

DANIEL CHEESEMAN OAKES

When: 1825–1887

Where: Born in Maine, settled in Denver, Colorado.

Why Important: D. C. Oakes was an early settler and smart businessperson. He helped build a strong foundation for Colorado's economy and growing population.



D.C. Oakes was one of Colorado's first pioneers and goldseekers. He even wrote a guidebook for the Platte River area only to be scorned for his extreme exaggerations. Though Oakes' reputation was tarnished, he worked hard and became a successful businessman until his death in 1887.

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Daniel Cheeseman Oakes was born in Maine on April 3, 1825. He became one of the first permanent settlers in the city of Denver when he arrived on October 10, 1858. Oakes searched for gold in the Pikes Peak region. He was optimistic about the opportunities Colorado had to offer.

Oakes wrote a book called *Pike's Peak Guide and Journal*. The book encouraged many people to move west and explore Colorado. The book also gave instructions for gold mining. Oakes included two lists of what supplies people needed in order to live for six months. Included in the "Provisions, Supplies" list were 1,000 pounds of flour (\$30), twenty-five pounds of gunpowder (\$9), fifty pounds of lead (\$5), and 2,000 gun caps (\$1.20). Other provisions listed were four gallons of pickles, four gallons of vinegar, six gallons of brandy, dry beans, fruit, dried beef, coffee, and cooking utensils. The total was \$517.25. The second list, "Teams, Implements," included oxen, yokes, a tent, and gold prospecting implements. The guidebook was very popular, until the would-be gold prospectors couldn't find any gold!

Oakes also brought the first sawmill to Colorado. His mill provided lumber to build the city of Denver. Oakes built a fort called Oakes' Folly to keep the settlers safe during fights with the Indians. He began to understand the Native American way of life. In 1865 President Johnson made Oakes the first Indian Agent for the Grand River, Yumpak, and Uinta Utes areas. He helped keep peace between the Native Americans and new settlers.

Oakes held a position on the first legislature and city council in Denver. He was the first postmaster of Douglas County and the first president of a pioneer organization called the Fifty-Niners. In 1869 Oakes became Deputy United States Land Surveyor. He held that position until he died in 1887. Oakes was married in 1853. He and his wife, Olive Maria Martin, had eight daughters together.

Sources:

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