

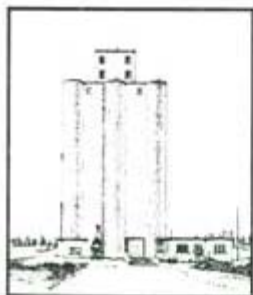
Land of Contrast: A History of Southeast Colorado

BLM Cultural Resources Series (Colorado: No. 17)



LAND OF CONTRAST A History of Southeast Colorado

Frederic J. Athearn



CULTURAL
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Number 17

Bureau of
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Colorado

LAND OF CONTRAST: A History of Southeast Colorado

By
Frederic J. Athearn

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This document is printed in conjunction with the Southeast (Colorado) Planning

Analysis Update and the Raton Basin Coal Leasing Project. In addition, this volume serves as support for both the Update and Coal Leasing. This document is also integral to the Canon City District Cultural Resource Management Plan. Hardcopy edition designed by: Leigh Wellborn
Series Editor: Frederic J. Athearn

FOR

Robert G. Athearn
Historian, Friend, Father

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FOREWORD

This publication represents our final Class I History of Colorado. The volume provides baseline information about the history of the Bureau of Land Management's Royal Gorge and San Luis Resource Areas. This work contains the history of thirteen Colorado counties and a large geographic region ranging from South Park to the San Luis Valley, and eastward down the lower Arkansas River.

A major objective of the Bureau of Land Management, U.S. Department of the Interior, is to study and preserve significant cultural values. Evidences of our history and national heritage cover large areas of public lands. In order to provide for the orderly and careful evaluation of these places, these baseline narratives give our specialists and managers information by which to wisely conserve our historic traditions.

This volume is the last of five histories that have been prepared by the Colorado State Office, Bureau of Land Management. I am pleased to note that in 1984 this series was presented with a *Certificate of Commendation* by the American Association of State and Local History for its excellence. I am pleased to share this award winning book with you, and I hope that BLM's contribution to the body of history is both long lasting and useful, to the professional and the general public alike.

Kannon Richards
State Director, Colorado
Bureau of Land Management

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

In the course of writing a book of this size; any author accumulates many debts. Such an enterprise cannot be undertaken by just one person, any number of others help support projects like this. History is, by nature, the use of written documents, oral tradition, and other means by which mankind reveals his past. In this manner, many people helped me create this document.

First, John Beardsley, Canon City District Archaeologist, provided direction and balance for this project. His pointed comments and useful insights made this a far better work. Mel Clausen, Stub Freer, and Stu Wheeler, of our Canon City District Office, helped by providing field support and encouragement. Thanks to them, life was much easier. Since the primary resources used in this compilation are located in Denver, the staffs of the Colorado Historical Society's Steven Hart Library, the Western History Collection of the Denver Public Library, and the Western History Collection of the University of Colorado (Boulder) Library are to be thanked. Also, the Las Animas Public Library, the La Junta Public Library, the Lamar Public Library, and other local sources like newspapers, were most helpful. A special thanks to the late Fred M. Betz, Sr., of Lamar, who took time to give me some extra help. The folks at the Prowers County Historical Society (Big Timbers Museum) and at the Bent's Old Fort National Monument were very useful in their assistance and providing me with "leads."

Various persons read and critiqued this work. Among them, Steven F. Mehls, John Beardsley and the late Robert G. Athearn provided comments that pointed up errors of fact and grammar. Steve Mehls, in particular, is owed a great big "thanks" for his work that provided some of the notes that were used in this document. Equally Paul O'Rourke's partial manuscript detailing the history of the Royal Gorge Resource Area was liberally used by this author. Also, both Cecil Roberts and Dave Strunk, of the BLM's Colorado State Office, were major contributors to this book, for they allowed me the time to write it. Were it not for their open encouragement and direct actions, this project could never have been completed. Of equal importance to this effort is Donna Diercks, who typed the manuscript from my crude draft. She kindly made corrections in grammar as she went, and entered the whole thing on her magic word processor. Thank you, Donna. Thanks also to Tricia Lucero, who typed, and Bettie Smith, who retyped, the Bibliography in a most efficient manner.

Frederic J. Athearn
Denver, Colorado
1984

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INTRODUCTION

Southeast Colorado, defined as that area from the Continental Divide east to the Kansas line, north to about Colorado Springs, and south to the New Mexican border, is a land of far-ranging contrasts. From the snowy Rockies to the wind swept eastern plains, history has seen this land change from nomadic natives wandering its peaks and valleys to heavy industrialization by modern society. While the first humans to use this region were Native Americans, who survived by exploiting natural resources, the first Europeans into the southeast corner were Spanish. Spain's attempts to expand her empire were not overly successful, and there were no settlements of consequence in this part of what was later to become Colorado. Perhaps the greatest Eighteenth century event was the Comanches' 1779 defeat near the Greenhorn Mountains.

The early 1800's saw a new invasion of Europeans, this time Americans in search of fur. The fur trade lasted until about 1840. Forts were established, and the plains boomed. The famous Santa Fe Trail was established to bring goods into Santa Fe, New Mexico. Bent's Fort served as the primary outpost of civilization on the eastern prairies. However, like everything else, the fur days were not destined to last. As beaver fur ran out, hunters turned to the plains and buffalo. The great herds were decimated, and by 1860 nothing was left to exploit. The land was abandoned except for a few New Mexican settlers, who clung to the earth in the San Luis Valley. The New Mexicans came to the Valley to take up land grants from Mexico's government. However, the Mexican War of 1846 caused this region to become part of the United States, and the older Mexican land grants were in litigation for a number of years. Nevertheless, settlers from 1850 forward built little villages, particularly San Luis, in 1852. They dug irrigation ditches and tilled the soil. On the other side of the Sangre de Cristo Mountains, settlements were established along the Huerfano and Purgatoire Rivers. These *plazas* barely sustained agriculture. On the Arkansas River, El Pueblo (or Milk Fort) provided passers by and local farmers with supplies and food. This place was wiped out in 1854 by Ute warriors.

The Pike's Peak gold rush of 1859 is where modern history begins for southeastern Colorado. In that year some 100,000 would-be miners rushed into the Rockies when gold was discovered along Cherry Creek, later the site of Denver. By 1860, South Park was flooded with miners; the Upper Arkansas saw preliminary exploration activity; and gold seekers crossed the San Luis Valley ready to invade the San Juans. As it happened, a primary beneficiary of the gold rush was the Valley, for its first settlers now sold scarce food to thousands of miners. Equally, the Arkansas River corridor was used to move the argonauts to the gold fields. Pueblo was founded at this time, as were numerous small way stations. The Smoky Hill Trail crossed this area, as did the ever-popular Santa Fe Trail. Raton Pass was put into use. By 1865, cattle were being trailed up the Goodnight-Loving Trail through Pueblo. The gold rush stimulated considerable settlement in this region, but by 1865 things were slowing down. It turned out that there was not as much gold in "them thar hills" as expected. South Park's camps died slowly. The Arkansas River corridor, no longer the route of thousands, fell back on agriculture as did the San Luis Valley. The Raton Basin

languished, for the gold rush hardly touched the valleys of the Huerfano and the Purgatoire.

The era of the 1860's was one of quiet. The cattle industry got its start along the Arkansas River at this time, and agriculture expanded modestly in southeast Colorado. Thanks to the collapse of the great rush of 1859, there was not much significant settlement. This changed, however, in 1872 when the newly incorporated Denver and Rio Grande Railway chugged south from Denver to Colorado City. Here is where William Jackson Palmer founded Colorado Springs and where his railroad brought tourists. The Rio Grande moved on to Pueblo and then Trinidad, hoping to cross Raton Pass, but there were rivals. The Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railroad (Santa Fe) marched across the Colorado plains, along the Arkansas, preparing to meet the Rio Grande head on. At this time, Las Animas, La Junta, Granada, and other little settlements on the river became railroad towns. As the Santa Fe reached Trinidad, an event on the Upper Arkansas changed everything.

The discovery of huge amounts of silver at Leadville in 1878 touched off a boom that was astonishing. Overnight, Leadville's population reached into the tens of thousands. Silver kings like H.A.W. Tabor, David Moffat, Jerome Chaffee, and D.R.C. Brown made their fortunes here. The rival Santa Fe and Rio Grande turned, at Pueblo, ready to rush into Leadville. The Royal Gorge was not big enough for two railbeds and the "Royal Gorge War" broke out. After extensive litigation, the Rio Grande won this route and built into the rich Leadville market in 1882. The Santa Fe got trackage rights to Denver, which also boomed, because of Leadville. Pueblo, the lower Arkansas, Trinidad, and, thanks to William J. Palmer, the San Luis Valley all had, by 1882, rail transport. The importance of this cannot be underestimated, for now reliable, relatively cheap transportation was available to previously isolated regions. Farmers benefitted because they could export their crops back east, or to the booming mountains, or to a growing Denver market. Cattlemen, wheat growers, and various others all saw the day when the dry plains would bloom. The silver boom, the advent of rails, and a strong national economy all came together in a ten-year period and helped southeast Colorado solidify its position in agriculture and mining.

The 1880's saw development from new coal mining activity that took place in the Raton Basin. Trinidad, Walsenburg, Aguilar, and, to a lesser extent, Canon City, all supported numerous company coal towns. Rail lines extended like a spiderweb all over the foothills of southeastern Colorado. Even the isolated Wet Mountain Valley underwent a silver boom. In the late 1870's, Rosita and Querida became the sites of a silver rush. Silver Cliff, founded in 1882, became a town of 10,000 souls overnight. The Rio Grande built a line up Grape Creek into the Valley; however, 1893 saw an end to this, for in that year, silver prices collapsed. The Panic of 1893 was the *coup de grace* to an ailing industry. Leadville's mines closed, Silver Cliff was all but abandoned, and the nation was cast into a deep depression. Railroads that once were money-makers went broke. The Denver, South Park and Pacific (DSP&P) slipped into receivership, while the Colorado Midland (from Colorado Springs to Leadville) was on the verge of collapse. Even the big outfits like the Santa Fe or the Rio Grande suffered, which in turn did not bode well for local farmers and miners. As the crisis deepened, homesteaders tried to farm the arid plains more extensively (so-called dryland farming), without benefit of water or irrigation. Technical advances like "Turkey Red" wheat made this possible, but 1893 also wiped out drylanders. Prices were too low to make farming profitable. Industry, like the steel mill at Pueblo, suffered badly, as did area coal mining. Production dropped, and prices fell. Workers were laid off. Yet, there was one bright spot in this gloom.

Cripple Creek townsite was platted in 1893 to take advantage of gold discoveries made in 1890. The Cripple Creek boom was not only huge and the creator of two cities; it was also the last major discovery of precious minerals in this State. Cripple Creek and Victor lasted until about 1910 when the price of gold was too low to make mining profitable. During this

boom, some 25,000 persons made Cripple Creek and Victor their homes. Labor violence during the late 1890's marked Cripple Creek as hostile to workers. The infamous Independence Station bombing made national headlines; but in the end, Cripple Creek faded like other mining districts. After an agonizingly slow death, Cripple Creek and Victor now cater to tourists, not miners.

The turn of the century saw recovery from the devastation of the Panic of 1893. As businesses struggled to their feet, they found that there were not as many buyers. The lack of a strong mineral industry did not help much. Farmers, ever hopeful, began returning to the plains. Irrigation, a development of the 1880's along the Arkansas River and throughout the San Luis Valley, was once again popular. Where irrigated lands could not be obtained, dryland homesteaders went back at it. From 1900 to 1920, the last great homestead boom occurred on the Great Plains. Thousands of last-minute, would-be farmers poured onto the plains in a last-ditch effort to own land. In 1914, just prior to the Great War, most drylanders, indeed all farmers, were having a hard time. However, war in Europe brought about high food prices due to increased exports. Local industry also profited from the war; steel prices soared; and CF&I, at Pueblo, had all the business it could handle. Coal production rose to keep pace with increased rail traffic and industrial use. Alloys like molybdenum became popular and were increasingly mined. Climax (AMAX) began its operations on Fremont Pass, and by the late 1930's had developed this area near Leadville into the world's largest such mine.

While the four years between 1914 and 1918 were prosperous, the latest boom ended in 1919 with a serious recession that wiped out farmers, miners, and industry. Drylanders were particularly hard hit, as was the precious mineral industry. Gold and silver production dropped, and other industrial metals like lead, copper, and zinc lost ground. This caused the population to seek a scapegoat for their woes. At first, Communists were the target. The Red Scare of 1919 had all the overtones of witch-hunting, but a worse threat was the reemergence of the Ku Klux Klan during the early 1920's. The Klan managed to seize the governor's mansion in 1924, and the Colorado legislature had all it could do to stop these extremists. In southeast Colorado, Klan activity centered around Pueblo (a large Catholic and Hispanic population), Walsenburg, and, to a lesser extent, Trinidad. Canon City had a strong chapter, too. Other than a few cross burnings, the Klan did little real harm. They were out of political power in 1926, and the KKK slid downhill from that point forward. The Roaring Twenties was not prosperous for most Coloradans. The nation might have boomed, but the local economy did not. Farmers, as mentioned, faced hard times. They banded into cooperative groups to market their wares in 1924, after passage of the Cooperative Marketing Act permitted such activity. San Luis Valley potato growers, in particular, were leaders in co-op ventures. Dryland wheat farmers grew more and more to cover their losses. This not only glutted the market, but also had a devastating effect on southeast Colorado's fragile topsoil.

If the twenties were bad, the thirties were far worse. In 1929, the American economy totally collapsed, not that eastern Colorado's farmers noticed right away. More important was the Federal Government's intervention in the market place. Republican President Herbert Hoover's "wait-and-see" policy failed miserably. In 1932, Franklin D. Roosevelt, a Democrat, was elected President. He immediately began Federal aid to industry, farmers, and the dispossessed. Farmers living in the Dust Bowl, of which southeastern Colorado was part, were aided in numerous ways, including heavy farm subsidies. The national forests, created in 1891, were improved by Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) labor, while the Public Works Administration (PWA) built post offices and city halls. This Federal aid worked well for a while, but by the late 1930's the economy once more sagged. Again, war saved the day.

When the United States entered World War II in 1941, America's industry and farmers were both producing full tilt. Food prices skyrocketed, mining demand was up, and industry could

not keep up with local wartime demands. CF&I, at Pueblo, made steel at full output, and railroads hauled goods and troops at full capacity. World War II cast southeastern Colorado into its present mold, for at this time various facilities that are still in use were built. Foremost among these was Camp (later Fort) Carson, placed just south of Colorado Springs. Pueblo got an army depot, while La Junta was given an air base. These military additions strengthened the economy of this region, while bringing in new population. After the war, many newcomers remained and helped further develop local industry and services. While agriculture was predominant in the San Luis Valley, South Park, and on the lower Arkansas during the 1950's, Pueblo, Colorado Springs, and, to a lesser extent, Trinidad, saw new growth. Coal mines that closed down during the 1930's were replaced by service industries. Tourism, for instance, took up some of the economic slack. Trinidad, gateway to Raton Pass, got a boost when Interstate Highway 25 was built through that city. Fast food places, motels, and other service facilities helped fuel the local economy. Schools like junior colleges also grew, thanks to an influx of World War II veterans. Pueblo, Alamosa, Trinidad, and Lamar all had either four-year or two-year institutions of higher learning that saw student population increases as a result of the recent war.

The last twenty years in southeastern Colorado have been stable and moderately prosperous. Agriculture, mainly wheat, is the mainstay of the plains. Coal is still mined for CF&I in the Purgatoire Valley, and oil is being discovered in the Raton Basin, the San Luis Valley and, of course, around Florence. There has been fairly low recent population growth, although Pueblo suffers from pollution caused by autos, more people, and Denver's "brown cloud" drifting southward. Tourism still remains a major force in this region. Subdivisions are scattered throughout the Wet Mountain Valley, west of Pueblo, and in other spots like South Park. They appeal to the summer home resident, but are generally not well developed. Skiing, something new in this area, is taking hold. Conquistador, in the Wet Mountain Valley, is showing signs of becoming a serious tourist area. Westcliffe caters to both winter and summer visitors these days. Canon City serves tourists who come to ogle the Royal Gorge, drive scenic U.S. 50 to Buena Vista, or do a little camping in the surrounding national forests. Longer term visitors are housed in a new State Prison located east of Canon City. Pueblo now suffers from hard times because its main industry, steel, is not in demand. Unemployment is high, and city fathers worry about their future. The San Luis Valley remains timeless. There really has not been much change since the early 1900's. Agriculture still dominates the Valley. Potatoes, corn, wheat, barley, and other grains provide a stable economy. Tourists come into the Valley to see the Great Sand Dunes National Monument or pass through on their way into nearby national forests, but this is hardly a booming trade in visitors. The Valley remains quiet, "pristine," and possibly the most charming region in this State. To visit this place is truly a pleasure.

The southeast corner of Colorado is, perhaps, one of the least changed areas of this State. The eastern plains have always been, and remain, agricultural. Towns along the front range, like Pueblo and Trinidad, were traditionally industrial or supply cities. They are still that. South Park, after mining peaked, reverted to agriculture, like cattle raising. It remains a livestock area. Leadville is still highly dependent upon mining, although not silver. The Wet Mountain Valley, originally settled for mining purposes, is presently used by ranchers. The San Luis Valley was and still is predominantly agricultural in nature. The land, its people, and its dreams remain much the same as one hundred years ago. As time moves forward, changes are bound to occur here; but if the past is an indicator, they will not be massive, and they may not be permanent. This region's history is like that.

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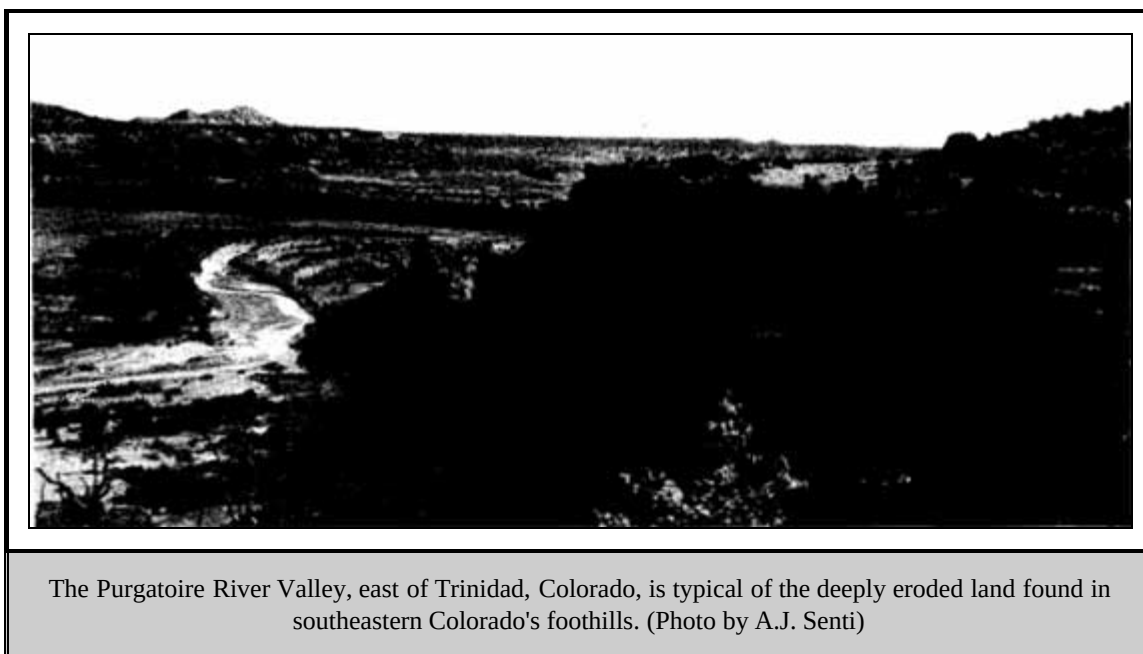
Chapter I

THE NATURAL SETTING

Southeastern Colorado consists of at least three unique geographic areas, ranging from high plains to rugged mountains. Regional extremes are striking. From semiarid plains, to towering mountains, along with large "parks," that is, valleys, the land exhibits a diversity of climate and flora that are quite unusual. Perhaps the southeast corner of Colorado is a perfect example of transition from prairie to mountain in the American West. Within this area are three distinct components. First, there are plains that are relatively featureless highlands upon which sparse vegetation exists with only 14 inches of annual moisture. The plains rise into foothills to the west where rivers cut through these hills. The main water course, the Arkansas River, exits near Canon City; the Purgatoire River, rising in the Spanish Peaks, meets the flatlands at Trinidad; the Apishapa, also a product of Spanish Peaks, comes out at Aguilar while the Huerfano emerges near Walsenburg, Colorado. These waterways are fed by dozens of tributary streams throughout the foothills and plains. Water, nevertheless, remains scarce and must be allocated with care. Beyond the foothills, rise the Rocky Mountains. The Continental Divide provides a 14,000-foot barrier between the plains and Colorado's western valleys. The largest east slope valley is the San Luis, extending from Poncha Pass into New Mexico, and representing the single biggest mountain "park" in the world. The San Luis is about 100 miles long and 70 miles across. It is intersected by the Rio Grande, New Mexico's primary river, which rises in the San Juans near Rio Grande reservoir. This stream is a major drainage for the Valley and tends southeasterly from Del Norte, leaving the north end of the San Luis Valley rather dry. One unique feature of what natives call "the Valley" is the Sangre de Cristo Mountains that rise 14,000 feet to the east. On the west lie the San Juans, equally high, trapping potential moisture while the Sangre de Cristos stop upslope rainfall on the eastern side. Because of these peaks, annual rainfall is limited to 6.9 inches. Nestled against the west side of the Sangre de Cristos lie the famous Sand Dunes, a natural phenomenon rarely found in this region. [1]

The other major "park" in the area is South Park, or as it was first called, Bayou Salado. South Park was used early and frequently by both Native Americans and Europeans. It was the best known area in Colorado prior to 1830. The park lies at an altitude of some 9,000 feet and is 40 miles long by 15 miles wide. The South Platte River intersects the entire valley on a northeasterly trend and provides a regular water source. To the west rises the Mosquito Range that shields the upper Arkansas Valley. Beyond, westward, lie the Rocky Mountains. To the east, the Tarryall Mountains provide another barrier. Moisture falls in the form of snow and thundershowers and averages 20 inches per year. [2] South Park also contains portions of Colorado's famous "Mineral Belt" where gold, silver, and non-precious minerals are found. Equally, the upper Arkansas Valley is the home of the fabulous silver veins of Leadville. The upper Arkansas River region consists of a narrow valley running from Leadville to Salida with the Collegiate Range on the west and the Mosquito Range to the east. As the Arkansas flows south, it cuts through the granite canyons of Fremont County, carves the Grand Canyon of the Arkansas (the Royal Gorge), a chasm some 1,200 feet deep, and then exits near Canon City. From here, the river flows past Pueblo and out to the eastern

plains. In its higher locations the Arkansas is fed by numerous streams that originate in mountain valleys. [3]



Another geographic feature of this region is a small basin south of Canon City called the Wet Mountain Valley. Here the Sangre de Cristo Mountains on the west, and the Wet Mountains to the east, create an inter-montane "park" that is high, dry, and mineralized. The valley contains silver-bearing veins and was the scene of a major silver boom in the 1880's. Today it is dedicated to cattle ranching. [4] South of the Wet Mountain Valley lies what is commonly called Raton Basin. This land consists of broken terrain intersected by numerous watercourses, including the Huerfano and Apishapa Rivers. Westward lie the twin Spanish Peaks, and the basin descends slowly to meet the plains at Walsenburg, Aguilar, and Trinidad. South, the Purgatoire River very nearly approximates the New Mexico-Colorado border. The Raton Basin is characterized by vast coal deposits that belie its presently arid climate. This area was once a swamp that lay at the edge of a shallow sea extending from the Gulf of Mexico across Texas and into southeastern Colorado. Valleys created by modern streams are quite narrow and marginally useful for agriculture. East of Trinidad the land is broken by waterways and deeply cut by erosion. Here a series of high mesas run east about 50 miles, the largest being Mesa de Maya. The southern part runs west to the Raton Mountains of New Mexico where Raton Pass, the major entry into northern New Mexico, is located. Traditionally, this pass was used to enter Trinidad from Taos.

The climate in southeast Colorado is as varied as its landforms. From the snow-covered Continental Divide to barren plains, water was, and is, the most important consideration for the use of this land. Winter snows that blanket high mountains serve as runoff for streams and rivers of the region. [6] The eastern plains are scenes, in the summer, of violent thunderstorms that create downpours, often causing flash flooding and considerable erosion. Tornadoes are common as well. Agriculture in this violence is a risky business. Summer showers develop in the mountains and provide daily rain that enhances the previous spring's runoff. In this way, the larger rivers are usually with water, even though most smaller streams run dry during the summer months. The key to successful vegetation on the plains is moisture retention in the soil. Winter and spring snows saturate the land, and until about July moisture is adequate. After that time, irrigation is needed, if available, to sustain crops. Summer rains provide some moisture where there is no surface water. Vegetation in southeastern Colorado is varied and plentiful. The prairies contain usual grasses and bushes associated with this sort of land feature, along with a few trees. Along river banks,

cottonwoods abound, including willows and other riparian species. As the land rises, vegetation patterns change to represent not only montane grasses but shrubs like pinon juniper and other low-growing trees. As altitude increases, oak brush, Gamble's oak, and aspen are found in scattered patches. In the highest regions, ponderosa pine, some Douglas fir and other evergreen species are common. The forests are similar to those in the rest of Colorado's mountainous lands. [7]

Geologically, southeastern Colorado represents volcanic activity that created the mineral deposits found throughout mountainous areas, while shallow seabeds covered the plains and then uplifted into today's topography. The uplifting process began some 60,000,000 years ago during what is called the Laramide Revolution. Intense mountain building occurred, lifting the beds of an ancient ocean to altitudes of 6,000 feet. That the sea existed is seen in fossil beds at Florissant Fossil Beds National Monument, and in Garden Park where bones have been continuously removed since 1876. Erosion has long since worn down uplifted sedimentary rocks while very ancient granite, billions of years old, was cut through by water and wind. The Royal Gorge is a classic example of such erosion. Wind carving can be seen in soft Morrison formation rocks at Garden of the Gods near Colorado Springs. Geology, of course, is of considerable importance to southeastern Colorado for it determined to what use man would put the land. Topography caused certain areas to develop early and others to be overlooked until a time when it was economically or socially feasible to use them. Always, geology influenced development and use of not only modern man, but also his prehistoric counterpart. [8]

Southeastern Colorado's cultural history began some 12,000 years ago. Archaeological evidence in the form of artifactual materials, indicates that at least four culture traditions are represented in this region. The most ancient is Folsom whose crude points represent earliest evidences of man in the area. These people were hunters of large herd animals like bison, and evidence is found not only on the plains, but in South Park as well. The Plano culture continued a big game hunting tradition from about 9000 B.C. to 6000 B.C., by which time most large Pleistocene animals were extinct. As the bison and mastadon disappeared, new species including antelope, modern bison, and deer appeared. Both Plano and Archaic traditions hunted, but as the climate changed, these peoples were forced to modify their habits. Archaic campsites contain unique projectile points, a variety of scrapers, bone ornaments, metates, and crude stone tools. This culture seems to be transitional, moving from "pure" hunters to nomads, who roamed the plains and foothills in search of game and seasonal resources. [9] Between 1 A.D. and 1000 A.D. the Woodland Cultural complex used the eastern plains of Colorado. These people hunted and gathered, as indicated by their physical remains. They represent a further transition from classic hunters to nomadic-gathering peoples. This state of development led to what is referred to as the Proto-historic period, or the time just before European-Native contact. [10] Out of Woodland Culture came the nomadic plains tribes that are familiar today. The Utes dominated the foothills, the San Luis Valley, South Park, and the mountains west of the Continental Divide. These people survived by hunting buffalo, elk, deer, and antelope. They also gathered berries and seed plants such as pinon nuts. The Utes moved in family groups, on foot, and often used dogs to drag "travois," or primitive sledges. [11] In addition to Utes, various other plain tribes arrived on the scene by the Seventeenth century. The most notorious of the plains natives were the Comanche, who, moving northwest from Texas became the scourge of this region. The Comanche were superior horsemen, and, when in the Eighteenth century they obtained guns, they terrorized not only the Spanish in New Mexico, but also the Utes and other local tribes. The Utes retreated to the San Luis Valley, South Park, and higher into the foothills. Meanwhile, other regional tribes like the Arapaho were pushed into Front Range valleys. The Arapaho, who maintained much the same lifestyle as Utes, tended to remain north of the Colorado Springs area. They did roam all over the plains in lean times. The Pawnee, another northern tribe, on occasion, would find themselves in the southern plains of Colorado in

search of food. However, they were not permanent "Colorado" residents and were more identified with the Platte River Valley. [12] The Comanche may have been the "raiders of the Plains," but there were other tribes who also frequented this region. For instance, Jicarilla Apache, residents of northern New Mexico hunted on horseback, as far as the Arkansas River on a regular basis. The Apache were like the Comanche. They were a horse-based society that lived by raiding others. Ute culture suffered their depredations just like Spanish New Mexican society. The Apache, however, eventually became allied to the Spanish in order to fend off Comanches. These two tribes were the most powerful groups on Colorado's southeastern plains well into the nineteenth century. It is questionable as to whether either the Jicarilla Apache or the Comanche actually dominated southeastern Colorado. After 1778, Comanche terror was broken, and the Ute again moved freely along the foothills. Nevertheless, for all tribes the arrival of the Europeans was of incalculable importance. When the Spanish arrived on the plains during the late Sixteenth century, they brought with them two major technological wonders: horses and guns. [13]

There was no greater change in native lifestyles than at this time, for here is where the American native became a raiding machine. No longer was he dependent upon his feet for hunting and gathering. With horses, the range for game was greatly extended and lives of the various tribes were changed forever. Animals now became the basis of trade and life. Skins were used for shelter and clothing while newly gained surpluses were traded with other tribes or Europeans. Guns, of course, made killing game that much easier, and for the first time excesses in food supplies occurred. The late Sixteenth century saw the last time that American natives roamed the region alone. For, less than thirty years after the conquest of Mexico's Aztec Empire, Europeans found their way into the American southwest, lured by tales of gold, vast civilizations, and rich lands. [14]

CHAPTER I: NOTES

1. For a physical description of the San Luis Valley see: Virginia McConnell Simmons, *Land of the Six-Armed Cross* (Boulder, Colorado: Pruett Press, 1980.)
2. South Park's physical description is contained in: Virginia McConnell, *Bayou Salado: The Story of South Park* (Denver, Colorado: Sage, 1966.)
3. A general description of the Arkansas Valley is contained in: Pachel D. Lewis, "Official Exploration and Improvement of the Arkansas River, 1806-1900" (M.A. Thesis: University of Colorado, 1937.)
4. See: Robert A. Murray, *Las Animas, Huerfano and Custer: Three Colorado Counties on a Cultural Frontier, A History of the Raton Basin* (Denver, Colorado: Bureau of Land Management, 1979.)
5. Ibid., p. 4.
6. For climatological information regarding this region, see: Colorado State Board of Immigration, *Year Book of the State of Colorado, 1918* (Denver: Welch-Haffner, 1918), pp. 81, 111, 132, 162-163.
7. Ibid., p. 164, and see: Simmons, op. cit.; McConnell, op. cit.
8. The region's geology is discussed in: R.D. George, "Geology," in *History of Colorado*, Vol. I, James H. Baker and Leroy R. Hafen (eds.) (Denver: Linderman, 1927), pp. 93-98.
9. For a discussion of this part of Colorado's prehistory, see E.B. Renaud, (Comp.), *The*

Archaeological Survey of Colorado: Fourth Report (Denver: University of Denver, 1935.)

10. This phase is described in Marcia J. Tate, "A Synopsis of Colorado Prehistory," in the Colorado Parks Archaeology *Manual*, (Comp.) Tate, Rippeteau and Stuart (Denver: Office of the State Archaeologist, Technical Publication Series 13, 1978.)

11. A detailed discussion of prehistory on the eastern plains of Colorado is contained in: James Gunnerson, "Class I Overview of the High Plains" (Manuscript located at U.S. Forest Service, Region II, Lakewood, Colorado, and Bureau of Land Management, Colorado State Office, Denver, Colorado, 1981.)

12. George E. Hyde, *Indians of the High Plains* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1959), pp. 26-29.

13. See: J. Donald Hughes, *American Indians in Colorado* (Boulder: Pruett Press, 1977), pp. 29-34.

14. As related in: George P. Winship, *The Journey of Coronado, 1540-1542* (New York: Greenwood, 1969.)

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Land of Contrast: A History of Southeast Colorado

BLM Cultural Resources Series (Colorado: No. 17)



Chapter II

THE FIRST EUROPEANS

As plains natives roamed the region, hunting and gathering, major events to the south were to change their lives forever. The Spanish empire moved from its small settlements on the islands of Hispanola and Cuba onto the North American continent. By 1521, Hernan Cortes had conquered the Aztec city of Tenochtitlan, and upon its ruins were established the capital and viceregency of New Spain. New Spain encompassed an area from Panama to the Arctic; and while the center of the viceroy's domain was at Mexico City, it took only a few years for new tales of wealth and empire to filter down from the north. [1] From the days of Cortes' conquest, rumors of wealthy cities to the north plagued the Spanish government. One of the most "solid" stories came from a member of the ill-fated Panfilio de Narvaez expedition of 1527. In this effort, a group of colonists tried to land in Florida and settle the place. However, bad weather, poor resupply efforts, and hostile natives put a tragic end to the attempt. There were survivors, including Alvar Nunez Cabeza de Vaca. Cabeza de Vaca, and three others, wandered through the southeastern United States, across Texas, and finally into northern Mexico, where he was found by the Spanish government. Upon returning to Mexico City, he told Viceroy Antonio de Mendoza legends of great cities and considerable wealth just to the north and west of the area he had visited. [2] The Spanish, having just conquered Mexico, were in the mood to hear about new "civilizations of wealth." The Cabeza de Vaca story only increased interest in the northern sectors of New Spain. Further, silver discoveries were made north of Mexico City in the province of Queretero, and for some reason this was associated with the possibility of "civilizations" in the north. Exploration fever was increased when, in 1539, Fray Marcos de Niza returned from the Rio Grande region with reports of the legendary "Seven Cities of Cibola" that Cabeza de Vaca described. On October 2, 1539, Fray Marcos returned to Mexico City and certified his discoveries with the Viceroy. Based upon this information, Viceroy Mendoza prepared a crown expedition to conquer the north. [3]

Chosen to lead this force was Francisco Vasquez de Coronado, who, after assembling an army of Spaniards and natives, began the long trek northward on February 23, 1540. This expedition was the first European entry on the western plains of North America and represented Spain's largest effort, to date, to explore the interior of the continent. [4] As Coronado marched north with 75 men, Hernando de Alarcon sailed along the Mexican Coast to the Colorado River, in tending to supply Coronado by sea. This expedition, obviously well-financed, was expected to bring results for the Spanish government. The project was one of the few ever fully financed by the crown, and Viceroy Mendoza's reputation was on the line. [5] Coronado reached the American southwest by July 1540 where he found "Cibola." What a disappointment that must have been. Instead of a city "made of gold," he found a mud pueblo on a mesa full of hostile natives. This was Hawikuh, located near present-day Zuni. After a fierce battle, the place was captured and Coronado set up headquarters. [6] At this point, Coronado dispatched Garcia Lopez de Cardenas westward to find Alarcon, while Hernando de Alvarado was sent east to explore. Lopez de Cardenas, in August 1540, found the Grand Canyon of the Colorado, but was unable to locate the Alarcon expedition at the mouth of that great river. Meanwhile, Hernando de Alvarez discovered the Rio Grande and

the pueblo of Tiguex. This place represented the river pueblos of New Mexico and was populated by sedentary natives who grew such crops as corn, cotton, and wheat. Coronado moved his headquarters to Tiguex in September 1540 where he began subjugating the people of the river pueblos. [7] Coronado spent that winter putting down rebellions in the pueblos and trying to keep his little army together. While at Tiguex, the expedition heard a story from a native named "the Turk," who described a "vast civilization" northeast of Tiguex called Gran Quivira. This place was supposed to be fabulously wealthy and would put "Cibola" to shame. Coronado, desperate for results, planned a march on Quivira when winter broke. The spring of 1541 found an expedition on its way across the Llano Estacado of western Texas working its way east. The Turk led thirty of Coronado's men to eastern Kansas where they found a motley collection of stick and mud houses inhabited by primitive natives. There was no gold, there were no great civilizations. In frustration, Coronado's men tortured and killed their guide at Quivira. [8] The party started back to Tiguex, crossed western Kansas to southeastern Colorado, followed the Arkansas River west, and then went down to the Rio Grande. By November 1541 Coronado, having transmitted his findings to the Viceroy, tried to decide what to do next. That December, he fell from his horse and was badly injured. In the spring of 1542, Coronado began the long return to Mexico City, arriving at the capitol in the late autumn of that year. [9] Coronado, in disgrace from not having found the "Seven Cities," resigned his position as governor of Nueva Galicia and retired; he died in poverty. Mendoza had to answer to the crown why so much money was spent on the 1540 expedition and why there were no results. [10]

Coronado's expedition brought first contacts between Europeans and natives in the western interior of what later became the United States. The natives, while brutally treated, did gain the technology of horse and gun. Spain learned that there were no cities, that there was no gold, but that there were sedentary populations ready for Christianization. The buffalo was recorded for the first time, and native cultures at the time of European contact were described by various chroniclers of the expedition. This was an important time for both natives and Spaniards, for here two cultures met and were well documented by contemporaries. While New Mexico (as this land was called) was written off as "worthless" by the greedy Spanish, it was not forgotten. Expeditions still went north, out of New Spain, seeking not gold this time, but a place to settle. Both settlers and church men were interested in New Mexico for it offered natives for conversion, land, water, and "free" labor. For example, an illegal expedition led by Bernaldino Beltran and Antonio de Espejo occurred in 1582. However, the partners fell to arguing among themselves and were eventually disposed of by plains natives. [11]

The first serious attempt at settlement in New Mexico came in 1598 when Juan de Onate led an expedition from lower New Spain into the Rio Grande Valley. By 1600 the City of Santa Fe was founded, the second oldest European city in the present-day United States. As the Rio Grande Valley became occupied by Spanish colonists, pueblo natives were more and more abused by their conquerers. Forced labor, confiscated lands, and other brutalities were common. Settlement extended north to Taos, and during this time the San Luis Valley was visited by potential colonists. [12] That place was not suitable for colonization due to lack of useable water, and hostile Utes promptly drove out their Spanish visitors. Since existing pueblo towns ended at Taos, there was really no incentive to move much farther north. The eastern plains also held interest for the Spanish because there were also pueblos. The Pecos Pueblo, east of Santa Fe, represented Spanish interests on the plains and, because it was the object of continual plains native raids, the Spanish were forced to patrol the eastern part of New Mexico north into southeast Colorado. [13] As the seventeenth century progressed, Spanish settlers found themselves in even more trouble. Not only did plains raiders cause never-ending problems, but the province's economy was on the verge of collapse. Finally, in 1680, pueblo dwellers at Taos rose in rebellion and removed the Spanish to El Paso del Norte. [14] Rebels then took over New Mexico and proceeded to revert to what Spanish

missionaries called "barbarism." The province was abandoned to its original owners until 1692. [15] In that year, Diego de Vargas began the "reconquest" of New Mexico. Vargas, with 100 soldiers, settlers, and allied natives, marched from El Paso del Norte on August 21, 1692, subduing pueblo after pueblo until they reached Santa Fe on September 12. Here, the reconquerors engaged in battle with natives who held the city. The Spanish retook the capital on September 14, 1692. This day is still celebrated in New Mexico every year as Vargas Day. [16] He then spent the next several years reestablishing Spanish settlements throughout New Mexico. Vargas faced a new Pueblo native revolt in 1696. Again, Taos was the hotbed of resistance, and Vargas moved swiftly to crush this uprising. In the army's movement north to Taos, Vargas took the occasion to march into the San Luis Valley to demonstrate Spain's strength. He found some Utes who, after limited discussion, agreed that the Spanish were indeed rulers of the region. Vargas then returned to Santa Fe, and the Valley was forgotten. [17]

Life in New Mexico during the Eighteenth century was anything but pleasant. The economy was shaky, settlement was slow and dangerous, and there was a continual fear of Pueblo uprisings. To further complicate the situation, plains raiders, most notably the Comanche and Apache, began to encroach on the eastern plains. Taos, the most outlying pueblo, was constantly attacked. Comanches soon raided the upper Rio Grande, and, in cooperation with the Utes, Taos was nearly cut off from the rest of the province. [18] The problem became so serious that the government established an outpost on the eastern plains to warn of Comanche raids while, at the same time, looking out for supposed French traders. This establishment, called El Cuartelejo, was built about 1709 and was manned by allied Apache natives. Where this place was actually located is in some doubt. Leroy Hafen, Colorado historian, places the site somewhere in far southeastern Colorado. [19] However, Kansas historians claim that the fort was farther east in Kansas and therefore was the first European settlement in that state. Wherever El Cuartelejo was located, it served as the northern-most outpost of Spanish civilization in North America. While El Cuartelejo was Spain's "early warning" post, its effectiveness was doubtful. There were only six men posted, and they were wholly ineffective against Comanche hordes.

In 1719, rumors of French traders in the region filtered into Santa Fe. The Spanish were concerned about French influence because of a closed and restrictive trade system within the Spanish Empire. Spain, very early, decided that a mercantile system was the only way to extract maximum profit from the New World. Hence, all trade was funneled from Seville, Spain, to Vera Cruz, Mexico (in the case of New Spain), and then on to the provinces. This pattern allowed full control of goods. No citizen was allowed to buy from any merchant other than Spanish. No imports were permitted except through specified ports. Naturally, when goods reached their destination, they were terribly expensive. New Mexico, being at the end of the line, having a cash flow problem, and being nonself-supporting, suffered greatly from this trade system. [20] The situation grew more intense when France, in the late 1600's, colonized the Mississippi River Valley. French traders soon found their way into east Texas, and, as goods became readily obtainable for the natives of that area, word spread that cheap European merchandise was available. The Comanche brought some trade goods into New Mexico which, in turn, caused poverty-stricken settlers in New Mexico to look to Texas rather than New Spain (Mexico) for goods. [21] In addition, the Comanche started a vicious circle of trade that involved raiding New Mexican settlements, stealing food, animals, goods, and hostages, then trading them back to settlers for food, animals, and goods. These various problems, a small trade with the French, a drain on the local economy, and the "Comanche Barrier" on the eastern plains all concerned New Mexico's government. [22]

To deal with this perceived threat, Governor Antonio Valverde sent his lieutenant north onto the plains in search of "Frenchmen." In June 1720, Pedro de Villasur and about 100 men set forth from Santa Fe, crossed southeastern Colorado, and in August ended up on the South

Platte River where they found a Pawnee village. After exchanging written messages, the Spanish got a reply (in French) that "proved" the French were there. During one night, the Spanish were attacked by a Pawnee war party, and all but 13 Spaniards perished. [23] The Villasur disaster caused Santa Fe to demand more protection. Mexico City failed to help, but rather, an inspector, Pedro de Rivera, was sent to the province for the purpose of assessing defenses. Rivera recommended the establishment of an outpost among the Jicarilla Apache of southeast Colorado, a suggestion that was ignored. [24] The unprotected Jicarilla were absorbed by both the Comanche and the Ute during the 1730's. This left New Mexico's northeastern flank exposed. In 1739, the Santa Fe government got a real shock when French traders wandered into the capital. Two brothers, Pierre and Paul Mallet, from Illinois country, made it to Santa Fe by following the Arkansas River to the foothills near Pueblo, and then proceeding south along the Front Range, over Raton Pass, and into New Mexico. The party was welcomed at Santa Fe, and after some limited trading, the little group, less two Frenchmen who chose to stay, went back to Illinois. This was the first record of Europeans crossing the plains by way of what later became a traditional route along the Arkansas River and over Raton Pass. [25]

The French at New Orleans, hearing of Mallet's success, began planning a "trade invasion" of New Mexico, using the plains route of 1739. A party led by Fabry de la Bruyere made it part way up the Canadian River in 1741, but had to turn back due to low water and hostile natives. Santa Fe saw another expedition led by Pierre Mallet in 1750, who was arrested this time and sent to Mexico City. Governor Tomas Velez Capuchin had just found three Frenchmen at the 1749 Taos Fair and was in no mood for more incursions. Two more Frenchmen appeared in 1752, and they too were sent packing to Mexico City for questioning. Only the French and Indian War of 1754 put an end to French traders in New Mexico. With most tribes of the Mississippi Valley in arms, France and Spain were no longer involved in commerce. [26] Northeast New Mexico became an international no man's land because of the French and Indian War. Peace, in 1763, divided the North American interior between Spain and France. The English, established since 1607 on the east coast, took over that part of the continent. As war raged in the Mississippi Valley, New Mexico was left out. The region of southeast Colorado, western Kansas, northern Texas and northeastern New Mexico was overrun by the Comanche. These raiders continued to harass New Mexico, and in confederation with the Utes, kept the plains closed to all. [27] Comanche terror continued well into the 1770's when the crown decided to do something about New Mexico. This was part of an overall reorganization of the Empire and included an "inspection" by the Marques de Rubi in 1766-67. Rubi viewed defenses in the province and made recommendations as to improvements. This included a suggested line of *presidios* from California to Texas so as to stop both French and natives. In 1772 a *Reglamento* (order) was published that required the establishment of *presidios*, moving of some older ones, and the creation of the Provincias Internas, a new governmental organization. [28]

In 1776, the Provincias Internas were put into operation and Teodoro de Croix was named commandante-general of these Provinces. Within a year campaigns were begun to subdue natives of the north. Teodoro de Croix, given this task, saw that it was accomplished by a "*presidio volante*," or the "flying presidio." This was a rapid deployment concept that sought speedy response when hostile natives attacked. Horse-mounted soldiers could chase the offenders. [29] Yet, by 1779 the Comanche were still such a problem that Governor Juan Bautista de Anza assembled a force of some 600 men to track down the powerful Comanche Chief Cuerno Verde (Greenhorn) and stop him for good. To accomplish this feat, Anza enlisted the help of 200 Ute and Apache allies, who, coincidentally, had just been defeated at San Luis Lake by the Comanche. [30] Anza marched from Santa Fe into the San Luis Valley with the largest Spanish force ever gathered in the North American interior. His army pushed over Poncha Pass, forded the Arkansas River at future Salida, and then moved into South Park seeking Comanche. Anza crossed the park to near where Cripple Creek was founded

over 100 years later, and then proceeded down Little Fountain Creek, emerging on the flatlands. At this point, Anza found a Comanche encampment, and on August 31, 1779, engaged in battle. [31] Anza's troops easily overcame the women and children in camp, but Cuerno Verde and his 200 warriors were out on the plains. Anza gave chase, and on September 3, 1779, he found Cuerno Verde near the Greenhorn Mountains. Here the Comanche and Spanish fought a pitched battle where Cuerno Verde was resoundingly defeated. Comanche power broken, the eastern plains were freed from continual raiding, and northeast New Mexico was secure for the first time in nearly 100 years. Finally, in 1786, a peace was negotiated between Spain and the Comanche. The Ute also made peace, and the eastern plains were open to all. While the native menace was gone, a new threat appeared on the horizon in the form of American traders.

CHAPTER II: NOTES

1. George P. Winship, *The Journey of Coronado, 1540-1542* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1969), p. vi. Also: John Francis Bannon, *The Spanish Borderlands Frontier, 1513-1821* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1970), p. 9.
2. Bannon, op. cit., p. 13.
3. Winship, op. cit., p. vi, and Bannon, ibid, p. 15.
4. As related by Winship, ibid., p. viii, and Bannon, ibid, pp. 17-18.
5. Bannon, ibid, p. 19.
6. Winship, ibid., pp. 32-33.
7. Bannon, op. cit., p. 18
8. Bannon, ibid, p. 20, and Winship, op. cit., p. 77.
9. Bannon, ibid., p. 26.
10. Ibid., p. 27.
11. Ibid., p. 32.
12. Ibid., pp. 35-38, and George P. Hammond and Agapito Rey (eds. and Trans.), *Don Juan de Onate, Colonizer of New Mexico, 1595-1628* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1953), Vol. I, pp. 225-228; Ralph E. Twitchell, *The Spanish Archives of New Mexico* (Cedar Rapids: Torch Press, 1914), Vol. 2, pp. 279-280.
13. Frederic J. Athearn, "Life and Society in Eighteenth Century New Mexico, 1692-1776" (Austin, Texas: Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Texas, 1974), p. 78.
14. Bannon, op. cit., p. 83.
15. Ibid., p. 82, and Athearn, op. cit., p. 15.
16. Bannon, op. cit., p. 87 and Athearn, op. cit. See also: Charles W. Hackett, *Revolt of the Pueblo Indians of New Mexico and Otermin's Attempted Reconquest, 1680-1692* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press 1942), 2 vols.

17. Jesse B. Bailey, *Diego de Vargas and the Reconquest of Mexico* (Albuquerque, University of New Mexico Press, 1942); and J. Manuel Espinosa, *First Expedition of Vargas into New Mexico* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1940.)

18. As related in Bailey and Athearn, op. cit., p. 43.

19. See: Alfred B. Thomas, *After Coronado, Spanish Exploration Northeast of New Mexico, 1696-1727* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1935), pp. 134-137.

20. LeRoy R. Hafen, *Colorado: A Story of the State and Its People* (Denver: Old West Publishing Co., 1945), pp. 52-55.

21. Thomas, op. cit., p. 15, and Athearn, op. cit., p. 110.

22. Athearn, *ibid.*, pp. 110-111.

23. Alfred B. Thomas, *Plains Indians and New Mexico* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1940), p. 18.

24. Alfred B. Thomas, "The Massacre of the Villasur Expedition at the Forks of The Platte River," *Nebraska History Magazine*, pp. 67-81.

25. Bannon, op. cit., p. 130.

26. Athearn, op. cit., p. 182.

27. As related in Bannon, p. 142.

28. See: Thomas, *Plains Indians*, op. cit.

29. The *Reglamento* is translated in: Sidney Brinckerhoff and Odie Faulk, *Lancers for the King* (Phoenix: Arizona Historical Foundation, 1965.)

30. Bannon, op. cit., p. 180.

31. McConnell, *Bayou Salado*, op. cit., pp. 49-50.

32. *Ibid.*, p. 51.

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Chapter III

AN AMERICAN INVASION

The Comanche defeat of 1779 led to increasingly friendly relations between these natives and their Spanish victors. In the best missionary tradition, Governor Juan Bautista de Anza selected a site along the Arkansas River (near future Pueblo) for the purpose of founding a settlement that would convert the Comanche into sedentary Christians. [1] This place, called San Carlos, was operating by 1787. However, after a hard first year, the Comanche preferred to roam the plains, and this site was abandoned. Outside of El Cuartelejo (location in question), this was the first Spanish settlement in the present state of Colorado. [2] The late 1700's also saw a steady increase of trappers and traders into the interior. St. Louis, at this time a French city, was jumping off point for these men. Manuel Lisa, perhaps the most famous early name in the fur trade, opened the Missouri River country in the 1790's. This Spanish trader brought back beaver fur, and soon St. Louis was the most important trading center in the midwest. Lisa's exploits were legendary and created new opportunities for an emerging American nation.

The American revolution changed an already tense international situation in western North America. Because the British lost the Revolutionary War, a new element was introduced to the scene. Not only did Spain face French incursions from the Mississippi River Valley, but the British, in the form of Hudson's Bay Company, moved south from Canada into rich fur regions of the Upper Missouri River. Additionally, Russia was settling northern California, while American traders, eager for quick profits, entered an already crowded field. [3] Spain, even with recently reformed trade laws, still refused to allow free trade with other nations. New Mexico was in a position of wanting French and English goods, but could not obtain them overland. However, 1803 changed the picture greatly, for in that year Napoleon Bonaparte of France sold what was called "Louisiana" to the United States for \$15 million dollars. [4] Instantly, the United States doubled in size and became Spain's neighbor. The land was totally unknown except that the boundaries ran from New Orleans up the Mississippi to its headwaters, west to the Pacific, and along the Red River to the Rockies. The description was hardly precise, and President Thomas Jefferson wanted to know what he had purchased. [5] In 1804 Jefferson commissioned Meriwether Lewis and William Clark to explore up the Missouri River, across the Rockies, and on to the Pacific Coast. This task was accomplished in 1806, and Louisiana became a better known place. However, only the northern third was explored. Jefferson still wanted to know what else was out west.

To further southern exploration, Lieutenant Zebulon M. Pike was sent to the central Rockies in 1806. The Pike expedition left St. Louis in July 1806 with fifteen men. They moved up the Arkansas River and entered southeastern Colorado on November 1, 1806. On November 23, the group reached the future site of Pueblo, where a crude shelter of logs was built while Pike and three others explored Fountain Creek adjacent to the peak that now bears his name. [6] On November 27, they tried to climb Pike's Peak but failed. The expedition continued up the Arkansas to the mouth of the Royal Gorge and crossed into South Park along Oil (Four Mile) Creek. Upon crossing this valley, they followed the South Platte westward back to the

Arkansas, near future Buena Vista. Pike wrongly assumed that these were the headwaters of the Yellowstone River. [7] Pike then marched downstream and ended up back at their old campsite near Royal Gorge, having gone in a circle. At the site of present-day Canon City, the party build a small blockhouse and Pike left two men and the party's horses. The expedition turned south, struggled up Grape Creek and into the Wet Mountain Valley. They crossed over the Sangre de Cristo range, by way of Sand Creek Pass (Music Pass), down Sand Creek and into the San Luis Valley. This passage was brutal for, while in the Wet Mountain Valley, winter struck with vengeance and these men suffered from cold and lack of food. Upon reaching the Rio Grande, near future Alamosa, Pike's little group built a sturdy stockade in January 1807. [8] Pike claimed he thought he was at the head of the Red River, the supposed international boundary. However, Spanish officials in New Mexico were less sure. A member of the party, Dr. Robinson, was sent on to Santa Fe, which caused the Spanish to send out an armed force to find the Americans. Pike's expedition was arrested and hauled into the New Mexican capital for questioning. Eventually, Pike and his men were returned to the United States where his journal was published, revealing for the first time the extent of Louisiana. This also was the first written record of southeastern Colorado and proved invaluable for later explorations. [9]

Pike's intrusion onto Spanish soil heralded the beginning of an American invasion into New Mexico. James Purcell had met Pike in New Mexico during 1807 and was trading with plains natives as early as 1805. He had been in South Park and found some gold flakes there. [10] Ezekial Williams was, however, the first man to trap the streams of South Park, working for two years in that area for Manual Lisa's Missouri Fur Company. Williams, in 1811, with a small group of men, worked the Upper Arkansas River, camping along that stream during the winter. By June 1813, the party moved into South Park, trapping high in the Mosquito Range. They then separated and found their way back to St. Louis. [11] Purcell and Williams opened the door for trapping in the central Rockies. Through their efforts, beaver fur trade flourished on a limited scale. Trappers sold their goods at the annual Taos fair or traded with natives using American goods acquired at St. Louis. [12] These first incursions caused Spanish officials to worry about American traders who could cause unrest among the New Mexican population. Expeditions were sent out from Santa Fe to find intruders. For instance, Pike's party was tracked by a Lieutenant Malgares (?) in 1806. [13] Individual trappers were left pretty much alone, for they did not bring commercial goods and did not generally get to Santa Fe. Taos, the center of fairs since the late 1700's, provided an outlet for native goods, American trappers' furs, and local New Mexican merchants. Comanche, Ute, Apache, New Mexicans, and others had gathered at Taos for years to exchange goods, buy things and enjoy famous "Taos Lightning," a potent liquor. Perhaps this was the first "rendezvous." The fair served an important role in bringing trade to poverty-stricken New Mexico. Here is where Americans learned of the profits to be made in this trade. Equally, this is where Spanish officials came to fear American intrusion, knowing that cheap trade goods could not be stopped once introduced. Further evidence of Spain's concern for "intruders" could be seen in 1819, when a small fortress was built along South Oak Creek to guard Sangre de Cristo Pass. The place was soon abandoned and turned over to the Comanche who roamed this region. [14] That Spanish fear was real is seen by the fact that in 1812 Robert McKnight was arrested and thrown into jail at Santa Fe for illegal trading. In 1815, August Chouteau and Jules de Mun came up the Arkansas River, then the Huerfano, across Sangre de Cristo Pass and into Taos with trade goods. Here they were arrested and their goods were confiscated by Spanish officials. [15]

All this changed in August 1821, when Spain was overthrown by Mexican revolutionaries led by Augustin de Iturbide. New Spain declared her independence and in January 1822 became the Republic of Mexico. New Mexican Governor Facundo Melgares promptly announced that the province would be opened to all traders. William Becknell of Missouri was already there and in business. [16] By fall 1822, trade into New Mexico began. Hugh Glenn and Jacob

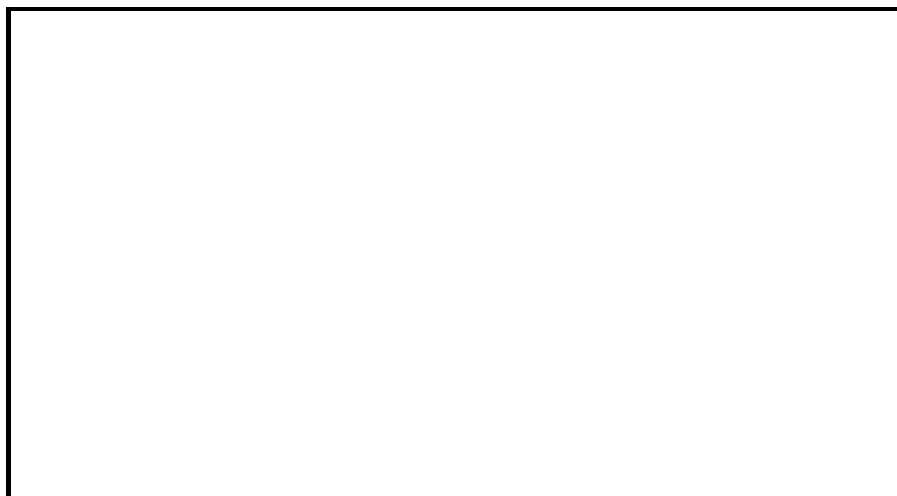
Fowler came to Taos that same fall, having followed the Huerfano River route over the Sangre de Cristos, down South Oak Creek and past the old Spanish fort. [17] From the days of the Taos fair to 1822, New Mexico saw a mixture of trappers, traders and natives all trying to break into her trade cycle. It took independence to accomplish the feat; and by 1822 not only was New Mexico booming, but so was the fur business to the north. Generally, fur trappers sought beaver pelts. These animals were demanded by Europe and Russia where they were made into fur hats. Due to upheaval caused by the Napoleonic Wars, Siberia's fur trade was interrupted and there was a fur shortage. The British, in Canada, were able to sell all they could trap. Naturally, American interest in the west was high. Pike's expedition sparked concern, and older trappers familiar with the Taos trade brought news to St. Louis that there were "unlimited" resources in the Rockies. As noted, first American fur trade was on the Upper Missouri River and was linked to St. Louis. However, by the 1820's this region was depleted and new areas were needed. Just as the Santa Fe trade began, an advertisement appeared in a St. Louis newspaper seeking: "Enterprising young men . . . to ascend the Missouri to its source there to be employed for one, two, or three years." [18] The advertiser, General William H. Ashley, formed a fur company that included all the "big" names in the business. William Sublette, Jim Bridger, Thomas "Broken Hand" Fitzpatrick, Jim Beckwourth, Jedediah Smith, Kit Carson, and others were part of the first Ashley expedition. These men explored the upper Missouri, then followed the Green River into Colorado and Utah. By doing so they established a fur trade in western Colorado. [19] For the first few years, most major fur activity was concentrated on Colorado's western slope. However, by the mid-1820's, better areas were "trapped out" and trappers began a serious invasion of the central Rockies and San Luis Valley.

James Ohio Pattie trapped in South Park by 1827, while Beckwourth was reportedly in the same area with a band of Crow Indians. [20] Equally, trappers from Taos moved into the San Luis Valley, over the Sangre de Cristo range, and onto the rivers of the Front Range like the Purgatoire, Huerfano, and Arkansas. One of the larger parties to work the region was the Robert Bean and Alexander Sinclair expedition of 1830. This group left Fort Smith, Arkansas, and marched along the Arkansas to Fountain Creek. Here they moved north past Pike's Peak, up the North Fork of the Platte River, and into South Park via Kenosha Pass. They trapped extensively and then went west to the Green River at Brown's Hole. After a season's trapping, the majority of this party went on to Taos via the upper Arkansas and through the San Luis Valley. [21] There were also other trappers in South Park. In 1830, Kit Carson joined Thomas Fitzpatrick at Taos from whence their group went into South Park where they trapped along the South Platte. Here they heard that a party led by John Gantt was in the area. Carson and four others joined the Gantt party and operated in both South and North Parks. Fur trappers worked South Park and the Arkansas Valley well into the late 1830's. Joseph Meek, Bill Sublette, "Old" Bill Williams, and Richens L. "Uncle Dick" Wootton all trapped Bayou Salado from 1835 to 1840. [22] By the early thirties, fur values were dropping. In 1833, the price of a pelt was only \$3.50 compared to \$6.00 just the year before. In addition to falling prices, it became more difficult to find fur in the west. Even worse, fashions in Europe changed. Silk hats were now the rage and beaver fur was no longer needed. [23] The demise of fur trapping led old timers to new fields. For example, in 1832, near the mouth of the Purgatoire River, John Gantt built several log houses enclosed by a stockade where a trade in buffalo robes began. He also sold liquor to the natives, thus beginning a whiskey trade on the Arkansas. [24] Gantt's enterprise was so successful that other trappers began similar operations. Ceran St. Vrain and William Bent built a "picket post" stockade on the north side of the Arkansas River about nine miles below the mouth of Fountain Creek in December 1832. The next year saw the beginning of a long and profitable trade with the Cheyenne. Faced with competition, Gantt imported New Mexican bricklayers from Taos and built an adobe fort. [25]



Bent's Old Fort, as reconstructed by the National Park Service, was a haven for travelers along the Santa Fe Trail. (Photo by F.J. Athearn)

The Bent-St. Vrain combine wiped out Gantt commercially, and he finally abandoned his adobe building in 1835. With that threat gone, the Bent Brothers moved seventy miles down the Arkansas to near the future Las Animas and built a famous adobe post, Bent's (Old) Fort. [26] Bent's Fort may have been the single most important factor in the development of Colorado's plains trade. Displaced trappers moved onto the prairies to hunt buffalo. There were millions of these animals along the Arkansas, and the demand for buffalo robes was rising both in the eastern United States and in Europe. Buffalo hunters and skinners used various posts and forts to buy goods, to trade with the natives, and to drop off robes. [27] Bent's Fort encouraged other settlements, too. Maurice Le Duc and William LeBlanc, at the behest of the Bent brothers, built an adobe trading post near Hardscrabble Creek called "Crow's Nest" or "Buzzard's Roost." New Mexicans called the place El Cuervo. Le Duc and his partners traded with Utes headed into the Wet Mountain Valley and dispensed potent "Taos Lightening." The post struggled along for years, but was hardly a major site. [28] More important was the establishment of a post along the Arkansas River, thirty miles east of Fountain Creek in 1843. El Pueblo, as the settlement was named, provided trade goods, locally grown vegetables and goat's milk. Hence it was also known as "Milk Fort." [29] The life of this "fort" ended on December 25, 1854, when Utes massacred its inhabitants. [30] As competition for the buffalo trade heated up, forts were built farther north along the South Platte River. Places like Lancaster Lupton's Fort Lupton, Louis Vasquez's establishment, Fort Vasquez, and other locations served the plains trade into the 1840's. However, the thrust of trade and commerce was on the Arkansas. Bent's Fort was the major settlement between Santa Fe and St. Louis, and it provided provisions, trade goods, liquor, a place to stay, and it was certainly a welcome sight for weary travelers from throughout the eastern plains.





Boggsville, founded in 1866 was the home of Kit Carson and J.W. Prowers, both famous pioneers in southeastern Colorado. (Photo by F.J. Athearn)

Bent's Fort was a success not only because of the buffalo robe trade. New Mexico's commercial ventures, beginning in 1822, blossomed into a serious trade system by the 1840's. To serve New Mexican traders, the Santa Fe Trail became the "road west." Leading from Missouri to Santa Fe, this route carried thousands of tons of goods, horses, and other items to be sold for Mexican silver at Santa Fe. The Santa Fe trail ran along the Arkansas River which provided water and forage for the lumbering oxen that dragged heavy wagonloads of goods. Near the mouth of the Purgatoire River, it then cut south, went over Raton Pass, and on to Santa Fe. Modern Interstate-25 roughly parallels the "Mountain Branch" of the Santa Fe Trail from Raton to Las Vegas, New Mexico. As time progressed and technology allowed larger wagons with longer ranges, a cutoff was blazed from near Fort Mann, Kansas, southwestward across the Cimarron River, and into the northeastern plains of New Mexico. The "Cimarron Cutoff" was shorter but more dangerous. There was no water across the barren prairies; Comanche and Apache natives created an ever-present threat; and, while the route took less time, losses were greater. [30] Nevertheless, traders were willing to take risks for New Mexico's commerce. By the mid-1840's, there was so much trade that the Arkansas River Valley could hardly be called "unsettled." Traders, trappers, and natives all congregated along the river, and before much longer permanent European settlement was going to occur. The end of the Santa Fe Trail came, coincidentally, at the same time the buffalo trade faded. Relations between Mexico and the United States soured over the Texas question, and by 1844 war seemed inevitable. The problem dated to 1836, when American colonists in Texas declared their settlements independent of Mexican rule and established the Republic of Texas. Mexico's government, under the rule of Antonio Lopez de Santa Anna, refused to recognize the new Republic and to allow trade with Texans. Texas, with greedy eyes cast upon New Mexico, considered invading Santa Fe in order to capture the Missouri trade. An expedition was attempted in 1843, but it was poorly managed and turned into rout when Mexican soldiers from Santa Fe broke it up. [31] The Santa Fe Trail trade was curtailed in 1846 when war occurred. The United States, having annexed Texas in 1844, went to war

when Mexico allegedly "invaded" the new state. New Mexico was captured in 1846 by Steven Watts Kearny's 500-man military expedition. Charles Bent was named governor, and Kit Carson became Lieutenant Governor. In 1847, a revolt occurred at Taos, and Bent was killed. However, the rebellion was put down and New Mexico was firmly in American hands. In 1848, Mexico surrendered and a peace was negotiated. The Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo provided that all lands west of Louisiana, including California, would be annexed to the United States. In one stroke, the nation grew to its present size. New Mexico became part of this change and the Santa Fe trade was no longer profitable because silver specie from Mexico was cut off. The mines of Chihuahua provided hard currency until 1848, and with this source gone, New Mexico was thrust back into poverty. [32]

Missouri merchants stopped sending goods to Santa Fe, and the Santa Fe Trail was abandoned. Only a few immigrants wandered into the Arkansas River Valley, most notably the so-called "Mormon Battalion" of 1847. [33] Perhaps a most telling sign of the end was the destruction of Bent's Fort in 1852. William Bent tried to sell the fort to the United States government. When negotiations dragged, Bent, in a fit of anger, loaded the place with black powder and blew it to pieces. Bent then moved down river and built a new fort near today's Lamar, Colorado. This became known as Bent's New Fort. [34] The Santa Fe Trail continued to be used, of course, but traffic was light. During the 1850's, immigrants seeking land used this route, and some traders found their way into the region. A few new settlements did spring up during this time. Charles Autobees established a *plaza* at the mouth of the Huerfano River in 1853, and Maurice Le Duc maintained a store at Hardscrabble; El Pueblo functioned until 1854. [35]

These places represented European settlement on the eastern plains. Yet, there was also the stirring of development in the San Luis Valley. By the early 1840's, Mexico's government provided land grants totalling millions of acres, and some small settlements arose along the Rio Grande. These *plazas* were the first agricultural towns in the future state of Colorado, and became important a few years later when gold was discovered in the Rockies. After the fur and buffalo trade died, there was a period filled by another type of development. Instead of men exploiting the region's natural resources, they explored it to discover what else was available.

CHAPTER III: NOTES

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Land of Contrast: A History of Southeast Colorado

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Chapter IV

THE NEW WEST IS EXPLORED

Zebulon Pike's journey into Colorado during 1806, was the prelude to numerous other expeditions that were to map, record, describe, and condemn this region. While the Pike expedition was supposedly for "science," it turned decidedly military when the group was captured by the Spanish. [1] Perhaps this experience soured the government on further efforts, because it was not until 1820 that the next American explorers found their way into southeastern Colorado.

The year 1819 proved important to western exploration, because the United States and Spain concluded a treaty that set, for the first time, definite boundaries for Louisiana. The Adams-Onís (or Transcontinental) Treaty provided that Florida's boundary would be set at about where it is today (Florida was Spanish) and that the southernmost boundary of Louisiana would be the Red River. This approximates the Texas-Oklahoma border of today. The northern boundaries were not established, since Louisiana and Canada were contiguous, and the western boundary continued to be the Continental Divide. [2] Congress intended, in 1819, to explore the Upper Missouri in order to supplement existing information. The so-called Yellowstone Expedition left St. Louis using a steamboat. However, the party got no farther than Council Bluffs, and, while in winter quarters, the men contracted scurvy. This incident ended the expedition, and Congress, irritated by mismanagement, withdrew its support. [3] The U.S. Army, sponsor of the Yellowstone Expedition, tried to salvage the situation by commissioning Lieutenant Stephen H. Long to lead a "quick" exploration to the Rockies to seek the source of the Platte River. The military overtones of the expedition were written off, and the Army sent Long to the west on a "scientific" mission. [4] Long assembled a party of nineteen men, including topographers; a cartographer; a zoologist; a physician, who also acted as botanist and geologist; a naturalist; and a painter. The party was horse mounted and made rapid progress. By June 1820, the group viewed the Rockies for the first time. Working along the South Platte River, they spotted what was modestly named Long's Peak after the group's leader. [5] As the expedition approached and passed the sites of future Greeley and Denver, they found the area in use by plains natives encamped along the rivers. There were Arapaho camps along Cherry Creek, and Long noted that the smoke rising from the valley obscured the mountains. This was the first recorded case of Denver's famous air pollution. [6] Long's party followed Monument Creek over Monument (Palmer) Divide and to the site of Colorado Springs. Here Edwin James, the party's physician, with six other expedition members, decided to climb what they called Grand Peak. The little group broke up, and four remained at the base, while James ascended the peak with a barometer to make altitude measurements. He calculated the peak at 3,000 feet, but forgot to include the fact that he was well above sea level. The altitude is actually 14,110 feet. [7] To honor this feat, and the fact that these men were the first Europeans to have climbed the peak, this mountain was named James Peak. However, the name was later changed to Pike's Peak, and Dr. James was relegated to a mountain near Rollinsville, Colorado. [8]

After conquering Pike's Peak, the Long party moved to the Arkansas River Valley and

followed that stream westward toward the Grand Canyon of the Arkansas (later called the "Royal Gorge"), using the same path that Pike had blazed fourteen years earlier. The expedition then turned and moved east down river where Long split his team into two parties. One group was to find its way back to Ft. Smith, Arkansas, under the leadership of Captain John R. Bell. Major Long and the rest of the party went south in search of the elusive Red River. [9] Long's men crossed the Purgatoire River and then the Cimarron River, finally coming to a large watercourse they assumed was the Red. They traced the stream east and found that it emptied into the Arkansas. They were following the Canadian, not the Red. [10] The Long group then followed the Arkansas back to Fort Smith where, in September, the party was reunited having failed to find the Red River, the headwaters of the Platte, or the source of the Arkansas. The mission was not a total failure, because, for the first time, reasonable accurate maps were drawn, and descriptions of the flora and fauna, with details such as altitude measurements, were made. [11] Long's scientific contributions were modest, but the greatest revelation was that Long considered the plains and mountains of the west a "Great American Desert." This phrase, more than any other, caused the west to be "written off" for many years. Long described the region thus: ". . . I do not hesitate in giving the opinion, that it is almost wholly unfit for cultivation and, of course, uninhabitable by a people depending upon agriculture for their subsistence . . ." [12] The condemnation of the plains by Long had long-lasting consequences. Prospective settlers by-passed this "barren land" in search of more fertile places like Oregon or California. Long's remarks confirmed what Pike had thought about the region, and for the next twenty years it was abandoned to natives, fur trappers, and buffalo hunters.

The next travelers in the area were visitors on their way elsewhere. Dr. F.A. Wislizenus visited the Arkansas Valley in 1839, where he refers to "Fort Puebla," a small trading post five miles [sic] west of Bent's (Old) Fort. The Wislizenus journey went from the Arkansas, over the Rockies, across Brown's Park, and on into California. [13] Other travelers included Thomas Jefferson Farnham, who also described "El Puebla" on his journey west to Oregon. In 1846, Francis Parkman was in the region, and he noted that several of the local fur establishments, particularly Fort St. Vrain and Fort Lupton, were falling into ruin. [14]

The next officially sponsored expedition into southeastern Colorado came in the form of John C. Fremont's 1844 search for a new California passage. Fremont was one of the west's more colorful characters. He was the son-in-law of Thomas Hart Benton, Senator from Missouri. Benton was an expansionist, who believed the West should be settled and developed. He further thought that the region must be in the hands of the United States, not Mexico. Benton personified the concept of Manifest Destiny. That is, it was America's "destiny" to rule from sea to sea and those who opposed such expansion would be crushed. [15] From 1842 to 1848, Fremont appeared five times in what became Colorado. The 1842 expedition employed Kit Carson as its guide, and he traveled up the Platte River to Fort St. Vrain with the Fremont party. From here they traveled to Fort Laramie and then to South Pass, Wyoming. The effort, having yielded little new, was renewed in the spring of 1843 when Fremont, guided by Carson and Thomas "Broken Hand" Fitzpatrick, searched the Front Range for a passage through the Rockies. [16] The 1843 party explored the Cache la Poudre River canyon, marched across the Medicine Bow Mountains, and hit the Oregon Trail in Wyoming. From here Fremont went west to the Great Salt Lake and then northwest into the Columbia River basin, ending up at Fort Vancouver. He then went south into California for the winter. When the Sierra Nevada had cleared of snow, Fremont returned east, traversing the central Rockies by way of Brown's, North, Middle and South Parks, and then down the Arkansas River to Bent's Fort. [17] Fremont's explorations added to the body of knowledge about the west and proved that the central Rockies did not appear to provide an easy passage westward. Increased American interest in California kept the U.S. Army's Corps of Topographic Engineers busy. With James Polk's election to the Presidency in 1844, Fremont had no problem getting permission for another expedition. Polk, after all, had been elected on an

avowed platform of expansion and Manifest Destiny. [18] The next Fremont excursion took him down the Santa Fe Trail, again guided by Kit Carson, along the Arkansas River, and then over the Rockies at today's Fremont Pass, near modern Leadville, Colorado. From here he followed the White River into Utah and then traveled on to California across the Great Basin and the Sierras. [19] At the same time Fremont was crossing the Continental Divide, Stephen Watts Kearny commanded a military reconnaissance mission from Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, to Fort Laramie, Wyoming, then to South Pass, back to Fort Laramie, and finally south to Bent's Fort on the Arkansas. From here, Kearny marched back to Leavenworth. The military purposes of the party were to seek paths into New Mexico in case war should erupt between Mexico and the United States. Other than that, the expedition provided no new knowledge of the region and indicated that southeastern Colorado was just a place to pass through on the way to other locations. [20]

The next explorers came in 1846 when forty-three Mormons learned that they were well ahead of the main body of emigrants on their way to the Great Salt Lake. Since the rest of the group was to winter at Council Bluffs, Iowa, this little party was sent to the Arkansas River Valley near Fort Pueblo, to spend the winter. Here they were joined by the so-called "Mormon Battalion," a party of soldiers who had enlisted in the Army during the Mexican War and were injured or sick. They were shipped from New Mexico to the El Pueblo area to recover. In the spring of 1847, the various Mormons continued west and went on to Salt Lake. [21]

John C. Fremont appeared once again in 1848. This time Fremont was a private citizen, having left the Army at the end of the Mexican War. This trip was for the purpose of finding a railway route for the proposed transcontinental railroad that his father-in-law, Thomas Hart Benton, was pushing. The concept of a railroad to span the continent developed during the early 1840's as California and Oregon were settled. The Atlantic and Pacific Coasts were separated by a vast land with few roads and no manner in which to move quickly. After the Mexican War, with the nation at peace, interest in a railroad again surfaced. Fremont, in 1848, was privately commissioned to explore for a practical route to the Pacific Coast. Businessmen from St. Louis, greatly interested in this project, financed an expedition from that city to California. With thirty-three men, the "Pathfinder" followed the Arkansas River to Bent's Fort (and El Pueblo) where he hoped to engage his favorite guide, Kit Carson. Finding that Carson was in New Mexico, Fremont hired "Old" Bill Williams, a long-time fur trapper. [22] Despite Williams' warning of an early winter, Fremont chose to press on. His party marched up Hardscrabble Creek, over the Sangre de Cristos at Mosca Pass, in the middle of winter, without any difficulties. They passed into the San Luis Valley and then headed toward the San Juans, by way of the Rio Grande valley. As the party reached the 12,000-foot level, the snows deepened, and, before they reached the divide, Williams took a wrong turn. Trapped and starving, Fremont sent four men south to New Mexico for help. [23] After sixteen days waiting, Fremont proceeded down river, taking with him four men and leaving the rest to fend for themselves. On the way down, he found three of the four he had sent out earlier still alive. Fremont and his little group made it into Taos on borrowed horses (their animals had long since died) where they formed a relief party back to the San Juans. In the end eleven men died, all the expedition's animals were lost, and all equipment was destroyed. The 1848 Fremont Expedition represented the single greatest disaster in the exploration of the Rockies. No group ever suffered from such a defeat, and no other expedition lost as many men at one time.

The search for a transcontinental railroad route continued into the 1850's. National politics were such that a railroad was now feasible. The Compromise of 1850 had partly defused a vicious fight over slavery in the new states. That battle was brought on by the huge land acquisitions of the Mexican War. The South wanted these new lands open to slavery, while the North opposed the spread of "the Peculiar Institution." Crisis was averted in 1850, when

New Mexico Territory was created and permitted slavery. California became a "free" state, and Utah Territory was also "free" and very Mormon. New Mexico Territory extended to the Arkansas River on the north and to the modern-day California border on the west. The eastern boundary was today's Texas-New Mexico state line, and the southern edge approximated today's Mexican border. Hence, both southeastern Colorado and the San Luis Valley were in New Mexico Territory.

Since the slavery matter was quiet, Congress decided, in 1853, to commission a series of surveys for possible transcontinental railway routes. The primary question was not only which route was the "easiest," but where it would be located. Southern interests demanded New Orleans to Los Angeles, while northern businessmen wanted from St. Paul to Seattle. St. Louis merchants needed a route from their city to San Francisco by way of the Central Rockies. [24]

In 1853, surveys by the U.S. Army Corps of Topographical Engineers began. The northern route was surveyed and approximates today's Northern Pacific. A north-central line was mapped across Wyoming and subsequently became the Transcontinental Railroad (Union Pacific). A southernmost line was traced from New Orleans and later became the Southern Pacific. North of the New Orleans route another survey occurred, and it ran from Atchison, Kansas, to Los Angeles by way of Albuquerque and the future Phoenix. This became the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe in the 1880s. [25] A central Rockies route was surveyed by Captain John Williams Gunnison in 1853. This expedition was to follow the thirty-ninth parallel from St. Louis to the West Coast. A team of thirty scientific men, with an escort of thirty dragoons, along with eighteen wagons, an instrument wagon, and an ambulance, made their way along the Arkansas River to Bent's Fort. From here the party crossed the Sangre de Cristos at La Veta Pass and proceeded through the San Luis Valley, westward to Cochetopa Pass, which turned out to be a far easier passage than the one attempted by Fremont in 1848. [26] Once into the Gunnison River Valley, the surveyors went west through the Black Canyon of the Gunnison, up to the Grand (Colorado) River and emerged at the future site of Grand Junction, Colorado. Gunnison's party then proceeded down the Grand into Utah where, at Sevier Lake, on October 26, 1853, the men were attacked by Paiute natives. Seven of the expedition were killed, including Captain Gunnison. [27] Lieutenant E.J. Beckwith assumed command and led the group into Salt Lake City. From here the expedition returned east the next year. While the Gunnison expedition ended in disaster, it proved that a railway through the Rockies was feasible, but also extremely expensive. Gunnison's work noted and mapped, for the first time, the San Luis Valley, Cochetopa Pass, and the interior of western Colorado. The survey was proved useful in the 1880's when the Denver and Rio Grande Railroad built its first narrow gauge line from Denver to Salt Lake City nearly along the route determined by Gunnison. [28]

Not to be outdone, John C. Fremont, of the famous 1848 expedition, put together a trip to find a railway route to the West Coast that would outrival those of the Topographic Corps of Engineers. This was Fremont's fifth, and last, excursion to the West. Fremont traced Gunnison's steps almost exactly, adding absolutely no new knowledge. However, he did prove that a route was feasible during the winter because that was when he chose to survey. The Central Rockies, at least, could be penetrated in snow season. [29]

By 1854, the crisis over slavery arose once again. Sectional differences destroyed the Compromise of 1850 when the territory of Nebraska was carved out of old Louisiana. Again, the Union faced the decision of whether to permit slavery or not. Introduced in January 1854, by Stephen A. Douglas, the Nebraska Territorial Bill caused a storm. Southern interests, naturally, assumed that this new land would be "slave," while northerners thought that it would not. To resolve this crisis, the two territories of Kansas and Nebraska were created in order to provide a "free" territory (Nebraska) and a "slave" territory (Kansas). Unfortunately,

Kansas was given the choice of free or slave, and the split among the population caused an internal civil war. [30] With the nation's attention turned on Nebraska, the thought of a Transcontinental Railroad evaporated. There was no possibility of such a monumental enterprise being attempted at this time. By 1861, the nation was plunged into Civil War, with brother fighting brother, family against family. The west would have to await the outcome.

CHAPTER IV: NOTES

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Land of Contrast: A History of Southeast Colorado

BLM Cultural Resources Series (Colorado: No. 17)



Chapter V

EARLY AGRICULTURAL SETTLEMENT

The Mexican Revolution of 1821 destroyed old land tenure patterns in New Mexico because Spanish law became Mexican regulation. The Mexican government, when it drew up a new constitution, changed some provisions for land acquisition through settlement. Much of the government's concern revolved around the Texas question. Texas declared its independence in 1836 and promptly cast greedy eyes on New Mexico, where the Santa Fe Trail trade was perceived as quite wealthy. Mexico's fears about Texas were not totally unfounded. Yet, long before Texans sought independence, Mexico City was deeply concerned about other Americans. Fur traders made regular appearances at Taos while, of course, American traders found their way into Santa Fe from Missouri. Mexico, concerned for the safety of her northern flank, decided, in the early 1830's, to settle upper parts of New Mexico. Records show that first land grants made in what is presently Colorado were along the Conejos River. Some fifty families were conveyed land, and for ten years they grazed a few sheep but never settled. [1] That grant languished until 1842 when Seledon Valdes and several other grantees petitioned for revalidation. Apparently, the original grant papers were lost. In October 1842, Juez (Justice) Cornelio Vigil, at Taos, actually went to a site along the Conejos called San Francisco de Padua where eighty-four families from Taos, El Rito, Rio Arriba, Rio Colorado, Abiquiu and other northern New Mexican villages had been given lands. [2] This newer grant was made in the names of Julian Gallegos and Antonio Martinez and was called Conejos. The regrant was huge, extending from the Sangre de Cristo Mountains, on the east, southward to the Rio Grande, to San Antonio Peak, and then north to the La Garita Mountains. The land subsequently became Conejos County, and represents one of the largest nonsurveyed areas in this state. During the 1840's, settlers tried to raise corn and beans on their shares, but, because of Ute raiding and extreme isolation from New Mexico, results were less than encouraging. [3] The Mexican War changed land status in the San Luis Valley, for Mexican grants were no longer valid. Charles Bent, Governor of New Mexico in 1846, agreed to uphold existing claims. However, this did not last because land claims adjudication courts were established in the 1850's to straighten out older Mexican land grants. Just before the war, grants were issued to Stephen Luis Lee (Sangre de Cristo Grant), Carlos Beaubien (Baubien-Miranda Grant), and several other groups such as the Vigil-St. Vrain Grant and the Maxwell Grant, the latter two being in Raton Basin. [4]

The Sangre de Cristo Grant lay east of the Rio Grande and was one of the largest such land claims in Colorado. There were no settlements until 1848, when George Gold (or Gould) tried to establish a town along the Costilla River. Being in trespass, he was promptly evicted by New Mexicans, and the San Luis Valley was again without settlement. However, 1849 saw a new village founded near present-day Garcia, Colorado. This place was called the Plaza de los Manzanares. The name was changed when Garcia got a post office a few years later. [5] This first step toward settlement led to further efforts. Several events helped. First, a treaty was signed with the Utes in 1849 and these natives now allowed New Mexicans to settle unmolested. Next, merchants sensed an oncoming "land boom" and decided to set up stores catering to settlers. Since the Utes were out of the way, a village of crude *jacales*

(huts) appeared along the Costilla, followed in 1851 by some log cabins and a general store run by Ferdinand Meyer. [6] The little communities of San Luis and San Pedro represented the first permanent agricultural settlements in southeast Colorado and certainly in the San Luis Valley. These places were based on a Spanish classic "plaza" concept, where homes were built around a central square with spaces reserved for governmental buildings and churches. From the plazas, homesteaders went to their fields during the day and returned at night. The fields were divided in a long, narrow fashion and were semi-communal in nature. There was also a common pasture area for animals to graze. This settlement pattern was a duplicate of New Mexican homesteading in the 1600's. The only difference was that there were hostile Utes instead of sedentary Pueblo natives in the San Luis Valley. By 1851, a permanent European settlement was in operation (San Luis), and farming was an ongoing enterprise. To provide water for an arid environment *acequias*, or irrigation ditches, were dug. The first recorded water rights (in Colorado) date from April 10, 1852, and this became known as the San Luis People's Ditch. [7] For the first time, Colorado's dry soil was irrigated, a harbinger of things to come. By 1852, the San Pedro Ditch was built, with the Acequia Madre Ditch following. The Montez Ditch was finished in 1853, the Vallejos and Manzanares Ditches in 1854; then the Acequiacita Ditch in 1855. These efforts at farming were not only the earliest in southeast Colorado, but were among the most successful anywhere. [8]

The 1851 settlements spurred further development. For instance, by August 1854, a permanent settlement under the leadership of Jose Maria Jaquez was founded along the Conejos River. This village was called El Cedro Redondo. Meanwhile, Lafayette Head brought a group of some fifty families from Abiquiu, New Mexico, to the Conejos where they built Plaza de Guadalupe. [9] The Conejos Grant became a beehive of activity. By 1854, Servilleta was founded, Mogote appeared in that same year, and ditches such as the Guadalupe Main Ditch and Head's Mill Ditch were in operation by 1855. Perhaps the most influential settler of the time was Lafayette Head.

A Missouri native, Head came to Santa Fe during the Mexican War. He operated a store at Abiquiu where he was also Indian Agent. He was a member of the New Mexico Territorial Legislature by 1853, and he represented the claimants of the 1842 Conejos Grant. Head, as Indian Agent, built the Conejos Ute Agency and ran its varied facilities, such as the general store, stables, and school. The Utes were a continual problem to New Mexican settlers. Finally, in 1852, the United States government authorized the establishment of a fort just off the Sangre de Cristo Pass trail, about fifty miles west of the Conejos settlements. [10] Fort Massachusetts was the home of Edwin V. Sumner's cavalry. It contained barracks, a blacksmith, a kitchen, officers quarters, and all the "amenities of civilization." However, the fort was badly placed, could never obtain sufficient supplies, and it was isolated from most other settlements. From October 1853 to April 1854, the place was unoccupied due to winter. Lieutenant Colonel Horace Brooks, the commander, saw his troops in action during late spring of 1854. Ute raiders along the Rio Grande caused the U.S. Army to chase these natives, and the troops actually caught a group of Utes near Raton Pass, inflicting serious damage. [11] The summer of that same year saw an outbreak of smallpox among Mouache Utes that decimated the tribe. The natives blamed contaminated goods on the government, and in retribution massacred the settlers at Fort Pueblo on Christmas Day, 1854. They then moved into the San Luis Valley, killed some settlers at Costilla, and raided the area's livestock. [12] February 1855, saw a punitive expedition under Thomas Fauntleroy arrive from Fort Union, New Mexico; he led his troops to Fort Massachusetts. This group chased some 150 Utes and Jicarilla Apache north across the valley catching them north of Poncha Pass on March 23, 1855. After several other skirmishes, a decisive battle occurred in April where forty natives were killed. The troops then retreated to Fort Massachusetts, glorying in their victory. Meanwhile, Guadalupe Plaza was raided, but the Ute were driven off. [13] The rest of 1855 was relatively peaceful, and communities continued to grow along the various

watercourses. The next several years remained calm, the Ute having been driven back deep into the San Juans. Agriculture continued to develop, with new canals dug and little settlements built throughout the lower San Luis Valley. The "older" places like San Luis and Guadalupe were so strong that in 1856 a church was built. Equally, Conejos, which already had an adobe church, was quite healthy. The first mass was offered during that year in the uncompleted shell of the new Conejos church. [14]

The Catholic religion, dominant in the San Luis Valley, derived from New Mexican Catholicism which, in turn, dated back to 1598 and the conquest of that province. New Mexican settlers brought their religion with them and the San Luis Valley saw numerous churches built during the 1850's. The parish became part of the Colorado mission in 1860 and was administered by Joseph E. Machebeuf. Later, in 1868, Colorado's Catholic churches were separated from New Mexico and were operated with Utah's parishes. One feature of this religion that came to the San Luis Valley early was los hermanos Penitentes, of just the Penitentes. [15] This group was primarily from northern New Mexico, and one of the first Penitente organizations, dating from 1859, was founded at Chama, New Mexico. The Penitentes were lay brothers who expiated their sins through self-flagellation, using methods such as being bound to wooden crosses. They met in buildings called *moradas* that were generally secretly built and maintained. The Penitentes were regarded by the Church as extremists who should be stopped, primarily because of their violent practices. However, despite efforts of men like the famous Bishop Lamy of New Mexico, the Penitentes survived and still practice their religion today. Many *moradas* are found in Conejos, Costilla, Alamosa, and Saguache Counties; they are presently in use. [16]

Agriculture was well established by the late 1850's. Stores in Costilla, San Luis, and Conejos all provided "imported" goods to settlers, who, in turn, sold grains, corn, and other staples to northern New Mexico's population. There was virtually no northern trade in Colorado, for there were no towns outside the valley. However, by 1858 the situation was to change. Gold was discovered in the Dry Creek and Cherry Creek drainages near Denver in 1858. These small placers resulted in a gold rush that brought an alleged 100,000 people to the area now called Colorado. While there was no gold rush in the San Luis Valley, there was a boom. Since there was absolutely no agriculture north of the valley, and with thousands of gold seekers pouring into the region, San Luis Valley farmers were in an excellent position to provide food and grains to the hungry miners. At first, food was shipped across the plains from Missouri and Kansas into the Denver area. However, this process was not only extremely expensive, but it also limited the types of foods available. Flour, grain, beans, corn, and other staples that would not easily rot could be shipped, but fresh meat, vegetables, and milk had to be obtained locally. The San Luis Valley was not only closer to Denver, but it could provide nearly anything the "59ers" needed. To accommodate this sudden growth, flour mills were built at Costilla and other locations near settlements in the valley. Albert D. Richardson, noted journalist, visited the area in 1859 and stated that F.W. Posthoff, at Costilla, had a milling operation of the "Mexican type." The coarse ground flour produced was not well suited to the new Denver market, and soon other businessmen arrived. [17] Ceran St. Vrain, late of the fur trade, and H.E. Easterday, who operated a trading post at Taos, built a new mill at San Luis in 1860. April of that year saw advertisements in the *Rocky Mountain News* for "American Mill Flour." [18] Valley farmers hauled grains into San Luis and Costilla for milling, and, as traffic increased so did San Luis' population. San Luis emerged as the dominant town in the valley, thanks to its agricultural efforts. The village petitioned for a post office, and its name was changed from Culebra (Snake) to San Luis. Easterday, doing well, imported a "Negro woman" to do housework. This was the first recorded case of a black slave being in southeast Colorado. [19]

Slavery was not new or unusual to the settlers of the valley, for Navajo and Apache natives were often enslaved after capture. This tradition was New Mexican in origin and dated from

the mid-1700's when captured raiding natives became booty for the Spanish. Abiquiu was one of the major centers for this slave trade, and as settlers moved into the San Luis Valley they brought with them native servants and workers. Even during the 1850's the slave business went on. Raids were conducted by Utes and Apaches into Navajo territory for the purpose of obtaining young boys and girls who would become slaves. New Mexican settlers, needing cash, would also raid for slaves. The poorer farmers would conduct attacks, knowing that a good captive could bring up to \$500. These slaves were used as household domestics but not usually for hard labor. In 1865 Lafayette Head, Ute Agent, was required to list native "servants" in the valley, and he came up with some 88 in Conejos County alone. What was unusual was that many were Ute. Costilla County listed 65 slaves, with other areas reporting "native servants" at fewer numbers.

As the gold rush to the north progressed, agriculture benefited in the San Luis Valley. Towns and villages continued to be established and plazas cropped up on a regular basis. For instance, Fort Massachusetts was abandoned in 1858, and a new post, Fort Garland, was established at the northern end of the Sangre de Cristo grant, along Ute Creek, to protect the valley's settlers and to keep the passes over the Sangre de Cristos open year round. A town grew up around Fort Garland; settlers grew vegetables to sell at the fort. At the base of Sierra Blanca, the town of Zapata was established in 1864, while new places were founded farther north and east of Culebra Creek. Jesus Valdez and Luis Montoya settled on San Francisco Creek near present-day Del Norte in 1858, while Domacio Espinoza, Crescencio Torrez, J. Mateo Romero, and Susan Trujillo founded a town along La Garita Creek. The original settlement was west of today's La Garita. The Espinosa family settled along Carnero Creek, grazing sheep and cattle, during 1859. [21] Spring of that same year saw fourteen families from the Conejos area build a plaza near Del Norte and call it La Loma de San Jose. From this village came a number of smaller places like Valdes (Seven-Mile) Plaza and Luzero Plaza. Naturally, ditches were dug from these plazas and agriculture flourished. The Silva Ditch was a major enterprise that was followed by forty other similar irrigation projects within a few years [22]

While the San Luis Valley progressed nicely, events on the eastern plains caused more and more settlement along the Arkansas River and its tributaries. One of the earliest villages, El Pueblo or Fort Pueblo, was wiped out in 1854. Bent's Fort disappeared as did the fur trade. What then caused trappers, traders, and settlers to stay? Similar to the San Luis Valley, the Mexican government was worried about both Texan and American intrusions into New Mexico. As in the Valley, that government granted large tracts of land for settlement, based upon the premise that occupation equaled ownership. In 1843, Ceran St. Vrain (of fur trade fame), and Cornelio Vigil obtained a grant along the Huerfano River, east of future Walsenburg. The Vigil-St. Vrain Grant was not huge in the style of the San Luis grants, but it was in a well-watered area. However, little development occurred, and no permanent settlements were founded. [23] Of more interest was a giant grant made to Carlos Beaubien and Guadalupe Miranda, also in 1843. This land extended from the Culebra Mountains on the west, eastward along the Purgatoire River to near modern-day Trinidad. The grant became known as the Maxwell Grant when Lucien Maxwell, Beubien's son-in-law took over control of the tract in later years. [24] The other land grant of note was a tract called the Nolan Grant that was south and east of present-day Pueblo, Colorado. This grant was also supposed to be settled and developed, but that never took place. As happened in the San Luis Valley, the various Mexican grants on the eastern plains were turned over to the American government in 1848 and claims to these grants were adjudicated in 1853 by Claims Courts. The Maxwell Grant was upheld in full while the Nolan and Vigil-St. Vrain Grants were reduced. The Conejos Grant remained in court for years, while the Sangre de Cristo Grant was confirmed. [25]

The 1850's on the eastern plains was a time of retrenchment for most settlers and residents.

The fur and buffalo trade died, and California or Oregon bound travelers went north along the Oregon Trail, leaving southeastern Colorado to the natives. The Santa Fe Trail trade also ended with the annexation of New Mexico, and there was simply little incentive for settlers to remain. Yet a few hardy souls stayed on in the Raton Basin-Arkansas River area. Maurice Le Duc and Mathew Kinkead's fur post on Hardscrabble Creek struggled along, trading with the Utes and a few die-hard fur trappers. Of course, Fort Pueblo was in business until 1854 while Bent's (New) Fort served the lower Arkansas River Valley. Charles Autobees established a plaza in 1853 at the mouth of the Huerfano River and proceeded to farm and ranch. [26] During the 1850's, little plazas were founded along the Purgatoire River, too. These places, generally without names, were agricultural settlements that were subsistence in nature and did not provide much export trade. They were usually unorganized, had no governmental functions, and probably had no churches or other infrastructure. Yet these places became the core towns that sprang up during the 1860's in this region. [27]

The 1850's were generally a "dead" period for Colorado, but the San Luis Valley and, to a lesser extent, the Raton Basin saw development, progress, permanent settlement and a solid agricultural foundation within a ten-year period. Such settlement patterns were unusual for Colorado and represent a unique chapter in this era. The late 1850's were times of dramatic and drastic change, not only for the Raton Basin, but also for the San Luis Valley. Not only did the gold rush to Pike's Peak affect southeast Colorado, but so did problems with Ute natives in the Valley, pressures from miners in the San Juans, changes in land tenure patterns, and the invasion of Anglo-American society to a land that was predominantly Spanish in origin.

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Chapter XI

PIKE'S PEAK OR BUST

The year 1858 proved a watershed in Colorado's history, for at that time gold was found in large enough quantities to spark what was called the Colorado "Gold Rush." Discoveries of small amounts of placer gold in Cherry and Dry Creeks, at the base of the Rockies, near the Platte River Valley, caused a depression-ridden nation to hope for another boom the size of California's 1849 Gold Rush. Gold was not found by wandering fur trappers or natives, although they certainly knew about the strange glittering metal, but rather by veteran placer miners from Georgia. Three brothers named Russell went from the Arkansas River (Santa Fe Trail) north to Dry Creek, where in July 1858 they found "good diggings." Based on the meager gold they found, promoters in Kansas and Missouri "boomed" the Russells' find into the Pike's Peak Gold Rush. A nationwide depression, beginning in 1853, caused merchants at these western "ports" to lose business. The Oregon Trail was virtually dead as was the Santa Fe Trail. Upon hearing of "gold" in Pike's Peak country, they promptly began a propaganda campaign aimed at luring Americans into the far west. [1] Russells' success was soon followed by others. John Easter, a Lawrence, Kansas butcher, went to Pike's Peak country by way of the Arkansas River Valley, as had the Russell party. This little group tried panning around Pike's Peak and found nothing. They went into South Park with no luck, and just as the party was ready to turn south, news of Cherry Creek came forth. The Easter expedition rushed for that region and began placer operations. Like the Russell group, the Easter men (also called the Lawrence party) found some gold, but it was hardly a bonanza. Nevertheless, some die-hards stayed for the winter in 1858 and staked out town sites. Montana City died quickly, but St. Charles town lived a little longer. Across from it arose the village of Auraria. In the end, the cities were combined and Denver erected. However, gold at Cherry and Dry Creeks soon ran out, and miners began working upstream toward the mountains, searching for a main source of gold. [2]

Clear Creek was the nearest canyon, and soon placer miners were working up and down that drainage. Gold was found, but not in paying quantities. Cries of "humbug" and fraud were heard from the canyons of Pike's Peak. Thousands who rushed to Colorado soon learned that there was little gold and that living conditions were horrible, at best. Nevertheless, persistent gold seekers aspired to find the "mother lode." George A. Jackson, in 1859, discovered large quantities of ore along Clear Creek. Central City was founded a mile west of the discovery. Meanwhile, miners found "color" in Boulder Canyon during July 1859. The significance of these finds cannot be underestimated, for they preserved a flagging gold rush. Discouraged miners were leaving by May 1859, and Jackson's claims revived the "boom." Naturally, merchants in Kansas and Missouri cashed in by issuing "guides" to the goldfields, describing the fastest, cheapest, or easiest way to "Pike's Peak." Promoters who issued these often grossly misinformed guides touted the virtues of their cities as the place to outfit for the journey. [3]

During 1859, miners spread out into the mountains, emulating Jackson's experience and hoping to find another place like Clear Creek. They struggled their ways over the Continental

Divide and on to the Blue River where placer gold was mined. Of more interest were hundreds of miners who moved over Kenosha Pass, or followed the South Platte River through Eleven Mile Canyon, into South Park. South Park's mining history dates from June 1859 when J.B. Kennedy, J.L. Shank and D.M. Slaughter went to the park to pan for gold. However, they were driven off by hostile Utes who killed several members of the party on July 9, 1859, near what became known as Deadman's Gulch at Kenosha Pass. [4] The next mining attempt was made in late July 1859, and the party consisted of W.J. Curtice, Clark Chambers, M.V. Spillard, T. Cassaday, J. Merrill, Catesby Dale, William Holman and Earl Hamilton, who entered the park by way of Kenosha Pass. They found Tarryall Creek and proceeded to work that drainage. Holman staked out a claim and called the place "Pound Diggings." News of the Tarryall find caused excitement along Clear Creek, and a rush ensued. Soon Tarryall was overcrowded and latecomers were sent packing. Disgruntled prospectors found deposits along Beaver Creek on August 19, 1859. A settlement called "Graball," in reference to stingy miners at Tarryall, was founded. The name was later changed to Fairplay, and it soon became the largest town in South Park. [5] As South Park became famous, more and more prospectors flooded the region. A group of seven men, led by "Buckskin" Joe Higganbottom, of fur trade fame, found gold eight miles south of Fairplay, while four other men formed the "Snow Blind District of Gilpin Gulch" at the foot of Mount Lincoln. [6] Winter weather drove out all but the most determined, and South Park awaited the spring thaw. The new year, 1860, saw more activity in the park. By late spring the mining camps of Tarryall, Fairplay, Buckskin Joe and others were in full operation. With the greatest optimism, "cities" were planned. W. J. Holman laid out Tarryall City, while Earl Hamilton platted Hamilton City next to Tarryall. [7] Hamilton City boasted a drug store, six groceries, a lawyer, two doctors, a meat market, two blacksmiths, three boarding houses, a hotel, five stock ranches, the recorder's office, a justice of the peace, and a St. Vrain-Easterday provision store. The town had thirty-five finished buildings with thirty more "on the way." [8] Tarryall City boasted three hundred buildings (surely exaggerated) in the spring of 1860 with local miners panning "\$100 per day" in gold. Tarryall and Hamilton had rivals, such as Jefferson City, which claimed a population of 2,000. Equally, Buckskin Joe promoters alleged 2,000 miners were crammed into Buckskin Gulch. [9]

As the park filled, a few unhappy miners crossed the Mosquito Range into the Upper Arkansas Valley. This activity centered around Mount Massive, where a little gold was found, but not enough to excite a rush. On April 25, 1860, Abe Lee found "color" at California Gulch, and a stampede to the Arkansas occurred. By summer, 5,000 miners filled the area and were busily placer mining every stream they could find. Among first arrivals were Samuel Kellogg, Horace A.W. Tabor and his wife Augusta. [10] The California Gulch boom caused a town site to be laid out, and Oro City arose. With the better claims paying \$50,000 or \$60,000 a year, the place was touted as the "great Camp of Colorado," an overly optimistic view of gold mining at this time. However, this activity in the central Rockies did have a positive effect throughout the region. [11]

Not only were towns created where miners appeared, but materials needed for building and development were not readily found. Lumber, for instance, was simply not available. First settlers cut down every tree in sight for cabins, buildings and mines. Soon sawmills were imported from Missouri or Kansas, and milled lumber became available. Then, wooden houses, stores, warehouses, sluices, flumes, and other structures were erected using local trees. Within a few years the hillsides were decimated, and virtually all original growth was gone. Early photographs of mining towns depict barren hillsides with rivulets of erosion beginning. Clearly, mining booms were hard on the environment. [12] In addition to destroying timber, mining camps were unsanitary, with raw sewage dumped into creeks and garbage tossed into the streets. Disease was common, primarily thanks to filthy conditions. Fire was an ever-present threat because of all wooden buildings. In its earliest stages, nearly every mining town was wiped out by a conflagration, and then it was rebuilt with more "fire

resistant" materials, such as brick or rock. [13]

Towns needed roads, and transportation paths were carved up canyons and along waterways, always following the path of least resistance. Later, railroads used the same trails, as did paved highways in the early twentieth century. The early days saw crude, two-rut paths serve as primary transportation routes throughout Colorado. The plains traffic, mostly from Kansas and Missouri, was heavy, but it was also easy in that there were no mountains. Trails across the plains developed rapidly. First prospectors used the traditional Santa Fe Trail-Arkansas River path to about where Bent's (Old) Fort had stood, then they turned north along Fountain Creek, over Monument Hill, and into the Denver Basin. While the road was fairly good, it was slow; miners were always in a hurry. There were advantages in the Arkansas River route. For instance, Bent's (New) Fort served as a place to reprovision and repair. One could always count on fresh vegetables, milk, and meat along the Arkansas River, where a few farmers and traders maintained establishments like that of Charles Autobees. [14] This route became known as the Cherokee Trail or the "Old" Cherokee Trail. The next most popular trail was the Platte River Road that ran from Omaha to Fort Laramie, Wyoming, with a southern cutoff into Denver. This route had fewer amenities along the way, but it was faster and possibly a little flatter. By 1861, the trail was recognized as superior; seen in the fact that Wells Fargo and Company used it, as did the Central California, Overland and Pike's Peak Express Company (CCO&PP). Freighters preferred the Platte Road as did stage travelers. A tri-weekly stage ran from Omaha to Denver, and daily stages moved west from Ash Hollow, Nebraska. Thousands of prospectors (and would-be millionaires) used the South Platte Road to the Rockies. Deep ruts were cut into the plains, just as the Santa Fe Trail was deeply imbedded. [15] The other major route to the goldfields was the Smoky Hill Road. At first, the trail was used by the U.S. Army as a shortcut to Bent's Fort, and then as a secondary road into the Rockies. This path was difficult, and it contained few watering holes. However, it was shorter and faster than other main trails. The Smoky Hill Trail had three branches in Colorado; and they led through southeastern Colorado, across the plains, into Denver. The road was popular enough that in places it was ten miles wide. However, travelers on the Smoky Hill Road reported dead bodies and open graves: victims of starvation. There were reports of Arapaho natives feeding starving travelers along the trail. [16] There were places where no water was available for 150 miles. The Smoky Hill Trail was known as the "Starvation Trail" with good reason. By 1865, the main road was abandoned in favor of the South Smoky Hill Road. [17]

The Smoky Hill Trail followed the Smoky Hill River, roughly paralleling to day's Union Pacific Railroad line from Cheyenne Wells to Limon, Colorado, and then on into Denver. This trail did not develop any ancillary facilities, such as trading posts or villages. [18] No matter what route they used, "Pike's Peak or Bust" settlers came by wagon, horseback, muleback, on foot and dragging hand-carts. One inventive soul even tried a "wind wagon," or a wagon with sails. The inventor made it from Independence, Missouri, just as far as the first gully, which swallowed up wagon, sails and all. No matter what mode of transport, some one hundred thousand Americans crossed Stephen H. Long's Great American Desert to the Rockies, where they first built cabins, and then towns. [19]

As noted, a major problem was supplying mining camps located in the high Rockies. These places were virtually inaccessible, and, even with crude roads, getting heavy machinery, goods, and other necessities in was most difficult. The logical solution was to bring heavy goods across the plains by wagon, deposit them in a central location and then transship them in smaller loads into the mountains. This is how supply towns arose in Colorado. Denver was the first and most obvious supply point. From here Clear Creek Canyon's residents were provided with nearly every possible kind of goods. Boulder was another supply town that serviced Boulder Canyon and Gold Hill. South Park was supplied by a new settlement along the Arkansas River, just east of the "Royal Gorge," called Canon City. The town site was laid

out in October 1859 by William Kroenig, William H. Young, Robert Bercaw, Charles D. Peck, and the Smith Brothers. With the hope that Canon City would be the "gateway" to gold fields of South Park and the Upper Arkansas, Kroenig quickly built his cabin and began surveying a road over Currant Creek Pass to the Tarryall Diggings. [20] As it happened, most miners preferred the Fountain Creek-Ute Pass route into the park, and Canon City did not become a major supplier for the mines. However, fresh vegetables and fuel were always in demand. Jesse Frazer, along with Hosea Hoopengartner, C. Harrington and John Leland, filed coal claims to supplement their gardening efforts. Eight miles east of Canon City, Florence was born. At first a tiny agricultural settlement, Florence became a major coal producer in the 1870's. In 1860, Gabriel Bowen located a claim on Fourmile (Oil) Creek for an "oil spring." While these resources were not immediately developed, they were used during the 1870's and later. [21] By fall 1860, Canon City's newspaper, the *Times*, reported that several mills, including a steam-powered sawmill, were in business there, and that some 800 people called the place home. [22]

Farther down the Arkansas River, at its junction with Fountain Creek, settlers used the site for crossing the river and grazing their animals. The area became part of the Cherokee Trail, famous in initial gold rush days. At this location, a little settlement called Fountain City arose, and it served travelers, farmers and others in the immediate region. However, because the town site was prone to constant flooding, it did not develop. Pueblo, on the other hand, was located on high ground, overlooking the Arkansas River, and grew as a supply center. The two villages were as one site. [23]

During the 1859 rush, people would stop over at this location, and finally a few pioneers set up a town company to develop the area. Stephen S. Smith was Pueblo's first settler, and he called the place Fountain City. In 1860, the town company changed its name to Pueblo, and on May 22, 1860, the residents of the village met and formally founded Pueblo. The site was platted on July 1, 1860. Thanks to its location along major north-south trade routes, the place flourished by providing services to miners, farmers and merchants. [24] Pueblo attracted farmers from as far as seventy-five miles to trade in town. Pueblo became a center for trade and commerce, not only for the gold fields, but also for places like the San Luis Valley, where farm goods went to Pueblo and then were resold to mining communities. The Huerfano River valley also produced farm goods, such as vegetables, fresh milk and other staples, and sold them at Pueblo. Pueblo residents soon built irrigation ditches from the Arkansas River, and by 1860 crops abounded in the valley, providing even more farm goods for the booming Rockies. [25] As Pueblo grew, typical problems of urbanization occurred. By 1860, People's Courts were established to mete out justice, and in 1862 Pueblo County, which took in all of southeastern Colorado, was organized. Also, in 1862 a U.S. mail route was established to Pueblo that, in turn, assured the town would "funnel" communications up the river to the gold regions. [26] Pueblo's trade importance became evident in 1862 when its first flour mill was erected. To be able to produce refined goods was of considerable importance in early Colorado history, for local goods were much cheaper than those from St. Joseph or Omaha. The next year, 1863, saw Pueblo's first school opened and run by George Bilby. [27]

Perhaps the most serious sign of permanence was Richens L. "Uncle Dick" Wootton's construction of two houses in 1861 at Pueblo. Uncle Dick Wootton was not only famous for his exploits in the fur trade, but also as a developer in southeastern Colorado. Wootton farmed along the Arkansas River during the 1850's, ran small trading posts in the Huerfano Valley, and in the 1860's obtained a right-of-way through the Maxwell Grant from Trinidad to Raton, New Mexico. He built a toll road over Raton Pass and proceeded to open trade among Pueblo, Walsenburg, and Trinidad into New Mexico. The road became a major transportation corridor and was eventually purchased by the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe for its railroad line to Los Angeles. [28]

As the Arkansas River Valley developed, so did other drainages, such as the Huerfano and Purgatoire Rivers. Demand for food was so great from the numerous mining camps that farms arose in these areas. J.M. Francisco established a community at Francisco Plaza, near the Spanish Peaks, in 1862. This became La Veta, Colorado, in later days. [29] Madrid Plaza, on the Purgatoire, was founded in the 1860's by the Madrid family. J.M. Madrid, interviewed in the early 1900's, recalled that some nineteen settlements were located along that river west of Trinidad. For instance, the Barela family founded a plaza on San Francisco Creek in 1866, while Torres Plaza and Vigil Plaza were both founded by New Mexican settlers at about the same time. [30]

In addition to a need for farm goods, the mining boom created demand for fresh meat. John Wesley Prowers brought 600 head of cattle from Missouri during 1861 and grazed them along the Arkansas River prior to shipping them north to Denver to supply hungry mining camps. The results were so profitable that Prowers added one hundred stock cows in 1862 and used the region from the Purgatoire north to the Arkansas and east to the Kansas line for grazing. This area became the core of a great cattle empire of the 1870's. While Prowers may have been astute enough to begin southeastern Colorado's cattle industry, he was not the first to use the area. In 1859, John C. Dawson trailed a modest cattle herd from Texas using the north side of the Arkansas River, along Fountain Creek and on into Denver. These efforts paved the way for men like J.W. Prowers and J.W. Iliff, eastern Colorado's two most famous cattle barons. [31] By the mid-1860's one hundred thousand head of cattle roamed the plains of southeastern Colorado, generally concentrated along the lower Arkansas River. Charles Goodnight pioneered a new trail in 1864 when he drove cattle from Texas up the Pecos, over Trincheras Pass, north past Pueblo, across Monument Hill, and to Denver. Today's Interstate 25 closely parallels the Goodnight Trail from Pueblo north. [32]

While the eastern plains developed, mining in the Rockies did not fare so well. The blush of discovery was over by 1861, and mining slowly became a depressed industry. The year 1861 saw a period of retraction in most South Park camps as well as at Oro City. The major problem was lack of "loose" or placer gold in streams. The rush of 1859-1860 cleaned out drainages, and by 1861 miners were digging shafts in an attempt to extract quartz in which gold ore was locked. While mining techniques were standard for these times, Colorado quartz ores would not yield their minerals. South Park miners at first used the old Spanish *arrastra* method of milling by which a mule tied to a long pole would drive a large round rock on a flat stone surface, thus crushing ore. However, the system was inefficient and could be used for only high-grade ores. [33] Colorado miners soon imported metal ore stamps to pulverize stubborn local ores. By 1862, Laurette town site could boast of two steam-driven and two water-powered stamp mills, in addition to five older *arrastras*. Montgomery had six quartz mills, and three hundred men worked the various mines in Mosquito Gulch. Even with this ore-crushing equipment, and transportation, organized mining districts (like the Independent Mining District), were doomed. [34] Extracting minerals from these crushed ores was just too much for frontier technology. Only the richest ores were worth refining because they had to be sent to either Boston or Swansea, Wales. There were no local smelters, and 1860's technology was not adequate to deal with the extremely complex ores of this region. The end result was a steady decline in production followed by abandoned mining camps. Perhaps the most telling statistics were in the census of 1860 that recorded 10,610 persons in Park County and the 1870 census that showed only 447 souls left in this county. [35] Samuel Bowles reported in 1868 that only one of two hundred cabins at Montgomery was occupied, while at Tarryall maybe three cabins were in use. Hamilton was described as a place of fifty mud-patched cabins, two hotels, mostly vacated, and a population of two dozen. [36] An earlier visitor, Bayard Taylor, reported in 1866 that Jefferson City was abandoned and only two hundred miners still lived at Fairplay. [37] Difficult ores were not the only problem for South Park's miners. A flood on the plains in 1864 cut off traffic from the east and, for a

considerable time, slowed delivery of badly needed heavy machinery. The Civil War interrupted supplies to mining camps as manufacturers switched production to meet the war effort while, at the same time, native raids by both the Arapaho and Cheyenne disrupted trade routes. Even the Santa Fe/Cherokee Trail was attacked by Cheyenne raiders. These events conspired to make mining less and less profitable as the 1860's marched forward. [38] The mines of Oro City, such a promising place in 1860, also slowed production. The Printer Boy and Pioneer Mines were still the biggest producers in Lake County, but they were not providing a fraction of the 1861 finds. Both Park and Lake Counties yielded \$7,762,000 in gold from 1859-1867, but from 1868-1870 production was a pitiful \$385,000. [39]

South Park and the Upper Arkansas River basin were not the only areas explored for gold. Most every canyon along the Front Range was prospected, with results that were less than encouraging. The Wet Mountain Valley was explored, but no gold deposits were found. The Sangre de Cristo Mountains were looked at, also with minimal results. The San Luis Valley hosted prospectors who worked various creeks and streams emerging from both the Sangre de Cristos and the San Juans. Kerber Creek, Saguache Creek, Poncha Creek, and San Luis Creek were all tested, but deposits were meager. The Valley was also used by transient miners on their ways to other places. In March 1861, T.C. Wetmore, of Canon City, went on a prospecting trip into the San Juans. He returned in June and reported that these mountains contained vast potential but that the native population had to be removed in order that Europeans could explore further. Wetmore suggested that a treaty was needed to permit miners into the San Juans. He apparently did not realize that the treaty of 1849 covered this matter, and various prospectors were indeed trespassing on native lands. [40] The Wetmore trip only served to point up an ever-growing tension between native and European inhabitants in Colorado. By the mid-1860's resentment flared to hostility, and the native problem loomed large in territorial politics.

CHAPTER VI: NOTES

1. Ubbelohde, Benson and Smith, op. cit., pp. 60-61. Also: Robert G. Athearn, *The Coloradans* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1976.)
2. Ibid., p. 61.
3. Athearn, ibid.
4. Virginia McConnell, op. cit., p. 63.
5. Frank Fossett, *A Historical Descriptive, and Statistical Work on the Rocky Mountain Gold and Silver Mining Regions* (Denver: Daily Tribune, 1876), p. 45.
6. McConnell, ibid., pp. 64-65.
7. Don and Jean Griswold, *Colorado's Century of Cities* (Denver: Smith-Brooks, 1958), pp. 62-63.
8. *Rocky Mountain News*, June 13, 1860, p. 2.
9. McConnell, op. cit., p. 74.
10. Jean Griswold, "The History of Leadville, Colorado to 1900," (M.A. Thesis: University of Southern California, 1933), p. 6.
11. Don and Jean Griswold, *The Carbonate Camp Called Leadville* (Denver: University of

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12. Duane A. Smith, *Rocky Mountain Mining Camps, the Urban Frontier* (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 1967.) See also: Muriel Sibell Wolle, *Stampede to Timberline* (Chicago: Swallow, 1974) and C. Eric Stors, *Victorian Bonanza* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1973.)

13. Stors, *ibid.*

14. Janet LeCompte, "Charles Autobees" in: *Mountain Men and the Fur Trade* (Glendale, California: A.H. Clark, 1966), Vol.4, p. 37.

15. Ubbelohde, Benson and Smith, *op. cit.*, pp. 63-64.

16. Margaret Long, *The Smoky Hill Trail* (Denver: Kistler, 1943), p. 19.

17. *Ibid.*, p. 20.

18. *Ibid.*, p. 39.

19. Ubbelohde, Benson and Smith, *op. cit.*, p. 66.

20. Frank Hall, *History of Colorado* (Chicago: Blakely, 1895), Vol. IV, p. 223. See also: H.H. Bancroft, "Early Days in Canon City," *Colorado Magazine* (1930), p. 110.

21. As related in Rosemae Campbell, *From Trappers to Tourists: Fremont County Colorado, 1830-1950* (Palmer Lake, Colorado: Filter Press, 1972), and B.F. Rockafellow, "History of Fremont County." In: *History of the Arkansas Valley* (Chicago: Baskin, 1881.)

22. LeRoy R. Hafen, *Colorado and Its People* (New York: Lewis, 1948), Vol. 1, p. 197.

23. Milo Lee Whittaker, *Pathbreakers and Pioneers of the Pueblo Region* (Philadelphia: Franklin, 1917), pp. 51-52.

24. *Ibid.*, p. 40, 42, 52, 53, and 48.

25. *Ibid.*, p. 64 and 56.

26. *Ibid.*, p. 58, 62, 63 and 64.

27. *Ibid.*, p. 132.

28. Lavender, *Bent's Fort*, *op. cit.*, p. 374, and Murray, *op. cit.*, p. 57.

29. Raymond M. Beckner, *Old Forts of Southern Colorado* (Pueblo, Colorado: O'Brien, 1975), pp. 54-55, and CWA Interviews, A.K. Richeson, "Senator J.M. Madrid, Trinidad, Colorado," Las Animas County, Colorado, CWA No. 359/6. In: Colorado Historical Society, Denver, Colorado, MSS.

30. William B. Taylor and Elliott West, "Patron Leadership at the Crossroads: Southern Colorado in the Late 19th Century," *Pacific Historical Quarterly*, 42, (1973), pp. 335-357.

31. Murray, *op. cit.*, pp. 41-42, and Ora B. Peake, *The Colorado Range Cattle Industry* (Glendale, California: A.H. Clark, 1937); J. Everetts Haley, *Charles Goodnight* (Boston: Houghton-Mifflin, 1936); and Ernest S. Osgood, *Day of the Cattleman* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1929.)

32. As related in Haley, *Charles Goodnight* *ibid*.
33. As described in: James E. Fell, *Ores to Metals: The Rocky Mountain Smelting Industry* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1979.)
34. McConnell, *op. cit.*, p. 78, 106 and 109.
35. *U.S. Census* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1860 and 1870.)
36. Samuel A. Bowles, *A Summer Vacation in the Parks and Mountains of Colorado* (Springfield, Massachusetts: Bowles, 1869), pp. 107 and 115-116.
37. McConnell, *op. cit.*, pp. 109-112.
38. Described in: Ubbelohde, Benson and Smith, *op. cit.*
39. In: C.W. Hendrson, *Mining In Colorado* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1926.)
40. Simmons, *op. cit.*, p. 63.

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Land of Contrast: A History of Southeast Colorado

BLM Cultural Resources Series (Colorado: No. 17)



Chapter VII

CONFRONTATIONS: REMOVAL AND TRANSITION

With thousands of would-be miners flooding into Pike's Peak, governing this new land became a major problem. In short order, miners who settled the foothills and canyons established vigilante groups to prevent claim jumping and land grabbing that disrupted the work of recovering precious minerals. Miners did not have time to waste with formal government, and quasi-legal organizations like claim clubs arose. These "clubs" were formed to record claims, provide services to legally stake claims, settle land disputes, and dispense justice for those who tried to grab others' claims. In this way, an embryo of civil government was brought to mining camps and other settlements. The claim clubs eventually dissolved into elected officials and the creation of town and county governments. [1] Many times members of the local claim club became government officials and, later, territorial officers. Anson Rudd, of Canon City, is a good example of the transition from claim club to legal official. [2] One major problem faced by what was then called "Pike's Peak" was that this place represented the western-most part of Kansas Territory. Administration lines extended hundreds of miles over unsettled plains and, clearly, miners of the Rockies did what was necessary for survival. National politics created further tensions. By 1860 the nation was on the verge of civil war. The Kansas-Nebraska controversy made creation of new territories difficult. Further, 25,000 persons were required to create a territory, and, by 1860, with many "go-backers" leaving Pike's Peak, there was considerable question as to whether there were enough souls to create an independent political entity. [3] Election of Abraham Lincoln to the presidency in 1860 changed things greatly. Not only was he the first Republican Party candidate to win this high post, but the victory drove Southern Democrats from the Union. Hard-line southerners could not tolerate Lincoln, and they left Congress, retreating to Montgomery, Alabama where the Confederate States of America was born.

On the eve of Lincoln's inauguration, President James Buchanan, a Democrat, signed a bill that created the State of Kansas, with its western border fixed at the present location. On February 28, 1861, Buchanan also signed legislation that created a territory from what was left of the old Kansas Territory. After considerable wrangling over what the place should be called, including suggestions like Jefferson, Idahoe, Yampa, Arapahoe [sic], Tahosa, Lafayette, Columbus, Franklin, Weapollao, Nemara, Lula, San Juan and Colorado; the latter won and Pike's Peak became Colorado Territory. [4] When President Lincoln came to office, he appointed Colorado's first Territorial Governor, William Gilpin. Gilpin, an old Colorado hand, arrived during a particularly troubled time. Civil War racked the nation, the South seceded, and the country was torn asunder. William Gilpin faced a series of problems ranging from the creation of new counties to suppressing Confederate activities in Colorado. Upon his arrival in May 1861, Gilpin set up his cabinet, and by September of that year the first territorial legislature convened. This body elected Hiram P. Bennett as delegate to Congress, and Colorado Territory was in business. [5]

Gilpin also had a strong interest in the San Luis Valley. From his earlier days of promoting Colorado during the gold rush, Gilpin touted the Valley as a land that held considerable

agricultural promise. He proposed a transcontinental railroad that would cross the area while, at the same time, he wrote a guide book that praised the Valley. When Colorado Territory became a reality, the San Luis was taken from New Mexico and included in Colorado. The appointment of Gilpin only could enhance the San Luis Valley's position in a new territory. [6] To bring government to the Valley, Conejos, Costilla and Guadalupe Counties were carved from old Taos (New Mexico) County. Costilla County was formally organized in 1863 and San Luis became county seat, while Conejos County developed from the earlier Guadalupe County, and Conejos became its seat. With county governments in place, territorial representatives were elected. Jose Victor Garcia and Jesus M. Barela went to Denver to serve the Valley, while John M. Francisco was elected to the Council (the same as today's State Senate.) [8] On the east side of the Sangre de Cristos, Fremont, Pueblo, Huerfano, El Paso and Park Counties represented local government. County seats were established at Fairplay, Canon City, Fountain City (Pueblo), San Luis (actually west of the Sangres), and Trinidad. As Colorado settled into its territorial status, Governor Gilpin was faced with not only the Civil War, but increasingly difficult natives on the Eastern Plains. The most immediate matter was war between the states. There was a considerable community of southern supporters at several mining communities, most notably those of South Park. [9] Southern forces in New Mexico eyed Colorado's gold fields as sources for the Confederacy's ailing economy. To meet this threat, Gilpin found himself raising a militia. However, there were no public funds available, and Gilpin, in desperation, issued \$375,000 worth of drafts on the Federal Treasury, hoping that Washington would honor them when the war ended. [10] Unfortunately for Gilpin, the Treasury Department later refused to pay these drafts, and the Governor found himself in serious trouble with the citizens of Colorado who demanded payment for their services and goods. Before the money problem surfaced, Gilpin was busy "protecting" his territory from Confederate invasion. Mace's Hole, near today's Beulah, was a hotbed of Confederate activity, while miners at California and Georgia Gulches tried to raise Confederate regiments. While there was no real threat of invasion from the south, U.S. Army posts at Fort Garland and Fort Lyon (on the Arkansas) were put on alert. [11] Under Gilpin's leadership, the First Regiment of Colorado Infantry was assembled in 1861. The group trained at Camp Weld near Denver, and then in 1862 they joined Union forces under E.R.S. Canby in New Mexico. As it turned out, Gilpin's fears were not totally misplaced as Confederate General Henry Sibley marched across eastern New Mexico, intent on capturing Santa Fe. By the time Colorado's volunteers reached New Mexico, Santa Fe had fallen and the Confederates prepared to take Fort Union. At Glorieta Pass, Union forces, under Canby, met Sibley and routed the Confederates. This battle ended any Confederate threats to the west, and Colorado's volunteers were praised for their contribution. [12] Shortly thereafter, Gilpin was removed as governor by Abraham Lincoln, and John Evans replaced him. Evans arrived in Colorado during May 1862 and found that most sympathy for the South was snuffed out. A raid into the San Luis Valley by Confederate raider James Reynolds was quickly disposed of, as were attempts of Confederate officers to smuggle gold from the territory. [13]

Governor Evans may have been rid of the South, but he faced continued problems with the Eastern Plains natives. The heart of the matter lay with the Laramie Treaty Council of 1851, at which it was agreed that the Cheyenne and Arapaho tribes could use the Eastern Plains from the South Platte to the Arkansas Rivers as their land. The Gold Rush of 1859 changed that, because thousands of prospectors trespassed while on their way to Pike's Peak and demands were soon loud and long for removal of the "indolent savages." Land became a valuable commodity and native claims were in the middle of all the activity. [14] The fall of 1860 saw Federal agents holding council along the Arkansas River to negotiate new peace terms. Both the Cheyenne and the Arapaho agreed to surrender all their lands except the area between Sand Creek and the Arkansas. This reservation would be divided so that each tribal member received forty acres, while the Federal Government promised an annual \$30,000 subsidy for fifteen years, a grist mill, a saw mill, and a school for the new land. [15] Such an

approach was in keeping with European ideas that the native American should and could be "civilized" by turning him into a farmer. Details, like cultural differences and totally divergent concepts of economics and society, did not bother these newcomers. The natives were considered "useless," and unless they conformed they would be removed. Herein lay the core of European/native conflicts throughout the western United States. Every time settlement encroached on the natives, conflict occurred because neither side was willing to change. The natives were usually more flexible than were European settlers and generally they were bullied out of their lands and heritage by these newcomers. The Cheyenne and Arapaho may have been confined to the Sand Creek Reservation on paper, but, in fact, they wandered across the plains hunting and gathering as always. Further, continual expansion of European towns, cities, and farms concerned the natives, for they saw lush grasses of the prairies put to the plow and rivers dammed up. Increasingly, the Cheyenne and Arapaho were agitated by younger braves who wanted all settlers out of Colorado. It was one thing to share with itinerant fur trappers and a few traders, but when cities were built, ranches and farms begun, the threat was too much to overlook.

Settlers in isolated regions of the plains became apprehensive about native raids. The Sioux uprising in Minnesota during 1862 fueled the fires of panic in Colorado. In response to his ongoing "Indian problem," Governor Evans recalled the First Regiment of Colorado volunteers from New Mexico and scattered it across the plains to calm the fears of various communities. Evans, despite his pleas for Federal help, was caught between Colorado's apprehension and the pressing needs of Civil War. Tension ran high, but there were no incidents until the spring of 1864, when the natives became more bold, raiding cattle ranches, stopping travel on the South Platte Trail, and then on June 11th attacked Nathan Hungate's ranch, brutally killing him, his wife, and two daughters. [16] Denver's citizens were thrown into panic and prepared to defend the city from the raiders. Evans, however, tried to use reason and appealed to "the friendly Indians of the Plains" to gather at Federal forts where they would be protected. Warring natives would be "ruthlessly exterminated" if they did not surrender. Threats did no good, for raids continued, mail service was severed, stage lines were cut, overland freighting stopped, and Denver was isolated from its eastern suppliers. Evans, in August 1864, raised a "hundred-day regiment" of volunteers who would sweep the plains clear of hostiles. [17] The fall of 1864 saw natives appearing at Fort Lyon along the Arkansas. Edward W. Wynkoop, fort commander, escorted seven chiefs to Denver to talk with Evans. Evans, who supposedly wanted peace, treated his guests terribly. He and John Chivington were then involved in "statehood" politics, and it seems that peace with the natives would harm this process. Evans stated that resolution of the "native problem" was in the hands of military authorities and he could do no more. Army officers suggested that the tribes move to the Sand Creek Reservation where they would be safe for the winter. Chivington, however, had plans of his own. As commander of the hundred-day volunteers, he had yet to see action, and his soldiers' terms were about to expire. Obviously, if Chivington was to use his men, it would have to be soon. Governor Evans left for Washington, D.C. in November 1864, and Chivington decided to move. As Methodist-Episcopal Bishop of Colorado, he saw it as his sacred duty to "exterminate" the heathen natives of the plains so as to free the land for settlement by "Christian" Europeans. Further, Chivington felt the plains natives should be taught a lesson that European technology was superior and defeat was inevitable. [18]

With such thoughts, Chivington's force marched from Fort Lyon north to Sand Creek, where a band of reservation natives had set up winter camp, just as Wynkoop suggested. Chief Black Kettle was assured that if he flew the American flag, his people would be safe. Despite these promises, Chivington attacked the little band on November 29, 1864, and proceeded to slaughter men, women, and children without discrimination. [19] The massacre was appalling. Chivington's men spared none. Women were sadistically mutilated, men were tortured, children were torn from their mothers arms and slowly killed before their parents

eyes. Nobody knows how many natives died. Chivington boasted of 500 dead, while saner heads suggested 100 losses. There were no prisoners taken. [20] This horrible deed had immediate consequences. The citizens of Colorado, who had called for native removal, were revolted by Chivington's actions. A Congressional Joint Committee on the Conduct of the (Civil) War investigated this massacre, and it condemned Chivington, while a military commission spent months coming to the same conclusion. So vicious was sentiment over Sand Creek that one outspoken critic of Chivington, Captain Silas S. Soule, was assassinated; his murderer was never apprehended. [21]

Governor Evans foolishly defended Chivington's actions on the basis that Colorado's natives had to be taught a lesson. However, no matter who was right, native revenge occurred. The town of Old Julesburg was sacked in January 1865, and then burned to the ground the next month. Terror returned to the plains and Colorado's settlers demanded action. In 1867 a new treaty was negotiated by which the Arapaho and Cheyenne were moved to Indian Territory (Oklahoma), onto reservations that would keep them out of Colorado. The Medicine Lodge Treaty of that year "removed" these natives from the eastern plains and kept them away from civilization. [22] Nevertheless, enraged natives, led by Chief Roman Nose, attacked fifty army scouts in September 1868 at Beecher Island on the Arikaree Fork of the Republican River in eastern Colorado. An siege ensued, and nine days later U.S. Army reinforcements from Kansas relieved the men after some losses. The next year Chief Tall Bull was pursued into northeastern Colorado by Army troops and was attacked at Summit Springs where fifty natives were killed. The Battle of Summit Springs was the final engagement on the Colorado plains between European settlers and natives. [23] The eastern plains of Colorado were cleared of natives by 1870, primarily because superior military power and the physical removal to Indian Territory eliminated the presence of these peoples. Unlike the northern plains, there was no continual warfare between newcomers and natives, nor was there inter-tribal squabbling. Colorado's natives were simply overwhelmed by the 100,000 immigrants that poured across the plains in 1859, and small bands like the Arapaho were inundated. [24]

Across the Sangre de Cristos the situation was much the same. In the San Luis Valley, Ute natives were a problem from the beginning. Fort Garland was built to "protect" local settlers, and, as the gold rush continued, more and more pressure was brought to bear on this tribe. Miners went from the Upper Arkansas into the San Luis and then up the Rio Grande deep into the San Juan Mountains in search of gold. Charles Baker, for instance, traveled into the San Juans during 1860 where he found gold near Eureka Gulch. This site was known as "Baker's Park" and a small settlement popped up here. The problem was that these miners were clearly trespassing on Ute reservation lands. Nevertheless, May 1861 saw the town site of Animas City laid out and several buildings were erected. Harsh winters and the Civil War stopped mining in the San Juans until the late 1860's. Exploratory expeditions found paths into the mountains, usually by way of the San Luis Valley. Mineral development continued at a pace that caused Coloradans (and miners) to demand that an older treaty, signed in 1868 with the Utes, be revised. The 1868 treaty said that a single reservation for all seven bands of the Ute nation would be provided and that its boundary would run from about Pagosa Springs north to Steamboat Springs and then westward into Utah Territory. Thus, the western half of Colorado was ceded to these natives. The treaty was executed at Conejos on March 1, 1868, and it established agencies at White River (near modern-day Meeker) and Los Pinos, along Los Pinos Creek, west of Cochetopa Pass. The old Conejos Agency was to be closed and its facilities were moved to Los Pinos. By mid-1868 the various Ute bands occupied their new cession. One man emerged as their main spokesman. This was, of course, Chief Ouray who sensed the futility of opposing these newcomers and tried to maintain peace while obtaining the best possible conditions for his people. In this effort Ouray was generally successful, for there were no serious incidents between miners and natives. There were no "massacres" as on the eastern plains, and the Ute were left to hunt and gather as they had always done. However, pressure increased year after year in the San Juans so that by 1873 the Federal

Government found itself having to negotiate a new treaty. Felix Brunot, U.S. Commissioner of Indian Affairs; Charles Adams, U.S. Indian Agent; and interpreter, Otto Mears, of Saguache, all met with the Ute and created what was known as the Brunot Treaty. This pact called for even more land cessions. The Ute were removed from the San Juans, a new Los Pinos Agency was established near today's Montrose, and thousands of miners rushed into the region by way of the San Luis Valley, using Otto Mears' newly built toll roads. [25] The Ute and their relationship to the San Luis Valley ended in 1873. Actually the 1868 Treaty removed natives from the Valley; however, there were trade ties with Saguache and Conejos after that date. But by 1873 the natives were confined to southwestern Colorado, and to the White River in northwest Colorado. The White River Agency was where the associated Ute Tribes of Colorado were finally removed. In 1879, under considerable aggravation from Agent Nathan C. Meeker, the White River Utes rose in rebellion, killed Meeker and caused the U.S. Army to rush troops to the Agency. A military detachment sent from Wyoming, under the command of Thomas T. Thornburgh, was ambushed along Milk Creek. This was known as the Thornburgh Battle and was used as the final excuse to remove the Ute from Colorado. After Army troops had subdued White River's natives, they were removed to the Uintah Reservation, Utah, during 1881 [26] All of Colorado was now free of its native inhabitants and the land rush was on. The eastern plains were swept clear by 1868 while the western slope was opened in 1880. These removals provided the land that miners, farmers, ranchers and town builders needed to "settle and civilize" Colorado Territory.

CHAPTER VII: NOTES

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Land of Contrast: A History of Southeast Colorado

BLM Cultural Resources Series (Colorado: No. 17)



Chapter VIII

A PERIOD OF TRANSITION: INTO THE 1870's

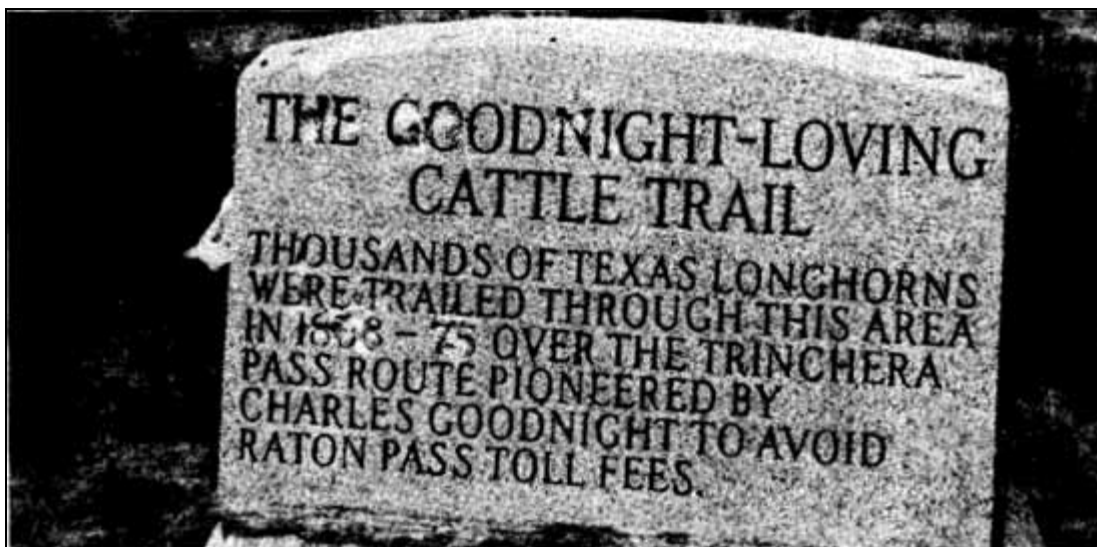
Placer mining, Colorado's sole heavy industry, faded quickly during the 1860's. The Rush of 1859 gave way to ever-decreasing finds and abandonment of early mining regions. South Park was particularly hard hit in the mid-1860's. Towns were emptied, mines closed, and boundless optimism that pervaded, died. Alternatives to mining were needed if the territory was to survive as a viable political and economic unit. Agricultural goods were the one item that miners, store keepers, gamblers and, indeed, everyone needed, but nobody had. Goods were imported from Kansas, as was live beef. David Wall, in 1859, diverted Clear Creek and established a little vegetable garden near Golden. From these modest efforts, Colorado's agriculture began. Miners not only bought garden crops from farmers along the South Platte River, but also beef from Texas cattlement such as John Dawson, who brought Texas Longhorns in during 1859 to feed hungry miners. Dawson trailed his herd north of the Arkansas River, along Fountain Creek and into Denver. [1] South Park's cattle industry began, meanwhile, in 1860 when Samuel Hartsel homesteaded at the junction of the South and Middle Forks of the South Platte and imported 148 Shorthorns and some bulls. By 1866, Hartsel had a thriving cattle business that provided beef to Denver and the eastern plains. [2] That same year Charles Goodnight and Oliver Loving were trailing cattle from the Pecos River over Raton Pass, through Trinidad, Pueblo, Colorado City, and into Denver. From Denver, this trail went north to Cheyenne, Wyoming, where cattle were shipped on the Transcontinental Railroad. The Goodnight-Loving Trail was the most famous cattle route in Colorado, and it certainly helped establish a north-south route along the Front Range. In fact, Interstate Highway 25 very closely parallels the trail from Pueblo to Raton Pass. [3]

These early efforts at cattle ranching led to further developments along the Arkansas River. After the Civil War, American industry boomed. Hundreds of thousands of European immigrants flooded into this nation and the demand for red meat soared. As need increased, so did price. At the same time, American and British capitalists, having made their fortunes in the Industrial Revolution, sought investments with high returns. By the early 1870's it became obvious that cattle could be raised on the vast western plains with little effort and expense. Men like Goodnight and Loving proved just that. As America's economy picked up, men like John Wesley Prowers built cattle empires with nothing but grass and water. Prowers, who began his ranching days along the Arkansas, imported Shorthorn Herefords from Kansas and grazed them on free public lands. By 1881, his domain consisted of forty miles of Arkansas River frontage and some 400,000 acres, feeding 10,000 head of cattle. [4] James C. Jones, arriving in Colorado during 1879, preempted lands south of the Arkansas and was running some 15,000 head by the early 1880's. The "JJ" brand was seen from Trinidad to Kansas and from the Arkansas south to Raton Pass. [5] These "Cattle Barons" were able to build their empires because there was minimum investment, grazing land was free, and labor was cheap. Cattlemen merely moved onto public domain and, using rather questionable methods, proceeded to tie up hundreds of thousands of acres. Homesteading, authorized under the Homestead Act of 1862, was used to gain lands that were never intended for cattle raising. By capturing waterholes and stream banks through homestead applications, ranchers

controlled the plains. Homesteaders who dared claim public land were expelled, as were sheepmen attempting to share the range. The cattle industry in southeastern Colorado was typical of most western operations. Generally, a headquarters was constructed on a homestead filing and consisted of a log or adobe house, a bunkhouse, corrals, and other support structures. Contrary to western movies, most ranches did not have two-story Victorian houses but rather quite functional buildings that could be quickly amortized.



The cattle industry was an early, and important, contribution to southeastern Colorado's economy. Grazing continues to this day. (Photo by A.J. Senti)



The Goodnight-Loving Cattle Trail was one of the most famous, and important, routes north from Texas into Colorado. It was used from 1868 to 1875 when the Santa Fe Railroad arrived along the Arkansas River. (Photo by F.J. Athearn)

As the 1870's progressed, interest in cattle rose. Hiram Latham's work, *Trans-Missouri Stock Raising*, received attention as did the Baron von Richtofen's *Cattle Raising on the Plains of North America*. Perhaps the most famous work was that of James S. Brisbin, who entitled his treatise, *The Beef Bonanza, or How to Get Rich off the Plains*. All of these narratives touted the ease of cattle raising, noting that land was free, water was available, and cattle did not cost much. For a ten-dollar investment, one could expect to sell a grass fed cow in several

years for \$40, or a 400 percent profit. [6] Of course, these figures did not calculate the costs of transportation or winter losses, and here is where the dream of easy money died. More and more cattle were placed on an overburdened range. Not only was native vegetation wiped out, but hard winters began to take their toll. Additionally, the invention of barbed wire in 1873 increased fencing of the range which, in turn, made old-fashioned, open grazing even more difficult. Fencing became a major issue during the 1880's. With increased settlement pressures, homesteaders demanded the right to use public domain. In 1882, for instance, Special Agent H.W. Jones of the General Land Office (GLO) in Pueblo, complained to the Secretary of the Interior and cited a number of cases where cattlemen had closed public lands. The pressure increased, and finally, Interior forced fence removals on public lands, hence opening them to homesteading. The Prairie Cattle Company of Trinidad removed fences from some 36,000 acres of public land while the Barela family took down fences on 38,000 acres. [7]

The western American cattle industry was, by 1886, badly overextended. Despite the handsome dividends, cattlemen suffered from decreasing prices and short counts of cattle. Then the winter of 1886-1887 roared across the plains killing thousands of cows and wiping out, forever, the open-range cattle industry. [8] Southeastern Colorado suffered losses along the Arkansas River as blizzards howled across the flatlands, freezing cows stiff. Some accounts stated that up to fifty percent of herds were lost, while in milder regions, near the foothills, losses were "only" ten percent. This disaster not only destroyed western cattle fiefdoms, but it showed ranchers that open-range grazing was not an effective manner in which to use the land. A further problem was the introduction of sheep.

Sheep raising was hardly new to this region. Spanish settlers brought "woolies" into the San Luis Valley during the 1850's, while Raton Basin saw sheep grazing along the Purgatory from the 1860's on. The influx of sheep from New Mexico was such that the Pueblo *Chieftain* reported in 1868 that there were 185,000 sheep in Costilla and Conejos counties alone, while ". . . Las Animas County has about 87,500 and Huerfano and Pueblo Counties about 35,000, totalling 317,500 sheep for southern Colorado." [10] The problem with sheep, alleged cattlemen, was that they grazed vegetation to the roots, they smelled so bad that cattle would not graze where sheep had been, and they were greater users of the range, which in turn caused overgrazing. None of this was true, but for years these myths continued. A further problem was that many sheepmen in southeastern Colorado were of New Mexican or Mexican descent and "Anglo" cattlemen considered them inferior persons. Tension that arose caused conflicts over range use and cattlemen determined to "protect" themselves by forming associations. Political power rested with cattlemen, as seen during the 1870's, when brand laws were enacted, the Colorado Cattlemen's Association was chartered, and a process of roundups was begun under State statute. Laws favoring the cattle industry were passed, while sheepmen struggled to gain access to the public lands. Generally, cattle empires flourished from 1865 to 1889 in southeastern Colorado. Sheep were prevalent in the San Luis Valley and, to some extent, the Raton Basin, while cattle was king on the eastern plains from Pueblo all along the Arkansas River into Kansas. Those days were doomed, however, for more and more settlers pushed onto the plains closing lands that had previously "belonged" to the cattle barons.

As mentioned, quite a few Pike's Peakers turned to agriculture when mining failed to materialize the great wealth expected. The San Luis Valley, an agricultural area since 1855, provided corn, wheat, beans and other staples. The Raton Basin also was a source of farm goods from 1860 onward. Since there was little mineral activity in the foothill portion of Colorado Territory, this area became primarily farming. However, several problems needed immediate solution. The first was lack of water. While there might be streams, there were no irrigation ditches. To resolve this matter, ditches were quickly dug. David Wall of Golden is one example, while the Arkansas Valley around Canon City was turned into a farming

location by 1861. Fruit orchards were planted during 1862 by William Lee only to be wiped out by flooding along Spring Creek. [12] Anson Rudd planted an orchard in 1864, with little success. It took until 1867 when W.A. Helm set out apples, pears, apricots and grapes to begin a local fruit industry. Jesse Frazer planted tree near future Florence in 1868, and in 1869 he established the State's first fruit tree nursery. [13] B.F. Rockafellow bought some trees from Frazer and planted the second orchard in Colorado during 1869, proving that the area east of Canon City could be used for fruit growing despite its high altitude. Up river from Canon City, Frank Mayol, in 1863, homesteaded a farm near Buena Vista and sold his produce to miners at California Gulch, realizing a handsome profit. These efforts caused others to emulate Mayol, and by 1865 several farms producing hay, potatoes, oats, turnips and other farm goods were in operation along Cottonwood Creek, Brown's Creek, Trout Creek and Chalk Creek. [14]

A major reason for agricultural expansion in Colorado, indeed the whole west, was passage of various land laws encouraging settlement and production. The Homestead Act of 1862 provided, for the first time, "free" land to those who wished to settle the western United States. A claimant could, after five years of residence on the land, and with certain improvements, claim up to 160 acres of public land for him/herself. In this way farmsteads could be used to tame the wilderness west of the Mississippi while landless immigrants, farmers and others could become property owners. Homesteading opened millions of acres and provided western territories and states the ability to develop themselves with federal help. As it turned out, 160 acres in the west was not enough to sustain agriculture. In 1873, for example, the Timber Culture Act granted more acreage to settlers who planted trees on their homesteads, while the 1877 Desert Land Act said that homesteaders who irrigated their claims could be given up to 640 acres. [15] Providing public domain for individual settlement encouraged not only private immigrants, but also colonies and town companies. Early attempts at colonization were by-products of the Civil War. In the early 1870's such organizations as the Union Colony at Greeley and the National Land Company's colony at Longmont had "proven" this concept could work.

As it happened, Colorado's first attempt at Anglo colonization occurred in 1869, south of Canon City. The German Colonization Company of Chicago sent Carl Wulsten to Colorado to find a suitable location for a colony. Wulsten visited the Wet Mountain Valley during November 1869, and early next spring a party of settlers was on its way to the valley. The Wulsten group traveled by rail from Chicago to Fort Russell, Kansas, where the Kansas Pacific Railway ended. Arrangements were made for U.S. Army troops to escort the three hundred men, women and children west to Colorado. Vice-President Schuyler Colfax, who had provided Army help, was remembered when Wulsten's settlement was named Colfax. Wulsten's party was supposed to have 160-acre plots based on a 40,000-acre grant that the German Colonization Company requested from the Federal Government. However, the government had not acted by the time all the settlers arrived, so they squatted, hoping their claims would later be validated. Settlements were founded at Colfax, Ula, and Dora. The colonists built houses and began irrigation projects. However, the Wet Mountain Valley was not all that wet, and agriculture was difficult at best. Since Wulsten still did not have a grant, he traveled to Washington, DC, in the summer of 1870 seeking redress. While he was gone, the colony began to fall apart. Individuals refused to farm in a cooperative manner, and then they struck out on their own. When Wulsten returned in late 1870, he found the colony dissolved and Colorado's first Anglo settlers were drifting into Pueblo, Denver and Canon City seeking work. [16]





Homesteaders arrived along the Arkansas River to take up farms. Very often they built sod houses (soddies) and then tried to till 160 acres. The failure rate on the hostile plains was very high. (Photo by A.J. Senti)



Carl Wulsten, founder of the Colfax Colony in 1870 is buried at the Rosita, Colorado Cemetary. His headstone survives even if the colony did not. (Photo by F.J. Athearn)

The fate of the Wet Mountain Valley experiment did not stop colonization. As mentioned, the Union Colony at Greeley, founded in 1870, did quite well. However, for each successful colony there were several failures. For example, in 1878 the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society (HIAS) gathered enough capital to attempt colonization in the West. At the same time, Emanuel H. Satiel, a Jew of Portugese extraction, and the owner of several mines in the Arkansas River canyon had filed on 2,000 acres of public land with the intention of colonizing his region. The mines at Cotopaxi needed miners and Satiel saw a cheap labor force available in unsuspecting Jewish immigrants. Satiel then only needed settlers. He found Jacob Milstein interested in providing new homes for Russian Jews suffering increasing

abuse under Czar Alexander II. Saltiel promised houses, barns, implements, rich fields, water, draft animals, wagons and seed. He offered to move these Jewish immigrants to Cotopaxi for a mere \$10,000, including land and buildings. HIAS appropriated the money, but, just to make sure, they sent Julius Schwartz to investigate Saltiel's claims. Before a report could be issued, the Russian immigrants were sent on to Cotopaxi in early 1882 where they arrived in May of that year. They were not greeted with warmth. Residents of Cotopaxi met the group at the train station and were openly hostile. Nevertheless, the new colonists proceeded up Bernard Canyon where they found dry, barren slopes and twelve crude shanties measuring about eight-by-eight feet each. [17] Saltiel, needless to say, was accused of fraud. He explained that missing items like furniture and houses were delayed and would arrive soon. Saltiel's store at Cotopaxi cut off credit to the settlers just as their first crops failed. As winter approached desperate colonists went to work in Saltiel's mines for \$1.50 per day. However, when Saltiel was about to have his way, the Denver and Rio Grande Railroad hired track layers at \$3.00 per day and the immigrants at Cotopaxi not only survived that winter, but had money for the crops the next spring. But the next year was hardly better. Some gave up, and by 1884 there were only six families left at Cotopaxi Colony. In June of that year, the colony formally broke up, and these Jewish settlers scattered throughout Colorado. The Cotopaxi experience was a good example of how badly some colonies fared. [18]

The San Luis Valley was also the site of several colony attempts. Here, conditions were more suitable for these social experiments. In November 1877, a group of Mormon converts from Alabama arrived at Pueblo on the Denver and Rio Grande Railway to begin new lives along the Arkansas River. The seventy-two people were housed in the old Thespian Theatre until barracks could be built. A crude structure was erected on an island in the Arkansas River, and here the party wintered; the men worked around Pueblo and picked up cash in preparation for spring. Ex-territorial Governor Cameron Hunt, long interested in settlement and a stockholder in the new Denver and Rio Grande Railway, proposed that the Mormons could find land at the southern end of the San Luis Valley. Their leader, James Z. Stewart, made an exploratory trip to the valley, and in late March 1878, he located suitable lands near Conejos. Here, he bought 120 acres, and in May of that year a D&RG train brought the Pueblo settlers to Fort Garland where the Mormon families hired local Spanish-American drivers to take them to their new lands. By 1879 there were some 400 Mormon settlers in the Conejos area. A townsite was staked out and named Manassa. Three and one-half miles north, Ephraim was established. Some colonists, by 1881, moved to near La Jara, where Richfield was founded. Sanford was later platted just north of Richfield. So successful were the Mormon settlements, that the State of Colorado sold the Mormon Church land for \$1.25 per acre, and church officials bought seeds and tools for their colonists. There were so many arrivals that land could not be cleared fast enough. The Denver and Rio Grande Railway was building its line to Antonito at this time, and the Mormons were able to obtain jobs paying from \$3.50 to \$4.00 per day. Thus, these Mormon colonies survived and prospered. Their Spanish-American neighbors, who had been in the valley since 1852, helped the newcomers and provided support. Within ten years, the Mormons had 40,000 acres of land under cultivation, irrigated by ditches and canals. This was one case where colonization worked well in Colorado. [19]

Another example of colonization was the Holland American Land and Immigration Company's Dutch colony in the San Luis Valley. This organization bought 15,000 acres in the Valley, and in November 1892 some two hundred people arrived at Alamosa directly from Holland, ready to settle their new land. Poorly built quarters caused an outbreak of diphtheria among the children, and only thanks to the Denver and Rio Grande Railway's offer of two railroad cars as isolation wards, was an epidemic stopped. While this was going on, the Empire Land and Canal Company agreed to locate individual families on plots north of Alamosa and rent or sell land to the immigrants. Meanwhile, word reached Holland that the colony was in chaos, and the company stopped sending settlers to the San Luis, diverting

them to northeastern Colorado, along the South Platte River. This ended efforts at Dutch settlements in the San Luis Valley and put a stop to colonization in the Valley during the 1890's. [20] Failure was due to lack of planning, inadequate resources and poor agricultural potential.

Not all colonies or settlement schemes were for profit and economic development. One unique example on the plains was the Salvation Army's Fort Amity project. The Salvation Army, an English philanthropic organization, decided it could help reduce poverty in large cities by moving poor citizens to settlements where they could become farmers and learn to be self-sufficient. This social rehabilitation was intended to turn the poverty-stricken into "productive citizens" much like the American native was supposed to become a sedentary farmer. Victorian morality had much to do with these views of "agricultural uplift," for poverty was seen as a moral illness. Of course, it made no difference that most of these potential farmers had never been outside of the city, had never farmed, knew nothing about dry-land agriculture and were so poor that they could not hope to survive the first two years. Yet, the Amity Land and Irrigation Company of New York City purchased land along the Arkansas River twelve miles west of the Kansas line. Using about 1,800 acres of bottomland, the Salvation Army hoped to turn this place into a utopia of abundance. The Army paid between \$20 and \$27.50 per acre, a rather high price considering the quality of the land. Nevertheless, these lands were to be resold to settlers by means of time payments. The Salvation Army still lost between \$60,000 and \$70,000, even with resales. Despite the problems, April 1898 saw thirty families arrive from Chicago and other places in the mid-west. None of them had experience on the frontier, and there were no farmers among them. The first year's crop was a total failure, and to survive, the Salvation Army borrowed money to advance to its settlers. The next year, irrigation ditches were dug, houses were built and fences were erected for livestock. While there were a few colonists who left, the bulk of the new farmers remained, and in April 1902 the first member paid off his entire debt of \$900. By 1905, Amity had a population of 350 and was a prospering community. The Salvation Army also built an orphanage for \$20,000, which was later used as a sanitarium for lung diseases. The orphanage, called the Cherry Tree Home, was populated by children who were transported from New York and New Jersey cities to Colorado on the theory that they could be trained as "useful" workers in the sugar beet and cantaloupe fields around Fort Amity. Amity prospered for a few years, but saline seepage began to destroy fields. Crops failed, buildings settled, and despite frantic drainage efforts, farms had to be abandoned year after year. The orphanage was evacuated, and the children were moved to California. The building was eventually demolished. About ten years after the colony was founded, its lands were sold to J.S. McMurty of Holly, Colorado, who later reclaimed the orchards with modern drainage methods.

The Amity project, finally abandoned by the Salvation Army, was a combination of bad luck, unforeseen conditions such as seepage, and a poor choice in location, all contributing to the loss of this colony. Such an experiment in religion and social development was another example of good-intentioned persons gone wrong by assuming the West was fit for agriculture in the eastern manner. [21]

The period between 1860 and 1880 in southeastern Colorado was one of retrenchment from a failing mining industry. As gold booms faded, agriculture developed and took up the slack. Towns like Pueblo, Trinidad, Walsenburg, Lamar, Alamosa, La Junta, and Las Animas were founded at this time and grew into agricultural service centers. Ranching and farming sustained the economy of the region while optimists waited for the next mineral boom. One factor that slowed growth and settlement during this era was a lack of adequate transportation systems. Wagons and stage coach lines criss-crossed the area, but these methods were slow and expensive to use. Freight cost money to move, and men like "Uncle Dick" Wootton who ran a toll road over Raton Pass made a good profit. Equally, the San Luis Valley was served

westward from Saguache by Otto Mears' toll road system into the San Juans. As agricultural efforts continued into the 1870's, other events occurred that, in their own ways, may have been more important than the region losing its dependence on mining.

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Land of Contrast: A History of Southeast Colorado

BLM Cultural Resources Series (Colorado: No. 17)



Chapter IX

A TIME OF BUILDING, 1870-1880

Southeastern Colorado, during the 1870's, suffered from a common problem: the lack of inexpensive and reliable transportation. Denver may have been the commercial capital of northern Colorado, but commerce in the southern portion flowed from Pueblo to Santa Fe, New Mexico. Roads over Raton Pass, along the old Santa Fe Trail, across La Veta Pass, and other wagon routes into New Mexico were used for trade and transportation from 1840 well into the 1880's. There were roads north to Denver, but the bulk of Arkansas Valley trade went south and east using older, established routes. Denver, meanwhile, served the mountains by way of canyon outlets. South Park, for example, had a stage coach trail from Denver to Fairplay (and then on to Leadville) by 1877. Spotswood and McClellan's route took two full days and cost \$17 fare. A second road into the park was built over Ute Pass, west of the future Colorado Springs, while a third wagon/stage route went up the Arkansas River to Buena Vista and then later into Leadville. [1] Wagon roads also led from the San Luis Valley into the San Juans. Otto Mears of Saguache built toll roads to the Los Pinos Indian Reservation, west of Cochetopa Pass, then on to Lake City, Ouray, and finally into Silverton. In addition, Mears built a road over Poncha Pass to connect the Valley with the Arkansas drainage and other eastern trade routes. Thanks to Mears' roads, Del Norte became a supply base to the San Juans, as did Saguache. Into the 1880's, Mears continued building his toll roads. Finally, late in that decade, most were sold for use as rail grades or public roads. [2]

Perhaps the most important event since the Gold Rush of 1859 occurred in 1871 when the Denver and Rio Grande Railway was chartered at Denver for the express purpose of building a railroad from that city to El Paso, Texas (and hopefully Mexico City.) General William Jackson Palmer, recently of Civil War fame, gathered enough investment capital to build his dream railway. The reason for this interest was the Transcontinental Railroad (Union Pacific) that reached Wyoming in 1868. By building north of Denver, the Transcontinental saved construction costs and time; however, Denver's businessmen were frustrated in their efforts to gain rail connections. To solve this problem, the Denver Pacific was built, with Union Pacific help, to Cheyenne in 1870, and Denver became a rail city. These connections, in turn, assured Denver's place as a trading center. From here, railroads radiated into the mountains and across the plains. Palmer planned a north-south connection for Denver. In order to save construction costs, in expensive mountain terrain, Palmer used narrow-gauge rails that measured three feet across, rather than the standard four-feet-eight and one-half inch gauge. In this way, Palmer's limited capital could go farther. [3] Commencing in 1871, Palmer built a line from Denver to what became Colorado Springs. Regular business began in 1872, and the Rio Grande carried about 484 passengers a week. The Palmer road continued south to Pueblo that same year, and here the line turned up the Arkansas River toward Canon City and its coal fields. Palmer founded Colorado Springs in 1871. By the end of 1872, the place had a population of 1,500. He could boast that Pueblo's size had shot to 3,500 persons since the railroad's arrival. A major problem was a source of cheap fuel. The Labran fields near Canon City provided an answer. The Rio Grande built from Pueblo to that region, intent on developing these resources, but with no real desire to proceed westward, for Palmer had his

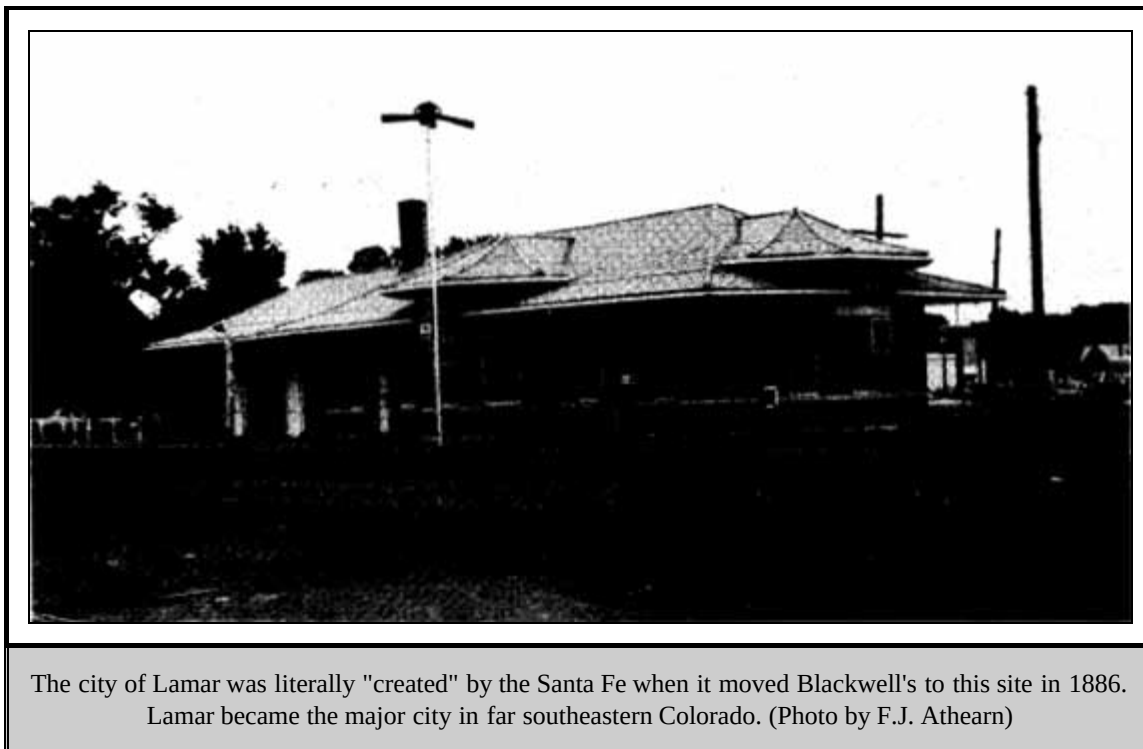
eyes on Santa Fe and then El Paso. Canon City's citizens were infuriated when the Rio Grande refused to extend the Labran line only a few miles to their city. [4]



The arrival of the Santa Fe Railroad along the Arkansas River in the mid-1870's opened southeastern Colorado to settlement. (Photo by A.J. Senti)

As Palmer's road was being prepared to move south, a threat appeared from Kansas. Not only did the Kansas Pacific propose to build a line along the Arkansas to connect with Pueblo, but the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe was pushing across the plains, following the old Santa Fe Trail; prepared to invade New Mexico. Palmer's plans were suddenly in serious trouble, for the Santa Fe, as it was called, could not only take Raton Pass, but also could end the Rio Grande's monopoly at Pueblo, Colorado Springs, and north to Denver. [5] As the Santa Fe built toward Pueblo, Palmer extended his "baby road" south to near Trinidad, reaching that point in April 1876. The Rio Grande terminated at El Moro, a point five miles north of the earlier Trinidad settlement. Its townspeople were furious when Palmer calmly built a new town at El Moro and decimated Trinidad's commerce. The Rio Grande was equally responsible for founding Cucharas, Colorado. [6] Upon reaching Trinidad, the Rio Grande Railway was suffering from financial difficulties. While Palmer went to Europe to raise funds, construction ceased for several years. The Santa Fe, still building, reached Pueblo in February 1876, having followed the Arkansas River from Dodge City, Kansas. La Junta and Las Animas eventually became Santa Fe railroad towns and farm service centers. While La Junta became the junction of the Santa Fe, with one line running to Pueblo and the other along Timpas Creek to Raton Pass, other towns arose in the next ten years. It took that long for enough settlement to develop along the Arkansas River to support towns and their services. The mid-1880's saw several settlements become important for providing service to farmers and ranchers. Lamar, for instance, grew out of Blackwell's Station, a siding on the Santa Fe. Originally, this place was used to ship cattle from the A.R. Black Ranch. During May of 1886, the Santa Fe, desiring a new location for facilities, moved its station and other structures from the siding to the present-day site of Lamar. May 22, 1886, saw a train roll into Blackwell's Station, load up all railroad property and move it west. Since rancher Black had refused to allow a townsite on his land, the Santa Fe vacated his premises and founded their own town. By May 23, 1886, trains were running from Garden City, Kansas, carrying

land speculators, and some \$45,000 worth of town lots were sold on that day alone. Lamar, named for Secretary of the Interior L.Q.C. Lamar, became the largest town in far southeast Colorado and still serves as a major rail town for the Santa Fe.



The Rio Grande reached an agreement with the Santa Fe to provide cooperative service to Denver. In doing so, the Rio Grande assured its monopoly and kept Denver to itself. However, the Santa Fe had eyes to the south and promptly began construction to Trinidad, by way of La Junta, following Timpas Creek with the objective of Raton Pass. As the Santa Fe rushed for Trinidad, the Rio Grande began a line from Cucharas, over La Veta Pass, intending to tap the San Luis Valley and many suddenly mineral rich San Juan mining towns. Palmer made a fatal error at this time, for he chose not to extend his road from Trinidad to Raton Pass. In consequence, the Santa Fe captured the pass, buying out "Uncle Dick" Wootton's toll road, and then it proceeded on into Santa Fe, New Mexico with impunity. [7]

The year 1878 changed all railroad builders thinking; Leadville boomed. Oro City, founded more than a decade earlier in California Gulch, was a gold mining camp that never really went very far. Men like Horace A.W. Tabor, a merchant, were ever hopeful and were willing to grubstake local miners. Tabor, in 1877, provided August Rische and George Hook enough goods for them to prospect Fryer Hill. Here they found a rich silver lode, and the "boom" was on. By 1879, Tabor was a millionaire, just as a number of Colorado luminaries, like David Moffat, John Routt, Jerome Chaffee and John Evans made their fortunes thanks to Leadville's silver. Leadville was formally founded in 1877, and by 1879 it was the third largest city in Colorado, with all the amenities of a growing town. Silver mines produced millions of dollars while smelters worked day and night refining ore and casting ingots. Between just 1878 and 1880, an estimated \$36,850,000 in silver was pulled from the hills around Leadville. Eastern investors poured in capital, and mines went even deeper searching for minerals. Individuals rarely developed their finds now, for eastern corporations spent the needed millions in tunnels, shafts, mills and smelters. Laborers were hired for \$3.00 per day, and mining in Colorado became a modern industrial enterprise. This, in turn, led to labor unrest. In 1880 Leadville's miners went out on strike demanding \$4.00 per day for their work. The Miners, Mechanics and Laborers Protective Association was founded to present management with workers' complaints. [8] Hostility ran high, with businessmen and mine owners facing

workers and miners. In typical nineteenth century fashion, Governor Frederick Pitkin called in militiamen, and the strike was broken. There were no further labor problems at Leadville until the late 1890's. [9]

What is more significant about Leadville, and the silver boom, was that eastern capital, invested for the first time in Colorado, was returned to Denver, Colorado Springs and Pueblo, causing new and dramatic growth. The mines of Leadville precipitated silver booms in the San Juans, the Wet Mountain Valley and other such locations. As noted, transportation was a major problem for the mining industry. One reason silver took off during the early 1880's was construction of railroads throughout this state, providing cheap and reliable means to move silver ore to smelters generally located in metropolitan areas. Denver and Colorado Springs had large smelter operations that required quantities of coal and raw ore. Pueblo, a developing steel producer, also needed coal in huge quantities.

Palmer's railroad, along with rivals, offered the solution to silver's problems. It was soon realized that Leadville would produce fantastic rail revenues for the line that got there first. Competition was keen for the rights to Leadville. Palmer, having been cut off at Raton Pass, turned westward up the Arkansas River Canyon in 1878, rapidly building toward Leadville. There were other rivals, too. John Evans and Walter Cheesman, of Denver, incorporated the Denver, South Park and Pacific Railroad (DSP&P) in 1875. In 1876 construction up the Platte River Canyon was underway. By October 1878, the line reached Bailey's Ranch, then Grant and Webster. Kenosha Pass was crossed in May 1879, and during June of that year the DSP&P reached Como. Como was not only a station, but also the site of coal deposits that were soon exploited to fire the DSP&P's locomotives. The Lechner and King Mines provided fuel, and the railroad built an extension from Como to these places for development. Como, by 1879, was a tent city of some 6,000 residents, including miners, railroad workers, and others cashing in on the mini-boom. As the summer of 1879 progressed, the DSP&P graded over Red Hill toward Leadville. The South Park line was prepared to cross Trout Creek Pass and build up the Arkansas River into Leadville when its management ran into unexpected troubles. The DSP&P hoped to have exclusive rights into the "Cloud City" by getting into the valley first. These dreams were dashed by events not of the South Park's making. [10]

As the Rio Grande turned west into the Grand Canyon of the Arkansas, Santa Fe officials decided that Leadville's markets were too rich to ignore. A race was on between the two roads, and when they reached the Canyon of the Arkansas (Royal Gorge), there was no room for two railroads. The rivals locked in battle, beginning the "Royal Gorge War." The Santa Fe went to court while the Rio Grande barricaded itself in the canyon. Judge Moses Hallett of Denver's U.S. District Court did not help matters by ruling, in a preliminary injunction, that both companies had rights to the canyon. Palmer, assuming he had lost the legal battle, prepared for physical confrontation. Assistant Chief Engineer James R. DeReemer, located twenty miles up river from Canon City, created a "deadline" with ties and then built stone "forts" on the canyon walls all the way up to Texas Creek so to defend Rio Grande workers from Santa Fe crews. These works are still visible from U.S. Highway 50. There were no shots fired, and the Royal Gorge War took place in courtrooms, not the Canyon of the Arkansas. [11] The Rio Grande was in serious financial difficulty by late 1878, and Palmer was forced to settle with the Santa Fe. December 1878 saw a formal lease executed between Rio Grande and Santa Fe by which the Palmer road would be leased to the AT&SF. In return, the Santa Fe agreed not to build lines that were competitive or that would lower freight rates on the Rio Grande. Five days later, the AT&SF raised freight tariffs to Colorado Springs and Denver via Pueblo. [12]





This rockwork is one of the so-called DeReemer Forts that were built in the Canyon of the Arkansas during the "Royal Gorge War." They still survive and can be seen from Highway 50. (Photo by F.J. Athearn)

The Rio Grande battled in court during 1879, hoping to regain sole ownership of the road. In April of that year, the U.S. Supreme Court affirmed the Rio Grande's claims to the Royal Gorge, but provided for joint trackage rights where the canyon was too narrow for both railroads. In turn, Palmer got a Costilla County judge to cancel the lease with the Santa Fe. This was promptly overturned by Judge Hallett in Denver. Nevertheless, Hallett, in July, carried out the Supreme Court ruling and granted Palmer rights to the entire Arkansas River Canyon. While a financial settlement was being arranged between the two railroads, the Santa Fe built the famous "Hanging Bridge" in the narrowest part of the Royal Gorge. It was unique because the structure hung from the Canyon's walls along the river rather than crossing the stream. [13] Palmer's road went into receivership in July 1879, a victim of financial mismanagement and the Santa Fe Agreement. The lease was broken by bankruptcy, and the Santa Fe, free again, announced they would build a line to Denver next to the existing Rio Grande main line. Meantime, a desperate Palmer provided Jay Gould, of the Union Pacific/Kansas Pacific combine half of his company's trust certificates which partly revived the Rio Grande's financial health. In December 1879, Judge Hallett ordered that the completed line west of Canon City be transferred to the Rio Grande with the Santa Fe getting \$1.8 million for its efforts. The road to Leadville was opened to Palmer by 1880, but his problems were far from over. [14]

While Palmer and the Santa Fe fought it out in the Royal Gorge, the Denver, South Park and Pacific was across Trout Creek Pass and running into Buena Vista. Early 1880 looked bad for Palmer's hopes; for the DSP&P was way ahead in the race to Leadville; the Santa Fe had cut off Palmer at Raton Pass; the La Veta Pass construction was slow and expensive, the San Luis Valley was still elusive, and a new railroad was proposed from Colorado Springs to Leadville by way of Ute Pass. Palmer, with enemies on all sides, took on the DSP&P first. He went to court and got an agreement with the DSP&P to jointly operate D&RG-built trackage between Buena Vista and Leadville. The DSP&P then proposed to build up Chalk Creek to Gunnison, allowing the Rio Grande to use these rails. The DSP&P was therefore deprived of its exclusive right to Leadville and the Rio Grande was given some badly needed breathing room. [15]

The DSP&P, for its part, continued on to Gunnison by building the Alpine Tunnel, hoping to

reach that town before Palmer's road could. The Rio Grande, in turn, built over Marshall Pass and entered Gunnison ahead of the South Park. As the DSP&P struggled to drill the Alpine Tunnel, Jay Gould's Union Pacific bought it out. The South Park Line was then reincorporated as the Denver, Leadville and Gunnison (DL&G) in 1882. Having been beaten to Gunnison, the DSP&P turned its attention to Leadville. Palmer was still a long way from that city, so the South Park Line built toward Breckenridge by way of Boreas Pass. On August 2, 1882, the DSP&P was at Breckenridge, and by the end of that year the line reached the Montezuma Mining District at Dillon and Keystone. [16] Since the Union Pacific owned the DSP&P, capital was available for further construction. The Rio Grande successfully choked off traffic between Buena Vista and Leadville, so the DSP&P decided to go in the back way. From Breckenridge, the road built up Ten Mile Canyon over Fremont Pass and into Leadville, arriving at the "Cloud City" on February 5, 1884. The Rio Grande, having reached Leadville in 1883, was forced to lower its freight rates. The South Park's line was also faster, because it was 126 miles shorter than the Rio Grande main line up the Arkansas River Canyon. [17]

As the Rio Grande and South Park battled over Leadville, a new competitor entered the fray. Colorado Springs businessmen like Irving Howbert and J.F. Humphrey got Jerome Wheeler, J.R. Buck, Charles Otis and J.J. Hagerman to capitalize construction of a standard gauge road from that city to Leadville. While the railroad was incorporated in 1884, construction did not actually begin until 1886. Next year saw the Colorado Midland Railroad marching over Ute Pass, across South Park, through Trout Creek Pass and down to Buena Vista where the first train rolled in on July 13, 1887. [18] From that station to Leadville was another matter. Because the Rio Grande already occupied the most practical right-of-way, the Midland was forced to build around, over and under the D&RG. For instance, in the narrowest part of the Upper Arkansas River Canyon, the Midland drilled four tunnels in just four-tenths of a mile, finally arriving at Leadville on August 31, 1887. Now that city had three railroads serving it, and they were all looking to better things. The Colorado Midland eventually raced the Rio Grande over the Continental Divide in an attempt to reach Aspen first. The Midland used Hagerman Pass, west of Leadville, where the 2,000-foot Hagerman Tunnel was bored. The Rio Grande proceeded over Tennessee Pass, down the Eagle River Valley to Glenwood Springs, and then up the Roaring Fork into Aspen, reaching that boom town on November 1, 1887, beating Midland by a year. [19]

Railroad construction's importance to southeastern and south central Colorado cannot be underestimated. This form of transportation not only provided fast and relatively inexpensive freight and passenger service, but it made settlement in remote areas practical. Further, railroads made marginal mining possible and provided a way to get low-quality ores to smelters. In addition, food and durable goods were imported at lower costs and local standards of living rose.

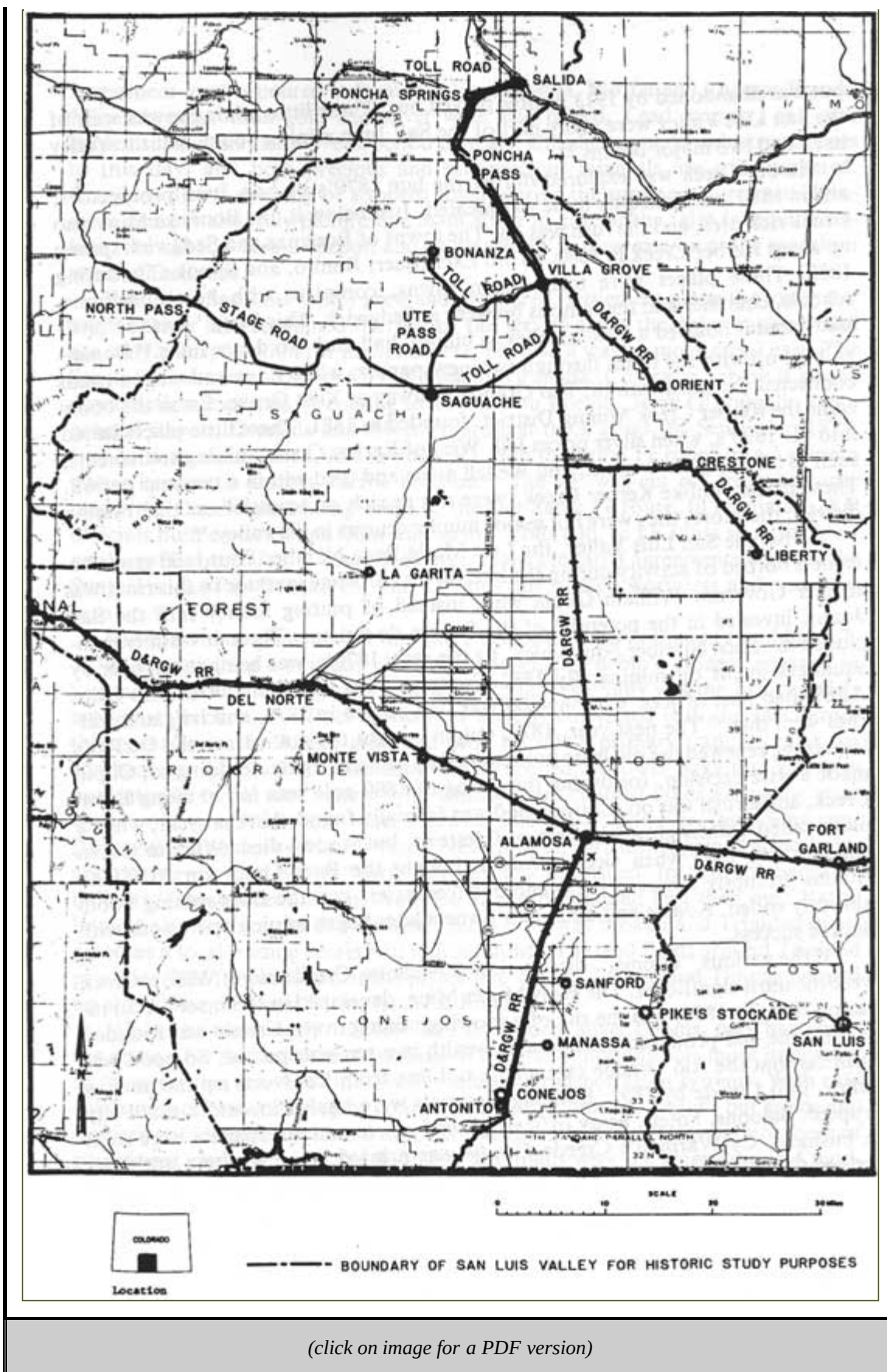
The year 1876 was the culmination of Colorado's fight for statehood, for in August of that year Colorado was admitted to the Union. The long battle for this privilege was over. After several false starts, a Constitutional Convention prepared an acceptable State constitution and the U.S. Congress voted admission. President U.S. Grant signed the entrance papers, and Colorado became a state on August 1, 1876. One of the provisions of the statehood Enabling Act was that the new State of Colorado would relinquish, forever, all claims to public domain within her borders. This was done, and not twenty years later, Coloradans were to regret it. Once statehood was obtained, the question as to Colorado's new capitol arose. Suggestions ranged from Leadville to Silver Cliff (both with large populations), but Denver was chosen. In the 1890's a new capitol building was erected at that city. State facility location became a major fight. Cities throughout Colorado saw location of State facilities beneficial to their economies and were willing to fight for the various plums.

Canon City engaged in battle with Boulder over the location of the State Prison and/or State University. Canon City's boosters saw the location of a prison there as having more "growth potential" and were pleased when the legislature agreed to build the State Prison at Canon City. Boulder, laughed Canon City residents, had "lost." They only got the State University. Likewise Pueblo got the State Mental Asylum, which did not add a great deal to the local economy primarily due to the lack of purchasing power by its inmates. Nonetheless, these cities were typical of what good lobby efforts could do for a town.

The decade of the 1870's also saw considerable growth and development along the Arkansas River corridor. The San Luis Valley and Raton Basin regions were populated, thanks not only to rail connections, but also due to governmental encouragement in the form of surveys. One of the last great survey efforts was that of Ferdinand V. Hayden of the U.S. Geological Survey (GS). The Hayden expeditions were designed to map and record areas of this and other states that, prior to 1870, were not accurately described. Hayden, over a period of four years, explored the western slope, the southwestern corner of Colorado, North and Middle Parks, and in 1873 his men fanned out over the Front Range to map and record geologic and geographic features of this region. Hayden was not unfamiliar with this part of Colorado, for in 1869 he had noted "oil springs" around Canon City and also that there were major coal deposits here. He also described salt deposits in South Park. This referred to Charles L. Hall's Colorado Salt Works Company which began operation in 1864 and continued into the 1870s. [20] Hayden's men dispersed across the southeastern Front Range in 1873; A.C. Peale mapped many of the producing mines of South Park, while Henry Gannett described the topography and climate of the park as ideal for cattle and sheep. In addition, the various survey parties looked over the Wet Mountain Valley and Raton Basin. The annual report of 1873 provided detailed maps of this region, including towns, roads, drainages and elevations. Publication of Hayden's works attracted the attention of land developers and mining investors who used this information to promote settlement. Hayden's survey efforts helped increase a rising interest in the land for development and improvement. [21]

South Park and the Upper Arkansas Valley were not the only areas that boomed during the 1870's. Pueblo became a major supply center, and its beginnings as an industrial city date from this time. Transportation, water, and coal supplies all accounted for the city's predominant situation. Coal fields extending from Florence to Trinidad were opened, and thousands of tons of this mineral were produced in order to fuel locomotives, fire smelters and heat homes. Coal mining became big business. From early small mines, operated by several individuals or a family, corporate mining took over by 1880. With it came imported labor, company towns and labor strife. [22]





The San Luis Valley saw some new developments during the 1870's, too. Mining was not exclusively the domain of the central Rockies. Of course, the San Juan Mountains were "invaded" in the late 1860's by eager gold seekers. As miners spread across the region, a few explored the streams and creeks of the valley hoping to find enough "pay dirt" to stake

claims. The first strike occurred near the San Luis Valley at Summitville District in 1870. The nearest town was Del Norte, which became the camp's supply center. The Summitville area was not overly productive, but camps were established in never-ending hope of wealth. Jasper was staked out along the Alamosa River in 1874. It became part of the Jasper-Cornwall District in 1879. Jasper had a stamp mill and post office, along with a branch of L.L. Fassett's store of Monte Vista. [23] This region also was home for the town of Stunner, located above Jasper along the Alamosa River. Stunner was an outgrowth of Blaineville and dated from around 1882. Four miles from Stunner, the settlement of Platoro was founded. This place produced during the early 1880's, but was abandoned by 1913 as ores played out. These little mining towns west of the San Luis Valley were really part of the San Juan mining boom, but the Valley itself had two major booms. [24]

Kerber Creek was explored during the late 1870's by San Juan prospectors, and in 1880 the Exchequer mine was located. Just below it, the Bonanza Mine also struck rich ores, and the rush was on. The towns of Bonanza and Sedgwick sprang up along Kerber Creek in 1880, as did Exchequer, Bonito, and Spook City during 1882. These places were truly boom towns, complete with hotels, saloons, schools, churches and the famous brewery at Sedgwick. This "city" was so "civilized" that it boasted a bowling alley, a billiard hall and two dance halls. [25] Bonanza kept up with the times through two newspapers, while stage and wagon roads connected the town with the Rio Grande Railway at Villa Grove. From the boom came the Kerber Creek Mining District, founded in 1881. These little places lasted into the 1890's, when silver prices fell. West of Kerber Creek, mining settlements, such as Sky City, Bowenton, and Biedell arose and died within a ten-year period. These places, unlike Kerber Creek, were not as rich or accessible as that mining district; therefore, they were not major mining centers in the valley. [26]

Across the San Luis Valley, the Luis Maria Baca Number Four land grant became a hotbed of activity during the late 1870's. A prime investor in this tract was former Governor William Gilpin who, instead of putting money into the San Juans, invested in the potential of the Sangre de Cristos. These investments included the Baca Number Four which, by the early 1870's, was being taken over by squatters intent on mining. By 1882 Crestone, San Isabel and Rio Alto (Rito Alto?) had post offices. Cottonwood was first settled in 1876, and irrigation ditches were dug. [27] The next year, 1877, Gilpin bought the grant from the D&RG's lessees; he renewed the old lease but retained all mineral rights. In doing so, Gilpin made a wise decision, for during the spring of 1880 gold was found along Burnt Creek, and a rush was on. Cottonwood was formally founded in that year, while a place called Tetons grew up north of Crestone, but it soon died. William Gilpin got lucky in 1886 when George Adams bought the Baca Grant for \$350,000. Adams promptly removed the numerous trespassers and the Baca mining boom abruptly ended. Adams and other new owners later began mining operations with limited success.

Of the various "booms," discoveries by Nicholas Creede along Willow Creek were the most significant. The Holy Moses Mine, developed in 1889, set off an invasion that, by 1890, was the site of a growing mining town. Creede was founded at this time and produced considerable wealth in a ten-year period. So good was business that the Rio Grande extended a rail line from Del Norte up the narrow valley, into Creede by 1891. Building materials were hauled in, and a small city erupted. Saloons, hotels, assay offices, general stores and newspapers were soon in business. Cy Warman's Creede *Candle* was printed here. Warman aptly described Creede: "It's day all day in the daytime, and there is no night in Creede." Investment monies poured in from men like David H. Moffat and Thomas Bowen. Minerals other than gold and silver were also mined. Lead, copper, and zinc helped sustain the camp over a period of years. Creede's mineral industry survives to this day, and both precious and semiprecious minerals are still marketed. Creede is also something of a tourist town; during the summers numerous sightseers come to the truly picturesque main street to gaze at the

false fronted buildings, the old Rio Grande depot, and an amazingly narrow canyon at the mouth of which Creede sits. [28]

While the San Luis Valley grew and prospered, settlement along the lower Arkansas River also continued. Arrival of rail service along the Arkansas provided not only transportation for homesteaders, but also a way to move crops east. The Santa Fe built from Dodge City, Kansas to Granada, Colorado, where it stored construction materials, preparing to advance on Pueblo. Jerry O'Loughlin ran a general store at Granada and this town arose at track's end. By September 1875, Las Animas was reached, and in February 1876 the Santa Fe rolled into La Junta where it met the Kansas Pacific head-on. [29] The KP was cut off from its cattle trade (the Goodnight-Loving Trail) by the new Santa Fe route. In retaliation, KP officials built a branch line from Kit Carson, Colorado, to La Junta so as to divert cattle traffic north into Kansas. However, thanks to tariff agreements between the Santa Fe, the Rio Grande and the KP, this line proved worthless and was later torn up. [30]

Santa Fe management built on, into Pueblo, arriving in that city on March 7, 1876, precipitating a two-day celebration at which Pueblo's citizens engaged in "eating, drinking, dancing, and general rejoicing." Not only was the Rio Grande's monopoly broken, but Pueblo was now directly connected with the east. From this point forward, Pueblo grew and soon became a primary trading center for southeastern Colorado. [31] The Santa Fe also opened the lower Arkansas Valley to homesteaders who took trains from Chicago and claimed lands along the river where soils were fertile and water was available. Early, however, there were conflicts with cattlemen previously there. Nevertheless, agriculture gained a foothold, and during the next twenty years, that industry flourished. In 1878 the Santa Fe built its Transcontinental line from La Junta to Trinidad and then over Raton Pass. As at Pueblo, the Rio Grande's monopoly was broken and Trinidad prospered as a local trading center and railroad town. The coal fields around Trinidad provided fuel for railroads. Little places like Model, Tyrone and Timpas popped up along the new Santa Fe line from La Junta. [32]

While the Gold Rush of 1859, and subsequent silver booms, may have been the reason for settlement in southeastern Colorado, nothing was more important to the area than arrival of inexpensive and fast transportation systems. With railroads, not only was this region connected with the "outside world" but goods and services could be imported and exported which, in turn, created an atmosphere of permanent settlement and development. Railroads were the forerunners of modernity in the Victorian West; and when they arrived, prosperity could not be far behind.

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Land of Contrast: A History of Southeast Colorado

BLM Cultural Resources Series (Colorado: No. 17)



Chapter X

INTO MATURITY, 1880-1900

Railroads were the region's mainstay for a period of ten years prior to 1885. Not only did transportation systems develop, but so did major industries. Pueblo became the center of industrial Colorado when, in 1880, the Colorado Coal and Iron Company was founded by William J. Palmer as a subsidiary of the Rio Grande Railway. Of course, Palmer intended to produce iron for rails which, in turn, would assure self-sufficiency in his railroad construction. [1] The General, realizing that abundant natural resources lay at his feet, built a steel mill at Pueblo to be fed by coal from the Huerfano River country and iron from the San Luis Valley. Mines along the Purgatoire and Huerfano Rivers began producing in earnest during the early 1880's, while the Orient Mine in the San Luis Valley was opened in 1880 to produce iron ore for Colorado Coal and Iron, which coincidentally was an investor in the nearby Trinchera Estate. Orient City, by 1880, had two restaurants, a saloon, and other businesses to serve its iron miners. In 1881 the Rio Grande built a spur from Villa Grove to Orient (also called Hot Springs), by which then had a population of 400, and produced 30,000 tons of limonite ore annually.

Pueblo's burgeoning steel industry also helped Palmer expand the Rio Grande. In 1878 the road reached Alamosa, and by 1880 it was extended to Antonito, then Chama, New Mexico, prior to reaching Durango in 1881. As noted earlier, the Rio Grande built up the Arkansas River toward Leadville in 1880, and this, in turn, caused construction over Marshall Pass in 1881. A spur was built over Poncha Pass in that same year to Villa Grove (and Orient), while a new line was constructed from Alamosa to Del Norte, and then on to Creede to tap the mineral potential of this new mining camp. [3] All of this activity was either directly or indirectly connected with the incorporation of the Colorado Coal and Iron Company in 1880. Capitalized at \$10 million, this organization bought up coal lands around Trinidad and Walsenburg, opened iron mines at both Orient and Calumet, began quarrying limestone near Pueblo, at San Carlos Station, built a full-scale iron mill at Bessemer (south of Pueblo) and opened coke ovens from Trinidad to Crested Butte to serve smelters in Leadville, Denver and numerous other places. [4] But the year 1883 saw Pueblo's iron mills running at half capacity due to slowdowns in rail purchases. While the Rio Grande and the Burlington were still buying these goods, times were hard. Additionally, CC&I suffered legal setbacks in a battle with the Department of the Interior over illegally acquired coal lands south of Pueblo. While the mid-1880's may have been a little slow for Pueblo, there were other events that tended to overshadow development along the Arkansas. [5]

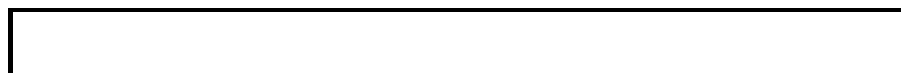


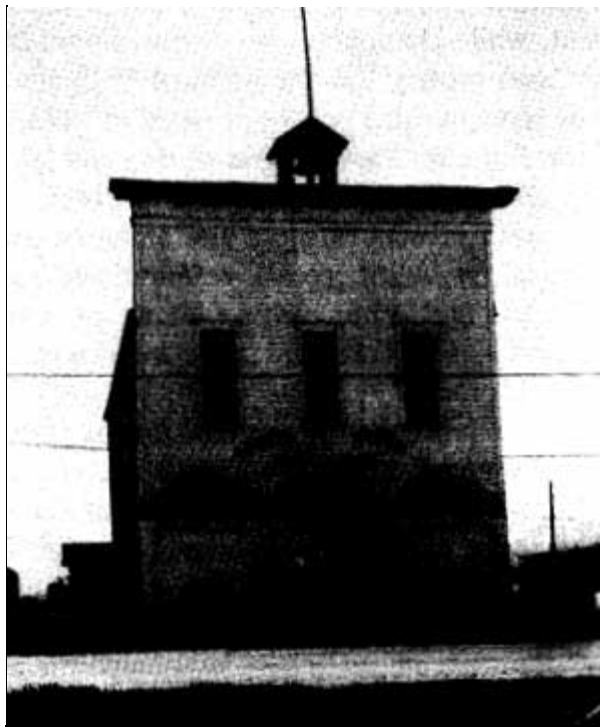


The Bassick Mine, located at Querida, Colorado, sparked the silver boom that took place in the Wet Mountain Valley during the 1880's. There is still some mining taking place around Querida and Rosita.
(Photo by F.J. Athearn)

Silver discoveries at Leadville in 1878 unleashed a whole new boom in Colorado. Everywhere miners sought to locate silver lodes and make their fortunes. Silver prices were stabilized when the U.S. Government agreed to purchase virtually all domestic output in the nation. Sure prices meant that production could increase, while new transportation systems made discovery and development of low-grade ores possible. Areas like the Wet Mountain Valley were explored during the mid-1870's, and 1877 saw E.G. Bassick locate and develop the first silver mine in the valley. The Bassick Mine was soon drawing population, and Querida was founded in 1877. As exploration spread, silver was located at the southern end of the White Hills, and by 1878 a rush into the Wet Mountain Valley was underway. Silver Cliff was founded at that time, and the Silver Cliff Mining District became a major silver producer. The Bull-Domingo Mine was one of the most productive properties in the region. [6] By the early 1880's, Silver Cliff's population was between 5,000 and 8,000 citizens, and there was talk of it becoming Colorado's capital. Obviously since statehood in 1876, the question of location was not settled. Custer County was formed in 1877, and towns such as Rosita, Querida and Silver Cliff boomed. This was a far cry from Carl Wulsten's aspirations of 1868.

Things were so bustling, that in 1881, the Rio Grande built a narrow gauge line up Grape Creek to serve the mines of Silver Cliff. The Grape Creek route was wiped out by a flood in 1888. [7] By the mid-1880's, silver production in the valley was declining, and by the end of this decade most mining came from reworking old mine dumps and hand-sorting ores. Population dropped and Silver Cliff was slowly abandoned. Rosita and Querida also lost their populations, but localized mining persisted. During the 1890's cyanide leaching was used to extract small amounts of gold from Wet Mountain Valley ores. After 1890, annual production of gold and silver rarely exceeded \$40,000. That there was still profitable mineral activity in the valley was seen in 1901, when the Denver and Rio Grande built a standard gauge line from Texas Creek to Westcliffe. Silver Cliff citizens dutifully moved the one-mile west and settled in Westcliffe. Ranching and farming provided the economic base for the Wet Mountain area after 1900. [8]





Silver Cliff's town hall was built in 1882 with the hope that it might become Colorado's next capitol. But by 1889 the boom was over and so were Silver Cliff's hopes. (Photo by F.J. Athearn)

As the Wet Mountain Valley boom went on, Leadville continued producing vast quantities of lead, silver, zinc and other minerals. Silver prices remained high because the United States government was buying everything produced. The Sherman Silver Purchase Act of 1890, was an extension of the Bland-Allison Act of 1878, by which silver would be purchased and used for coinage in the United States. Silver became embroiled in national politics during the late 1880's, when a debate arose over basing the American economy on either silver and gold or just gold. The gold standard is what backed America's currency, and was in vogue throughout the world by 1890. National politics came to the forefront during this period. The election of 1892 saw a struggle between silver and gold coinage developing. Both major parties were swept up in this issue. Republicans supported a "solid" gold standard, while Democrats were split. Some factions favored gold, while others wanted "soft money" in the form of both silver and gold backing. To further confuse the issue, a third party appeared in 1892. [8] The People's Party, or more commonly the Populist Party, arose during the late 1880's in protest to big business, corrupt government and inequitable distribution of the national wealth. The Populists were mostly farmers and small businessmen who wanted basic reforms, like the secret ballot, recall, referendum, graduated income tax, regulation of the railroads and other rights that we assume today. Among the Populist Party's demands was a silver-gold standard at a ratio of 16 to 1. This, of course, was popular in Colorado. [9]

The battle reached its climax during the election of 1896. Populists "fused" with the Democratic ticket and William Jennings Bryan was nominated as a silver candidate. William McKinley was chosen as Republican standard bearer, and the fight was on. Colorado, for one, was convinced that right-seeing voters would cast aside McKinley and turn the country into a silver-based, reform-minded nation. So deeply divided were the national parties, that in Colorado the Republicans formed a Silver-Republican party that supported the national party's platform except for the gold standard. The Colorado situation was further complicated by a strong Populist Party. Davis P. Waite of Aspen had been elected Populist governor in 1892. His attempts at reform were generally not successful, and he became involved in

several violent disputes that revolved around mining. Waite also had the misfortune of being in office when the Panic of 1893 wiped out Colorado's silver industry. [10] Waite was involved in a bitter strike at Cripple Creek during 1894, when miners went out seeking better pay and shorter hours, not to mention union recognition. The Western Federation of Miners (WFM) led this strike, and, while Waite's sympathy was with the miners, he sent in the state militia to restore order, benefitting local mineowners. [11]

Ironically, Cripple Creek was the one mining district that survived the crash of 1893. First staked in 1890 by Bob Womack, these claims precipitated a gold rush resulting in creation of the Cripple Creek Mining District on April 5, 1891. The region west of Colorado Springs and on the backside of Pike's Peak turned out to be one of the richest gold-bearing areas in Colorado. What was unique about Cripple Creek was that the gold was locked in volcanic rock with certain areas of vugs that were amazingly rich. In late 1891, a town site was laid out by Horace Bennett and Julius Myers. They named the eighty-acre site Fremont. The next year another 120 acres were platted and called Cripple Creek. By February 1893, the two townsites had merged into modern-day Cripple Creek. In 1893, the town got electricity, a sewer system and water works. By the end of that same year, telephone service to Colorado Springs was in place. Cripple Creek was a legendary boom town drawing thousands of miners into the region. [12] Other towns arose around Pike's Peak. Victor was founded in 1893 and soon became a "rival" to Cripple Creek's claim as the last great gold rush town. Smaller settlements served specific mines. Anaconda, Gillette, Goldfield and Independence all represented home to miners whose livelihood was nearby.

As fast as towns were built and as mines produced, construction of roads into the district began. Early routes into the gold camp included a wagon road from the Colorado Midland stations at Divide and Florissant while an El Paso County road called the Bear Creek Road ran south of Pike's Peak into the area. In 1892, several Florence businessmen created the Florence and Cripple Creek Free Road Company and opened a road up Eight Mile (Phantom) Canyon. Rivals quickly built a toll road up Four Mile (Oil) Creek from Canon City to Cripple Creek. The "Shelf Road" was used by Dave Wood, one of southwestern Colorado's most prominent early freighters, to haul goods into the newborn mining camps. [13] Wagon roads helped move goods into the booming region and to cart ores for smelting at Pueblo, Colorado Springs, Denver and even Leadville. But transportation was not cheap. As in earlier days, railroads raced for Cripple Creek and the millions of dollars worth of ores to be transported.

Right behind the wagon roads, rail companies sought to connect the place with steel. In late 1891, the Midland Terminal (MT) was incorporated to build a line from the Colorado Midland at Divide. A series of problems, including finances and being forced to rebuild the entire road from narrow gauge to standard gauge kept the MT out of Cripple Creek until 1895. On the other hand, David H. Moffat of Caribou, Colorado fame, determined to tap the riches of Pike's Peak, began construction on the Florence and Cripple Creek (F&CC) in late 1893. Wishing to win this race, Moffat threw 1750 men into the fray and proceeded up Phantom Canyon, reaching the district on July 1, 1894. The F&CC reaped the windfall revenues in the absence of competition. W.S. Stratton's Independence Mine, David Moffat's own extensive holdings, and numerous other operations were all served by the F&CC. The Midland Terminal did not reach Cripple Creek until December 1895, hence ending the F&CC's monopoly. [14]

These two major connecting lines then built feeders throughout Teller County. F&CC's subsidiary, the Golden Circle Railroad, built from Victor to Altman and then down Squaw Creek into Cripple Creek, thus tapping Battle Mountain's mines. Other short lines, like the Cripple Creek District Railway (CCD), were built in 1898 from Cripple Creek to Midway by way of Poverty Gulch. With these two roads fighting over ore haulage, competition was restored. Mills at Denver, Colorado Springs, and Pueblo vied for the right to process Cripple

Creek ores. In order to capture this market, Denver investors organized the Denver and Southwestern Railroad (D&SW) as a holding company. This corporation control led both the F&CC and the Midland Terminal, along with various short lines. As a result, ore was diverted to Florence, where Denver interests had major investments in mills and smelters. Once again, a monopoly existed. [15] Colorado Springs businessmen immediately objected to this diversion of trade. Mine owners like W.S. Stratton, Irving Howbert, Frank Woods, and others formed the Colorado Springs and Cripple Creek District Railway (CS&CCD) in 1899 to combat the D&SW. This new line ran from the Springs to Cripple Creek and then later to Victor. The railway was electrified and carried both freight and passengers. This line cost \$4.5 million to build and was the most expensive railroad in Colorado to date. [16]

While the Cripple Creek gold boom turned the area into a thriving metropolis of 25,000, creating in turn, Teller County in 1899, all was not well in the gold fields. Fire swept Cripple Creek during 1896, after which the city was rebuilt in brick. Victor fell victim to fire in 1899, when the business district was wiped out. Despite these setbacks Cripple Creek produced considerable gold during its first ten years. From 1899 to 1902, mining output declined as it became harder to find the precious mineral. In addition, labor unrest by the Western Federation of Miners led to bloody strikes in 1903, climaxing in the Independence (Mine) station bombing that killed 13 miners and set off violent retributions. The state militia was sent in to restore order and the strike was broken in early 1904. Not only did the District's miners pay a heavy price, so too did the mineowners, for production never recovered. [17] Another major problem that Cripple Creek's mines faced was continual water seepage. The El Paso Tunnel, built in 1903, was intended to drain part of the mines. Others followed, like the Roosevelt Tunnel in 1908, and later the Carlton Tunnel. These improvements, along with a new cyanide roasting process kept Cripple Creek's mines going up to World War I. By 1917, total cumulative production was \$293,202,811; not bad for a place that twenty-five years earlier was a cow pasture. [18] Cripple Creek might have been Colorado's mineral savior during the Panic of 1893, but it was not all that went on in the southeast corner of the state.

Agriculture developed to a point of major contribution during the 1880's and 1890's. The Arkansas River, near Canon City, provided water for Colorado's first orchards, dating to 1869. Irrigation, it was soon discovered, was needed to provide upland benches with water. The riverbottom itself may have been fertile, but there was precious little of it. Ditches were dug during the 1870's to water fruit orchards, like "Dall" DeWeese's nursery at Canon City. DeWeese offered not only fruit trees, but also 500,000 shade trees and 300,000 ornamental shrubs for the many homeowners in Denver, Colorado Springs and Pueblo. Water projects along the Upper Arkansas included the Missouri Park Ditch, the Hill and Sprague Ditch, the Willowdale Ditch, and several others. At one time, Chaffee county's pear and bean production was second only to Conejos and Otero counties. [19] Irrigation along the Arkansas River, below Pueblo, provided homesteaders with an opportunity to raise crops like hay, onions, peas, wheat and corn. These agricultural enterprises were the underpinnings of towns along the river from La Junta to Lamar. They all became agricultural service centers. Not only was water divertable, but local railroad transportation could haul goods east or west. The Santa Fe provided monopolistic service until 1887, when the Missouri Pacific Railroad reached Pueblo from St. Louis. [20] Now that city was connected to the east by two mainline railroads and agriculture was able to gain a solid foothold, thanks to these events. Thousands of homestead applications were filed during this period on the southeastern plains. From 1861 to 1961, 22,140,000 acres of public lands went into private hands in Colorado alone. Of this, considerable acreage along the Arkansas was put to the plow from 1880 to 1920. As settlers moved away from the river, they found that the land was not suitable for agriculture as practiced in the mid-west.

Dryland farming became a way of life during the 1890's in southeastern Colorado. Since there was not much natural moisture, farmers depended on soil retention and winter snowfall

to keep the ground wet enough to grow wheat. The turning point for dryland farmers was the introduction of strains from the Ukraine that could withstand both droughts and wind. These "Turkey Red" wheats were a boon to great plains farmers, who soon planted every available acre in "dryland" wheat. The advent of so-called "suitcase farmers" caused massive problems, like soil erosion due to gross overplanting and considerable overproduction on the plains. Once the virgin topsoil was disturbed, nature, in the form of wind and drought, blew millions of tons of soil eastward. The Federal Government, in an effort to populate the arid plains, ignored warnings about dryland damage and encouraged farmers further by enlarging the amount of acreage available through homesteading. In 1909 the Enlarged Homestead Act provided for 320 acres while the Stockraising Homestead Act of 1916 raised farm sizes to 640 acres. The hope was that 640 acres would also encourage grazing on the plains. [21]



When the Missouri Pacific arrived in the 1880's, the area north of the Arkansas River was opened to homesteading. Towns like Eads, Arlington and Sugar City were founded. Today, the Missouri Pacific hauls coal unit trains to St. Louis. (Photo by F.J. Athearn)

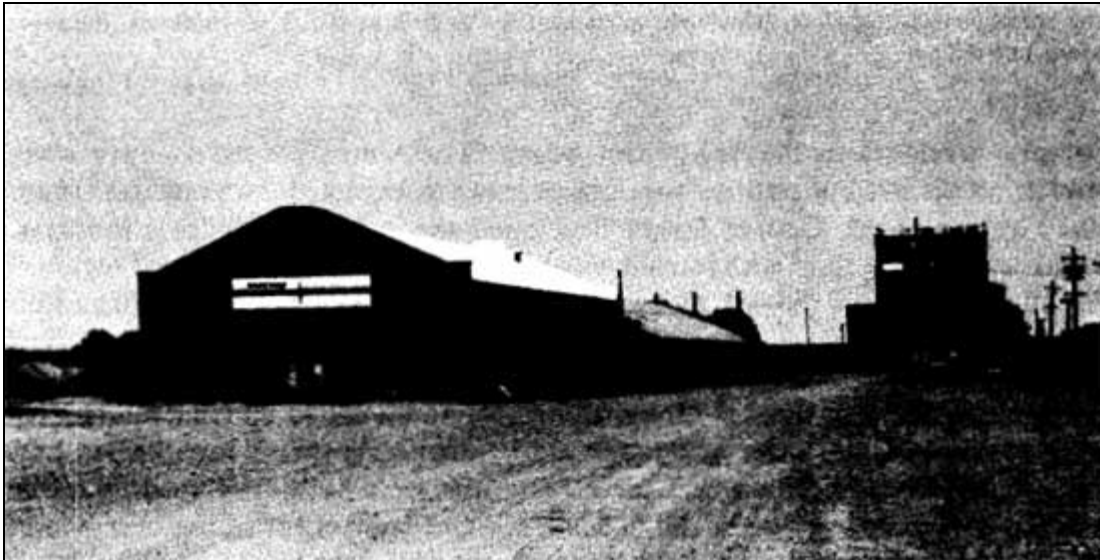


The rather large schoolhouse at Arlington, Colorado is testimony to the size of the last homesteading

boom. Now the town and its citizens are gone. (Photo by F.J. Athearn)

Water, of course, was the key to farming success on Colorado's eastern plains. The national government, in efforts to encourage irrigation, sponsored the Carey Land Act of 1894, by which up to 1,000,000 acres of public domain could be given to individual States for irrigation projects. This effort was a dismal failure, for the states were unable to manage the various "Land and Irrigation" companies that cropped up, and in the end, almost no acres were irrigated. [22] Irrigation got a serious boost in 1902, with the passage of the Newlands Act. A Reclamation Fund was established to help water users build dams and canals to irrigate farm lands that hitherto were unusable. The Reclamation Service was formed to oversee these projects. Southeast Colorado was not generally affected by the Newlands Act for most local canals and dams were already in place. However, during the 1950's the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers became an important force along the Arkansas River. [23]

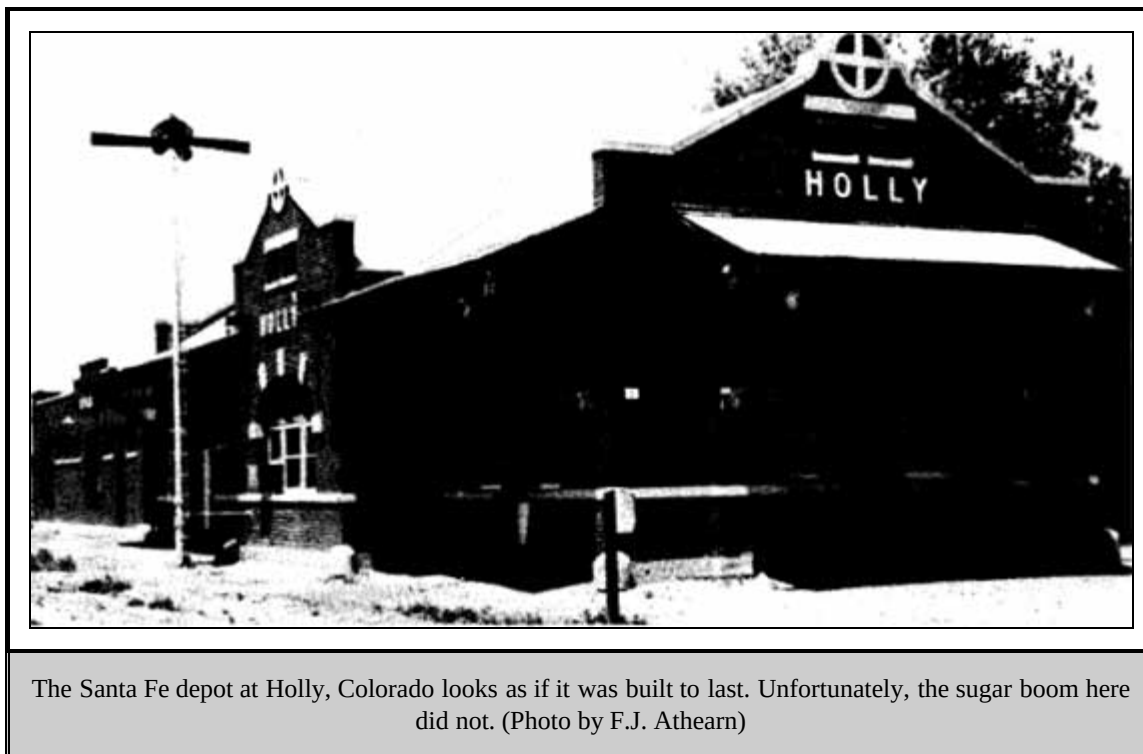
Irrigation for agriculture actually had its start in the San Luis Valley during the 1850's. Logically, the Valley continued to be the leader in irrigation projects in southeastern Colorado. The 1880's saw a proliferation of canals in the central valley when such projects as the Travelers Canal, the Monte Vista Canal and the Empire Canal were all built with eastern capital. They tapped the Rio Grande's seemingly endless water. The 1880's were a period of canal building by corporations rather than by individuals or the government. Both British and American companies put up the money to build ditches in the hope that they would not only make a profit, but that the lands around these canals would become more and more valuable. Of course, some major landholders in the area were the very same companies that held mortgages on the ditches. That many such projects were not small in nature was seen in the fact that during 1887 the La Junta and Lamar Canals were both enlarged and reincorporated as the Fort Lyon Canal Company. This organization built canals off the Arkansas River to the point that the Fort Lyon Canal was over 113 miles long, forty-five feet wide and six and one-half feet deep. It is still the major water carrier for the river. [24]



The sugar beet boom that took place at the turn of the century, lasted until the 1970's. But there are many abandoned sugar processing plants along the Arkansas now. This plant at La Junta was converted into a warehouse. (Photo by F.J. Athearn)

Irrigation and dryland farming notwithstanding, agriculture continued to dominate the San Luis Valley, the lower Arkansas Valley, and South Park. Hay and cattle were South Park's main products, while the San Luis Valley provided beans, vegetables, corn and other staples.

The 1890's saw a dramatic change in crop production throughout the Arkansas drainage with the introduction of sugar beets. Beets were a well-known European crop and became popular in Colorado during the 1890's as a cash crop. Sugar beets were first planted on the west slope, in the Grand Valley, which is also where Colorado's first sugar beet plant was erected in 1899. Then, "beet fever" spread like wildfire. Soon thousands of irrigated acres were planted along the Arkansas and South Platte Rivers. Water was the key to sugar beets, and where there was an abundance, sugar beet plants were built. John Campion, of Leadville, and Charles Boettcher, of Denver, were primary investors in the sugar beet boom. These men helped finance early processing plants, but returns were not as great as expected. Nonetheless, sugar beets were planted. George Swink developed the Arkansas Valley's industry. Swink was also credited with introducing cantaloupes to the Rocky Ford region. [25] The sugar beet boom did well along the Arkansas, and by 1900 the American Beet Sugar Company built a plant at Rocky Ford, while the National Sugar Beet Company put up a factory at Sugar City that same year. In 1906, the Holly Sugar Corporation was chartered at Holly, Colorado, and it ended up controlling most beet enterprises in the lower Arkansas Valley. Sugar fever spread into the San Luis Valley from 1911 to 1913, where several factories were built. They proved costly failures, and the Valley never did become a major competitor in the beet boom. So popular were beets that by 1909, 79,000 acres of Colorado's agricultural lands were in sugar beets. The beet industry continued, over a period of sixty years, to provide a cash crop that was easily grown and that was also in ever-increasing demand. Recently, however, with the advent of corn syrup, demand for beet sugar has greatly weakened. [26]



The Santa Fe depot at Holly, Colorado looks as if it was built to last. Unfortunately, the sugar boom here did not. (Photo by F.J. Athearn)

There were many significant events that occurred in southeastern Colorado during the twenty-year period prior to 1900. But perhaps none was more important than the impacts caused by what became known as the Conservation Movement. The General Revision Act of March 2, 1891, proved one of the most important and long-lasting decisions ever made by the Federal Government. Until 1891, governmental policy was disposal of public lands. When the nation was founded, hundreds of millions of acres lay in a state of wilderness. To encourage settlement and to help pay for government, vacant land was sold for \$1.25 per acre. War veterans were given free land. This system was under the supervision of the General Land Office (GLO) from 1812 to 1946. Disposal of the public domain was considered essential for

development by farmers, miners, businessmen and others who would buy cheap land, improve it and help expand the United States into the West. The Homestead Act of 1862 provided for "free" lands. Now, settlers could improve 160 acres over a five-year period and then the land would be deeded to the claimant. This policy resulted in legislation such as the Desert Land Act, the Timber Culture Act, and various other incentives for settlers in the west to take up land. In addition, millions more acres of public land were used for grants to various railroad companies, that used them to pay for construction costs by selling the land or using it as collateral. Perhaps the most famous grant was that of the Union Pacific (Transcontinental) Railroad across Nebraska and Wyoming. [27]

As the West developed, mining, lumbering, farming and ranching took their tolls on public lands. Cattlemen overgrazed, miners stripped back the soil, lumbermen denuded hillsides, and farmers plowed under virgin grass. During the 1890's, the Populist movement, so actively involved in the Silver Crusade and other reform efforts, also promoted awareness of natural resources and our environment. For years, concerned citizens expressed outrage over the devastation of western lands. Primarily eastern in nature, these complaints were finally heard in Washington. In March, 1891, the General Revision Act authorized the President "to reserve any part of the public lands" and to establish boundaries for these withdrawals. President Benjamin Harrison, on October 16, 1891, took advantage of the act and withdrew about 1,200,000 acres in Colorado. The White River Timber Reserve was the first such withdrawal in this state, and it caused an incredible uproar in the West. Cattlemen, in particular, protested that they could no longer graze freely. Miners cried that they would be shut out of the public lands (which was and is not true) and timber interests decried the loss of forest lands. Nevertheless, in 1892 the Pike's Peak Timber Land Reserve was created from 184,320 acres in the Rampart Range country. In late 1892, Harrison also withdrew the South Platte Timber Reserve consisting of 683,520 acres in Park, Summit and Chaffee Counties. This was done to preserve and protect Denver's South Platte watershed. [28]

In two short years, conservationists had won stunning victories. After these first withdrawals, a five-year period of nonuse lapsed before the Federal Government undertook active administration. In 1897, the Department of the Interior was designated forest manager, and rules were drafted to permit land use. The timber forest reserves were unlocked and locals could again use the land. Livestock grazing (excluding sheep) and water for irrigation was allowed. Homesteading and timbering were not. Nevertheless, sawmills operated openly in places like Florissant and Puma City without much Federal interference. Cattlemen adjusted to the new regulations, and generally the furor over forest withdrawals calmed down. [29] What destroyed the uneasy peace was the implementation of grazing permits in 1900 by Interior's General Land Office. Now to use the reserves, cattlemen had to have permits. What was worse, sheep were permitted to use forest grazing lands, too. These new rules drove cattlemen into the anti-conservation ranks almost to a man. Despite outcries from users and politicians like Henry M. Teller and Thomas Patterson, President Theodore Roosevelt, in 1902, created the San Isabel Forest Reserve, consisting of 77,980 acres in Fremont, Custer, Huerfano and Saguache Counties. Roosevelt, a hard-core conservationist, ignored protests by western ranchers and land users, proceeding to create the San Juan Forest Reserve in June 1902. This withdrawal consisted of 1,437,406 acres west of the Continental Divide, including the eastern side of the San Luis Valley and the Rio Grande watershed. Amid more howls of anguish, Roosevelt withdrew 1,129,947 acres in the Leadville Forest Reserve during May 1905. This massive forest extended from the Continental Divide to Central City, and from Idaho Springs back to Leadville. In addition, the Pike Forest Reserve was created from the older South Platte, Plum Creek and Pike's Peak Timber Reserves in 1905. In June of that year, the Wet Mountain Reserve of 239,251 acres was created, and one day later, on June 13, 1905, the Cochetopah Forest Reserve was withdrawn. The Cochetopah consisted of 1,333,300 acres and extended from Salida on the east to Creede on the west. [30] The year 1905 was the last of the massive Colorado withdrawals. Interior lost administration of these lands, and they

were transferred to the Department of Agriculture in 1905. The Forest Service was created, and cattlemen, forced to pay grazing fees since 1900, took out their hostilities on the new Forest Rangers, who literally defied death enforcing the rules. Despite the protests, fears that the timber and cattle businesses would be wiped out, and resentment toward the Federal Government, the forest reserves stuck. From the various timber reserves evolved today's present National Forest system, and most of the acreage withdrawn at the turn of the century is still in Federal hands.

The significance of forest withdrawals lies not only in the fact that the Federal Government became a permanent landlord in the western states, but also that millions of acres were removed from homestead entry. A Public Lands Convention held at Denver in 1907 deplored the closing of the frontier, but the reserves prevailed. Now, if a settler wanted to homestead, it would have to be on the arid eastern plains. This is precisely where the last great settlements occurred a few years later. The timber reserves changed, for all time, settlement patterns and development in southeast Colorado. From this time on, the region's growth and development were locked firmly by the location of forest reserves. By changing governmental policy from total disposal to conservation and retention, Colorado's (and the entire West's) destiny was turned and fixed in a new direction.

CHAPTER X: NOTES

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5. Ibid., p. 52.
6. Samuel F. Emmons, "The Mines of Custer County, Colorado," in Whitman Cross (ed.), *Geology of the Silver Cliff and Rosita Hills, Colorado District* (Washington, DC: GPO, 1896), pp. 412-413. Also: Gayle Turk, *The Wet Mountain Valley* (Colorado Springs, Colorado: Little London Press, 1976.)
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9. Fritz, *ibid.*, p. 352.
10. Ibid., pp. 353-354, and Ubbelohde, Benson and Smith, *op. cit.*, p. 221.
11. George Suggs, *Colorado's War of Militant Unionism* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1972), p. 17 and pp. 45-64, also Emma Langdon, *The Cripple Creek Strike of 1903-1904* (Victor: Victor Daily Record, 1904.)
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Land of Contrast: A History of Southeast Colorado

BLM Cultural Resources Series (Colorado: No. 17)



Chapter XI

A PERIOD OF CHANGE: 1900-1920

The turn of the century was a time of contradictions. On the one hand, times were prosperous; there was unbounded optimism for Colorado's agricultural, mineral and industrial future, while at the same time labor rose in rebellion and a series of violent strikes marred the first years of the new century.

Colorado's hopes were celebrated through a series of festivals and popular events meant to depict the State's rosy future. Agriculture and its importance was celebrated on a regular basis in the form of "Fruit Days." Rocky Ford, for example, held a Melon Day on September 5, to honor one of the region's most popular and successful crops. [1]

Meanwhile, Pueblo was the home of events that honored not only agriculture, but industry as well. As far back as the 1890's, Pueblo businessmen built a "Mineral Palace" that displayed Colorado's mineral wealth and mining technology. The place opened at Pueblo on July 4, 1890, and thousands came to see the exhibits. Leadville, during the winter of 1895-96, built an Ice Palace to celebrate the city's Crystal Carnival. The "building" was huge. It was a Norman Castle design and covered five acres. There were ballrooms, display areas and a restaurant. What was truly amazing was that the structure was made entirely of ice. The Palace melted during the summer, perhaps symbolizing Leadville's fate as a mining center. [2] Denver regularly held its Festival of Mountain and Plain between 1895 and 1912. This event was patterned after the New Orleans Mardi Gras and contained floats, parades and displays. Nearly every Colorado city of any size sent floats and showed its products. Leadville, Cripple Creek and Victor represented mining, while Pueblo, Lamar, La Junta and Las Animas flaunted their agriculture as did San Luis Valley towns. [3] Pueblo held annual festivals marking good harvests each fall. The entire Arkansas River Valley was represented by livestock, fruit, vegetable and other displays showing southeast Colorado's finest. Ribbons were awarded and farmers got to see what their neighbors were doing. The Pueblo Fair eventually became the Colorado State Fair, and permanent buildings were erected at Pueblo to house this event. The tradition continues into the present. [4]

During this period, industrial expansion also occurred. Because steel sales were strong and the new sugar beet industry was showing considerable promise, railroad expansion continued. In 1899, the Colorado and Southern Railway was incorporated to take over the bankrupt Union Pacific, Denver and Gulf (UPD&G) Railway which was made up of, among others, the Denver South Park and Pacific, the Colorado Central and several other mountain lines. The new Colorado and Southern had roadbed from Trinidad to Denver, and with joint control of the ailing Colorado Midland, the C&S could claim connections to Salt Lake City by way of Grand Junction. [5] Among the acquisitions of the C&S was the Fort Worth and Denver City that ran from Trinidad to Fort Worth, Texas. The Fort Worth and Denver was connected, in 1907, with the Trinity and Brazos Valley Railroad into Houston. In that year, southeast Colorado had a new transportation system that connected Pueblo, Trinidad and points north to the Texas Gulf Coast. [6] This provided new markets for Pueblo's steel, a fact not

unnoticed by the C&S. Also, Arkansas Valley sugar beets, vegetables and other produce could be shipped south. Equally, passenger service was available from Denver to Houston by way of Pueblo and Trinidad. The C&S had extensive trackage in Wyoming and Montana that connected not only Denver, but Pueblo and southeastern Colorado on a north-south axis. The Chicago, Burlington and Quincy (CB&Q) bought controlling interest in the C&S in 1908 and has retained the line ever since. [7] The C&S bought the Colorado Springs and Cripple Creek Railway in order to tap rich mineral markets in Cripple Creek and Victor. The CS&CC hauled ores to large smelters at Pueblo. By 1910, railroad building in the region ended, but Pueblo was now connected by four major railroads and southeast Colorado was the scene of cutthroat competition among these various lines. [8]

Smelting, along with steel, was one of Pueblo's primary sources of industry. As early as 1880, Meyer Guggenheim became interested in smelting near Pueblo. The Colorado Smelting Company opened a plant in 1882 at Pueblo. In 1884, plans were announced to build another smelter here. The New England and Colorado Mining and Smelting Company opened its facilities in 1885, but it closed a year later for lack of work. Nevertheless, local smelting was consolidated by Guggenheim in the late 1880's. This Philadelphia family controlled most smelting in the region. In 1888, Guggenheim built a new plant at Pueblo after the local Chamber of Commerce persuaded him to locate in that city. [9] By the early 1890's, copper ores from Arizona and New Mexico were being processed at Pueblo, as were Leadville, Cripple Creek and Victor silver and gold ores. Pueblo's mills worked during the 1890's turning out finished materials. The high point of Pueblo smelting came in 1901, when the industry processed \$24.5 million in ores. From here on, milling declined. [10] The situation had changed dramatically in 1899, when the American Smelting and Refining Company was created in New Jersey. American proceeded to buy up virtually all smelters in the nation, including the Colorado Smelting Company and the Pueblo Smelting Company plants at Pueblo. One of the combine's backers was Standard Oil of New Jersey. [11] The Guggenheim's Philadelphia Smelting and Refining Company of Pueblo was not swallowed by the American trust. The family held out against intense pressure to sell. Finally in 1901, the Guggenheim corporation sold their mills to American Refining and smelting was monopolized. [12] While the creation of this huge combine was significant for mineowners, it was outright ominous for the common working man. Labor lost its ability to bargain with owners who were physically close to their plants. Smelting workers found themselves facing a huge, nameless bureaucracy interested in profits, not people.

Pueblo's steel industry was in the same position. As demand rose, and with the organization of the Colorado Fuel and Iron Company in 1892, steelworkers and, more importantly, coal miners found themselves losing all rights to CF&I's management. Workers in Pueblo's steel plants were relatively skilled and therefore they tended to be better paid and treated. However, this was not the case in the coal fields. Colorado Fuel and Iron had mines around Walsenburg (Fred Walsen's little settlement) and Trinidad. To house miners, towns were built. Primero, for example, was founded in 1901 and was considered a model for company towns. Other similar towns arose. As coal production increased, new sites sprang up. Segundo, Tercio, Frederick, Starkville, Morley, Tobasco, Berwind, Toller, Rouse, Lester, Jobal and Pictou all represented company towns in southeast Colorado. [13] Colorado Fuel and Iron was justifiably proud of its towns, with their medical care, schools, company stores, and the most modern sociological design. However, company policies such as payment in script, inflated prices for houses and goods, long days, and management's refusal to bargain made for considerable resentment and tension in the coal fields.

Labor violence first flared, ironically, at Cripple Creek where gold miners went out on strike in sympathy for workers in the smelters of Pueblo, Denver and Leadville. Demands included an eight-hour day, the right to strike, collective bargaining and, most importantly, recognition of unions. While working conditions were important, union recognition was considered the

true goal. The Western Federation of Miners (WFM) pulled their men from the mines of Cripple Creek in 1903. In response, the State, at mineowner request, sent in the militia. The Cripple Creek strike quickly devolved into terror, including the famous Independence Station bombing in June 1904. Wholesale violence broke out; mines were burned, stores looted and newspapers ransacked. By mid-1904, mineowners had hired enough scab labor that the mines were reopened, the union was broken and the WFM was forced into oblivion. [14]

Now the stage was set for coal miners in southeast Colorado. The first coal strikes began in the Boulder County fields during 1910. By 1913, unrest had spread into southern Colorado, and in September of that year coal miners throughout Huerfano, Las Animas, Pueblo and Fremont Counties voted to strike. An eastern-based union, with considerable experience in coal strikes, represented Colorado's miners. The United Mine Workers (UMW) were determined to unionize Colorado's fields. To do so they sent in organizers like John Lawson and the famous Mary Harris, "Mother Jones", a well-known Socialist. Demands were different from those at Cripple Creek. The UMW wanted a ten percent wage increase, an eight-hour day, health and safety regulations, the right to select living quarters and the right to have other than company doctors. Above all, recognition of the UMW was demanded. [15] In response, various companies, most particularly CF&I, threw the strikers out of their homes and brought in strike breakers, hoping to keep up production. Tent cities were soon formed by displaced miners, including a large contingent at Ludlow about 18 miles north of Trinidad. The Colorado state militia was called in to "restore order" and in the process, swooped down on Ludlow in search of "illegal" organizers. A fight broke out, and fire swept the little colony, killing two women and 11 children. Additionally, five miners and one militiaman were killed. The tragedy became known as the Ludlow Massacre. The day, April 20, 1914, became a rallying point for the UMW, but to no avail, for President Woodrow Wilson sent in federal troops who rapidly broke the strike. [16] The UMW was forceably removed from Colorado's coal fields. But miners did gain concessions, such as wage increases, an eight-hour day, a Workman's Compensation Law (passed in 1915) and the Industrial Commission Act. Out of this strike came a "company union" sponsored by CF&I that supposedly represented the miners and gave them a voice for grievances. The so-called "Rockefeller Plan" was hailed as an ideal way to thwart unions while retaining control of workers. The plan was named after John D. Rockefeller, part owner of CF&I. [17]

Trinidad and Walsenburg were not the only areas to be struck. Canon City and Florence mines were also the sites of labor strife. The Canon City Coal District's major mines were located at Rockvale, Brookside, Williamsburg, Chandler, Coal Creek and Bear Gulch. The Rockvale-Williamsburg mines were serious producers, and these towns contained thousands of miners and their families. As at Trinidad, working conditions and union recognition provoked a strike in 1913. As the southern fields went out in September, so too did Canon City. There was little violence until April 20, 1914. After Ludlow, union miners and mine guards fought pitched battles at Rockvale and Chandler. There was one fatality, the threat of bombings, and other destruction. The state militia was called in on April 27, 1914, and an uneasy peace was restored. [18] The Canon City mines went back to work in the summer of 1914 as did Trinidad's operations. The strike was broken and miners had to be contented with "company unions."

While labor warfare was the by-word on the eastern plains, places like the San Luis Valley and South Park remained calm. South Park, faced with declining mines and mills, turned to agriculture as its mainstay. Cattle ranching, hay raising and sheep grazing all stayed the park's weakened economy. The great mining centers of Fairplay and Tarryall all but disappeared. Fairplay survived only because it was Park County seat and the park's main service center. Population decreased to some 300 in all of Park County by 1900. [19] The other South Park towns lay along railroads. The Denver, South Park and Pacific, now part of the Colorado and Southern, was the main employer at Jefferson, Como, Garo and Antero

Junction. Places like Hartsel and Antero were sustained by the Colorado Midland. [20] Both railroads transported cattle out of the area and provided a limited tax base for Park County. However, the trains were doomed by 1915 due to changing transportation modes.

The advent of automobiles and trucks during the early 1900's hurt shortline railways. In fact, the first gasoline auto of record in Colorado was owned by Dr. F.L. Bartlett of Canon City, proud driver of an Oldsmobile. He took delivery of his car in 1901 and the motor age had begun in southeast Colorado. [20] By 1902, some 200 cars were registered in Denver alone, and the rapid spread of motor cars did not bode well for railroads. The Colorado Midland, already in deep financial trouble, was abandoned in 1921. Passenger service had ended in 1918. The loss of the Midland was not serious, since the DSP&P was still in business. Cattle ranchers and hay raisers at the south end of the South Park were the big losers. [21]

The San Luis Valley saw somewhat better times during the first years of the 20th century. Agriculture, as always, continued to expand. Since irrigation ditches were in operation since the 1880's, and because most lands were taken up along the major drainages, there were few new areas that could be farmed. Nevertheless, north of Alamosa, marginal lands were sold for farming purposes. The Mosca Land and Farm Company was set up in 1891 to provide land for tenant farmers. By 1900, the town of Mosca had the largest flour mill in the valley, a newspaper and other such "signs of civilization." Mosca was a commercial land venture designed to provide vegetables and wheat for export. [22] Another new farm town in the northern reaches of the valley was Garrison. During the panic of 1893, Garrison went broke and was partly abandoned. In 1896, the place was renamed Hooper. Farmers began to develop farmlands around the immediate region. That things were going well, was seen in the fact that the Denver and Rio Grande built a line from Villa Grove to Alamosa, passing both Mosca and Hooper. This then connected Poncha Pass with Alamosa and the Durango branch. [23] Water became a major problem for settlements north of Alamosa. Not only was the water table too high, but there were also salinity leaks. By the early 1900's, many acres were so waterlogged that they were abandoned and overgrown by greasewood and rabbitbrush. Nevertheless, projects were attempted, between 1911 and 1921, to solve these problems. Inasmuch as most river water was already taken for irrigation needs, farmers at the northern end of the valley drilled artesian wells. They were fairly inexpensive to tap and provided considerable water. The many wells drilled caused the water table to drop, and several surface lakes dried up. During the 1950's, the artesian boom caused considerable drainage of the valley's water supplies and as a result, the Bureau of Reclamation has undertaken the Closed Basin Project to try and save what water is left. [24]

Attempts at other development continued during the early 1900's. Near La Garita, a small boom took place when the Oklahoma Land Company sponsored a lottery for local lands. Mineral Hot Springs was developed as a tourist spot, and by 1911 even had a post office. The center of the valley saw crop diversification at the turn of the century. Vegetables became a major cash crop and truck gardening arose around Center, Colorado which was platted in 1898. In 1909, the Costilla Estate Development Company attempted to sell the high lands around Culebra and Costilla Creeks. The company built Sanchez Reservoir to water the area and laid out the townsites of San Acacio, Mesita and Jarosa. Some Japanese truck farmers later settled at San Acacio. [25] Costilla Estate was not the first land company in this area. The Seventh-Day Adventist Church founded a colony at Jarosa, where they operated a cooperative farm and in 1910 they established an agricultural academy. In 1911, a post office was opened at Jarosa and when the San Luis Southern Railroad arrived, the little settlement prospered, for shops and other railway facilities were built here. [26] The San Luis Southern Railroad was one of the last independent roads built in Colorado. It ran from Blanca to Jarosa, and served to connect with the Denver and Rio Grande at Blanca. The San Luis Southern hauled vegetables, potatoes and other local crops to the D&RG where they were transshipped to Denver and other points. The railroad, started in 1910, still operates and

serves the same purpose, connecting the center of the valley with the Rio Grande. [27] In 1913, another short line was constructed from Sugar Junction (2-1/2 miles east of Monte Vista) to Center. Operations on the San Luis Central Railroad began September 1, 1913. This line carried sugar beets, vegetables and potatoes to Center, where it also connected with the Rio Grande. The San Luis Central was the last railroad built in the valley and still serves this region on a seasonal basis. [28]

As mentioned, the automobile's introduction in the early 1900's revolutionized transportation throughout the nation. Not only was mobility greatly increased, but new service industries developed because of automobiles. For instance, the Gates Rubber Company, in Denver, became the largest western manufacturer of tires, belts and other parts for cars. [29] Additionally, gas stations, roadside cafes and places to stay sprang up along improved roads. Under increasing pressure, the state and counties were forced to improve wagon and stage roads for cars. In this way, today's state and county highway system began. The rapid increase in automobile ownership culminated in something called the Good Roads Movement. The Colorado Good Roads Association was founded in 1905, and in 1908 became the Rocky Mountain Highway Association. Its lobby efforts helped create the State Highway Department. [30] The state was forced to admit that cars were here to stay and began road building. In 1905, Skyline Drive at Canon City was built, while 1911 saw the opening of a road to the Royal Gorge. Using convict labor, a state road was built in 1899, from Pueblo to Leadville. It later became U.S. Highway 50. [31] Road building was given a boost when, in 1916, Congress passed legislation by which the Federal government would double every dollar the state invested in highways. Federal aid led to national highway construction, including paved roads along the old Santa Fe Trail, up the canyon of the Arkansas, and north from Pueblo to Denver using the older, heavily used wagon routes. The Southern Transcontinental Highway or the "Rainbow Route," (U.S. 50) followed the Arkansas from Holly to Pueblo and then climbed over Monarch Pass. [32]

As railroads were abandoned, old roadbeds were turned into automobile highways. In 1918, the Florence and Cripple Creek Railroad was torn up and the Victor Auto Club converted the Phantom Canyon into a dirt auto road. When the Short Line Railroad was removed in 1924, it became the Corley Highway; operated as a toll road until 1939 when it was renamed the Gold Camp Road. [33]

Tourism was, traditionally, a railroad function. For years the Denver and Rio Grande; the Colorado Midland; the Denver, South Park and Pacific, along with the transcontinental lines, advertised Colorado as a tourist mecca. Not only were long-term visitors sought, but the weekend trade was also encouraged. The Rio Grande, for instance, advertised the Royal Gorge and its famous "Hanging Bridge," while the Colorado Midland ran "Wildflower Trips" into South Park on Sundays. The Florence and Cripple Creek touted the Phantom Canyon Route for its scenic beauty, while the Rio Grande lured visitors into the San Luis Valley by promising them scenic vistas while on the way to the fabled San Juans. [34] The use of travel and tourism by the railroads was badly eroded by the new automobile which threatened the very survival of some railways. The automobile brought in not only more tourists, but also increased demand for access roads. In 1912, the Forest Service was authorized to build "highways" in National Forests and to allow for select cabin and lodge sites within the timber reserves. This opened whole new worlds for car drivers, tourists, campers and summer settlers. Public camping areas became quite popular as was seen in the establishment of the Royal Gorge Park during 1906. Here some 2,000 acres were deeded to Canon City by Congress, and the Royal Gorge soon became a major tourist attraction. By 1923, there were 643,000 annual visitors to 250 campgrounds throughout Colorado, thus attesting to the new relationship between tourists and cars. The suspension bridge over the Gorge was opened in 1929, increasing tourism even further. [35]

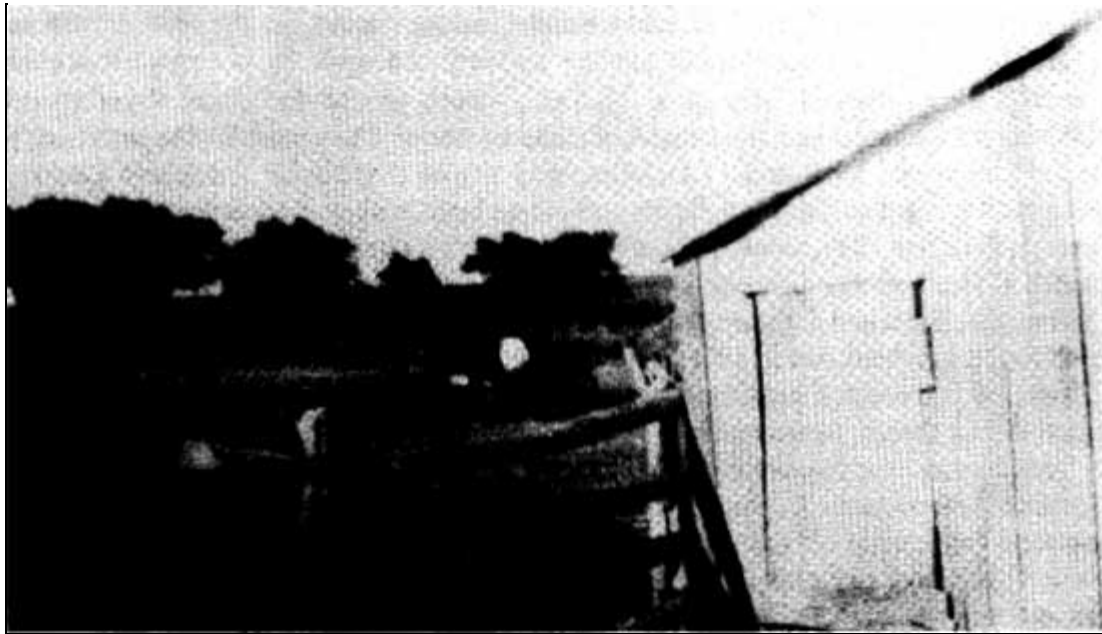
Colorado was always known for its healthy climate. Colorado Springs, for instance, was the site of several clinics for lung disease. Sanitariums were built at Buena Vista and Canon City to serve the very ill. Mineral waters and the clear air were drawing points. The many mineral springs in the region were bottled, diverted, or made into swimming pools. Mineral waters in the San Luis Valley were developed, too. Mineral hot springs are common in the valley, which is an area of considerable geothermal activity. Mineral and Valley View were the better known sites, but places like O'Neil Hot Springs, Hunt Springs, the Mishak and Russell Lakes, and something known as Shaw's Magnetic Springs (near Del Norte) all drew health seekers. The waters were alleged to cure virtually any ailment and are still in use today by those hoping for relief. [36] Mineral Hot Springs has a few current visitors, while Valley View Hot Springs is now a private nudist resort.

While tourism was, and remains, a major source of the region's economy, agriculture came to the forefront in the teens, due to war. The progress of American entry into World War I was contiguous to reform and changes in society wrought by the Progressive Party's demands. The Progressives, heirs to the Populist legacy, succeeded from about 1910 to 1914, in electing politicians who were able to implement "drastic" reforms like a graduated income tax, referendum, recall, the secret vote, Prohibition, and the initiative. Men like Edward P. Costigan and Judge Ben B. Lindsey represented Colorado Progressives who helped bring about change in government. [37] For southeast Colorado, one of the more important outcomes of this movement was President Woodrow Wilson's refusal to become involved in World War I. That conflict broke out in August 1914 among Great Britain, France, Russia, Germany, the Austro-Hungarian Empire and various allies. The United States remained neutral, which proved a considerable bonus for American business and the farm community. The mining industry soon benefited from increased exports. Production rose dramatically in southeast Colorado's coal mines, while agriculture found prices skyrocketing and manufacturing could hardly keep up with demand. The advent of war was a fortunate circumstance for Colorado, because 1914 was a depression year. Mineral prices were low, and agricultural demand was down. The strikes of 1913-1914 took their toll on coal mining. Thousands of miners, farmers and laborers were out of work. By 1915, things were so bad that a Committee of Employment and Relief was set up; state, county and private funds were used to help the destitute. Road building was a popular way to provide "make work" jobs, and in this way many county and state highways got built. [38]

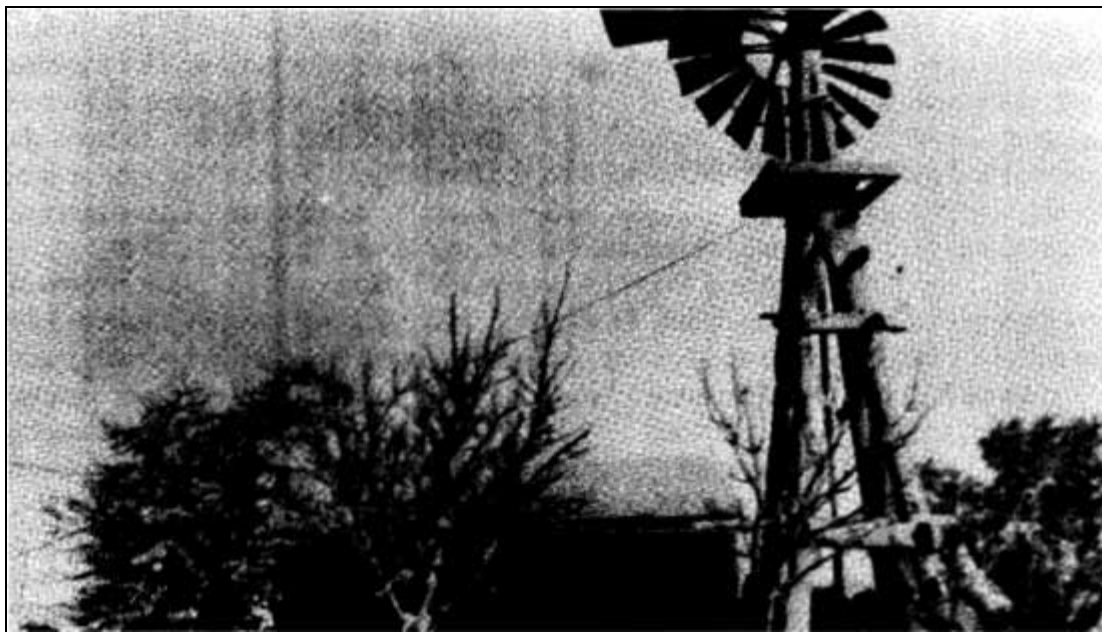
The war's demands for base metals like lead and zinc helped revive a sagging mining industry. Leadville produced the mineral for which it was named, while in other areas copper and zinc were mined. There was also a demand for tungsten, uranium and molybdenum. These minerals were not generally found in commercial quantities in southeastern Colorado, although molybdenum was discovered near Leadville on Fremont Pass. From these finds, the Climax Molybdenum Company (AMAX) developed a large mine, and by 1936 was producing 88 per cent of the nation's supply of this industrial mineral. Of more significance was that Leadville was saved from the possibility of becoming a ghost town as the silver industry died. [39]

The war also had consequences for the steel and coal industries. Steel production at CF&I in Pueblo rose to meet ever-rising needs for ships, tanks, arms and other war goods. Increased rail traffic caused coal demand to rise, as did steel making. Coal was exported from the region by railroads like the Santa Fe and Missouri Pacific, which gained considerable traffic. Pueblo's economy was doing well by 1916. So were lands eastward along the Arkansas River. [40]





The last great homesteading effort occurred just before World War I. This photo, taken in the late teens, is of a homestead in Baca County, Colorado. It is a typical representation of conditions on the plains at that time. (Photo courtesy Jessie Scobee)



This Baca County homestead was deep in spring snow when photographed just after World War I. Farmers depended on late snows to provide enough water to get through the summer. (Photograph courtesy Jessie Scobee)

Perhaps "The Great War" benefitted agriculture the most. As trade routes between Europe and the United States were disrupted, demand for food increased. War ravaged France, and England; Russia, too, needed staples. The American farmer was prepared to help. Sugar beet production rose to meet the need. So too, did cattle and sheep exports. The market for red meat was strong, and cattlemen expanded their herds. Wool was needed for uniforms, and sheep grazing greatly increased to provide the cloth industry with raw materials. Even the Spanish-American War of 1898 had not provided this kind of demand. In any case, beet

sugar, cattle, and more importantly, wheat prices rose and farmers smiled. This era also marked the last great homesteading period on the eastern plains. During this time, thousands of settlers arrived and took up the most marginal lands in southeastern Colorado. The area south of the Arkansas River to the Oklahoma line and north of the Arkansas to about Cheyenne Wells, was homesteaded between 1914 and 1920. What was left of the "Great American Desert" was plowed under. Dryland farms took over and Turkey Red wheat was planted everywhere. By 1919, wheat was selling for \$2.02 a bushel and there was no end in sight. [41] The Federal Government, responding to complaints that homesteads of 320 acres (Enlarged Homestead Act of 1911) were too small, enacted the Stockraising Homestead Act in 1916. This legislation provided for homesteads of up to 640 acres if livestock grazing also took place. No cultivation of the land was required, but range improvements were. However, many such homesteads became wheat farms. One feature of the new law was that mineral reserves were withheld for the government. In this way, many acres of the eastern plains of Colorado became "split estate," that is, privately owned surface and federally reserved minerals. [42] Massive dryland farming on the eastern plains created settlements that served as post offices, general stores and implement dealers. Little towns like Monon or Konantz, in Baca County, date from 1910. This developmental pattern was typical throughout the southeastern plains. Duncan, New Troy, Rule and Maxey, all in Las Animas County, also date from 1910 and served the dryland boom. [43]

The sad part of this last great homestead effort was that it devastated fragile soils of the high plains. Once the sod was stripped away, erosion set in. Runoff caused heavy gullying, while winds blew topsoil across the nation. The problem was complicated by a basic lack of moisture, severe overplanting and serious overgrazing. Nevertheless, with wheat selling for over two dollars a bushel, farmers did not care about the damage being done to the land. By 1918, food demand was so great that virtually every available acre was under cultivation. The American farmer was feeding not only America, but Europe as well. [44]

The United States entered World War I in 1917. Colorado, of course, provided its share of men for the front. In addition, victory gardens were planted, Liberty Bonds sold, clothing and bandages were sent to the front, and those who were Germanic by birth were presumed "un-American" and were cruelly persecuted. The German language was banned from schools, and local German newspapers were shut down. This show of "patriotism" climaxed in 1919 during the Great Red Scare. [45] In November 1918, a peace treaty was signed. Germany was vanquished, and the world was serene once more. While the nations of the earth celebrated, the "war boom" bubble burst. By 1919 this country was in a post-war depression. Farm prices dropped like a rock, and manufacturing was deeply hurt by a lack of orders. The plains of Colorado were badly damaged by the economic crisis, and the "Roaring Twenties" were not happy times for southeast Colorado. The economy was weak, and soon mother nature was going to turn against the farmer and his abuses.

CHAPTER XI: NOTES

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36. Simmons, *op. cit.*, pp. 140-141.
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Land of Contrast: A History of Southeast Colorado

BLM Cultural Resources Series (Colorado: No. 17)



Chapter XII

HARD TIMES: 1920-1940

As the "Roaring Twenties" dawned, times were not good for many of Colorado's citizens. The post-war boom ended in a major recession during late 1919. The year 1920 was a continuation of economic insecurity for farmers, miners and manufacturers. The farm industry was particularly hard hit, due to falling prices for wheat, cotton, sugar beets, cattle and hogs. Suddenly, the supplier to the world was no longer needed, and as prices plummeted, marginal farmers were wiped out. The situation was particularly difficult on the eastern plains, where marginal farming was common. Dryland farming was normal practice on the prairies from 1910 to 1930. Moisture was limited, erosion was heavy, and life was hard. Nevertheless, farmers cultivated wheat on these lands. High prices were incentives, and luckily, the war years were relatively moist. These conditions lulled homesteaders into a sense of security. As World War I peaked, so did prices. [1]

Equally, hard times were evident in the mining industry. Demand for tungsten, molybdenum, lead, zinc and other base metals was reduced when the war ended. Gold and silver prices slipped, and what little precious mineral activity there was, ground to a halt. For instance, China began mining tungsten on a large scale and, despite high U.S. tariffs, American prices suffered from these imports. Also, the uranium industry, located mainly on the western slope, suffered from newly opened mines in the Belgian Congo. [2] If hardrock mining was depressed during this time, so was coal. As demand for this fossil fuel dropped, life in the coal towns got harder. As prices fell, miners found that benefits were cut, wages were frozen, and management was less than willing to bargain. Other factors in the decline of coal included increased use of petroleum products. Oil was discovered at Oil Creek (Four Mile) in 1862, where the second well in the nation was drilled. The Florence field developed during the 1870's, but demand was limited to lamp oil and lubrication products. The heavy sales of automobiles dramatically increased the need for gasoline and other oil-related products. Fields were brought in at Moffat, Rio Blanco and Boulder Counties; and, of course, the Florence unit was heavily pumped. Railroad traffic declined and this, in turn, caused coal use to drop. Many smelters that once used huge quantities of the black mineral shut down after the war, and their demands ceased. Homeowners and businesses using coal found that alternative sources of fuel were both more economical and cleaner to burn. Natural gas was used by the mid-1920's to heat homes and stores. Gas was not new, but its widespread introduction and use came at this time. The final blow to coal came in 1928, when a major natural gas pipeline was built from Texas to the Denver area. This was made possible by the invention of seamless electric welding. Within a few years, most homes and businesses along the Front Range had natural gas heat, and coal demand fell even further. [3]

At the same time new natural gas was being imported, more labor troubles broke out. Coal miners in Boulder County went out on strike during the winter of 1927-1928, demanding restoration of wages cut in 1925 and better working conditions. The Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) moved in to organize Colorado's coal miners. The IWW was alleged to be a communist union that sought to not only unionize labor, but also to overthrow the

government. Violence ensued, particularly near Lafayette, Colorado, where six men died. As this strike went on, Josephine Roche became owner of the Rocky Mountain Fuel Company. She was a modern women who was associated with the Progressives prior to World War I. Josephine put her liberal ideas to work in the coal industry. [4] First, she recognized the United Mine Workers (UMW) as the legitimate bargaining agent for Rocky Mountain Fuel. Horrified stockholders threatened to sell; Roche bought them out and became sole owner of the company. Naturally, other mineowners, particularly CF&I in southern Colorado viewed the goings on at Rocky Mountain with fear and horror. Nevertheless, in 1928 the first contract, between management and labor, for Colorado's coal industry was signed. Roche's company recognized the union, increased wages and provided for better working conditions. In turn, the union, faced with declining coal prices and demand, loaned the company money to make interest payments and began a "Buy from Josephine" campaign to increase production. Rocky Mountain Fuel soon outstripped its competition in productivity, which in turn caused other firms to reconsider their positions regarding unions. In 1933, Colorado Fuel and Iron was forced to recognize the UMW, and from that point forward CF&I was unionized. [5] Perhaps the breakthrough came too late, for by the early 1930's company coal towns were being abandoned at an astounding rate. More significant were the nonprofitable railroad lines in the Trinidad-Walsenburg area. Lines near Walsenburg, Trinidad, Rouse, Tropic, Maitland, Cuchara Junction and Blende were torn up between 1934 and 1939. The railroad from Texas Creek to Westcliffe was removed in 1938 and during the 1940's even more mines closed and their railroad spurs were ripped up. [6]

As bad as things may have been in the mines, farmers were in even worse shape. Wheat, in 1918, selling for \$2.02 a bushel was, by 1921, priced at 76 cents. Dryland farmers found that their costs exceeded profits. Tenant farming rose. In 1920, 23 percent of Colorado's farmers were tenants, but by 1930 34.5 percent were renters. This trend continued well into the 1930's. Due to adverse weather, more and more tenants were driven off their land. [7] One new farm relief concept came from North Dakota. The Non-Partisan League was formed to help promote cooperative marketing, state-run warehouses and other ideas that would assist farmers in avoiding "middlemen" and pass subsequent savings on to the consumer. From these efforts came the Colorado League, which attempted to get the state legislature to pass laws benefiting farmers, most particularly some kind of act making cooperative marketing legal. The Cooperative Marketing Act of 1923 provided that farmers could form their own coop stores, warehouses and other facilities to provide direct sales to retail buyers. An immediate result of this act was the creation, in 1923, of the Del Norte Potato Grower's Cooperative Association and the Monte Vista Potato Growers Cooperative Association. These groups, among others, were later formed into the Colorado Potato Growers Exchange. They directly marketed San Luis Valley potatoes to stores and wholesalers. The cooperative built potato cellars, had their own sales offices, and sold vegetables under various brand names, all stamped on their burlap bags. These ventures lasted to the present. Supermarkets still carry San Luis Valley cooperative potatoes as identified by the trademark. [8] Along the Arkansas River, in Fremont County, the fruit industry lost most of its economic force. Between 1920 and 1940, the number of apple trees fell from 211,337 to 75,073. This attrition was due both to old age of the trees and very low prices for fruit. [9] Cattle prices also dropped. South Park, the San Luis Valley, and the far eastern plains saw reductions in herds. Pricing and a continued lack of forage did considerable damage to beef production.





The Fort Lyon Canal was built to serve areas north and south of the Arkansas River. Because of its irrigation, the sugar beet industry was able to develop and thrive. The canal is still the major water carrier in the Arkansas Valley. (Photo by F.J. Athearn)

A never-ending problem in the West was water. Irrigation projects were common in Colorado from the 1850's well into the early 1900's. These usually consisted of simple ditches built to move water from one place to another. However, water resources were finite, and by the 1920's, it was evident that the continual fight over water rights had to be solved. Bureau of Reclamation projects dating from 1902 helped preserve western water, as did privately funded reservoirs and canals. Private projects were often supplanted, in the late 1890's, by publically funded construction. Counties helped build dam sites. Custer County Reservoir was built to hold 4.25 million cubic feet of water, while the Apishapa Reservoir, located in Metote Canyon, held 20,000,000 cubic feet. Both were completed in 1892 and represented the beginnings of a unified water policy in southeast Colorado. [10] The Reclamation Service's creation in 1902, furthered water conservation. Interestingly, there were no major Reclamation projects in southeastern Colorado early; rather, they were built on the western slope along the Colorado River and other major waterways. Nonetheless, Federal involvement in water was assured, and as the 1920's wore on, Colorado and other western states were greatly influenced by Federal policy. The biggest battle was over allocation of Colorado's limited water. After considerable debate and discussion, Colorado joined with seven other western states and signed the Colorado River Compact in 1929. By this document, downstream states like Arizona (and Mexico) were given a share of western Colorado's water resources. The eastern plains also found their water allocated. Nebraska and Colorado agreed to share the South Platte River in 1925.

Ironically, while water was being discussed during the early 1920's, the Arkansas River became a killer. In 1921, unusual spring runoff and heavy thunderstorms created a flood that hit Pueblo with force. On June 3, 1921, the river overran its banks at Pueblo and swept away some 600 houses, killed over 100 persons, and inflicted \$19,000,000 damage to the city. The Pueblo flood shocked the entire state. Governor Oliver H. Shoup called a special session of the legislature in 1922, to discuss flood control. The Arkansas River, incidentally, was a source of controversy dating back to 1902, when Kansas and Colorado fought over water rights. In 1907, the U.S. Supreme Court decided that the two states could voluntarily work out water compacts. From this early precedent, came the 1929 Colorado River compact and the Caddoa Project in Kansas. [12] The Arkansas Valley was in some disrepute with the rest of Colorado. Despite a long tradition of water issues on the Arkansas River, the citizens of

Las Animas, Pueblo and El Paso Counties had steadfastly refused to vote for a bond issue to build a Denver-proposed tunnel through the Continental Divide for water control purposes. Bonds were consistently defeated by the votes of these southern counties on the basis that it would not benefit them. The 1921 flood changed things. Now, a two-fold package was presented, including Pueblo flood control and a tunnel in the northern Rockies for a railroad and water pipeline. Pueblo's citizens were not happy, for the Arkansas Valley was the mainline of the Rio Grande Railroad, and this might be lost by a new tunnel, but that was outweighed by fears of more flooding. [13] In April 1922, both the Pueblo Flood Conservancy and the Moffat Tunnel Bills were introduced in the state legislature. They were tied together, and for Pueblo to have flood protection, it would have to help the Moffat Tunnel. El Paso, Fremont, Pueblo and Las Animas Counties' representatives gave in, and both bills passed. Pueblo got a district with which to tax property owners, and with the proceeds build levees, dikes and other flood control devices. Denver and the northern Rockies got the Moffat Tunnel. Pueblo was probably the loser in this battle, but, on the other hand, there have been no recurrences of the 1921 disaster. [14]

The 1920's in Colorado was also a period of hatred, prejudice and racism. As hard times deepened, more middle and lower class workers became unemployed. Money was tight, jobs were few, agriculture was failing, and scapegoats were needed. The Ku Klux Klan (KKK) became a powerful force in Colorado politics at this time. The KKK came out of Georgia during the 1912-1918 era, and it gained considerable strength during the "Red Scare" of 1919. Colorado was a good breeding ground for the KKK because of a fairly large ethnic population and several industrial cities. Pueblo was a major contributor of KKK members who spouted patriotism, "Americanism," racism and bigotry. Their targets were minorities like Blacks (there were few in Colorado at this time), Spanish-Americans, Italians, southern Europeans, Jews, Catholics and Orientals. Trinidad, Walsenburg, Aguilar and other coal towns were prime candidates for Klan activities. Southeastern Colorado may have seen a few cross burnings, some threats against minorities, and other incidents, but there were no deaths or injuries due to KKK activities. Italian newspapers in Trinidad, such as *La Voratore Italiano* and the *Corriere de Trinidad* successfully defended their communities against the KKK. Because there was a large Spanish-American population in the San Luis Valley, the KKK did not do well. Canon City saw a fair amount of KKK activity, but there were not very many minorities living there. Local Catholics and Jews took the brunt of KKK hatred. [15] So powerful was the KKK in Denver and the Front Range, that in 1924 these areas elected Clarence J. Morley governor. This Klan-backed executive was a Klan sympathizer, as were most members of the House of Representatives in Colorado's legislature. All kinds of bills were introduced, from banning wine for use in Catholic church services to the abolition of parochial schools. Colorado's Senate was the only body that kept these efforts from becoming law. The sole accomplishment of the Morley administration was abolition of the office of Horseshoe Inspector. Morley was removed from office in the 1926 election, and the Klan's political influence quickly diminished. [16]

The imposition of Prohibition in 1919 created new problems. Not only did those less than honest about "being dry" demand liquor, but there were many people willing to supply the need. A large bootlegging industry grew up in the metropolitan areas of Colorado. Denver and Pueblo were the two biggest sources of illegal booze. As in Chicago, gangland-style crime became a serious matter. There were hijackings, kidnappings and murders over who was going to control the liquor trade. The Trinidad-Walsenburg area was also the location of numerous stills. Law enforcement officials, who tried raiding the hills west of Trinidad, found themselves consistently "shut off" by the locals. Such illegal moonshine trade continued for many years and was reportedly still popular into the 1950s. [17]

Gangland crime was persistent during the late 1920's into the 1930's. War broke out when Pueblo rumrunners tried to invade Denver. February 1931, saw exchanges between these

forces, with death threats if the Pueblo invasion did not stop. Undeterred, Pete Carlino continued to "muscle in," and in the best Chicago-style, he was machine-gunned while standing in front of a local Pueblo garage. The assassins, who were in a moving car, missed their target and Carlino was untouched. [18] But he was a marked man. One of his "boys" was kidnapped, his home was bombed, his brother was killed and numerous threats were made against him. Local authorities tried to "get" Carlino, by claiming that he had burned his own house for the insurance. As this was studied, so was the possibility of his deportation to Italy. In September 1931, Carlino's body was found along a roadside near Pueblo, ending that city's gangland attempt to take over Denver. Joe Roma, of Denver, emerged as Colorado's new leader. He survived until 1933, when he was "rubbed out" by rivals while sitting at home playing his mandolin. [19] As it happened, the Prohibition experiment ended during 1933, a total failure. Denver, for example, repealed local anti-liquor ordinances in July of that year. Pueblo and other southeast Colorado communities followed suit. By December 1933, national prohibition was repealed.

Southeastern Colorado was also the scene of one of the most sensational crimes of the decade. On May 23, 1928, five men walked into the First National Bank at Lamar and took \$250,000. They killed bank President Amos N. Parrish and his son John. Two tellers were abducted and held as hostages. Ralph Fleagle was identified as the gang leader and the chase was on. Sheriffs Deputies found one teller left wandering along a road about four miles from Lamar, but the other hostage was found dead near Liberal, Kansas, on June 13, 1928. During the robbery, one of the bandits, Howard L. Royston, was wounded and sought medical attention. Dr. W. W. Wineinger of Dighton, Kansas was forced to provide help and then he was shot in an execution-style slaying. His body was found on May 28 near Garden City, Kansas. This trail of bodies, abandoned cars and fingerprints finally led police officers to Kankakee, Illinois where, in August 1929, Ralph Fleagle was captured. Fleagle confessed and implicated his brother, along with two others. [20] Fleagle and his men were tried at Lamar in October 1929, and they were all found guilty of murder. After several appeals, Ralph Fleagle was hanged at Canon City on July 12, 1930, followed by George J. Abshier and Howard Royston later in July. Jake Fleagle was killed in September 1930 during a gunfight, while resisting arrest at Branson, Missouri. The robbery and murders at Lamar made a deep impression on the region and remain, to this day, one of the most dramatic events in the history of Prowers County. [21]

The thirties was a period of severe depression in Colorado and the nation. Farm prices, declining from 1920 on, went ever lower. Farmers, in turn, planted more and more wheat, beans, beets, corn and other staples. This drove prices down further, for there were huge surpluses. Desperation saw more planting and grazing, causing serious damage to fragile soils. Then, in 1929, the American economy totally collapsed. The fall of the stockmarket in October of that year precipitated the worst economic dislocation in U.S. history. Not only were millions jobless as factories shut down, but industry found itself facing bankruptcy. Farmers, suffering from overproduction, saw prices go from \$2.02 a bushel for wheat in 1918, to 76 cents in 1921, to 37 cents in 1932. Cost of production usually exceeded sale prices. Crops were left to rot in the ground rather than lose. Potatoes, a mainstay in the San Luis Valley, were selling for 24 cents, while hogs went for \$3.10 each. Fruit growers sold their apples for 42 cents a bushel. It cost more to ship them to Denver than they could be sold for. [22] Coal production dropped by one-half in 1932, and miners were laid off *en masse*. All business suffered, but mining and agriculture took the worst beating in southeast Colorado. Then, to make matters worse, nature turned against humanity. Drought gripped the region; what little soil moisture there was dried up. Strong winds blew topsoil across the plains. In a matter of two years, much of eastern Colorado was a desert. Soil blew against buildings, burying them in drifts. Cattle were covered in shifting sands, fences disappeared under dunes, and the plains were reduced to Stephen Long's famous "Great American Desert." April 14, 1935 saw the biggest dust storm ever. "Black Sunday" found a storm

raging across southeastern Colorado into Kansas with dust billowing several miles high. Thousands of travelers were stranded, as in a blizzard. Several deaths due to suffocation were recorded. The sky was black for twenty-four hours; the sun was blotted out. "Black Sunday" was such a serious disaster that the Red Cross set up hospitals and relief stations to help victims of this dust storm. Property damage done by blowing dust was extensive. Not only were farms wiped out, but towns and cities suffered from dust fallout. [23] The term "Dust Bowl" was coined by Robert Geiger, an Associated Press reporter from Denver, who after viewing the destruction of the plains, wrote about it. The Soil Conservation Service declared that southeast Colorado, northeastern New Mexico, western Kansas, the Oklahoma panhandle and western Texas were subject to severe wind erosion, and this became the "Dust Bowl." Baca County was the hardest hit area in southeastern Colorado.

As Depression settled deeper into the national economy, President Herbert Hoover, a Republican, declared that prosperity was "just around the corner." All the nation had to do was let the "recession" run its course and the capitalist system would revive itself. Yet the economy got worse, the Dust Bowl became more devastating, and private relief funds ran out. Destitute men and women roamed the streets literally begging for food. Unemployment reached nearly 20 percent of the work force, and despite cries for help, the Federal Government maintained that private business would solve the problem. [25] The elections of 1932 changed the situation. In that year Franklin D. Roosevelt, a Democrat, was elected President. Roosevelt had definite ideas about how the Depression should be handled. First, by "priming the pump" Federal dollars would be used to stimulate a devastated economy. Deficit spending by the Federal Government provided massive amounts of money to help industry, farmers and businessmen alike. To provide a conduit for this aid, Roosevelt created a myriad of agencies to oversee Federal help programs. Of primary interest to residents of southeastern Colorado, were the Agricultural Adjustment Administration (AAA), the Work Projects Administration (WPA), the Reconstruction Finance Corporation (RFC) [actually Hoover's idea], the National Industrial Recovery Act (NRA) and the Public Works Administration (PWA). Two programs in what Roosevelt called "The New Deal" that most benefited southeast Colorado were the AAA, which paid farmers to reduce crop production, and the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) that gave invaluable labor to the Forest Service by constructing trails, roads, park sites and other improvements within national forests. The CCC employed thousands of youths to build roads and other improvements, while paying them \$30 a month, a generous sum in the midst of the Depression. [26]

The Roosevelt administration also stabilized gold prices at \$35.00 per ounce and required governmental purchase of all gold produced. This caused a resurgence of precious mineral operations in Lake, Park and Teller Counties. Lake County's lead and zinc production slipped steadily from 1920 to 1930, and mining around Leadville was all but dead during the early 1930's. With gold prices stable by 1934, extraction increased considerably. Teller County also revived, and by 1935, production of Cripple Creek District's mines equalled \$4.5 million. The Golden Cycle Mill at Colorado Springs processed over 500,000 tons of ore in that same year. South Park saw a major revival of gold mining during the 1930's. Production went from a paltry \$39,719 in 1927, to \$3,001,074 in 1934. The Mosquito Creek District provided most of this while Fairplay saw considerable dredging activity. The South Park Dredging Company built and then ran a 510-foot dredge boat along the South Platte River between 1922 and 1952, producing considerable amounts of placer gold while tearing up the river bottom. Revived mining helped with capital improvements. In 1939, Cripple Creek's numerous mines were drained by completion of the six-mile Carlton Tunnel. Excess water, for irrigation, went to the eastern plains by way of the Arkansas River. Leadville's mines were to be drained by the Leadville Drainage Tunnel, begun in 1943. However, due to engineering problems, it was not finished until 1951. This water was also dumped into the Arkansas River and used for downstream irrigation. The Works Progress Administration (WPA) offered employment and also built public buildings like post offices, schools and city halls. For instance, the town

halls of Alamosa and Center were WPA built, while the bandshell and bridge at Pueblo's old Mineral Palace Park were WPA projects. Water-related construction was also part of the WPA/CWA concept. The Big Thompson Project in northern Colorado began at this time. The Twin Lakes Tunnel, bringing water from near Leadville to the Arkansas Valley, was financed with a 1930's RFC loan of \$1.25 million. [27]

The Depression created the Taylor Grazing Act of 1934. This legislation provided management of the Public Domain for the first time. Grazing districts were set up to control the numbers of domestic animals allowed on public lands. In this way, it was hoped that damage to the land would be reduced. Additionally, homesteading was severely limited. For all practical purposes, classic disposal of the public domain ended in 1934. Considering the condition of the plains at the time, this legislation went a long way to help stop degradation of remaining Federal lands. The U.S. Department of the Interior's Grazing Service, established in 1934, oversaw use of the public domain and administered these various grazing districts. The old General Land Office (GLO) continued to manage disposal of the public lands, but this was greatly limited by President Roosevelt's Executive Order of 1934, withdrawing all Federal lands west of the 100th Meridian from homesteading. Farrington Carpenter, of Hayden, Colorado was named the Grazing Service's first Director, and under him a new agency took shape. In 1946, the GLO and Grazing Service were merged to form the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) which remains the primary Federal land management agency in the United States. The newly created BLM was heavily involved in range management and land disposal, but as time went along, the agency emerged as a multiple-use, land-based bureau with the intent of balanced resource management. [28]

The New Deal saw new national legislation that benefited the general public. Social Security was created to help people in retirement while the Old Age Pension Amendment, passed in Colorado during 1927, was beefed up in the 1930's by increasing state tax revenues. In this way, pensioners were assured a minimum income by the state. By the end of 1938, 34,654 Coloradans were listed on the pension rolls. [29] The Depression Era was also a time of labor unrest. Under considerable pressure from the Roosevelt administration, industry was forced to recognize unionism throughout the country. The National Recovery Administration (NRA) provided a vehicle for ending the practices of blacklisting, lock outs, and other management abuses. The government directed that industries refusing to help unions would not be given Federal assistance. Under this threat, Colorado Fuel and Iron recognized the United Mine Workers (UMW) in 1933 and a collective bargaining contract was written. Other industries followed suit, and while union activity in Colorado has never been strong, southeast Colorado saw the second, yet most powerful, local union victory. Despite the worst Depression in history, there were some paradoxical events. Schools actually benefited from hard times, for as the nonworking population grew, so did its demand for education. Junior colleges were established to provide localized educational experiences from the mid-1930's on. In 1925, a college had been established at Trinidad, while Alamosa got Adams State College during that same year. Adams State was a teacher-training facility, the third in the state. Pueblo Junior College opened its doors in 1933 and served the Arkansas River Valley all the way west to Leadville. Lamar Junior College was established in 1936 and assured higher education for the lower Arkansas region. [30]

Another area that did not suffer as deeply during the Depression years was transportation. A newly emerging air industry expanded during the late 1920's and into the 1930's. Mail service was a key revenue producer; a few daring souls rode as passengers. As happened with the Transcontinental Railroad, the first coast-to-coast air service went by way of Cheyenne, Wyoming because the mountains were much lower in that state. From Cheyenne, air service was established to Denver, Colorado Springs and Pueblo. From Pueblo, airlines could go south to El Paso or east to St. Louis. Despite the promise of becoming Colorado's main air port, Pueblo's aviation dreams never materialized. Denver, instead, grew as the hub of

western air travel. When pressurized planes came into general service, the mountains were no longer a barrier. Both Cheyenne and Pueblo lost their respective positions to Denver. [31]

Rail service also underwent major changes during the 1930's and on into the 1940's. The Burlington Railroad introduced, in 1934, a revolutionary new train called the "Zephyr." These units were diesel powered (a serious omen for the coal industry) and consisted of "streamlined" lightweight cars that provided new luxury and comfort. The Burlington streamliner brought a whole new dimension to rail travel, and other railroads soon followed, hoping to attract travelers in vast numbers. Southeastern Colorado, by the late 1930's saw the Santa Fe running an incredibly luxurious train, the *Super Chief*, from Chicago to Los Angeles by way of Lamar, La Junta and Trinidad. The Missouri Pacific, in 1948, began the streamlined *Colorado Eagle* from St. Louis to Pueblo and then north to Denver on Rio Grande trackage. The Burlington introduced the *Texas Zephyr* in 1930, providing service from Denver to Houston by way of Pueblo and Trinidad. The Denver and Rio Grande, in bankruptcy during the 1930's, was hard pressed to even maintain service. Utterly ancient equipment ran from Denver to Salt Lake City through Pueblo and Leadville. Traffic was light and passengers few. Yet, by the late 1940's the Rio Grande was on a solid financial footing again, and upgraded equipment was forthcoming. The Pueblo-Arkansas River line became secondary with the absorption of the old "Moffat Road" in 1947, for the Moffat Tunnel/Dotsero cut-off route was used for most passenger service. [32] Nevertheless, the Rio Grande, in the early 1950's, provided passenger service to Pueblo and the upper Arkansas towns with streamlined equipment. *The Royal Gorge* followed the Rio Grande's historic mainline route to Leadville and then on to Salt Lake City. The train used diesel power, and had a diner and sleeper, and even boasted a Vista-Dome from which to view the Royal Gorge. This service was discontinued in 1967. [33]



The Santa Fe introduced luxury train service to southeastern Colorado in the 1930's. Famous trains like the *Super Chief* and *El Capitan* sped across the plains of Las Animas County on the way to Phoenix and Los Angeles. (Photo Courtesy Southwest Collection Texas Tech University Lubbock, Texas)

The Depression period saw dramatic changes in the economic and political lifestyle of

southeastern Colorado. Federal involvement in the area increased, as did dependence upon Federal aid. The economy perked up slightly during the mid-1930's, but was declining by the end of the decade. Again, as in 1914, American farmers and industry were fortunate when war broke out in Europe. Germany invaded Poland early in September 1939, precipitating a world crisis. Great Britain and France declared war on the Germans, and World War II began. As in the first World War, the United States remained neutral, but the Roosevelt administration supplied arms, ships and food to the British who were blockaded by Germany. America's economy revived from the war-induced shortages. Industrial production increased, while farm prices went up at an amazing rate. The war saved Colorado's economy, while providing employment for thousands of destitute citizens. Southeast Colorado was about to experience some quite interesting changes during the decade of the 1940's.

CHAPTER XII: NOTES

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2. Fritz, *ibid.*, pp. 410-412.
3. Athearn, *Coloradans*, *ibid.*, pp. 257-258, and Ubbelohde, Benson and Smith *ibid.*, p. 302.
4. Ubbelohde, Benson and Smith, *ibid.*, p. 303, and Athearn, *ibid.*, p. 274, also Fritz, *ibid.*, pp. 386-388.
5. Ubbelohde, Benson and Smith, *ibid.*, p. 302.
6. Athearn, *Rio Grande*, op. cit., p. 344 (map).
7. Fritz, *ibid.*, p. 451, and Ubbelohde, Benson and Smith, p. 305.
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Land of Contrast: A History of Southeast Colorado

BLM Cultural Resources Series (Colorado: No. 17)



Chapter XIII

FROM WAR TO PROSPERITY: 1940-1980

As Hitler's armies marched through Poland in 1939 and then turned on France in 1940, England was left to stand alone against the German war machine. President Franklin D. Roosevelt provided aid to the United Kingdom through his Lend-Lease Program, by which war materials and foodstuffs were shipped to Britain to sustain that country. As the war gained momentum, American industry and the farm community were called upon to provide goods and food. Farm prices rose quickly in the early 1940's, and southeast Colorado directly benefited. Sugar beet production, dryland wheat planting and cattle and sheep raising all increased while other farm goods like hay, oats, corn and vegetables also saw rising prices on the world market. Only five years before, the Federal Government paid farmers not to plant because of depressed prices. Now, heedless of the past, farmers planted every acre they could find, and agriculture boomed. The days of the Dust Bowl were forgotten as was the help offered by the Roosevelt administration during the 1930's. Farmers told governmental officials from the Farmer's Home Administration to the Soil Conservation Service to "get off our backs's" and let the free market determine prices. [1] The lessons of just ten years previous were totally forgotten.

Industry also revived from depression, thanks to the "war boom." Colorado Fuel and Iron of Pueblo had both new domestic and foreign orders for steel. American Metal Climax, near Leadville, saw molybdenum production rise, as demand for steel and other alloys rose. Precious minerals like gold and silver were mined in increased quantities as were zinc, lead and copper. The depression was well on the way to recovery by early 1941. Railroad traffic was up, industrial output increased, and agricultural enterprises flourished. Little did anyone know that Colorado, in fact the entire nation, would be plunged into war later that year. [2] On December 7, 1941, Japanese navy planes attacked the Pacific Fleet stationed at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii. Most American ships lying at anchor were either destroyed or badly damaged. The United States declared war on Japan and Germany. All national resources were committed to the battle. Not only did the agricultural community boom, but nearly all industrial complexes operated at full capacity. Railroads, the nation's main transportation system, were pressed into service. The Denver and Rio Grande, the Santa Fe, the Missouri Pacific and the Colorado and Southern all had more traffic than they could handle. Revenues increased accordingly. [3]

The war with Japan also brought about one of the most massive violations of the Constitution in American history. In early 1942, Japanese-Americans were rounded up along the west coast as "dangerous." These people were U.S. citizens, but their property was confiscated, and they were placed in what were called "Detention Centers." There was a difference between Hitler's concentration camps and the American version. The Japanese were not systematically exterminated. Colorado was the scene of some of this mass deportation. In August 1942, about 8,000 Japanese were moved to a campsite near Granada, Colorado along the Arkansas River. At this place 11,000 acres were set aside for construction of barracks, social halls, and agricultural fields. The camp was called "Amache" (after J.W. Prowers'

Indian wife) or, more formally, the Granada Relocation Camp. Camp Amache became a small city with its own internal government, newspaper and schools. However, residents' movements were severely restricted. Amache was not a pleasant place; water had to be hauled in due to undrinkable local sources, meals were served in three or four shifts, and very few of the huts had running water. The "internees" were offered work in sugar beet fields surrounding Granada and by 1945, Amache had 9,000 acres of irrigated beet land under production, managed by the American Crystal Sugar Company. The nearest large town, Lamar, at first wanted the camp because it pumped \$5 million into the local economy, but there was a strong anti-Japanese prejudice. Store windows carried signs "No Japs Wanted." Eventually, Lamar's merchants realized that it was good business to cater to Japanese-American buyers and stores soon welcomed the prisoners. There was also some anti-Japanese sentiment at Swink and La Junta, where it was suggested that these people would drive down the price of local labor. [4] Despite local fears, the camp was built to stay. By 1943, camp conditions were improving and included the establishment of a chapter of the Future Farmers of America, an American Legion Post, the YMCA and YWCA, and an extension division from the University of Colorado. Camp Amache's existence ended in October 1945, when its citizens were repatriated to California and other west coast states. Granada was not the only place Japanese-Americans went as they were displaced.

Eastdale, in the San Luis Valley, also saw a number of California Japanese-American farmers move into the area during 1942 where they took up vegetable farming. Eastdale, originally a religious settlement, was later populated by Japanese-Americans when encouraged to do so by the colonization company that ran this colony. In this way, the truck gardens were well established when the war came. Relatives and friends of Eastdale's Japanese population moved there when removed from the west coast as "security risks." Considerable numbers of Japanese-Americans also settled near Blanca and Fort Garland in the 1940's where vegetable farming made them famous. [5]



What remains of Camp Amache are foundations and bitter memories. This Japanese "relocation" camp was located just north of Granada, Colorado and was in use until 1945. (Photo by F. J. Athearn)



Beyond the foundations, some of the original barracks have been remodeled and are used for housing migrant laborers, mainly Mexican nationals. (Photo by F. J. Athearn)

The other major result of World War II was the infusion of "foreign" population to Colorado. Not only did manufacturers like CF&I need labor, but small firms got big government contracts that, in turn, caused worker shortages. This demand for laborers caused migration from both the south and midwest. Workers were paid good wages at both industrial and military facilities. This helped attract new people to the State. Colorado's minority population, particularly Mexican-American, found job opportunities increasing as the war progressed. President Roosevelt's Executive Order of 1943, forbidding discrimination by Federal contractors, helped open new markets for a population previously totally frozen out. This was the forerunner of substantial change in the state's population base and the social-economic makeup of the region. [6]



The Fort Lyon V.A. hospital, near Las Animas, is named for a previous fort along the Arkansas. This place represents some of the military/government spending that took place during World War II and that is still a powerful economic force in this region. (Photo by F.J. Athearn)

The war brought military facilities to Colorado on a large scale. The presence of military camps and forts was a traditional source of local income, and when new bases were placed in Colorado (because Axis bombers could not reach this state), small and large towns benefited. Southeast Colorado got its share starting in 1942, when the Pueblo Ordnance Depot was constructed. An airfield to train British pilots was built at La Junta. Near Leadville, Camp Hale was established to train the 10th Mountain Division in alpine war tactics. Possibly the most important and longest-lasting base was Camp Carson, set up south of Colorado Springs in 1943, for the purpose of training combat soldiers. Some 60,000 acres were set aside about six miles south of that city. This brought \$30 million into Colorado's economy and proved one of the most important contributions of World War II in southern Colorado. [7] Pueblo, in 1943, also got an airbase to train bombardiers; \$9 million came to that city from the war. Denver, of course, got the most in military increases. Lowry Air Force Base, the Rocky Mountain Arsenal, the Denver Ordnance Plant (now the Federal Center), and Buckley Naval Air Station all benefited that city. Nevertheless, southeastern Colorado fared rather well. Modern Pueblo and Colorado Springs got their starts at this time, thanks to war-generated income. [8]

Later, shortages not only brought immigrants into the state, but also cost unions considerable power. While the 1930's saw major gains in unionism, the 1943 Colorado Labor Peace Act virtually wiped out every labor gain "made since the days of Ludlow." Mass picketing, all-union shops, secondary boycotts, and the use of union funds for political purposes were all outlawed. These restrictions to labor affected the miners of southeastern Colorado as well as factory laborers in places like Pueblo. These laws were gradually rescinded, but not without having done considerable damage to the labor movement in not only Colorado, but particularly in the Pueblo-Trinidad region. [9]

As World War II came to an end, Colorado's future was changed forever by events of the past five years. By the time of Japan's surrender, farm prices were already falling and industrial output was down. Recession was on the horizon, as noted by the Colorado Stock Growers and Feeders Association which admitted: "We've got more cattle than we can handle." Coal production reached an all-time high in 1943, and then declined to almost nothing during the early 1950's. Oil and gas production soared during the war, and older fields like Florence were extensively pumped. Again, as war ended, oil prices fell and production slowed. [10]

By the end of the forties, recession set in and southeast Colorado began to look rather like the late thirties. There was one significant difference: the ever-increasing presence of the Federal Government. World War II's military bases remained, although on a lesser scale. Farm programs like the Soil Conservation Service and Farmer's Home Administration were strong on the eastern plains. Where offices were opened, the local economy benefited. The Comanche National Grasslands, created from Bankhead-Jones Land Utilization Repurchase Act lands, during the 1930's, were administered from Springfield, Colorado. The U.S. Forest Service opened an office here to handle the 420,000 acres for which it was responsible in 1954. Springfield got some badly needed economic help. [11] The 1950's were generally a period of low farm prices, falling demand for minerals and a desperate attempt to "sell Colorado" to easterners. Southeastern Colorado, primarily dependent upon agriculture, suffered intensely. Sugar beet prices dropped, as did beef and wheat demand. Farmers planted more and more hoping to make up for losses. Equally, the Trinidad-Walsenburg region saw mine closings on a regular basis. The coal market was limited to CF&I's Pueblo plant and, as a result, only a few company-owned mines west of Trinidad, at Weston and Primero, remained operational. Colorado Fuel and Iron, however, did expand through purchases of subsidiary companies on both the east and west coasts. Such diversification provided little relief for local unemployment problems.

Mining at Climax continued, and AMAX expanded its operations. World wide demand for replacement steel caused molybdenum prices to rise. Traditional mineral operations, like the limestone quarry at Howard, gypsum mining at Coaldale, granite quarries near Cotopaxi, the Colorado Portland Cement plant at Portland, Colorado and other nonprecious mineral operations continued to provide economic help to Fremont County. [12] Canon City also saw construction of a uranium processing plant south of that city in 1958. The Cotter Corporation built a "yellow cake" facility and generated considerable enthusiasm from Canon City's residents, who saw another "uranium boom" about to happen. There was no renewed rush, and Cotter, while adding to the local economy, did not greatly expand Fremont County's mineral industry. The Cotter Mill, during the late 1970's, became a source of concern when it was discovered that radioactive tailings were allegedly seeping into ground water supplies. Cotter eventually agreed to clean up its operations and residents breathed a sigh of relief. [13]

During the 1950's, Colorado's government undertook an ambitious campaign to attract tourists, on the basis that it was a "clean" industry, and also to gain so-called high technology businesses that would not be "industrial" in the fashion of CF&I or Gates Rubber. Such industry included the National Bureau of Standards at Boulder, the Rocky Flats Nuclear Weapons Plant just north of Arvada, and the Air Force Academy, outside of Colorado Springs. Southeastern Colorado did not generally share in these "benefits" other than at Pueblo where the Department of Transportation built, in the 1960's, a test track for cars and trains. There were a few other "clean" businesses introduced. For instance, Pueblo became a major GSA publication distribution center for Federal booklets ranging from consumer protection to abortion. Pueblo also saw some industrial growth when the Triplex Corporation of Chicago moved to the City on the Arkansas. These gains were offset by closures like the Golden Cycle Mill at Colorado Springs during 1958, which ended further serious mining at Cripple Creek and Victor. [14] Along the Arkansas, as agriculture retracted, cities like Lamar, La Junta and Rocky Ford sought new life. Sugar beet factories closed and local economies suffered considerably. In 1978, Lamar was able to attract a bus assembly plant that provided local employment. In fact, during 1981, the company was awarded the world's largest bus construction contract to build buses for numerous cities. Lamar Junior College experienced growth due to veterans from both World War II and the Korean Conflict taking advantage of their GI Benefits. Pueblo's college and Trinidad State Junior College also saw enrollments jump. Adams State College at Alamosa had good growth during the 1950's and well into the 1960's. College enrollment reflected not only returning GI's, but also a new recognition of the value of higher education. [15]

The fifties dragged into the decade of 1960 with indifference. The sixties did see changes in Colorado, but not along the Arkansas. Here life, based on farming, went on. The Pueblo-Trinidad corridor was provided with a new interstate highway during this time. Interstate-25 extended from Denver south to Pueblo, Walsenburg, Trinidad and over Raton Pass. Pueblo was cut in half by the four lanes, Walsenburg was totally by-passed, which proved rather disastrous to local merchants and Trinidad became a stop before or after Raton Pass. Motels, fast food chains and service stations dot the Interstate at Pueblo and Trinidad. Tourists, as in the 1870's, provided income for a sagging economy. Tourism also played a serious role in helping older mining towns survive. Cripple Creek was "refurbished" in a tasteless effort to attract unsophisticated "flatlanders." The town was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1966, which at least helped preserve what little integrity was left. Victor, on the other hand, was forgotten and remains a real gem for the tourist in search of a relatively authentic mining town. Creede, too, was left fairly well alone, probably because of its isolation. Leadville was never fully abandoned and the AMAX mine at Climax provided a stable population base. The town was "painted up" to some extent, especially in the core area around the Tabor Opera House. This part of town was also listed in the National Register of Historic Places (1966) which helps the city maintain some semblance of historic order. An extreme example of tasteless tourism came at the Royal Gorge, where a whole western town

called Buckskin Joe was "reconstructed." It competes with all sorts of gaudy sideshows for tourist's dollars. [16] On the opposite side, the San Luis Valley did not see tourism prosper. Perhaps this was because the main road, U.S. 285 just went through, and because the place had nothing "worthy" of note for "flatlanders." The San Luis Valley does contain several places that are off the beaten tourist path. The Sand Dunes National Monument and the Wheeler National Monument are just isolated enough to provide them with protection from the garish exploitation front range sites underwent. [17]

Along the Arkansas River Valley, water became an even more serious issue during the early 1960's. In 1962, Congress authorized construction of the Frying Pan-Arkansas Project to divert water from west of Leadville, through several tunnels, to the Upper Arkansas River where it would be used for irrigation. Representative J. Edgar Chenoweth, of Trinidad, was primarily responsible for this feat. Farmers on the lower Arkansas praised the Frying Pan-Arkansas Project for bringing them more agricultural water, while those on the western slope condemned diversion as destroying resources on that side of the Divide. [18]

The decade of the seventies was similar to the previous twenty years, in that economic growth was slow but steady. Perhaps of more importance was an influx of new population, the discovery of the foothills for recreation, and a social-political revolution. The far eastern plains remained little changed from earlier days. Agriculture, some industry and a few tourists represented ongoing life. Closer to the front range, the story was different. The corridor from Pueblo north became quite populated and urban growth occurred from Fort Collins southward. Here is where the majority of Colorado's citizens became located, and with such expansion, the "evils" of city life came to southeastern Colorado. Pueblo, for one, became polluted by cars, industry and bad air drifting south from Denver. Yet the city grew and retained its position as the state's third largest city. Places like Trinidad and Walsenburg did not experience such growth, but rather, their populations stabilized and these towns remained regional supply centers. Social unrest was minimal in the far southern part of the state for the Mexican-American population was well integrated into the infrastructure of government and society. The ethnic mixture of Trinidad is interesting because it contains Mexican-Americans, Italian, Eastern European and Anglo cultures, all existing together. The far eastern plains never did have serious racial problems for Anglo-American farmers were always in control. As population decreases occurred due to farm failures, labor became scarce. Early, sugar beets required "stoop labor" and Mexican-Americans or Mexican nationals were imported to do the job. As time went on, migrant laborers were used to pick beets and other specialty crops on a seasonal basis. The abuses that occurred were many. Laborers were paid low wages and given no benefits. Their children were not placed in public schools and the shacks they lived in were primitive at best. Clear-cut racial discrimination was a way of life for Mexican-American residents in Colorado. Denver, Colorado Springs and Pueblo were notorious for their anti-Hispanic attitudes. The San Luis Valley did not suffer from these tensions, primarily because the majority of the Valley's population was Spanish surname. Local officials and state-level representatives from the Valley were traditionally Hispanic and these trends continue into the present. While there was unrest on college campuses, southern Colorado did not see much of the national and state ferment that swept the minorities. Demonstrations at Adams State and Southern Colorado College reflected overall anti-establishment feelings of students, rather than broad-based minority demands. [19] The considerable influx of new population to the Front Range spilled over into traditionally Hispanic (or other ethnic) regions. The San Luis Valley, historically Hispanic, by 1960 could boast that only Costilla and Conejos Counties were "Mexican" in social make-up. Overall, the ethnic difficulties that beset northeastern Colorado were not as strong or violent in the southeast. The long tradition of multi-ethnic population can be credited for a lack of crisis during the 1960's and 1970s. [20]



The Victorian courthouse at Las Animas represents a past that has seen growth from a hostile land to a fully modern society. The building, erected in the 1880's, has stood the test of time. (Photo by F. J. Athearn)



The most ubiquitous structure on the plains of southeast Colorado is the ever-present grain elevator. (Photo by F. J. Athearn)

The other significant event emerging during the 1970's was what came to be called the "Environmental Movement." It was the grandchild of the Conservation Movement that occurred during the early 1900's. From the creation of the National Forests in 1891 to the closing of the public lands in 1934, interest waned. Perhaps this was due to the "Roaring Twenties" when times were good, or to the depth of the Depression when resource conservation was not important. During the late 1960's, politically active conservation groups (lobbies) pressured Congress to the point that the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)

was passed during 1969. This was the crowning glory for the environmentalist/conservationist movement. The new law provided national policy that required the consideration of environmental consequences for all major Federal actions. The act created considerable awareness, among the public, that the environment was fragile and should be protected. It may be argued that NEPA only created a new bureaucracy and slowed progress, but on the other hand, valuable ecological and other resources have been preserved due directly to NEPA. [21] In 1964, the Wilderness Act was passed. This legislation, a forerunner of NEPA, set the stage for creation of Wilderness Areas and affected primarily the Forest Service, which was told to inventory and then name sites that were "potential" Wilderness Areas. In the process, seven areas in southeastern Colorado were designated wilderness. They were La Garita, Collegiate Peaks, Mt. Massive, Holy Cross, Lost Creek, South San Juan and the Great Sand Dunes. All but one are administered by the U.S. Forest Service; the Sand Dunes is a National Monument. The Colorado "environmentalists" enjoyed their greatest triumph in 1973 when, thanks to intense pressure, Colorado withdrew its bid for the Winter Olympics. The environmental controversy that embroiled the Olympics may have been the peak of environmental power in this state for, from that point on, more moderate views were touted both among hard-core environmentalists and private industry. Most recently, the U.S. Army's plans to expand Fort Carson into the Pinon Canyon area, east of Trinidad, has generated considerable environmental discussion. [22]

Present-day activities in this region are traditional. Agriculture remains the primary economic force in southeastern Colorado. Wheat, hay, some sugar beets, fruit, beans, barley and other staples are the primary crops. The far eastern plains, the San Luis Valley, South Park and the Wet Mountain Valley are all agricultural in nature. Energy development is beginning to revive. Coal, of course, was once a primary economic force in this region. But today only CF&I still mines this mineral at Weston for its Pueblo Plant. However, with the 1973 oil shortage, there was talk of the vast coal deposits in the Raton Basin. The Federal Government, which controls considerable blocks of coal lands, is considering the possibility of leasing these reserves, but due to the current oil glut nothing has happened. The San Luis Valley has seen some oil and gas drilling activity. More interesting is the Valley's geothermal potential. Exploratory works have occurred in this area with the hope of tapping steam for energy. Near Walsenburg, carbon dioxide (CO₂) is being removed from Sheep Mountain and sent by pipeline to Texas, where it is used for recovery in older wells. Atlantic-Richfield operates a large CO₂ field in this area and is continuing exploration. With this interest in minerals and energy-related products, southeast Colorado may find itself once again a dominant producer of fuels. The old days of coal mining could again drive this economy. But there are many who will not forget the day the mines closed and will always watch with suspicion "big plans" for mining.

Southeastern Colorado is a place of many contrasts. From snow-capped peaks on the west to high plains on the east, this area has seen slow changes. First users were Native Americans who exploited the rich natural resources. Following them, several nations claimed the region. Spanish, French, Confederate and American flags flew over the land at one time or another. All peoples used the land in their own ways, depending upon need and level of cultural development. However, the progression of southeast Colorado's history was classically "western" in nature. From fur trappers to miners to cattlemen to settlers to town builders, the Arkansas River Valley grew in a traditional and steady manner. The Upper Arkansas was built on mineral extraction and remains tied to mining for its life. South Park has changed very little since mining died. Cattle raising, hay growing and a few seedy subdivisions sustain the park. The San Luis Valley was different. Culturally, it was New Mexican and has remained so to the present. Anglo-American influences came from some miners and a few settlers. Other than these intrusions, the Valley remains wonderfully unique.

Perhaps southeastern Colorado is different because it is one place that change has occurred

slowly. It has been said that the more things change the more they stay the same, which is certainly true for this part of our state.

CHAPTER XIII: NOTES

1. Worster, op. cit. See also: Paul Bonnifield, *The Dust Bowl, Men, Dirt, Depression* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1979.)
2. John H. Thompson, "The Molybdenum Industry at Climax, Colorado" (M.A. Thesis, University of Colorado, 1943), pp. 6-25, and Athearn, *Coloradans*, op. cit., pp. 301-302.
3. Athearn, *Rio Grande*, op. cit., pp. 318-320, and Overton, op. cit., p.
4. Athearn, *Coloradans*, op. cit., pp. 298-299, and Ubbelohde, Benson and Smith, *Colorado*, op. cit., p. 330.
5. Simmons, op. cit., and Shirley Fujikawa, "Eastdale, Colorado: A Picture Window Settlement" (Boulder, Colorado: University of Colorado, n.d., Seminar Paper.)
6. Athearn, *Coloradans*, op. cit., p. 301, 303 and 305.
7. Ubbelohde, Benson and Smith, op. cit., pp. 330, 332 and No Author, *Fort Carson: A Tradition of Victory* (Ft. Carson, Colorado: Public Affairs and Information Office, 1972.)
8. Athearn, *Coloradans*, op. cit., p. 297, and Trindell, "Occupance," op. cit.
9. Ubbelohde, Benson and Smith, op. cit., p. 327, and Athearn, *Coloradans*, op. cit., p. 303.
10. Colorado State Planning Commission, *Yearbook of the State of Colorado, 1941-1942*, (Denver: Smith-Brooks, 1942) and Colorado State Planning Commission, *Yearbook of the State of Colorado, 1945-1947*, (Denver: n.p., 1947.)
11. Culhane, *Public Lands*, op. cit., p. 48, and Interview, with Robert E. Wagner, Bureau of Land Management, Denver, Colorado, May 19, 1982.
12. Colorado Bureau of Mines, *Report for the Year 1960* (Denver: State Printers, 1961), p. 24.
13. "Cotter Corporation Plant Producing Uranium Oxide Yellow Cake," *Canon City Record*, September 11, 1958, p. 5, and W.T. Little "New Metal Treatment Mill Already Studying Expansion," *Rocky Mountain News*, December 9, 1964, p. 34.
14. Athearn, *Coloradans*, op. cit., pp. 319-320.
15. Ubbelohde, Benson and Smith, op. cit., p. 340.
16. U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, *National Register of Historic Places*, Vol. 44, No. 26 (Washington, DC: GPO, 1979), pp. 7437-7440, and Athearn, *Coloradans*, op. cit., p. 324.
17. See: Simmons, op. cit.
18. See: Robert G. Dunbar, "Water Conflicts and Controls" in: *A Colorado Reader*, Carl Ubbelohde, (Ed.) (Boulder: Pruett, 1962), pp. 219-230; Trindell, "Occupance," op. cit., pp. 148-149; and Athearn, *Coloradans*, op. cit., p. 294.

19. Athearn, *Coloradans*, *ibid.*, p. 342; Matt S. Meier and Feliciano Rivera, *The Chicanos: A History of Mexican Americans* (New York: n.p., 1972) and Jose de Onis, *The Hispanic Contribution to the State of Colorado* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1976.)

20. Simmons, *op. cit.*, and Athearn, *Coloradans*, *op. cit.*, p. 339.

21. Culhane, *op. cit.*, pp. 54-55.

22. Athearn, *ibid.*, pp. 357-360 and p. 398.

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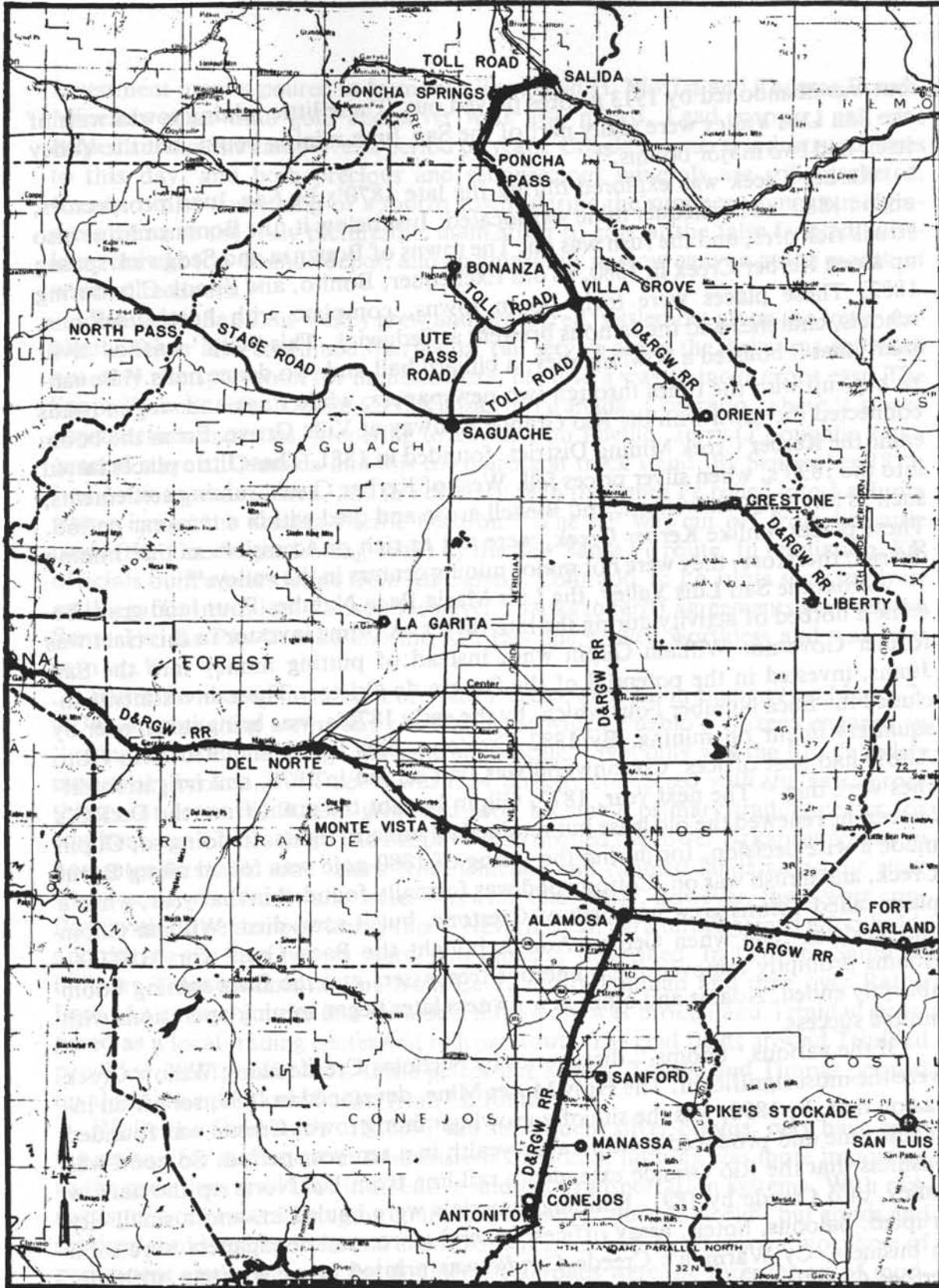
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