⁷⁸ Goff advertised his services as follows in the *Wyoming Stockgrower and Farmer* newspaper in 1908:

I have 30 head of Saddle horses and hack for fishing parties
Board and lodging \$2.00 per day
Fresh milk, butter, eggs and vegetables grown on the ground - - Will meet
any party in Cody at any time with good rig, and take parties through 7
hours - - Will guarantee bear, lion, lynx, or wild cat in the proper season -
- Best trained pack of hounds in America - - Also deer and elk in open
season - - Equipped to outfit pack outfit for hunting in any part of
Wyoming
Hay and grain always on hand. For dates address
John B. Goff
Wapiti, Wyoming⁷⁹

Goff described his adjustment to the new setting in a letter to *Outdoor Life* magazine, "we have had a very hard winter here, but not withstanding this fact the elk are in good condition ... I haven't hunted much the past winter, owing to the deep snows, but I will make up for it this spring."⁸⁰

While managing the Wapiti Inn, Goff's family found themselves hiding a fugitive sought by soldiers, who were then patrolling Yellowstone National Park.

⁷² Ibid., pp. 449-55.

⁷³ *The Cody Enterprise*, July 20, 1961.

⁷⁴ *The Cody Enterprise*, July 20, 1961.

⁷⁵ Letter to Mr. C. A. Lindsey from B. P. Wells, May 21, 1908. Letter to B. P. Wells from chief clerk, June 8, 1908. Courtesy of Yellowstone National Park Library, Mammoth Hot Springs, Wyoming.

⁷⁶ *National Geographic Magazine*, May 1908 19(5): 350-56.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ *The Cody Enterprise*, July 20, 1961. W. Hudson Kensel, *Pahaska Teepee: Buffalo Bill's Old Hunting Lodge and Hotel, A History, 1901-1946* (Cody: Buffalo Bill Historical Center, 1987).

⁷⁹ Facsimile of advertisement found in Kensel, *Pahaska Teepee*, 23.

⁸⁰ "A Note from John Goff," *Outdoor Life*, Vol. 23, number 5, May 1909, p. 485.

J.C. "Kid" Nichols killed three elk near Yellowstone's eastern boundary. Nichols found himself surrounded by a patrol of eight privates from the 1st Cavalry led by one sergeant. The sergeant accused Nichols of killing the elk inside of the park boundaries and ordered his men to arrest Nichols and escort him back to the park headquarters at Mammoth Hot Springs. Nichols argued with the sergeant that he killed the elk outside of the park boundary; thus, no crime had been committed and he refused to mount his horse for the ride to Mammoth. The sergeant struck Nichols in the face with pistol only to have Nichols seize the sergeant's weapon. Nichols then cold cocked the sergeant with the pistol. The blow knocked the sergeant's left eye completely out of its socket, Nichols assumed the sergeant would soon die. Using the pistol, Nichols covered the privates who were too busy loading the elk and thus unable to reach their rifles. Nichols took the bolts out of the privates' rifles and fled into the woods fearing he had just committed murder.⁸¹

While evading the soldier patrols searching for his whereabouts, Nichols sprained his ankle. The injured Nichols sought refuge under a bridge on the Elk's Fork of the Shoshone River when he heard Earl Goff singing from the kitchen of the nearby Wapiti Inn. Nichols followed the sound and noticed Earl and his mother washing dishes. Cautiously, Nichols approached the inn's back door hoping to find shelter, even though two park soldiers sat in an adjoining room! Nichols quietly knocked on the backdoor and when Earl and Mattie answered, Nichols motioned for them to remain silent about his presence. Earl covered up the quiet noise of Nichols arrival with his continued singing. Nichols later wrote, "Mrs. Goff motioned for me to come in, for I was like one of the family. The two older sons and myself hunted and chased wild cats with Johnny's dogs. She sent me to her bedroom which joined the kitchen and cooked me a nice meal. Believe you me it tasted good. I think she sat up all night sleeping with her head on

her arms on the table while I had her bed."⁸²

The next morning, two more soldiers arrived at Wapiti to relieve their fellow soldiers; however, all four cavalymen decided to stay at the inn where they enjoyed an evening of cards and Mattie's cooking. While the soldiers ate and played cards, Nichols remained hidden in Goff's bedroom until dark. In the darkness, Nichols saddled an army mule and rode on to Cody, accompanied by three other army mules, which refused to be separated from one another. Through the assistance of the Goff family and other Cody residents, Nichols made good his escape. The sergeant, whom Nichols feared dead, recovered from his head wound, so the military officials did not charge Nichols with murder. In 1911, the charges against Nichols were dropped by the park authorities when it was discovered that he had indeed killed the elk outside of the park.⁸³

During his residence in Wyoming, Goff attempted to arrange another hunt with Roosevelt. In 1908, Roosevelt wrote Goff, "I think I shall have to come for a hunt with you. I will fix up the details as to whether we can take it in the fall after bear, with the chance of elk and deer."⁸⁴ Unfortunately, the hunt never came to fruition; instead the president set his sites on the far hunting grounds of Africa. Although he would be known locally as Roosevelt's Guide, Roosevelt and Goff would never hunt together again. In his 1913 autobiography, Roosevelt praised Goff as a "famous hunter and mountain man." Roosevelt continued his praise of Goff, "I was rather proud of my achievements, and pictured myself as being known to the few settlers in the neighborhood as a successful mountain-lion hunter. I could not help grinning when I found out that they did not even allude to me as the Vice-President-elect, let alone as a hunter, but merely as 'Johnny Goff's tourist.'"⁸⁵ Goff most certainly appreciated this affirmation of his hunting skills and his friendship with Roosevelt. Roosevelt remarked to a friend that he had "no desire to return to the scenes of my ranching days. It's all

⁸¹ Lucille Nichols Patrick, *The Candy Kid*, (Cody: Lucille Nichols Patrick, 1969), p. 50.

⁸² *Ibid.* p. 52.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, chapter 16 and endnotes on pp. 169-71.

⁸⁴ Letter to John Goff from Theodore Roosevelt, January 25, 1908, Theodore Roosevelt papers.

⁸⁵ Theodore Roosevelt, *Theodore Roosevelt: An Autobiography* (New York: Macmillan., 1913), p. 41.

changed - and I don't want to see it.. .The place is all settled now ... I'd rather try and remember it as it was."⁸⁶ Roosevelt and Goff would never hunt together again.

Through his connections with local notables, Goff guided many distinguished visitors to Wyoming. Famed New York artist and acting superintendent of the Shoshone National Forest, A. A. Anderson, enlisted Goff's services to guide wealthy New Yorker, W.R. Coe, on a hunt for bighorn sheep on the Greybull River around 1909.⁸⁷ Separating from Anderson and another companion, Goff and Coe worked their way into the Venus Basin. While the two separate hunting parties chased their prey, a heavy snowstorm occurred causing the hunters considerable problems. Anderson made it back to camp after becoming separated from his partner. Deciding to wait out the storm and hoping his companions would return, Anderson sought shelter in a tent. The weight of the heavy snow caused one side of the tent to collapse. Anderson crawled to the end still standing and remained there for the night. Inspired by his plight, Anderson later penned the following poem:

Crash, snap, bang! I hear the pole give way. Flip, flap, flop! The tent begins to sway. What is this dreadful weight I feel upon my heart? A ton of cold, cold snow had tumbled in the dark. I crawl, I wriggle, and in my dreadful plight, I whisper to my dog, "What a hell of a night!"⁸⁸

As Anderson struggled with his tent, Coe and Goff, being unable to make it back to camp, spent the cold, snowy night without shelter. Fearing the danger of freezing if they slept, Goff and Coe stood around a small campfire for the entire night. When morning arrived, the tired men made their way through the snow back to camp. Upon the lost hunters' return,

Anderson remarked that Coe looked very spruce. Coe responded, "Perhaps that's because I slept under a spruce tree."⁸⁹ The reunited group of hunters returned back to Anderson's Palette Ranch where Coe lit up a cigar only to take two puffs and then fall asleep as the lit cigar tumbled to the floor. Despite his rough welcome to Wyoming, Coe decided to purchase the Carter Ranch from Buffalo Bill Cody. Coe's purchase insured a permanent connection between the residents of Wyoming and the wealthy New Yorker who quickly became one of state's greatest philanthropists.⁹⁰

In February 1910, Goff ended his service at Buffalo Bill's Wapiti Inn. Due to the use of automobiles now shuttling tourists from the town of Cody to Yellowstone, the Wapiti Inn became obsolete. Goff moved into the town of Cody where he set up his new headquarters for his guiding services.⁹¹ Shortly after the move, hunting with dogs in the forest reserves was declared illegal by the State Game Warden. Since much of the locality where Goff hunted was within the Shoshone National Forest, Goff had to plan his hunts far from his headquarters in Cody. In March, the guide took his pack to Colorado for a hunt with A. A. Kendall of Rock Springs, and N. L. Reese of Columbus, Ohio.⁹² When Goff returned from the Colorado hunt, he announced that he had sold off most of his pack.⁹³ Barney Goff later recalled that his losing the pack "kind of broke [John Goff's] heart as he loved those dogs."⁹⁴

Goff continued to guide sportsmen in the Cody region, without his dogs, until 1912. He then left the guide business to claim a homestead at Monument Hill north of Cody, Wyoming. Here he began farming and ranching with his son Barney. Goff once again settled down to the dull routine of being a homesteader. Instead of spending days chasing cougars on exciting hunts, Goff now filled his days

⁸⁶ John J. Leary, Jr., *Talks with TR. from the Diaries of John J. Leary, Jr.* (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1920), pp. 278-79.

⁸⁷ A. A. Anderson, *Experiences and Impressions: The Autobiography of A. A. Anderson* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1933), pp. 186-89.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 188.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

⁹⁰ Lucille Nichols Patrick, *The Best Little Town by a Dam Site or Cody First 20 Years* (Cody: Lucille Nichols Patrick, 1968), p. 156.

⁹¹ *The Park County Enterprise*, February 11, 1910.

⁹² "J. B. Goff Goes to Colorado," *The Park County Enterprise*, March 19, 1910.

⁹³ "J. B. Goff Sells Hunting Dogs," *The Park County Enterprise*, May 7, 1910.

⁹⁴ *Cody Enterprise*, July 20, 1961.

with the tedious work of homesteading that he had abandoned long ago for hunting. The homestead life did have its excitements, the family chicken coop burned down after John left his smoldering pipe in the coop. Killing of predators became Mattie's responsibility; unfortunately, the recoil of rifle she used would throw her down on the ground after each shot.⁹⁵

The economic tide seemed to be supportive of homesteaders in Wyoming during the early years of the twentieth century. With the outbreak of World War I, in agricultural prices boomed in Wyoming due to the wartime demands. Upon the conclusion of the war, the bust set in due to too much supply and little demand. For Wyoming, the Great Depression began in the 1920s, not the 1930s, and the Goff family, like others, suffered.⁹⁶ During this time, Goff turned more and more to alcohol to escape, probably due to the pressure of falling agricultural prices and the boredom he felt after leaving the hunting business. Goff's regular excursions into town allowed him to train his horses to pull his wagon back home, while he slept off his drunken condition in the back of the wagon.⁹⁷ John and Barney left the Monument Hill homestead in 1925, once again turning to other careers to support themselves and their families.

John and Mattie Goff returned to guiding tourists, this time for the various dude ranches in the Cody locality that flourished in the 1920s in Wyoming. The Goffs finally retired on a small piece of land east of Cody. It was here that John Goff passed away on March 28, 1937; the family buried John at Riverside Cemetery in Cody.⁹⁸ Mattie remained in Cody until January 1942, when she married Ed Hempstone and moved to Powell, Wyoming. Mattie's loss of hearing caused an unfortunate incident in which she locked Ed in the cellar, thinking he forgot to shut the door. Unable to hear his pleas for help, Mattie left poor

Ed in the cellar all day until someone came to his rescue."⁹⁹ After Ed passed away in 1950, Mattie moved in with her son, Earl, who resided in Cody. She remained living with Earl until her death in October 1952. The family interned her remains next to John's at Riverside Cemetery.¹⁰⁰

The life of John Goff illustrates a number of nuances of the western settlement process. Goff's constant struggle as a homesteader typifies the normal experience of men and women struggling to survive. Goff's family history illustrates the continued move to find new lands and opportunities; usually at the expense of Native Americans forced onto smaller and smaller reservations. Like many of his counterparts, John Goff multi-tasked, hoping to find enough funds to insure the continued success of his homestead. This multi-tasking led John Goff into other areas of western development, such as tourism and employment managing newly reserved public lands. Tourism would allow John Goff to shift from being just one of many homesteaders struggling in the West, to becoming well known as a western persona connected to Theodore Roosevelt. This relationship with Roosevelt also led Goff into federal employment as a government hunter; however, new state and federal policies created to protect western wildlife later limited Goff's ability to hunt with his pack of hounds on federal land. Despite the toils and hardships of his later life, Goff continues to remain a popular figure in the West as Theodore Roosevelt's hunting guide. Today he is celebrated in local stories, family reminiscences, and can be found in occasional references located in biographies of Theodore Roosevelt. Unfortunately the complexities of John Goff's life are buried under the barrage of material focusing solely on his identity as Johnny Goff, Theodore Roosevelt's hunting guide.

⁹⁵ Recollections from Mary Nielson, a neighbor of the Goff family during their residence on Monument Hill. Shared with the author at various meetings.

⁹⁶ T.A. Larson, *History of Wyoming*, second edition (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1978), pp. 346-446.

⁹⁷ Family recollections. Story of wagon told by Don Clayton who married one of Barney Goff's daughters, Norma Jean Clayton.

⁹⁸ *The Cody Enterprise*, March 31, 1937.

⁹⁹ Recollections from Helen Orendorff, daughter of Barney Goff.

¹⁰⁰ *The Cody Enterprise*, October 16, 1952.