

Theodore Brackenbury

b. 31 Oct. 1881

d. 20 Jan. 1906

Newspaper article. Date and paper unknown

Mr. Theo Brackenbury, son of Mr. and Mrs. E.D. Brackenbury, last Friday, January 19, 1906, during the blizzard, started over from Oakley to Almo to attend a dance. He left Oakley without overcoat or overshoes. He stopped at Joe McMerry's cabin, in Junction Valley and made a fire. Leaving his fire, he started on foot, leading his horse, and came up the valley to Jim Timons' cabin, went in and walked around in the house, but did not make a fire. He soon left there and wandered off down the valley until daybreak. The morning after he left Oakley, Orson Reed phoned over and asked if Theo got over to the dance all right, and the person he talked with said he had not seen him. Orson said he had left Oakley at 5 o'clock the night before, so they knew he must be somewhere on his way over. A party of men immediately started out to find him. They went as far as Jim Timon's cabin and stayed the rest of the night. As soon as they could see they went out in search of him. They found where he had gone, leading his horse, and soon came to a place where he had unsaddled and turned his horse loose. In a short time they discovered his horse and could trace his tracks now and then up a little canyon leading towards Almo. They followed on up the canyon to the Circle or City of Rocks, finding where he had stopped several times to rest. Soon they came to the point where he had left the road. They followed his tracks as best they could and found him up among some rocks by the side of the road. He had taken off his boots somewhere and wrapped gunny sacks on his feet, but he had walked so far through the crusted snow that he had worn them out and when he was found had only his socks on. He was lying on his face. His body was put into a sleigh and brought to Almo.

Newspaper article: The Oakley Eagle Thursday Jan. 25, 1906

The news article was retrieved by Robert Fehlman of Oakley and sent to Dee Ann Spencer. The old papers are kept in a vault in the Oakley City offices.

Theo Brakenberry of Almo Frozen to Death in the Mountains.

On Friday night last young Theo Brackenberry son of Deputy Sheriff E.D. Brackenberry of Almo, a young man about twenty-four years of age was frozen to death between Oakley and Almo. He was in Oakley at 4 o'clock at which time he started for home explaining to his companions that he would get home in time to have at least one or two dances in his home town that night. On Saturday morning telephone communication revealed the fact that the young man had not reached home and dreaded fears filled the hearts of his friends at both places. Searching parties were sent out from both towns, one of which consisting of Mr. Longlois of Almo and three companions succeeded in finding the unfortunate young man on the other side of the ridge about one and one-half miles from Mr. Tracy's ranch. Several theories as to the manner of his getting lost and his death are being given. The most plausible perhaps is this:

He reached Joseph McMurray's cabin safely and went in, built a fire and warmed, and then set out again. The road being completely filled with snow he lost his way and followed a wash for some distance and considering the course impracticable, retraced his steps and followed up birch creek as far as Lyman's cabin where he turned off up Trail canyon. About 3 miles from here he found it necessary to abandon his horse and that to complete his journey on foot. At sometime previous he had discarded his boots and wrapped his feet in burlap. He made about one and one-half miles this way through snow from two and half to three feet deep to the point where he succumbed. He had literally frozen to death. The burlap had worked off his feet, so that they were only protected by socks. The evidence is that he died without a struggle. A number of rumors have been circulated to the effect that the young man was drunk but the rescuing party say that every evidence shows that he was perfectly rational and that every step indicates judgment and heroic effort to reach a place of safety. His wonderful strength and vitality would have carried him thru despite the depth of the snow had he not been overcome by the cold. That he had been drinking some at Oakley and that he carried fire water with him is true; He had a half gallon in sealed demijohns tied to his saddle which were probably lost early in his course, and a half pint in his pocket, from which he had drunk little.

Liquor perhaps was the indirect cause of his death. He had imbibed just enough at Oakley to excite him to attempt the dangerous and perilous ride. A ride which any normal individual would shrink from taking at that time of day during this season of the year. This young man counted on having a glorious time at the party that night in Almo. He never dreamed of the risk he was taking in attempting to get there.

Theo was the third of twelve children and the first of the family to pass the portals of death. He was a generous, jovial, kind-hearted boy – but like many others had a false conception of happiness and having a good time and was not pursuing just the course that would lead him into the fields of honor and usefulness in life. The sad sad story of his death has a very grave and serious lesson for all. Let us, in all kindness and love say that he sacrificed his life as a warning to his companions and friends – to all the young men of this vicinity of the dangers that lurk within the cup. O, young men! Be reasonable! Be sensible! Be wise! –tamper not with LIQUOR. Take warning from this sad sad experience. If this young man's death, shall but succeed in inducing any to refrain from using liquor in any form, who shall say that he has lived in vain?