

Cole Younger
(cont)

For these things the bands from Kansas and Federal soldiers began a series of reprisals, and it is told by the Youngers that their own mother was compelled to set fire to her own house in the dead of winter and that three of their sisters were murdered. In September, 1863, after the sacking of Lawrence, in which "Cole" Younger had a hand, he went south with fifty men and joined the command of Kirby Smith. In 1865 he went with a commission from the Confederate government to raise a company in California. He had hardly reached there when the war ended.

In the fall of 1866, eighteen months after the close of the war, all the Younger boys were back upon the old homestead near Harrisonville mending fences, putting

up barns and getting ready for farming. At this point historical accounts disagree. The Youngers say they wished peace. Others say that they had such a baptism of blood and fierce adventure that it was impossible for them to follow the pursuits of peace, and that they joined with Jesse and Frank James and others of the Quantrell crowd and formed that band of desperate bandits which spread terror over this part of the west for many years. In just how many bank robberies, train robberies and highway robberies "Cole" Younger took part will never be known, but his name has been connected with many of them. He was the coolest and shrewdest of that outlaw band.

In all the wanderings of the Younger brothers in the ten years between the close of the war and the bank robbery at Northfield, Minn., which proved their undoing, the old home and haunts in Jackson county held strong attractions for them, and often they returned here. The curse of the outlaw and wanderer was upon them, but through all this county they had many friends who would rather die than betray them. The love of home was as strong within them as the same instinct in the breast of the homing pigeon, and twenty-five years imprisonment never deadened it. It was the middle of August, 1876, that "Cole" Younger and his two brothers rode out from Lee's Summit to join Frank and Jesse James and the others for the long ride to Northfield. This was "Cole" Younger's last expedition. "Jim" and "Bob" Younger never saw the old home again. "Bob" died in prison. "Jim" killed himself last summer. Both are buried in the graveyard near Lee's Summit. "Cole" Younger will be the only one of the trio to look again upon the scenes of his youth.