

Genuine Original Photographs of the Bower Family Band

Maxwell Van Nuys

Editor's Note: *The Walt Disney production of The One and Only Genuine Original Family Band, with its all-star cast of Hollywood notables, drew excited crowds when it opened in South Dakota in 1968. In fact, the movie had two premiers—one at Radio City Music Hall in New York City and the other in Rapid City, for it was a uniquely South Dakota story. It was based on the real-life experiences of the Bower Family Band, composed of seven of the eight children of John Calvin ("Cal") Bower and Keziah Bower of Vermilion. Soon after giving its first concert there in 1884, the family migrated to the Black Hills, where it achieved a measure of local fame during the 1880s and 1890s.*

Nearly sixty years later, the band's youngest member, Laura Bower Van Nuys, recorded her family's story in a book entitled The Family Band: From the Missouri to the Black Hills, 1881-1900 (University of Nebraska Press, 1961). She had been encouraged to preserve the stories by her son, Maxwell Van Nuys, who also harbored "a faint hope that such a book might appeal to Walt Disney as the basis for a musical." That dream became a reality, but Van Nuys remained disappointed that his mother's book had been published without illustrations. Several years later, he assembled an album of photographs of the places and people she had mentioned, gathering them from family members and archival collections. Van Nuys also wrote an accompanying narrative, basing it on The Family Band and on his own recollections and observations. Adapted here to fit the format of South Dakota History, the album adds yet another dimension to the story of the Bower Family Band.



*John Calvin
Bower and
Keziah
Huntington
Bower*

Calvin and Keziah Bower set out from Lodi, Wisconsin, in a covered wagon bound for Vermillion, in the southeast corner of Dakota Territory, in 1870. With them were their four youngsters, Alice, Sidney, Mayo, and Lulu. The family was one of the earliest to settle in Dakota Territory, preceding the Great Dakota Boom

Vermillion, Dakota Territory



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Vermillion river front, with Bower flatboat

by several years. In Vermillion, the Bowers occupied a two-story house (marked with a white cross in the photograph of Vermillion) just up the street from the grocery store (marked "C.I.K." for "Cash Is King"). The town, as the Bowers and others would learn to their sorrow, was located too low and too near the banks of the marauding Missouri River. Not far in the distance residents could see the bluffs across the river in Nebraska.

Cal Bower worked as a stonemason, bridge builder, and house mover and ran a ferry across the Missouri. At left in the photograph of the Vermillion river front is the flat boat he used in bridge building, and his crew appears to be laying a willow mat for a steamboat landing. In addition to his other jobs, Bower conducted a singing school and played the fife and snare drum. In a few years, the family was joined by Cal Bower's parents, Rensselaer and Christina Camack Bower, staunch abolitionists who became active in the county Bible society. They brought with them their youngest children, Willis and Mary Lida.



Alice Bower

Cal and Keziah Bower's oldest child, Alice (nicknamed "Od"), was soon playing the organ for church and the piano for dances, although she and the rest of the family never danced themselves. Alice supported herself from age fifteen by giving piano lessons and teaching in the town's log schoolhouse, where she spanked a future

South Dakota governor, Carl Gunderson. Her driving ambition was to become a journalist, and she defied convention to learn the printer's trade while working for the local newspaper, the *Standard*. As the years passed, the oldest boy, Sidney, found himself

Vermillion schoolhouse



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Sidney Bower



Agnes Walker

“struck” for a schoolmate, Agnes (“Aggie”) Walker, whom he would love for the rest of his life. By 1881, four more children, all girls, had been added to the family: Rose and Nettie, twins, Quinnie, and Laura.

*Bower girls:
(from left)
Quinnie,
Nettie, Lulu,
Rose*





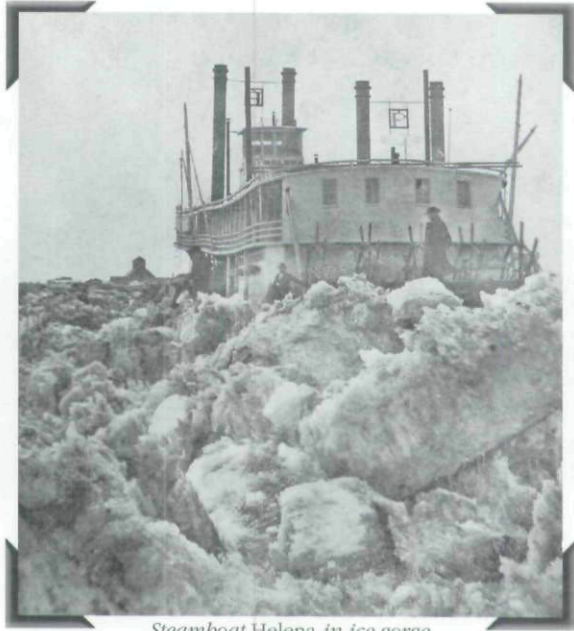
Standard office, with show bill

Vermillion main street, with Standard printing office



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Steamboat Helena in ice gorge

In the spring of 1881, flooding caused by huge ice jams on the Missouri River nearly wiped out the town of Vermillion. Among the casualties were numerous steamboats, houses, and businesses, including the *Vermillion Standard* newspaper office. As for the Bowers' house, it was swallowed up by the voracious Missouri, and the family lost everything except some cows, two pigs, and one load of goods hurriedly piled onto Cal Bower's flatboat. The forlorn family of ten moved in with his parents, whose small log house sat just out of reach of the floodwaters. A close look at the flood-ravaged *Standard* office reveals a bill announcing "Montanio and Liberman's New York Show and Cornet Band." This performance, if not flooded out, would certainly have been attended by the musical Bowers and may well have provided inspiration for the Bower Family Band.

At any rate, Vermillion's town band welcomed anybody with musical talent. Sidney and Mayo, seventeen and fifteen years of age, joined up the year after the flood. Their five younger sisters all wanted to play horns, too, but in those days, bands were not for girls. Nevertheless, the boys soon had each sister playing a band instrument—even Laura could play a baritone horn at the age of four—and a family band became practically inevitable. The first appearance of the Bower Family Band was at a Christmas concert given by the Vermillion band. The local newspaper praised the performance of the Bower children, "who all played upon brass instruments with a melody and precision in time that completely took the audience by storm."



Laura Bower



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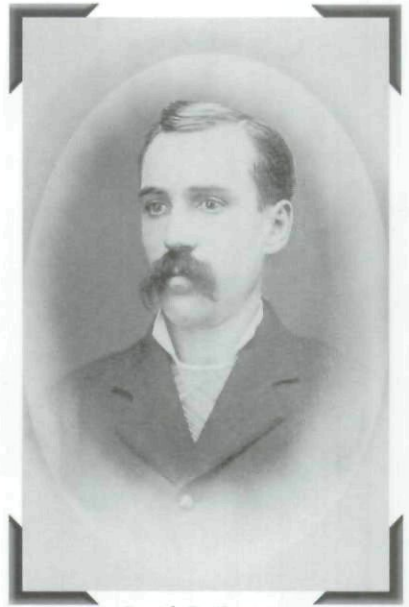


Bower Family Band: (standing from left) Mayo, Rose, Lulu, Nettie, Sidney; (seated) Quinnie, Laura

Vermillion band, with Sidney (third from right) and Mayo (far right)



Intent on her journalistic career, Alice did not join her brothers and sisters as a family band member. Word of her unusual ambition had traveled west to the Black Hills, which had been wrested from the Lakota (Sioux) Indians but a few years earlier. Joseph R. Gossage, an eligible bachelor who had established the *Black Hills Journal* at Rapid City, sought to make her acquaintance.



Joseph R. Gossage



Alice Bower

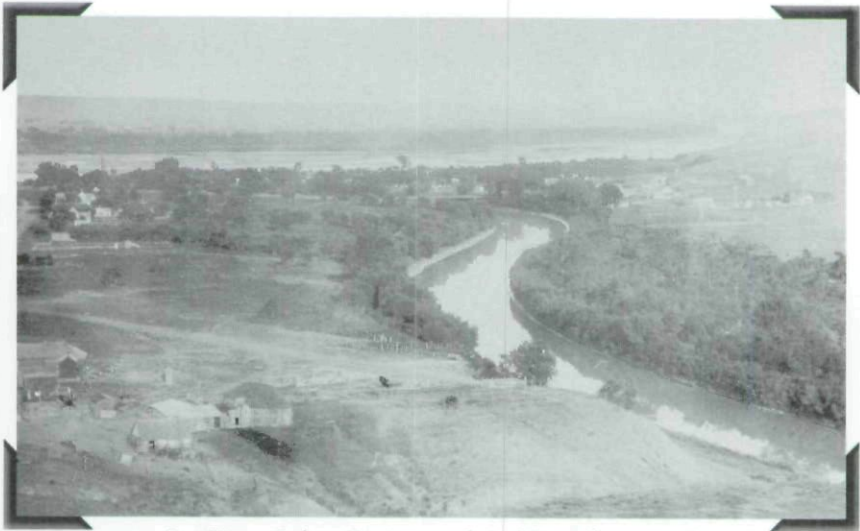
After corresponding for some time, they exchanged pictures. "In commenting on your photograph," Alice wrote Joe, "I omitted speaking of your moustache. You would never forgive me if I did not tell you it was grand, perfectly lovely, too nice for anything, etc." She, in turn, gave him a tintype of herself holding a card case he had sent her as a gift. A diary entry she had recorded two years earlier proved prophetic: "My future husband must be; A strong temperance man; . . . If possible, I want him to be an editor of a *Republican* newspaper. By the way, he *must* be a republican in politics." Joe Gossage passed

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the test with flying colors. After sixteen months of corresponding, they met for the first time. They wed in June 1882 and left immediately for the Black Hills, arriving in Rapid City by stagecoach from Sidney, Nebraska.

Cal Bower's determination to remain in Vermillion was badly shaken by the sight of wagons heading west, and both he and his wife missed their eldest daughter. When other relatives decided to



Fort Pierre, Dakota Territory, with Bad River (foreground)

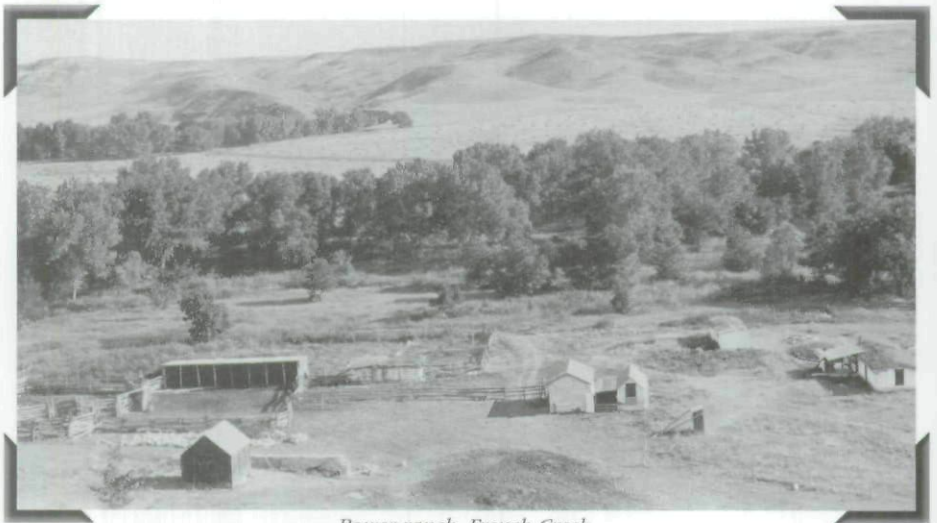
move west, the Bowers could not long remain behind. The Bower Family Band gave a farewell concert in Vermillion in May 1885, and two days later a vanguard consisting of Sidney, Rose, and Cal Bower's sister Lida left for the Black Hills. The rest of the family followed a month later, traveling by covered wagon up the east bank of the Missouri River to the dusty frontier town of Pierre. Crossing to Fort Pierre, they took a trail across the Great Sioux Reservation, following the Bad River for much of the way. After about two weeks of traveling at an average of eighteen miles a day, they at last saw the dark profile of the Black Hills.



Rapid City, Dakota Territory, with Gossage house (center)

As the party crossed a ridge the next day, the village of Rapid City suddenly came into view. They soon found the Gos-sages' little white house (at center, between the long white building and the larger white house in the photograph of Rapid City). There, while the trail-weary group rested, Alice played for them on her new piano.

The reunion was brief, for the family had to hurry to build their new home on lower Battle Creek, located about midway between the Black Hills and the Badlands. Later, they took claims on French Creek, not far from the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation. At both places, Cal Bower and the boys built log cabins, which could be put up more



Bower ranch, French Creek

quickly than a frame house and were cooler in summer and warmer in winter. Once again, the Bowers were on the leading edge of a wave of homesteading. The small farms and ranches where families raised their own cattle, pigs, and chickens would soon dot the landscape and help put an end to the days of the cowboys' open range.

In the spring of 1886, the Fremont, Elkhorn & Missouri Valley Railroad was laying tracks from western Nebraska into Dakota along the eastern edge of the Black Hills. Anticipating its arrival in Rapid City on the Fourth of July, officials planned a great parade and celebration. In hopes of being invited to participate, the Bower Family Band decided to raise some publicity by giving a concert on 5 June at Library Hall, the center of theatrical and musical entertainment in Rapid City. The band had Joe Gossage's *Black Hills Journal* working for it as well, and the invitation was forthcoming.

When the Fourth arrived, the Bower Family Band was seated in the grandstand, with the Fort Meade military band posted in the balcony above them. General George Crook was the guest of honor among a host of other dignitaries. At the close of each oration, the chairman waved for music and the military band took it for granted that it should respond. During the closing speech, Sidney Bower told his band members to be ready the instant the speaker finished. This time, the chairman had hardly risen from his seat when Sidney did his own waving and the Bower Family Band struck up "Hail Columbia." The stirring tune brought the audience to its feet, clapping and shouting, while the disgruntled Fort Meade band folded up their music racks and left the platform.



Library Hall, Rapid City

Other engagements followed in the wake of the Rapid City celebration. In September 1886, the Bower Family Band gave a concert in Custer, site of the first gold discovery in the Black Hills. On the long trip through the Hills, the Bowers camped out overnight, getting out their horns to rehearse before sundown. Unbeknownst to the band, a lone sheepherder stood spellbound some distance away, listening to the strains of music echoing over the hills. Not until years later did the shepherd, Mit Everly, learn of the explanation for the serenade from Quinnie, the woman who became his wife. On returning from another concert tour, the band discovered that fire had ravaged the main street of Hermosa, the town nearest their ranch. The people of Hermosa gladly accepted Sidney's offer to put on a concert the very next day

Bower Family Band

This Celebrated FAMILY BAND of Musicians of Hermosa, Dakota, having accepted the invitation of the people of Custer to give a

MUSICAL CONCERT

in this City will appear at

ALBIEN'S HALL,

Custer, Thursday Eve., Sept. 30th.

1886

General Admission 50 cts.	Children under 12 years, 25 cts.
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Persons purchasing tickets on or before 5 o'clock p. m. of the above date, will be entitled to Reserved Seats.
Tickets for Sale at Blackhawk's

Door open at 7:30 o'clock.	Curtain rises at 8 o'clock sharp.
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DON'T FAIL TO BE IN ATTENDANCE!

Proprietor, Albiens Hall, Custer, S.D., 3700. Hermosa Avenue
Custer, S.D.

Handbill, Custer concert, 1886



Mit Everly

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Robert Bale

ple to his liking, he eventually took a claim nearby and in the next several months was joined by his parents, three younger brothers, and two sisters. "Gentleman farmers," they had lost their landholdings in England and sought better fortune in America. One brother, George Bale, began to take some notice of Nettie Bower, and she of him.

and donate the proceeds to those most in need.

One cold and rainy evening late in 1887, the Bowers were startled by a knock on their door. Opening it, they found a young man whose muddy, bedraggled appearance was in complete contrast to his refined manners and clipped accent. Robert Bale, Esq., fresh from Norfolk, England, had gotten "lahst" on his way to a neighbor's ranch. Finding the country and the peo-

Hermosa concert, 1887

Nov 14, 1887

BENEFIT ENTERTAINMENT TO-NIGHT.

at 7:30 Sharp.

The BOWER FAMILY BAND

WILL GIVE US

CONCERT

This Evening at Stenger's Hall for the
benefit of the most serious sufferers from last
night's conflagration.

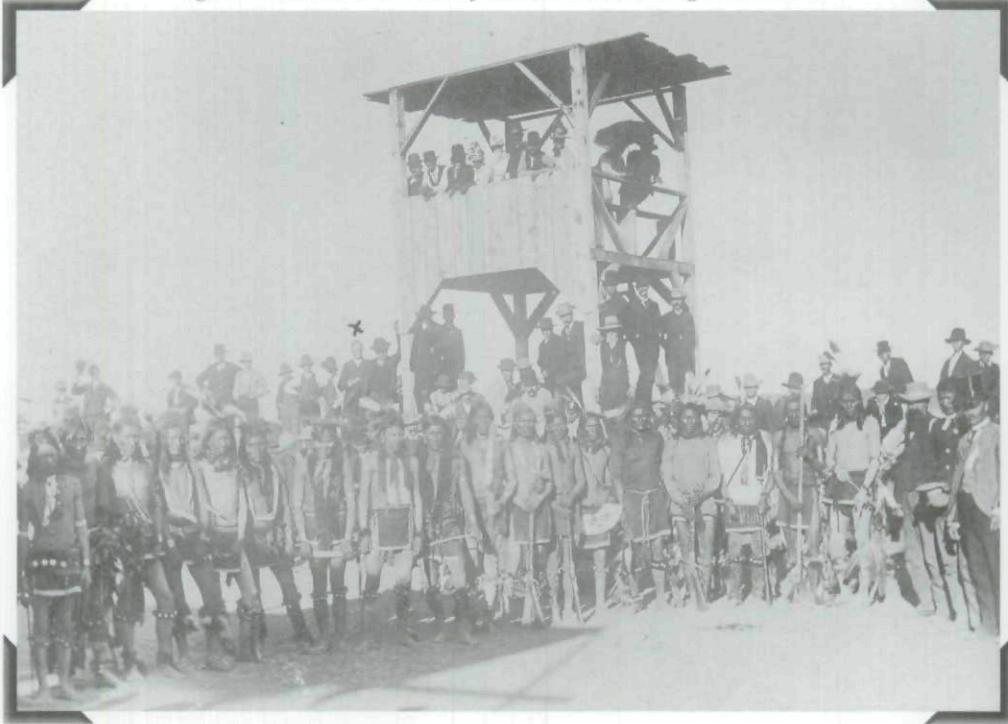
EVERYONE SHOULD ATTEND.

A Committee will be appointed to distribute
the proceeds.

Admission of Adults 25 cents.
Children 15 cents.

As its renown grew, the band played many engagements in the next few years, including Fourth of July celebrations, political rallies, county fairs, weddings, and school entertainments. At the annual Custer County Stock, Mineral, and Agricultural Fair at Hermosa in September 1888, the band was at its best, sporting new outfits. Besides the usual games and races, an added attraction was a group of Oglala Lakota (Sioux) Indians from the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation. Sidney Bower posed for a photograph with the group (he is standing beneath the "X" to the left of center), which performed dances at the fair. Two years later, many Oglalas joined the messianic Ghost Dance movement, which promised to do away with white people but instead culminated in the massacre of Indians at Wounded Knee.

Oglala dancers at Custer County Stock, Mineral, and Agricultural Fair



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LIBRARY HALL
FRIDAY EVENING, DEC. 11.

GRAND

CONCERT

GIVEN BY THE
Bower Family Band!

ASSISTED BY
LOCAL TALENT!

Music by the Band and Arion Orchestra.

The Evening's Entertainment will conclude with a
 Laughable Farce, entitled

THAT RASCAL PAT!

ADMISSION, - - 50 CENTS.

Seats Reserved without Extra Charge

Tickets

GRAND CONCERT.
 — GIVEN BY —
THE BOWER BAND
 ASSISTED BY LOCAL TALENT,
 Library Hall, Friday Evening, Dec. 11, 1891
 ADMISSION, 50 CENTS.

AT PUBLIC HALL
On - Thursday - Evening,
 SEPTEMBER 20, 1888.
GRAND CONCERT
 G. BY THE
BOWER FAMILY BAND.

PROGRAMME.

PART 1.

1. Overture—Dispatch. Family Band. Southwell.
2. Vocal Quartette—Hunter's Chorus. Lulu, Nellie, Rose and Quinsie. Lulu.
3. Guitar Duett—Medley Overture. Lulu and Rose. Scheld.
4. Cornet Duett—Framily. Sidney and Mayo. H. Bellish Jr.
5. Song—I'm Going to Write to Papa. Laura. Westendorf.
6. Brass Quartette—Cebella. Lulu, Rose, Nellie and Quinsie. Pettin.
7. Imitation Caliope. Sidney and Mayo. Scheld.
8. Vocal Duett—The Hunter's Song. Lulu and Rose. Aucke.
9. Baritone Solo—Highland Polka—with Band accompaniment. Lulu. Southwell.

PART 2.

10. Trombone Solo—Song of the Roses—with Orchestral accompaniment. Rose. Polizans.
11. Vocal Solo—Rock a Bye Baby. Lulu. Barker.
- Occasional Duett—Enchanted. Rose and Sidney. Southwell.
- Brass Trio—Thoughts of Twilight. Nellie, Quinsie and Laura. Pettin.
- Song—We'll Have to Mortgage the Farm. Lulu. Lachmond.
- Guitar Solo—Schubertopol. Lulu. Warrell.
- Solo—Home Sweet Home. Laura. Scheld.
- Ation—The Sisters. Lulu. Whittier.
- Solo—Little Polka. Mayo. J. Hartman.
- Chorus—Sweet Violets. Lulu. Emmet.
- Finchhoe Commandery. Family Band. Blake.

Section _____

Row _____

Seat _____

In May of 1889, Sidney wrote his sister Lulu, who was teaching school in Pactola, that he and a friend were planning to work in a logging camp. "We are trying to get some oxen broken to haul logs but they are so dumb that I don't know whether they will ever learn 'Gee' from 'Haw,'" he quipped, adding, "We played some tunes on our horns today." Lulu wrote back to inquire whether the band had a booking for the Fourth of July. "I wish that we could go to Rapid," she wrote. "I see by the paper that they talk of cele-



*Bower family: (back, from left) Sidney, Nettie, Lulu, Rose, Mayo;
(front, from left) Alice, Laura, Cal, Keziab, Quinnie*

brating. . . . Try to get some place to play." Instead, the Bowers ended up performing for the holiday celebration at Whitewood, north of Rapid City. Their uncle Willis Bower also contributed the oration for the day, filling in for a speaker who did not show up, and Sidney sang "Sherman's March to the Sea."

The following day, a patient photographer recorded the last picture of the entire Bower family. He had quite a time arranging a satisfactory grouping, and when Quinnie ripped her tight sleeve



Logging camp, with Sidney (left)

bending her elbow to place in her mother's lap, he made suggestions that would keep the rent from showing. Upon seeing the finished image, Quinnie told Sidney, "Papa's picture is just splendid, he has his heavenly smile, but Od [Alice] is holding Cleveland's Grand March. She must have been in a terrible hurry when she grabbed that piece of music!" Lulu called it "the one-eyed band" picture because everyone was tired out from the previous day's activities.

The day after the picture was taken, Sidney went back to his work in the logging camp near Hill City, where his oxen presumably learned "gee" from "haw." The younger girls, in turn, all went home to the ranch where, not long afterwards, a traveling photographer came by. Nettie wrote to Sidney: "We five girls had our pictures taken, just our five heads in one group. Mama was not home and we are not going to let her know it until they are done."

*Laura, Lulu, Rose, Nettie,
Quinnie (clockwise from top)*



Late in August 1889, Aunt Lida went to Hill City to show Sidney her new baby boy, Spencer. Holding the baby, the young man no doubt thought of the great happiness that seemed to be in store for him. He told his aunt of his plans to marry Agnes



Sidney Bower

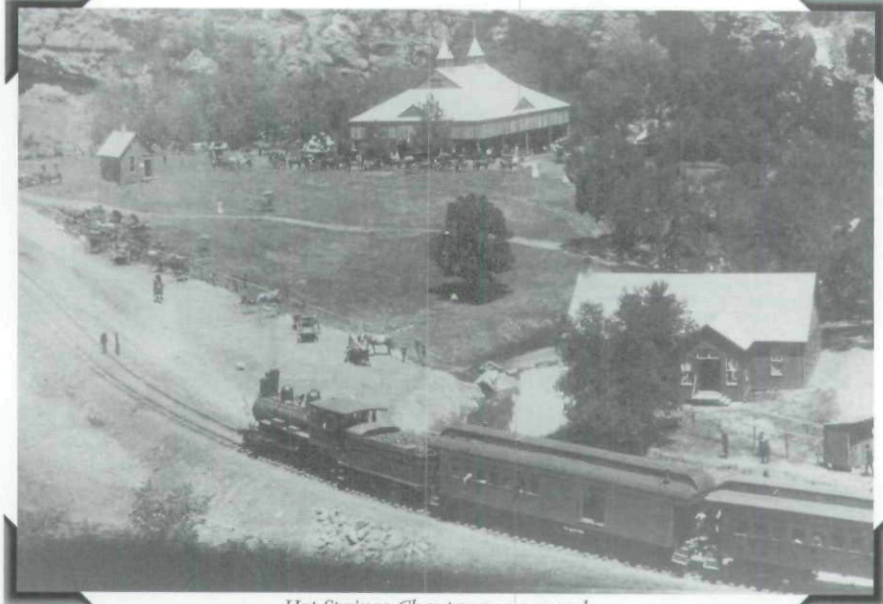
Walker, whom he had left behind in Vermillion, and showed her a letter he had just received from Aggie. But the next letter he received from his childhood sweetheart was one in which she asked for the return of her correspondence, for her heart now belonged to another. The disappointment was too great for Sidney. Taking fever and lacking the desire to fight it, he died within a week. Leaderless, the band might have died with him, but it carried on for many more years in the spirit in which Sidney had created, trained, and led it.

With the arrival of the "Gay Nineties," the enterprising and influential Fred T. Evans promoted Hot Springs in the southern Black Hills as a rival to Hot Springs, Arkansas, and other spas. Among his creations was Evans Plunge, the largest enclosed natural warm-water pool in the country. During the summer of 1891, Evans engaged the Bower Family Band to play at the plunge, housing them in a cottage along the creek on the Chautauqua grounds. The engagement, unfortunately, was a qualified success, but lots of building activity in Hot Springs kept Cal Bower busy and made the venture worthwhile.

Teaching at a difficult school the winter before had nearly broken Lulu's health, but by summer she had exciting news—a beau ideal was coming to visit her. His name was Ed Barthold, and one glance made it clear why Lulu had fallen in love with him. He had an easy manner and wore his well-cut clothes as though he were accus-

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Hot Springs Chautauqua grounds

tomed to strolling on Pall Mall, but his hands showed that he knew how to work. Before long, Ed, who ranched near Newcastle, Wyoming, wrote Lulu that he would be the happiest man in the Black Hills "if only I had your consent, for my dear Lulu, you are everything to me." He added that he would wait while she thought things over, but Lulu replied the very next day: "I did not stop to consider matters for to me they needed no con-

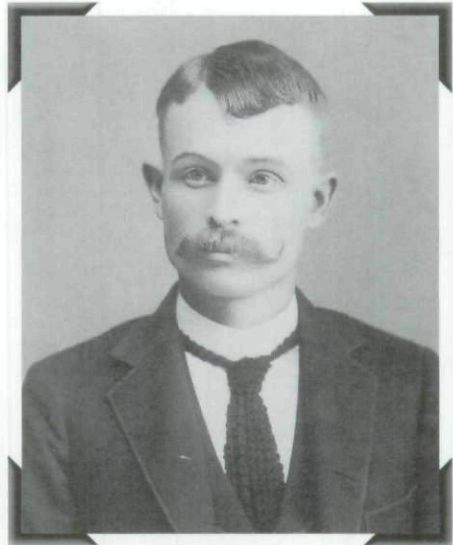


Ed Barthold

sidering. My mind was made up as soon as I learned the object of your letter." They were married at the end of 1892.

Mayo Bower had an eye for the girls, but with six prim and proper sisters, he was looking for something quite different, and he found her at a Methodist church social. Carrie Millis was already on her own, having left her family in the East, and was among the first females to break the Victorian tradition that in town, nice girls, or any girls, rode sidesaddle only. Carrie boldly rode her pony down Main Street in Rapid City, sitting astride a man's saddle, in a parade led by the Bower Family Band. Everyone was shocked, none more so than the Bower girls. Over their protests, Mayo fell more in love with her than ever.

In the fall of 1892, the Bower Family Band did its share for South Dakota's contribution to the World's Columbian Exposition at Chicago by touring the Black Hills to raise money for the women's exhibit. The girls sewed new uniforms and, swallowing their pride, took their prospective sister-in-law Carrie into the band. Rose had dedicated herself to mastering Sidney's trumpet and brought in another musician, Nina Eggleston, to take over her trombone. Lulu was on the drums. Her doctor, fearing she had consumption, had advised her not to blow a horn. Mayo directed the band, which now bore the name "Bower Family Concert Company and Ladies' Cornet Band."



Mayo Bower



Bower Family Concert Company and Ladies' Cornet Band : (back, from left) Mayo, Nina Eggleston, Rose, Carrie Millis, Lulu; (front, from left) Quinnie, Laura, Nettie

Mayo needed more money in order to get married, so he spent the summer of 1893 working as a cowboy in Montana. In one letter to Lulu he wrote, "Tonight I will commence to night hawk the horses. . . . The other morning I got thrown higher than a kite." At the end of summer, he came home and married Carrie.

PROGRAMME

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The
Bower Family
Concert Company

— — — — —

Ladies' Cornet Band.

— — — — —

Pretty as a Picture,.....Overture, E. N. Catlin.
Hand.
Sleep, Darling, Sleep,.....Female Trio, H. S. Perkins.
The Vision,.....Nettie, Rose and Quinnie.
When de Bell Rings,.....Trombone Solo, E. Brooks.
Nettie.
Song, Max Vernon.
Mayo.
The Patriot Polka,.....Cornet Solo, W. P. Chambers.
Rose.
Medley Overture,.....Guitar Duet, Selected.
Lulu and Nettie.
Indian Club Swinging,.....Rose and Quinnie.
Hearts Desire,.....Orchestra Bells, band accompaniment.
Nina Eggleston.
Love's Old Sweet Song,.....Contralto, L. Molloy.
Quinnie.
Columbian Exposition, Medley arranged by Quinnie Bower.
Rose.
Iva,.....Brass Quartette, Pettee,
Nettie, Rose, Quinnie and Laura.
Sebastopol,.....Guitar Solo, Henry Worrell.
Lulu.
Beetlehub,.....Tuba Solo, band accompaniment, A. Cattozzi.
Quinnie.

Columbian Exposition program

Alice, meanwhile, was spending more time at the *Black Hills Journal* office, working as both a reporter and typesetter. Her husband had finally resigned himself to the arrangement, which saved the wages of a compositor. Thus, business sense as well as her own ambition had combined to make Alice an all-around newspaperwoman, just as she had planned. When Joe Gossage traveled back east to buy a press, the *Deadwood Pioneer-Times* reported admiringly, "The publisher's wife prepared the entire copy, including editorial and local matter for yesterday morning's daily." In time, she would eclipse her husband in the management of the newspaper, and her byline, "A.G.," would become a byword in the Black Hills.

Rose was determined to make a career of playing comet and struck out on her own. She found great success in putting on benefit concerts for churches and societies in and about the Black Hills. Quinnie accompanied her on at least one trip, whose program is reproduced here. The sisters worked up an Indian club-swinging act, and

with Rose's whistling and Quinnie's tuba solos and mellow contralto, they needed to recruit little local talent in the towns they visited to make up a good entertainment.

That winter, while everyone concerned appeared or tried to appear happy, all were worried about Lulu. The cough she had developed while teaching school had never entirely left her and, in fact, became much worse. Unable to carry the burden of her own household, she sought refuge at the family ranch on

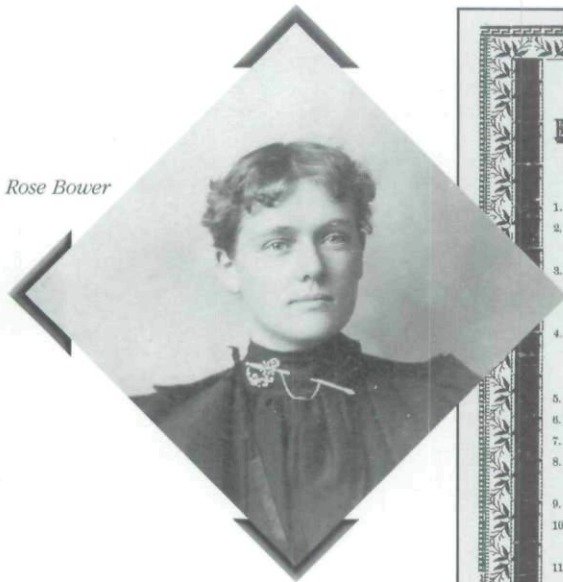


Alice Bower Gossage

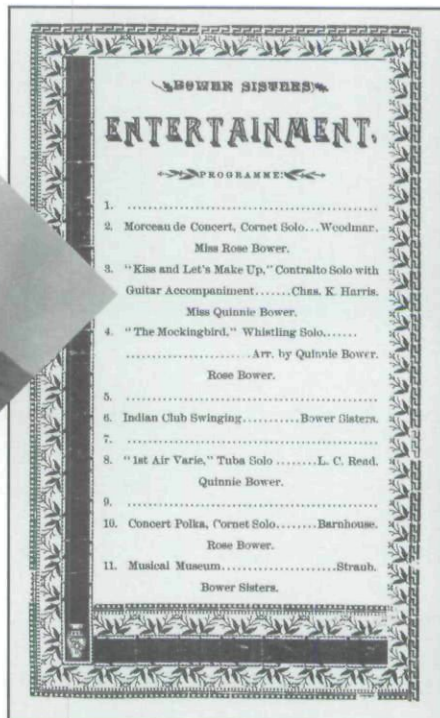
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Rose Bower

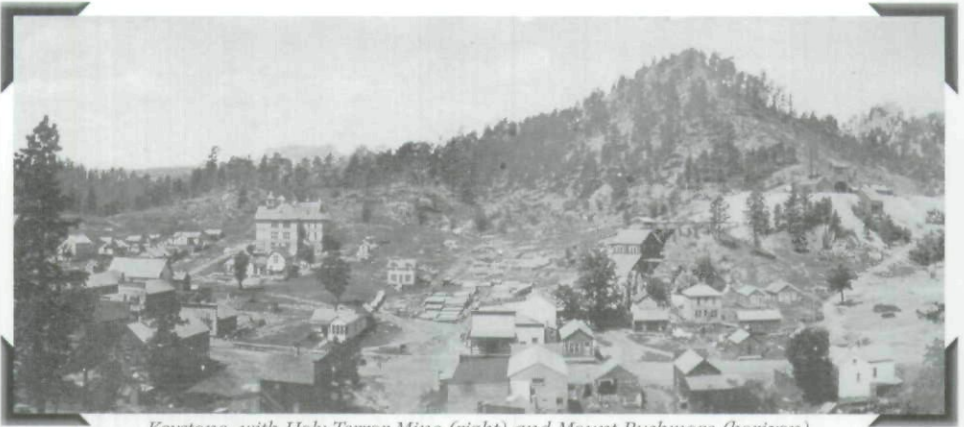


Lulu Bower



Bower Sisters program, 1893

French Creek, where Rose helped care for her. With the arrival of spring came an end to her suffering. In but a couple of years, a broken-hearted Ed Barthold lay beside her in death. The loss of Lulu so deeply affected Rose that she believed the "white plague" of tuberculosis had marked her as its next victim. Much distressed, she gave up the cornet and went to Georgia to find a new life.



Keystone, with Holy Terror Mine (right) and Mount Rushmore (horizon)

In the mid-1890s, gold fever rekindled in the Black Hills by the news in 1892 of a strike not far from a great granite outcrop later known as Mount Rushmore. The resulting Keystone gold mine gave its name to the town that soon grew up around it. Two years later, an even richer vein was discovered in the area by the young daughter of a Mr. Franklin who, legend has it, named the lode the "Holy Terror," for the reaction his wife exhibited when he returned home following some heavy celebrating. Cal Bower was excited, too—not by gold, but by the demand for house builders. So, in the spring of 1895, most of the close-knit Bowers congregated in Keystone. Uncle Willis Bower joined them, becoming Keystone school

Keystone schoolchildren



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superintendent and teaching the upper grades. Quinnie became teacher of the primary grades. That fall, fire erupted in the Keystone Mine. All the schoolchildren joined the rest of the town in forming a bucket brigade and helping to save several lives. In appreciation, so the story goes, Mrs. Franklin of Holy Terror fame took the pupils down to the photography shop and had their picture taken. Willis, with the moustache, is in the second row with Quinnie on his left. Laura appears second from the right in the third row.



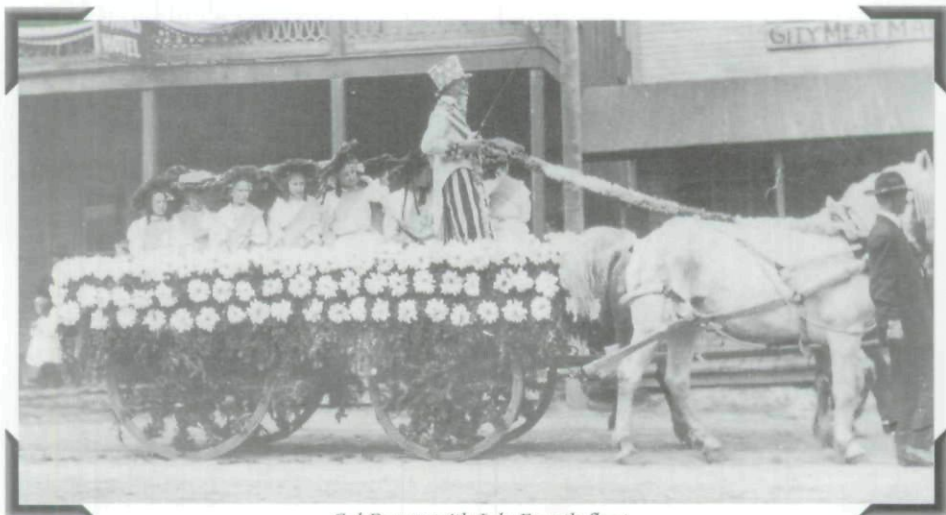
Keystone general store, with Nettie behind counter

Nettie was not entirely happy about living in Keystone, for she could not see as much of that attractive young Englishman, George Bale, as she would at the ranch. Before long, however, she found a job clerking in the general merchandise store where she loved talking to customers. Mayo and Carrie had been staying on the ranch, but Carrie wanted to join the excitement at Keystone. Although he preferred ranching, Mayo relented and soon found himself working in the mine. Rose, meanwhile, had gradually recovered her spirits in Georgia and, learning that her health never had been in danger, she returned to her family in Keystone and to her cornet.



Keystone band leading July Fourth parade

Together again, the Bower Family Band became the nucleus of the Keystone band, which may well have been among the first marching bands in the West to admit women to its ranks. If eyebrows were raised at this turn of events, they were about to rise higher at the sight of Carrie, whose time was drawing near for presenting the family with its first grandchild. The 1896 Fourth of July parade was coming up and



Cal Bower with July Fourth float

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nothing was going to keep Carrie from marching with the band. Cal Bower worked to assemble the patriotic float on which he portrayed Uncle Sam, as he had done many times before. Riding with him in the wagon were girls dressed in white frocks, blue hats, and red sashes, representing the forty states.



Mayo and Carrie Millis Bower, with Marguerite

As the Keystone band struck up a tune and swung down the dusty street at the head of the parade, a photographer recorded the last glimpse we have of the Bower Family Band. Nettie is in front, with Mayo and Laura behind her. Carrie, whose baby Marguerite was born less than three weeks later, is just out of sight.



Mit and Quinnie Bower Everly

As the Holy Terror lode ran out, the members of the Bower Family Band dispersed. Quinnie became the third Bower daughter to marry, wedding Mit Everly, the sheepherder who had gone on to become shift boss at the Holy Terror Mine in 1899.

Nettie Bower Bale



George Bale

Nettie turned down several Keystone suitors in favor of the Englishman, George Bale, two years later. Rose, who some considered the beauty of the family, rejected all suitors. In later years, she enlisted herself and her cornet in the causes of women suffrage and temperance. Mayo and Carrie, Nettie and George, and Quinnie and Mit all went into ranching. Their parents, Cal and Keziah Bower, returned to the French Creek ranch. Alice and Joe Gossage continued to make the *Black Hills Journal*, now the *Rapid City Daily Journal*, the leading newspaper of western South Dakota.

Rose Bower



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Cal and Keziab Bower



Alice Bower Gossage

Joe Gossage



Laura, the youngest Bower child, went on to attend South Dakota Agricultural College at Brookings. Returning to Rapid City, she taught school and succeeded her sister Rose as city librarian. In 1910, she married Claude Van Nuys, a professor at the South Dakota School of Mines. Following publication of her book *The Family Band* in 1961, producers from Walt Disney Studios read the book, agreed to produce it, and assembled a stellar cast. Laura, the only surviving member of the band, and other family members en-

joyed watching the filming of

Laura Bower

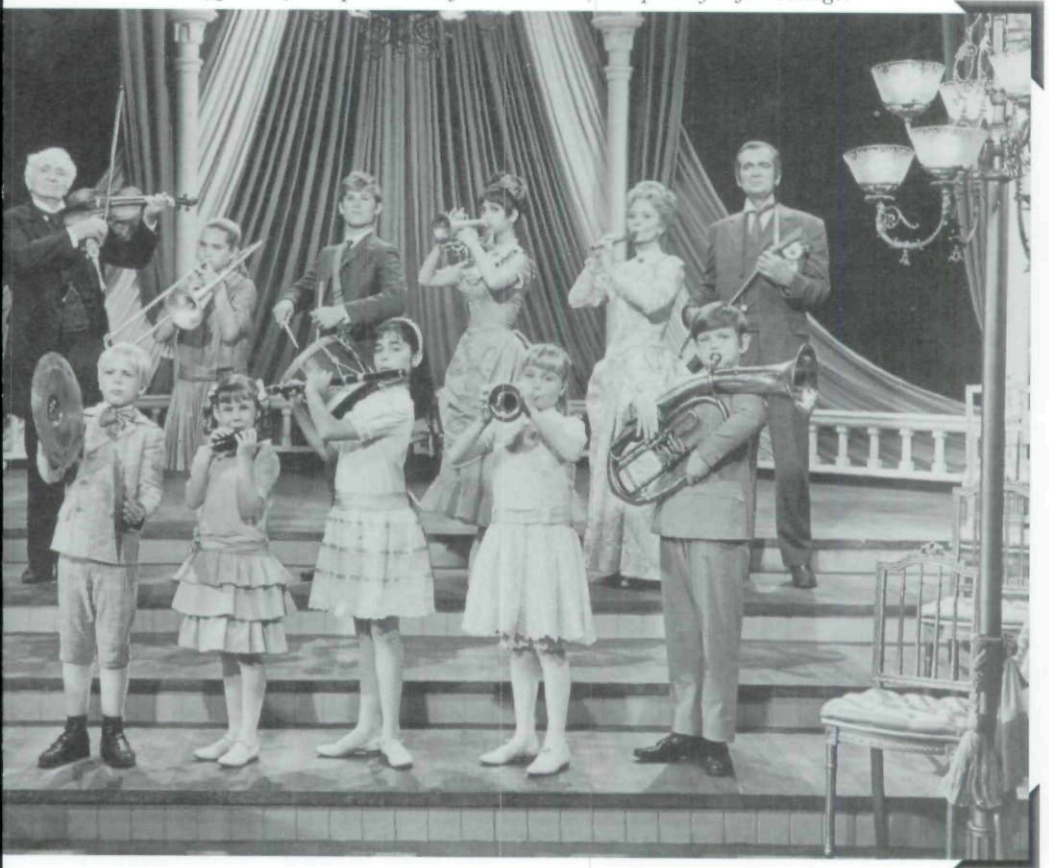


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"her" movie in the Disney studios in Los Angeles, California. All of the band members were accurately represented in the film with the exception of Quinnie, who was depicted as a boy, an adaptation that changed Mayo's role as well. Laura Bower Van Nuys enjoyed her fame in South Dakota to the fullest. In Rapid City, a writers' group and contest were named for her. She died in Denver, Colorado, in 1979 at the age of ninety-eight.

Cast of The One and Only Genuine Original Family Band:
(back, from left) Walter Brennan (Grandpa Bower), Debbie Smith (Lulu), Kurt Russell (Sidney), Leslie Ann Warren (Alice), Janet Blair (Keziab), Buddy Ebsen (Cal); (front, from left) Bobby Riha (Mayo), Pamela Ferdin (Laura), Smitty Worden (Nettie), Heidi Rook (Rose), John Walmsley (Quinnie). Not pictured is John Davidson, who portrayed Joe Gossage.



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