

PHILIP ASHTON ROLLINS

28 East 78<sup>th</sup> Street

NEW YORK

October 12th, 1923.

Mr. Gerould, Librarian,  
Princeton University,  
Princeton, N. J.

My dear Mr. Gerould,

There is sent you herewith a copy of "The Banditti of the Plains" by A. S. Mercer, which was printed at Cheyenne, Wyoming in 1894. The copy thus sent you is unbound and uncut.

I suggest that it would be wise to have the pages cut in order that the book may thereby be made readable.

I am also taking the liberty of suggesting that the book be somewhat safeguarded in your Library. Otherwise you very likely will discover some day that it has either disappeared or else been mutilated.

As you doubtless know, this attempted publication has had a curious history, and even today has insecure status on any library shelf.

The book was printed in 1894, was advertised, and was immediately suppressed by a court injunction in the course of a law suit instituted in Wyoming. All of the books printed were impounded and placed in the basement of a building at Cheyenne, to await the day when they should be destroyed by burning. There being ways and ways of procuring desirable things, several hundred of the books found themselves one night in a wagon drawn by galloping horses and headed for the Colorado line. The copy handed you herewith was one of those which began that night ride on the wagon.

The marks on the back of the last flyleaf represent in part, I am told, the doings of the fire hose that was called into play for a few moments. You will recognize some of the other marks as indicating the course of bullets. I saw these bullets started on their way.

Various people mentioned in the book are therein accused of having committed murder. Some of the people thus mentioned and the children of others of such of them as have died, have for many years united in an attempt to exterminate the book.

Mr. Gerould

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To my knowledge, the University of Wyoming and the State Library of Wyoming, each have lost copies of the volume from their shelves. I know also of individuals in the West who have lost their copies.

The book has a curious habit of either disappearing suddenly and forever, or else of disappearing for a while and then, when returned to the shelf, showing the marks of surgical operations.

The book is of value to any historian who is dealing with civilization in the trans-Missouri River country. It should, however, be carefully weighed by any such historian for the reason that it gives in most affirmative fashion but one side of a question which was bitterly contested. I speak thus positively because I saw at close range the occurrences dealt with by the book. In fact, I saw some of them over the sight of a six gun.

The book will, I think, eventually have a considerable monetary value as a piece of Americana. Collectors have the last few years been combing the West for copies of it. I paid only fifty dollars for the enclosed copy, exclusive of its slip cover. Unless I be mistaken, the copy sent you is worth materially more than the price paid for it. I make this suggestion as to price, thinking that you might care to have it for the purpose of your library statistics.

Yours respectfully,

*Philip A. Rowan*