

SERIAL STORY—

Love On The Line

By PAUL FRIGGENS

CAST OF CHARACTERS
CARRIE LANE—an Eastern girl who came into the frontier west to find a home.
MARK DEUEL—a homesteader who keeps his business to himself.
ASHTON OAKS—a land agent, with town lots to sell.

YESTERDAY: Carrie is terrified after the shooting. Mark laughs it off, says Newt Gale took care of Oak all right. But Carrie is worried about him. Newt Gale walks back to his room. Newt Gale warns him to look out for the land agent.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE TAYLORS left Sioux Springs early. Carrie joined them after a hearty breakfast at Ma Parmley's. The wagon was piled high with supplies, most for Carrie's claim. She sat between Mrs. Taylor and big Ed, perched up in front of the load.

Carrie would never forget that morning. The sun beat down mercilessly, she thought, and she was glad that Ma Parmley had warned her to wear her biggest bonnet. Mrs. Taylor wore one, too. Big Ed Taylor, busy driving, didn't say much except to note the powdery dryness of the land.

"Seems," Ed said, "as if this is about the driest spell I've seen in a long time. Little rain would sure help this here prairie grass. Look at how brown it's gettin' now."

She noticed, however, grass was greener along the bottom lands when Ed Taylor whipped his team of grays across Rock Creek an hour before noon and pulled up at Carrie's claim. While Mrs. Taylor got out their lunch, he unloaded supplies, stacked them near the soddy site. Then they sat down and ate as Carrie never remembered eating before.

The Taylors drove on to their own claim, a mile distant, after eating, promising Carrie to return early for her that afternoon. Carrie waved goodbye to the Taylors, standing there on her stack of supplies, and was thankful that such people lived. She watched them down the knoll and out of sight beyond the trees along Rock Creek. She was turning back to survey the things Taylor had unloaded when she saw a lone figure driving across the creek in a buggy toward her claim.

Instantly she was excited. She did not have long to wait. The visitor was Ashton Oaks. Carrie recognized him with a sudden fear, which she could not wholly disguise as he drove up.

OAKS AFFABLE, immaculate in his cutaway and black hat, jumped down from the buggy, greeted Carrie effusively.

"Just drove out from town," Oaks said, "and I'm glad to see you. Pretty dusty, but you homesteaders certainly can stir up the dirt." He laughed and Carrie Lane suddenly had the feeling of being eyed from head to foot.

"Where there's dust, there's action," Carrie retorted. "Why, you won't know this country in six months. Mr. Oaks," using the identical words Oaks had used on the ride out to Rock Creek two days before.

"That's right. That's right," Oaks bowed and laughed again, pushing back his black hat to wipe his forehead. "I'm glad you mentioned that. That's why I'm out here today."

"What do you mean?" Carrie asked.

"Seriously now, Miss Lane," Oaks went on, "you're not going to settle out here on Rock Creek and live in a sod house, alone."

Carrie thought he emphasized the word "alone," though she couldn't be sure. "That's all right for married folks and for men," he went on quickly, "but it's no place for a woman."

"Well, see about all that, Mr. Oaks," Carrie was suddenly defiant. "Besides, you suggested there was opportunity here, yourself."

"There is," Oaks cut in quickly. "Plenty of opportunity, Miss Lane, plenty. But it's not here in Rock Creek. It's in town. In the town. In lots. Lots in Sioux Springs and Laurel and Salem and a dozen other towns along the railroad."

"What railroad?"

Oaks colored so deeply that for a minute Carrie wished she had not reminded him of the encounter with Mack in the hotel lobby. But the agent quickly recovered.

"Miss Lane, I don't know the man Deuel, whoever or whatever he is, but I do know the railroad is coming."

HE STEPPED away from the buggy, came closer to Carrie, resting one foot on the pile of tin roofing while he talked. Instantly, Carrie drew slightly back, sensing for the first time the real measure of the man.

"Miss Lane, I understand you have a little money you might well invest out here. I'm prepared to invest that money for you, invest it in good, sound real estate in Sioux Springs or in any other town out here you like."

He reached into his pocket, produced an elaborate lithograph, spread it out before Carrie. It pictured a "State Capital of Tomorrow" with broad streets and humming river and railroad traffic.

"Miss Lane," Oaks pressed on, "the capital must be located in Grove City. Look, hundreds of lots have been sold there already." He produced further evidence of lot transactions. "People are coming west on every train out of Chicago. In six months it will be too late to get in on this. You don't need to homestead out here one hour."

Oaks stopped. Carrie Lane was not listening. She was looking toward Rock Creek and the waving siewgrass and the rolling plains beyond. She turned back, with a look of definite defiance.

"Mr. Oaks, I'm sorry, but I think you'd better drive on."

Oaks flushed. He turned back to the buggy, picked up the reins, but he held them a minute. And then he bowed ever so slightly and smiled, a dark, insinuating smile. "I suppose Mr. Deuel is to blame for this," he nodded his head. "In that case I don't think you or Mr. Deuel either have heard the last from me."

He climbed back into his buggy, reached for his long, black whip. "It might be a good thing to remember, Miss Lane, that pretty girls sometimes get mixed up in things out here a lot more than

FUNNY SIDE UP

By Abner Dean



"I want you to add a conveyer!"

HOLD EVERYTHING



"Let's not have any arguments! You've had 30 treatments—now pay up!"

FUNNY BUSINESS



"Be sure and get back here by 10:30!"

THIS CURIOUS WORLD

By William Ferguson



ANSWER—July 28, 1914.

they want to." He cracked his whip and the buggy rolled away. Carrie, trembling, sat down on the pile of lumber and watched him across Rock Creek. It was with a long sigh of relief she saw the Taylor wagon pull through the trees an hour later. Newt Gale was closing his livery stable at midnight when he glanced in the direction of the darkened land office across the street. A solitary figure crouched in the shadows. "Um, that's funny now," mused Newt. "This time of night. He walked toward the land office. Suddenly the figure darted down the side of the building and out of sight. But not before Newt Gale recognized the flat-crowned hat and the cutaway coat of Ashton Oaks. (To Be Continued)

(All events, names and characters in this story are fictitious.)

OUR BOARDING HOUSE

With Major Hoople



LI'L ABNER



RED RYDER



NANCY



WASHINGTON TUBBS II



FRECKLES AND HIS FRIENDS



BOOTS AND HER BUDDIES



ABBE AN' SLATS



OUT OUR WAY

By Williams



THE WEST WIND



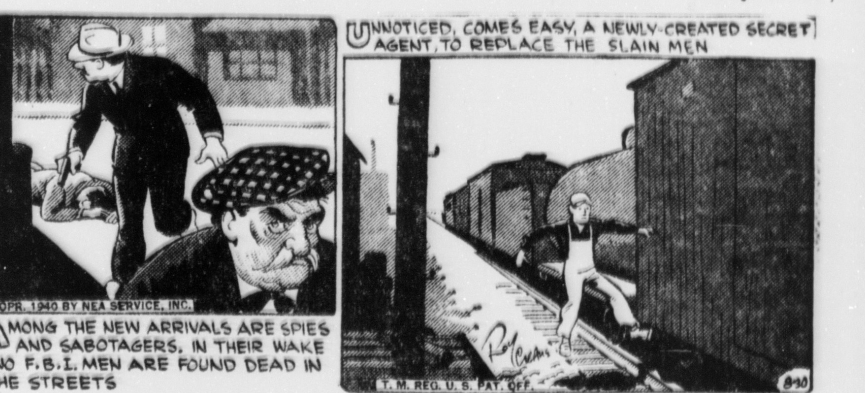
LAZONGA DONE STOPPED!!



AN HOUR LATER



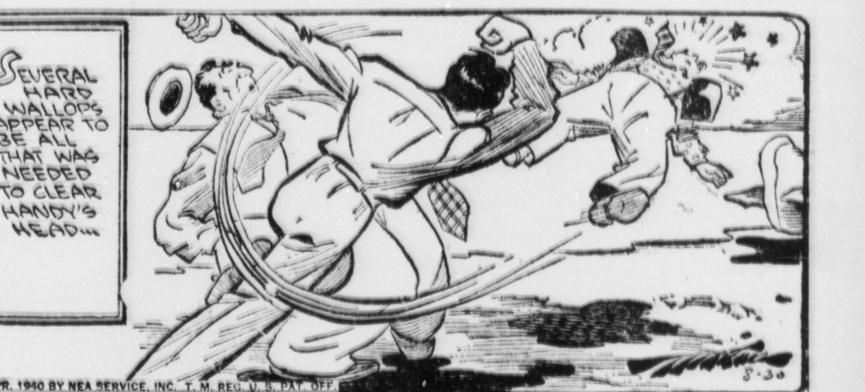
...YEP, I FOUND A NEW HAIR TONIC!



UNNOTICED, COMES EASY, A NEWLY-CREATED SECRET AGENT TO REPLACE THE SLAIN MEN



REDUCED TO THE LEAST COMMON DENOMINATOR, I WOULD SAY YOU JUST SET YOURSELF BACK FOUR HUNDRED AND TWO MILES!



SEVERAL HARDS APPARENT TO BE ALL THAT WAS NEEDED TO CLEAR HANDY'S HEAD



YOU ARE THE LAST OF HER GUESTS TO ARRIVE. MARCUS WILL TAKE YOU TO YOUR DESTINATION