

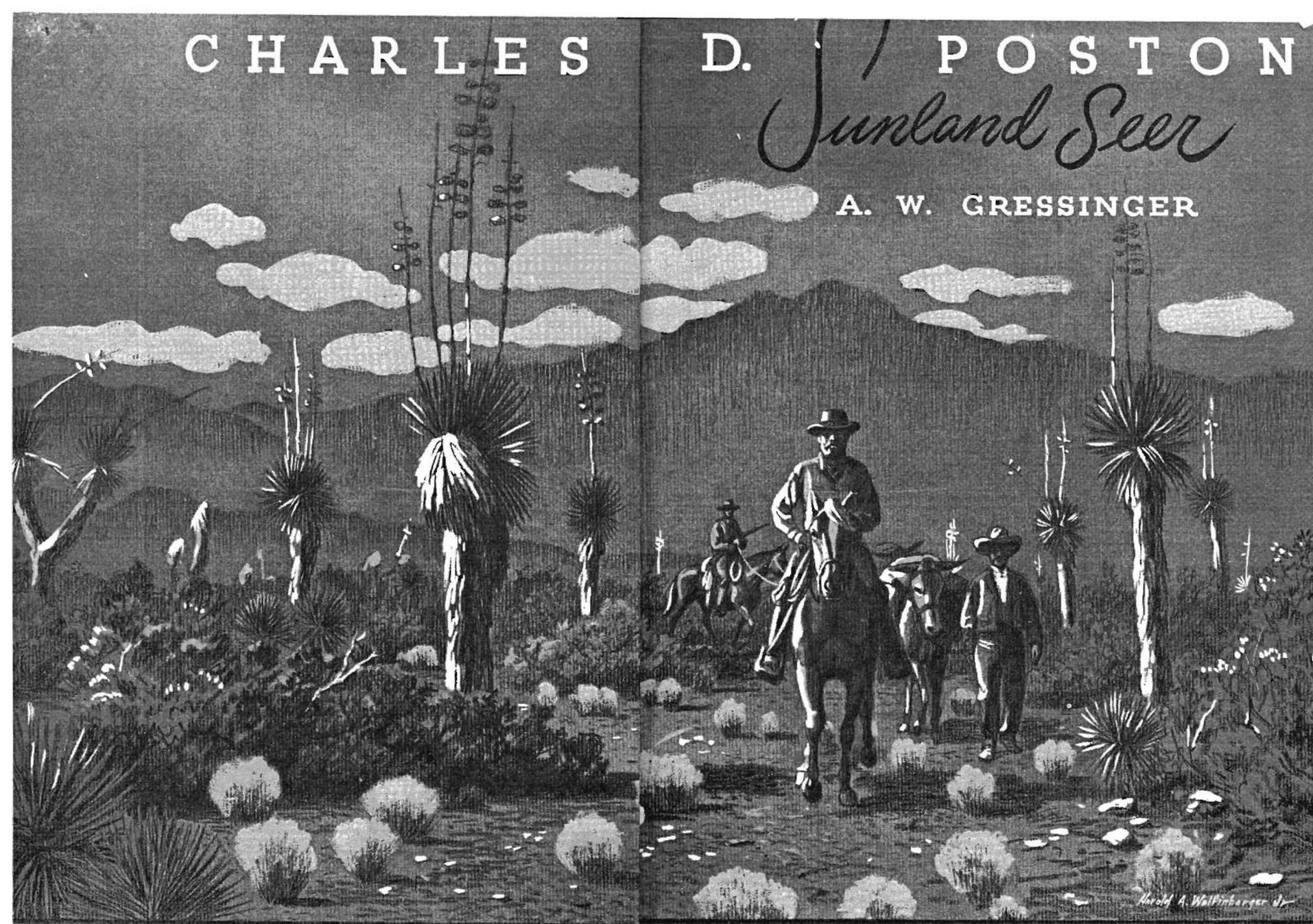
CHARLES

D.

POSTON

Junland Seer

A. W. GRESSINGER



Harold A. Wolfenbarger, Jr.



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Drawings by Harold A. Wolfenbarger, Jr.

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us over an open plain, where we could in the bright moonlight see every object within a long distance. The idea of being able to defend ourselves tempted us strongly toward the open plain, but the consciousness of the value of every minute caused us to decide quickly, and taking the shorter way, we were soon in the dark, close thicket. As we came out into the open valley, the sensation of relief was like that felt on escaping untouched from a shot you have seen deliberately fired at you.

"Just before reaching the house, we heard Indian signals given and answered, each time nearer than before, but we gained the door safely and found all as we had left it; the American unaware of danger, was making bread, and the Mexicans were asleep in their quarters. We kept guard all night, but we were not attacked.

"Before daylight, we dispatched a Mexican courier across the mountains to the fort* and another to Tubac and then went after Grosvenor's body. We found it as we had left it, while near the wagon lay the bodies of the two Mexican teamsters.

"We were now able to read the history of the whole of this murderous affair. The wagon must have been attacked within less than five minutes after we had seen it at noon, indeed while we were resting and smoking at the spring not 400 yards from the spot. A party of Indians, 15 in number, as we found by the tracks, had sprung upon the Mexicans, who seem unaccountably not to have used their firearms, although the sand showed the marks of a desperate hand to hand struggle.

"Having killed the men, the Apaches cut the mules loose, emptied the flour, threw out the ore, which was useless to them, and drove the animals to a spot a quarter of a mile distant, where they feasted on one of them, and spent the day and night. A party was left behind to waylay such of us as might come out to meet the team. . .

"During the day, Lt. Evans arrived with a force of 19 soldiers, having with difficulty obtained the consent of his commandant, and soon after Col. Poston reached the mine with a party of Americans. Graves had been dug and after reading the burial service and throwing in the earth, we fired a volley and turned away, no one knowing how soon his time might come.

*Fort Buchanan, 22 miles distant, consisted of only a scattered number of adobe houses. There was no stockade.

Chapter 7

harrid abandonment

"I NOW FORESAW", PUMPELLO CONTINUED, "A LONG AND DANGEROUS work before us in extracting the silver from our ore.

We could indeed have abandoned the mines and have escaped from the God-forsaken land by accompanying the military, which was to leave in two weeks. But both Mr. Robinson and myself considered that we were duty bound to place the movable property of the company in safety at Tubac, and to pay in bullion the money owing to men who without it could not escape. To accomplish this would require six weeks' work at the furnace, crippled as were all operations by the loss of our horses and mules.

"It was of the first importance that we should increase our force of Americans, not only for protection against the Apaches but more especially against the possible treachery of our Mexican



workmen, for at almost every mine in the country a part or all of the whites had been murdered by their peons. One of the party which had come that day from Tubac was engaged on the spot. Partly in the hope of getting a small force of soldiers, who should remain till the abandonment began, and partly to persuade an American who lived on the road to the fort to join us, I resolved to accompany Lt. Evans, who was obliged to return the next day.

"Taking with me a young Apache who had been captured when a child and had no sympathy with his tribe, I rode away with Lt. Evans, intending to return the next day. The wagon road lay for ten miles along the tributary of the Sonoita valley, then ascended the Sonoita for 12 miles to the fort, while a bridlepath across the hills shortened the distance some two or three miles by leaving the road before the junction of the two valleys. To reach the house of the American whom I wished to see, we would have to follow the wagon road all the way; and as more than a mile of it before the junction of the valleys lay through a narrow and dangerous defile on an Apache war trail that was constantly frequented by the Indians, Lt. Evans would not assume the responsibility of risking the lives of his men in a place where they would be at such disadvantage. While I felt obliged to acknowledge that it would be imprudent to take infantry mounted on mules through the defile, it was of the first necessity that I should see Mr. Elliott Titus, the American living near the junction of the valleys. At the point where the hill trail left the road, bidding goodbye to Lt. Evans, who could he have left his men would have accompanied me himself, I was soon alone with Juan, my Apache boy. As we neared the gorge, I observed that Juan, who was galloping ahead, stopped suddenly and hesitated. As I came up, he pointed to the sand, which was covered with fresh foottracks.

"It was evident that a considerable party of Indians had been here within half an hour and had dispersed suddenly toward the hills in different directions. Our safest course seemed to be to press forward and reach Titus' house, now about two miles off. We were on good horses, and these animals, not less alarmed than ourselves, soon brought us through the defile to the Sonoita creek. To slip our horses' bridles without dismounting and refresh the animals with one long swallow, was the work of a minute, and we were again tearing along at a runaway speed.

We had barely left the creek when we passed the full-length impression of a man's form in the sand with a pool of blood and at the same instant an unearthly yell from the hills behind us showed that the Apaches, although not visible, were after us and felt sure of bringing us down. Our horses, however, fearing nothing so much as an Indian, almost flew over the ground and soon brought us in sight of Titus' hacienda. This lay about 200 yards off from the road in a broad valley shaded by magnificent liveoaks.

"As we rode rapidly towards the houses, I was struck with the quietness of a place generally full of life and said so to Juan.

"'It's all right,' he said, 'I saw three men just now near the house.'

"But as we passed the first building, a smith's shop, both horses shied, and as we came to the principal house, a scene of destruction met our eyes.

"The doors had been forced in, and the whole contents of the house lay on the ground outside, in heaps of broken rubbish. Not far from the door stood a pile made of wool, corn, beans, and flour, and capping the whole, a gold watch hung from a stick driven into the heap. Stooping from the saddle, I took the watch and found it still going.

"As I started to dismount to look for the bodies of the Americans, Juan begged of me not to stop.

"'They are all killed,' he said, 'and we shall have hardly time to reach the road before the Indians come up. Promise me,' he continued, 'that you will fight when the devils close with us; if not, I will save myself now.'

"Assuring the boy, whom I knew to be brave, that I had no idea of being scalped and burned without a struggle, I put spurs to my restless horse, and we were soon on the main road, but not a moment too soon, for a large party of Apaches, fortunately for us on foot, were just coming down the hill and entered the trail close behind us. A volley of arrows flew by our heads, but our horses carried us in a few seconds beyond the reach of these missiles, and the enemy turned back.

"Slacking our speed, we were nearing a point where the road crossed a low spur of the valley-terrace, when suddenly several heads were visible for an instant over the brow of the hill and as