

# As It Was in the Beginning

BY JOHN ROLFE BURROUGHS

Many problems that exist today plagued Denver's "city dads" before the turn of the century.

The very first item of Denver city business of which there is any record is a resolution adopted by the city council on April 18, 1865. Deploring "the death by assassination of Abraham Lincoln," the measure provided that "as a slight tribute to his memory and his great worth, we will join in a body the civic and military procession . . . at twelve o'clock tomorrow, and wear the usual badge of mourning for thirty days."<sup>1</sup>

It isn't at all difficult to see the correlation which exists between those turbulent times of social upheaval and the present. If the city of Denver has come a long way in a material sense from the bloody month of April, 1865, the hearts of many Americans, Denverites included, recently have been oppressed by the assassination of another president and by involvement in another armed conflict, one longer and far less conclusive than our own Civil War. In a spiritual sense, then, the human condition seems to have altered very little in the past one hundred years. Even in the mechanics of everyday life, specifically in the administration of city affairs, change appears to have been one of degree rather than of kind.

Then as now it was not at all unusual for the city budget suddenly to be thrown out of kilter. "Whereas an unforeseen contingency has occurred since the passage of the annual appropriation . . . *to wit*: The occurrence of the smallpox disease in this city," reads an old Denver ordinance, "and whereas, in order to cure the persons afflicted with said disease and to prevent the spread thereof it was necessary to incur certain ex-

<sup>1</sup> Council Proceedings, City of Denver. This resolution and all other ordinances, resolutions, and related matters mentioned in this article are contained in Minute Books in the custody of the Denver City Clerk. These books currently are stored in the basement vaults of Denver's City and County Building. In the following citations, reference will be made to ordinance or resolution number and date.





Governor John L. Routt,  
a Denver mayor.

penses amounting to \$746.04, therefore the sum of \$746.04 is hereby appropriated to meet and discharge said expenses."<sup>2</sup> It is of interest that John L. Routt, Colorado's last territorial and first state governor, was mayor of Denver at the time.

The minutes of an 1884 council meeting reveal that aldermen were considerably more concerned with small economies in those days than currently is the case. "The reports of the finance committee recommending the payment of the bills of City Physician S. R. Hamer for horse feed was read. Alderman McLaughlin moved to substitute the sum of \$15.00 in place of \$20.00 in the bills, which motion prevailed"<sup>3</sup> Hurrah for the Scots! Despite such frugality, the city frequently found itself in a financial bind. "The . . . Treasurer is hereby authorized to secure the use of \$50,000 from the American National or other bank to meet the January payrolls," reads an Aldermanic Resolution adopted in the depression year of 1892, "the same to be returned with interest of 8% per annum on or before February, 1893."<sup>4</sup>

When in 1874 the city fathers established "a Police Department for the City of Denver"<sup>5</sup> whose members were to be appointed — presumably on the basis of merit — they were conscious of taking a momentous step forward. Prior thereto

the police power apparently had been vested in a "Town Marshal" elected to that office with slight regard for his technical qualifications. Twelve years elapsed, however, before a "Police (vehicular) Patrol,"<sup>6</sup> precursor to today's "prowl cars," was organized and made a part of the city's law enforcement system.

It is especially pertinent in light of current realities to note that even before the turn of the century, minority groups posed problems in the community. In that era the dissidents seem to have been of Chinese and Italian rather than of Spanish-American and Negro extraction. By 1880 the presence of large numbers of Chinese in Denver resulted in the enactment of "An Ordinance for the suppression of Opium";<sup>7</sup> and it is of interest that in November, 1884, the city's Italian residents presented a petition to the council advocating that one of their number, Gian Francesco, be appointed to the police force.<sup>8</sup>

Despite the frontier character of the nascent metropolis, one gathers that policemen had an altogether easier time enforcing the law in those days than currently is the case. For one thing, right was right and wrong was wrong then, and no uncertainty existed relative to which was which. Denver's policemen were not hampered by a maze of murky restrictions and technicalities in performing their duty. If they occasionally manhandled a malefactor, doing so was accepted by the body politic as a necessary part of their job. Possibly the administration of justice was a bit on the rough side in those days, but at least it served effectively to protect the public.

In this age of freeways and cloverleaf interchanges, many of the early-day ordinances pertaining to traffic seem quaint if not a trifle ludicrous. "No person shall ride or drive on any . . . bridge of a span exceeding twenty feet within the limits of the City of Denver faster than a walk," reads an 1883 ordinance, "nor permit or allow to pass over any such bridge faster than a walk any horse, mule, cow or other animal, singly or in drove, under their charge or control."<sup>9</sup> And in 1885 the city fathers really lowered the boom on speeders. "Any person who shall in the City . . . ride or drive at a faster or greater speed than six miles an hour . . . or shall drive across any cross walk or around any corner at a faster or greater speed than four miles an hour," the pertinent regulation reads, "on conviction

<sup>2</sup> Ordinance 65, Series of 1884.

<sup>3</sup> Meeting of the City Council, December 8, 1884.

<sup>4</sup> Resolution 199, Series of 1892.

<sup>5</sup> Ordinance 108.

<sup>6</sup> Ordinance 12, Section 1, Series of 1886.

<sup>7</sup> Ordinance 15, Sections 1 and 2, Series of 1880.

<sup>8</sup> The petition was presented on November 18, 1884.

<sup>9</sup> Ordinance 22, Series of 1883.



## DENVER'S FIRST UNIFORM POLICE

December 1, 1874



JOHN McCALLIN, Chief

- |                   |                   |                     |
|-------------------|-------------------|---------------------|
| 1. JOHN HOLLAND   | 5. SAM HOWE       | 9. FRANK ROBERTSON  |
| 2. ED. J. BURKE   | 6. DAN MAYES      | 10. ADDISON SANDERS |
| 3. H. C. SJERMAN  | 7. JOSEPH MOORE   | 11. N. W. SMITH     |
| 4. W. J. PHILLIPS | 8. CHAS. WHITCOMB | 12. WM. HICKEY      |

shall be fined not less than five dollars nor more than one hundred dollars for each and every offense."<sup>10</sup> One is at a loss to understand how enforcement officers ascertained whether a horseback rider or horse-drawn vehicle was exceeding the stipulated limit. Possibly the fact that a team of fast trotting horses is capable of clipping off twelve or fifteen miles an hour served as a criterion.

A further regulation germane in those horse-and-buggy days decreed that "any person who shall leave any horse or

<sup>10</sup> Ordinance 30, Section 1, Series of 1885.

other animal attached to any carriage, wagon, cart, sleigh, sled or other vehicle, in any street, avenue, alley, lane or other public place within the City without securely fastening such horse or other animal, or without same being fastened by a chain or strap to a post, ring, weight, or some other stationary object, shall upon conviction thereof be fined not less than two dollars nor more than ten dollars. Provided that the weight above referred to shall be of metal and weigh at least fifteen pounds for a single horse, and twenty-five pounds for a team of horses."<sup>11</sup>

Occasionally it is possible to recognize the inception of some modern traffic control practice amid otherwise obsolete provisions. "In all cases of persons approaching each other in vehicles, sleighs or other conveyances," the ordinance previously quoted continues, "in any highway or thoroughfare, or upon or near any bridge within this City, each person so approaching shall . . . turn off and go to the right side so as to enable each vehicle to pass without accident."<sup>12</sup> And as early as 1873 regulations were formulated relative to where "hacks," the forerunners of today's taxicabs, were permitted to stand. "Express wagons and hacks will be allowed to stand upon any street four feet from the line of the sidewalk . . . but two or more hacks will not be allowed to stand side by side in any street."<sup>13</sup> This is the first reference to double-parking that the writer found in the old ordinances.

Hacks and cabs were for the moneyed elite. Transportation for the hoi polloi was provided by "horse cars" and, as one





might expect, it was necessary to enjoin youngsters from "hooking rides" on these vehicles. "Any child under the age of eighteen who shall catch hold of the cars of any Railway company while the same are in motion . . . or shall run along by the side of such cars . . . or shall purposely frighten or attempt to frighten any horses attached to the cars of any street Railway," an 1885 ordinance provided, "shall upon conviction be fined in a sum not less than one dollar nor more than fifty dollars."<sup>14</sup>

Before the turn of the century, problems of public health and the control and suppression of disease in Denver were far more urgent than they are now. As previously mentioned, smallpox seems to have become epidemic in 1884; and in 1892 Denverites shuddered at the threat posed by "Asiatic cholera." A resolution presented by the board of health and approved by the city council that year reads: "Resolved . . . that the Health Commissioner be and hereby is authorized to purchase and erect tents, and provide accommodations for persons threatened with, or suffering from cholera who arrive on trains centering in Denver, and also communicate with all towns along the line of the several railways within or without the State to the end that proper quarantine may be established against the introduction of said disease."<sup>15</sup>

In the relatively septic era of which I write, the city council often was called on to cope with problems of hygiene. So it was that in 1873 the office of "City Scavenger" was created. The work of this functionary was every bit as unsavory as the title implies. "The duties of the City Scavenger," the covering ordinance reads, "shall be the abatement of all nuisances that may be injurious to the public health of the city, and for this purpose he shall be invested with all the powers now given to the City Marshal . . . The City Scavenger shall provide himself with a horse and proper vehicle for removing the bodies of dead animals and filth of every description . . . and shall remove such nuisances to such place or places as shall be designated by the Mayor or Chairman of the Committee on Health, where he shall bury them."<sup>16</sup>

The aforementioned ordinance went on to provide that, in addition to his forty dollars a month salary, the scavenger

could assess a charge "for hauling off each dead dog, cat or smaller animal, not to exceed fifty cents. For horse, mule, cow, or other (large) animal, not to exceed \$2.50,"<sup>17</sup> and "for each load of dirt or swill, not to exceed fifty cents." That the office of scavenger existed for ten years until the city, having purchased a number of "garbage wagons," assumed his function, is a further annotation on the times.

Morals came in for more attention in that Victorian era than presently is the case. One of the very first Denver ordinances of which there is any record, enacted on February 1, 1866, provided that "no person shall commit any nuisance, or indecently expose his person in the Papago way extending through the building known as the Elephant Corral, situated on Blake Street in the City of Denver, and if any person shall commit any nuisance or indecently expose his person in the Papago way aforesaid, he shall be deemed guilty of a misdemeanor." It probably is just as well that the ordinance failed to define of what "exposing one's person in the Papago way" consisted.

In 1884 the city council found it necessary to enjoin people not to "swim or bathe in the South Platte River at any point or place between one mile either way from the mouth of Cherry Creek."<sup>18</sup> The same ordinance also provided that "if any person shall appear in a state of nudity, or in a dress not belonging to his or her sex, or in an indecent or lewd dress, or shall make any indecent exposure of his or her person, or be guilty of any lewd or indecent act or behavior . . . every such person on conviction shall be fined in a sum not less than ten dollars nor more than one hundred dollars."<sup>19</sup>

Pornographic literature was banned, and then as now minors were protected. The same ordinance also provided that women were not to be employed in bars. "Any person who shall employ any woman in any liquor or beer saloon as a waiter or bartender, or who shall, for the purpose of attracting customers to any liquor or beer saloon, permit women to assemble, shall be deemed . . . guilty of a misdemeanor."<sup>20</sup>

In view of the foregoing, the fact that women were allowed to take out liquor licenses and operate saloons seems inconsistent. It is a matter of record that on December 4, 1884, the

<sup>11</sup> Ordinance 46, Section 27, Series of 1885.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, Section 29.

<sup>13</sup> Ordinance 80, Section 2, Series of 1873.

<sup>14</sup> Ordinance 46, Section 34, Series of 1885.

<sup>15</sup> Resolution 170, Series of 1892.

<sup>16</sup> Ordinance 71, Sections 2 and 3, Series of 1873.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, Section 6.

<sup>18</sup> Ordinance 99, Section 2, Series of 1884.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, Section 3.

<sup>20</sup> Ordinance 98, Section 9, Series of 1884.





*The all-male clientele of this bar attests its legality, to say nothing of its respectability.*

council committee on licenses recommended to the full council that Denver's most notorious madam, Mattie Silks, be permitted to sell her liquor license to one Alice Cole. Four months later Mattie, having purchased the license of L. Gripper, was back in the saloon business. Also, in 1884 the city council enacted an ordinance, one section of which reads: "No bad house, house of ill-fame, house of assignation or place for the practice of fornication, or common, ill-governed or disorderly house shall be kept or maintained within the limits of the City of Denver . . ." <sup>21</sup> This may or may not have been the ordinance that forced Mattie to set up shop just west of Denver's

<sup>21</sup> Ordinance 99, Section 9, Series of 1884.

city limits, in the vicinity of what now is West Twenty-fifth Street and Sheridan Boulevard in Lakewood.

That the city fathers occasionally came up against some very tough nuts in their efforts to keep Denver pure is evidenced by a resolution approved by the council on February 4, 1887:

Whereas numerous complaints have been made before a Justice of the Peace, as well as at Police headquarters, of robberies said to have been committed at the place known as "California Hall," and whereas the proprietor of said California Hall has violated and is flagrantly violating laws and ordinances of the City by allowing immoral, vulgar, and blasphemous females to assemble in said place for the purpose of attracting customers . . . and in various other ways, particularly in permitting minors of both sexes to frequent said dram shop and selling to them liquors, of which crime said proprietor was convicted in the police magistrate court; and whereas both county and city officials declare it is almost impossible to apprehend and bring to justice the offenders because of the circumspection by which these crimes are committed. Therefore, be it resolved that the dram shop license No. 126 for 1348 Larimer Street (new numbering) known as "California Hall," be and the same hereby is revoked; and the City Auditor is hereby authorized and instructed to draw a warrant in favor of J. H. Halligan for the proportionate part of said license not used.<sup>22</sup>

Action foreshadowing modern zoning practice was taken by Denver's city council as early as 1876. "No person, company or corporation shall hereinafter open, establish or operate, or cause to be opened, established or operated any livery, feed or sale stable," an ordinance enacted that year reads, "upon any half block when one half of said block, and also one half of the block upon the opposite side of the street, is used . . . for residence purposes, without first obtaining and filing with the City Clerk the written consent thereto of the owners of a majority of the frontage in the aforesaid two half blocks. Provided that this ordinance shall not be construed to prevent the erection of stables by private individuals on their own premises for the accommodation and keeping of their own animals and vehicles."<sup>23</sup>

Three years later a comparable ordinance was enacted relative to "candle factories, soap factories, and rendering establishments," the latter ordinance also providing that "no permit shall be issued by the City Council for either or any of the above-mentioned establishments to be erected, established

<sup>22</sup> This resolution was not designated by number.

<sup>23</sup> Ordinance 40, Series of 1876.



or conducted within five hundred feet of any public school building within the City of Denver."<sup>24</sup> That subsequently theaters, "public places of amusement," and hospitals were lumped in the same category with factories is a pertinent commentary on the era.

In the old days a surprising amount of an alderman's time was usurped by problems created by, or relating to, animals. Section 1, Ordinance 32, Series of 1872, provided that "any cow or cows running at large within the City of Denver between the hours of eight o'clock in the evening and six o'clock in the morning are defined and declared to be a nuisance, and any person being the owner of any cow who shall suffer the same to be at large, or be found at large between the hours aforesaid, shall be deemed the author of a nuisance and shall on conviction be fined in a sum not less than two dollars nor more than twenty dollars in each case." Nothing to the contrary appearing in the statute, one can assume that bossy was free to wander around the city suiting her convenience during the daylight hours.

Twenty-four years later animals at large still were creating problems. An ordinance enacted in 1896 provided that "it shall be unlawful for any person or persons to allow to run at large, or to herd or graze any cattle, hogs, sheep or swine, or any other animal or animals, upon or in any street, avenue, alley or public place in the City of Denver, or upon any vacant premises in said City whether said animals are attended by a person or persons or not. Provided that the foregoing shall not . . . apply to animals securely tied or staked beyond the reach of any tree or ornamental shrub."<sup>25</sup>

If Denver's city fathers eventually did succeed in bringing most of our four-footed friends under effective control, throughout the life of the city no mayor or city council, however strong-minded and determined, ever has succeeded in eliminating the barking of even more determined dogs, especially late at night while historical researchers into such matters undertake to collate their data and while other citizens yearn for much-needed rest.

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<sup>24</sup> Ordinance 22, Section 1, Series of 1879.

<sup>25</sup> Ordinance 10, Section 1, Series of 1896.

# The Wootton Land and Fuel Company, 1905-1910

BY LAWRENCE R. BORNE

Although in the early years of the twentieth century the United States frontier had officially been closed for at least ten years, there were ample opportunities for growth in the West, as many resources of this section of the country still were untapped. In Colorado such resources included the vast coal deposits near Trinidad, only parts of which had been developed and exploited. Coal, of course, was in demand at this time for use by railroads, by new industries in the West, by marine shippers, and by homeowners as fuel.

James A. Ownbey, who had first come to Colorado in 1870, developed a huge coal mining area in the southern part of the state under the name of the Wootton Land and Fuel Company. Ownbey's family had moved to Colorado from North Carolina when he was only sixteen; he had worked at many jobs but soon had drifted into the Colorado mining industry. Having become a fairly competent, self-taught mining engineer, he later invested in several mining ventures as he accumulated some capital.

Most of the money for the Wootton undertaking, however, came from the eastern financier, J. P. Morgan, whom Ownbey had met in Nevada years before. Ownbey had worked at the Comstock Lode and had acquired an intricate knowledge of the mines in that area. He had taken his information to Darius Ogden Mills, a California banker and financier, who was trying to gain control of these Nevada mines. Mills did not have sufficient capital for his project and so invited J. P. Morgan to assist him. Thus, Morgan met Ownbey, the two men becoming friends. Mills and Morgan hired James Ownbey to look after their interests in the United States, Latin America, Australia, and South Africa.<sup>1</sup>





"The Colonel," James A. Ownbey.

Returning from these overseas excursions, Colonel Ownbey—"Colonel" was an honorary title—settled in Boulder and resumed his connections with various mining interests. Assay reports and records of the Acacia Gold Mining Company, the Slide and Spur mines, and others abound in his papers. By 1905, however, feeling that the mining of gold and silver was becoming unprofitable because of the monopoly of processing by the American Smelting Company, he turned to coal as a new source of investment.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Jim Jam Jems*, XV (January, 1926), 15-17, copy in the James A. Ownbey Papers, Western History Collection, University of Colorado Libraries, Boulder. Unless otherwise noted, all materials cited below are from this collection.

<sup>2</sup> Ownbey to Nelson W. Aldrich, October 8, 1906.

In the development of the West, investment capital was often difficult to obtain. Thus, when in 1905 the First National Bank of Boulder had only \$120,000 in surplus and capital and was calling in loans, James Ownbey was fortunate to have eastern connections that would be interested in backing him.<sup>3</sup>

The Wootton Land and Fuel Company took its name from Richens "Uncle Dick" Wootton, a Colorado pioneer. Wootton had received a grant of land of about five thousand acres from the Maxwell Land Grant near Raton Pass, on which he built a ranch and operated a tollgate. It was on part of this land that the Ownbey-Morgan company developed.

In 1897 Wootton, Felix Baca, and Casimiro Barela had incorporated the Wootton Land and Coal Company. The objects for which the company were formed were "to buy, own, sell and operate coal lands and coal mines, to buy, own, sell and operate ranch and farm lands."<sup>4</sup> This organization was the predecessor of the Wootton Land and Fuel Company, the purposes for the formation of both companies being virtually the same. When Ownbey began buying options on these coal areas, he apparently regarded the undertaking as just another of his many business enterprises in which he would make a commission by reselling the land to interested capitalists. Since the Santa Fe Railroad ran through the Wootton property, he thought that this company might be interested in purchasing the coal land for an additional source of fuel for its locomotives.<sup>5</sup> The Santa Fe had once offered \$100 per acre for land adjoining the Wootton property; thus, Ownbey estimated that his land was worth \$250,000 based on an equal evaluation.<sup>6</sup> When the company officials declined, he looked elsewhere.

One of the men Ownbey interested in the investment was B. P. Cheney, former president of the Santa Fe. Though the company was not interested, Cheney himself was; he investigated the Wootton land while on an inspection tour of the railroad and was favorably impressed.<sup>7</sup> A second interested party was Ogden Mills, son of the Darius Ogden Mills whom Ownbey had known through his activities in the Comstock Lode. Morgan, however, was the most important member of this eastern triumvirate. Though it took many letters and

<sup>3</sup> W. H. Allison to Ownbey, March 4, 1905.

<sup>4</sup> Certificate of Incorporation, Wootton Land and Coal Company, December 14, 1897, Colorado State Archives and Records Service.

<sup>5</sup> C. H. Morehouse to J. E. Gorman, February 21, 1905.

<sup>6</sup> Ownbey to T. M. Patterson, May 20, 1905.

<sup>7</sup> Ownbey to Joseph Leiter, November 1, 1905.



several conferences, Ownbey finally convinced him to take part in the new undertaking. Morgan advanced the needed money to Ownbey, who completed his option on the land.<sup>8</sup>

The investors decided to incorporate a company in Delaware on October 15, 1906; the name was the Wootton Land and Fuel Company—a slight change from the corporation of 1897.<sup>9</sup> The company was incorporated for 100,000 shares of stock distributed as follows: 41,667 shares to Morgan, 8,333 to Cheney, 16,667 to Mills, and 33,321 to Ownbey. The remaining twelve shares were issued to individuals as a convenience so they could serve as directors in Colorado and New York. Later six more shares of Ownbey's stock were divided between additional directors; these eighteen shares of stock then changed hands frequently as different directors resigned and new ones were appointed.<sup>10</sup>

What began as just another investment was now rapidly becoming a full-time job for Colonel Ownbey as it became clear that the investors would develop and operate the mining area as soon as it was feasible to do so. Ownbey was named vice president and general manager of the company at the first board of directors' meeting. He hired men to serve as on-the-spot managers at the mines, which were fourteen miles south of Trinidad, while he commuted between there, his home in Boulder, and business meetings in New York. Despite these assistants Ownbey took a hand in many details of the company—giving specific directions, for instance, on who was to ride which horses and mules on the ranch, how the coal was to be mined, and how many men were to be hired. He also insisted that a copy of every business letter be sent to him at Boulder so he could keep abreast of all matters. His habits must have been difficult to get along with, since several superintendents resigned during the next four years.<sup>11</sup>

When the newspapers began to publicize the mining developments, Ownbey was swamped with applications for employment as well as opportunities for further investment. He

<sup>8</sup> Ownbey to Morgan, January 24, 1906; signed agreement between H. W. Spangler and W. B. Morgan, February 18, 1906.

<sup>9</sup> There was still talk of a quick sale to others as Ownbey reported an offer of \$180,000 for fifteen hundred acres of the land, but he suggested that the investors hold out for at least \$500,000. Ownbey to Ogden Mills, October 9, 1906; Articles of Incorporation, Wootton Land and Fuel Company, October 15, 1906.

<sup>10</sup> W. C. Prime to Ownbey, November 19, 1906.

<sup>11</sup> Ownbey to J. C. Bailey, November 25, 1908; Ownbey to all employees of the Wootton Land and Fuel Company, December 23, 1908; Ownbey to Bailey, C. V. Stewart, and William P. Keogh, March 1, 1909; Ownbey to George McDonough, July 1, 1909.

left the hiring of miners to his assistants but was very particular about getting trustworthy secretaries. One applicant even promised not to marry without his specific permission. Another emphasized that he was quite reliable, and he knew that "selling you out means a bullet."<sup>12</sup>

In the meantime, Ownbey turned down other investment opportunities; he thought he had found a lucrative and permanent source of income in the company burgeoning near Raton Pass.<sup>13</sup> To get a better idea of the resources of the Wootton land, Ownbey had it explored and made preliminary openings to coal veins. Alex Allen, his man on the spot in the early months, did everything from cutting mine openings to building stables for the horses. In January, 1907, he located a vein of coal four feet seven inches thick—a discovery which greatly encouraged Ownbey. In the same month State Geologist B. A. Langridge sent the Colonel a detailed eight-page report on the property. Langridge pointed out that there were three separate veins of coal in the area and that all could be worked by the tunnel method rather than by the more costly technique of shaft sinking. Since these veins lay above the bed of the Santa Fe line, the coal could be loaded by gravity into the cars. Langridge estimated that the land should yield hundreds of tons of coal per acre and thus produce a handsome profit once extensive production began. Ownbey continued to send Allen money and supplies and told him to keep looking for favorable spots to open more mine tunnels.<sup>14</sup> The Colonel was particularly eager to keep intruders away from the land as rival coal land owners seemed intent on learning the extent of the Wootton progress. By October, 1907, Allen was hard at work on the fourth mine entry on the property. In this same month Cheney visited the land again; he reported that three of these entries showed veins from four feet six inches to six feet three inches deep and that all four could be worked profitably. Also there were three railroads over which the mined coal could be shipped: the Santa Fe, the Colorado and Southern, and the Rio Grande.<sup>15</sup>

News of these finds circulated quickly, and by January, 1908, Colonel Ownbey reported receiving an offer of \$1,100,000 for his

<sup>12</sup> C. T. Hanson to Ownbey, November 16, 1906; Malcolm M. Currie to Ownbey, February 15, 1908.

<sup>13</sup> Ownbey to Guy Houghtelin, June 10, 1907; Ownbey to C. M. McGuire, June 1, 1909.

<sup>14</sup> Allen to Ownbey, January 7, 1907; Ownbey to Allen, January 12, 1907; Langridge to Ownbey, January 12, 1907.

<sup>15</sup> Ownbey to Allen, May 24, 1907; Allen to Ownbey, October 4, 1907; Cheney to Morgan, October 14, 1907.



and Morgan's interests. The Colonel insisted they were worth at least five times that amount. By April the land was graded and ready for the railroad spur, and the mine entrances were in order for inspection. Ownbey's predictions of rising value were confirmed by another offer of \$6,500,000.<sup>16</sup> Beside the offers to buy the Wootton property, there were other measurements of its growing importance. In August, 1908, for instance, the citizens of Wootton were requesting a post office; by June, 1910, a petition was prepared to request the establishment of a voting and justice precinct; and in September, 1910, there were thirty-five children of school age—enough for a schoolhouse.<sup>17</sup>

The financing of work on the Wootton land was carried out under the terms of an agreement among the four major stockholders. Colonel Ownbey was to do this preliminary development work to determine the most suitable spot for placement of the railroad switch. The cost was estimated at \$15,000 to \$20,000, and as the charges came in each investor was to contribute a portion of money based on his percentage of the total stock of the company. The same basic agreement was continued as the company expanded in succeeding years; an example was the need for an additional \$200,000 in capital to make sample shipments of 150,000 tons of coal to the United States Navy for test purposes. At another time \$30,000 was needed for company expenses while tardy debtors delayed payment of their accounts.<sup>18</sup> When Ownbey was unable to advance his share of this extra money, J. P. Morgan agreed to furnish it; he then was to be repaid from company profits for this extra share before any dividend would be given to the other stockholders.<sup>19</sup>

Much of Ownbey's contact with Morgan was through the latter's secretary, Thomas Joyce. And, through Joyce, the New York financier expressed his trust and confidence in Ownbey. The latter continued to keep a close watch on developments, insisting that his subordinates mail a daily report to his office.

Ogden Mills, unfortunately, was not quite as satisfied as Morgan; as early as March, 1907, he questioned the development costs for which he was asked to pay. Within six days Ownbey replied, asserting that expenses had been kept to a minimum.

<sup>16</sup> Ownbey to Morgan, January 20, 1908; McDonough to Ownbey, April 22, 1908; Ownbey to J. C. S. Blackburn, May 11, 1908.

<sup>17</sup> Petition to C. P. Granfield, August, 1908; J. T. Atwood to Ownbey, June 14, 1910; Ownbey to Board of County Commissioners, September 8, 1910.

<sup>18</sup> Ownbey to Thomas Joyce, January 12, 1907; Ownbey to Morgan, December 16, 1909; Ownbey to Joyce, March 16, 1910.

<sup>19</sup> *Denver Times*, March 4, 1916, p. 1, copy in Dawson Scrapbooks, LIX, 727, State Historical Society of Colorado Library.

He offered Mills a twenty-five percent profit on his stock and eight percent on all moneys he had invested if he were dissatisfied. Mills declined this offer but did not let the matter drop, continuing to ask for more details on expenses. Ownbey patiently described various problems and pointed out that by May, 1908, he had already made three trips to New York just to explain difficulties in the installation of the railway switch.<sup>20</sup> Ownbey suggested Mills visit the Wootton property to dispel his suspicions or doubts. He also offered to mail copies of all vouchers—eighteen hundred pages of paper work—if Mills so desired. This constant conflict finally was resolved in 1909 when Cheney bought Ogden Mills' stock for \$50,000. Ownbey was pleased as this change did "away with the unsatisfactory element."<sup>21</sup>

Ownbey's estimate of the worth of the Wootton land in 1907 was based on the same freight rates, arrangements, and treatment from the Santa Fe that this line gave to the Colorado Fuel and Iron Company and the Victor Fuel Company. However, one of the most persistent problems he was to face over the years was the unfair treatment he received from the railroads. Disagreements arose over improvements by the Santa Fe on Wootton property, freight rates, and even orders for coal. Ownbey's relations with railroad officials fluctuated; they began cordially but occasionally degenerated into virtual name-calling, as in his letter to Superintendent J. M. Kurn when he said:

The sandbagging, back capping attacks I have had to contend with from above sources since commencing to develop [sic] a great coal enterprise on the line of the Santa Fe would make five fingered Jack, eat them up Jake Kidmiller and Abe Hummel of New York greeneyed with envy . . .<sup>22</sup>

He refrained from legal actions though, relying on the influence of Morgan and Cheney, who were stockholders in the Santa Fe, to solve various problems.

Ownbey needed several improvements by the Santa Fe: grade crossings, spur tracks and a switch, and a tunnel under the Santa Fe right-of-way where a large coal vein was located. Conflicting orders, delays, and misunderstandings marked all of the proceedings, though Ownbey was eager to grant the railroad any right-of-way it wanted for no cost.<sup>23</sup> Particularly irk-

<sup>20</sup> Mills to Ownbey, March 27, 1907; Ownbey to Mills, April 2, 1907, and May 18, 1908.

<sup>21</sup> Ownbey to Mills, May 26, 1908, and September 22, 1908; Ownbey to Morgan, January 22, 1909.

<sup>22</sup> Ownbey to Kurn, August 28, 1908.

<sup>23</sup> Ownbey to F. M. Bisbee, April 28, 1907; Ownbey to Joyce, May 27, 1907; Ownbey to E. P. Ripley, September 25, 1907.



some was the Santa Fe's authorization of fourteen surveys worth \$3,500 for a rival coal company without any compensation. The railroad had also installed a switch for the Colorado Fuel and Iron Company at no cost. When he heard of this partiality, Joyce — Morgan's secretary — felt sure it would not have occurred had the higher officials of the Santa Fe system known of Morgan's and Cheney's interests in the Wootton Land and Fuel Company. In October, 1907, Cheney and Ownbey met with the president of the Santa Fe and his chief engineer. These officials were more cooperative because of Cheney's influence; thus, the value of Ownbey's eastern connections was again apparent.<sup>24</sup>

Work was begun on the switch and tracklaying, though their cost was not yet settled. Cheney, encouraged especially by Morgan's kind and cordial attitude, kept working on this problem. He urged the railroad officials to charge the Wootton Land and Fuel Company the same that they charged the CF&I. This persistent pressure paid off at last in November, 1908, when the general superintendent of the Santa Fe advised Ownbey that the railway would bear the cost of all tracks laid on Wootton property.<sup>25</sup>

Similar problems arose over freight rates quoted and charged to the Wootton Land and Fuel Company. Although Cheney did what he could to ease this conflict, he was not successful in solving it. One lawyer was of the opinion that the rates were set arbitrarily to keep producers in southern Colorado from competing with the Northern Coal Company. High freight rates were especially annoying since the haul from Wootton was downhill nearly all the way — going either north or south.<sup>26</sup> There was a considerable amount of "dealing" going on as rates were adjusted to various points to which Wootton wished to ship. So perturbed was Ownbey that when he ordered some large mining machinery from Columbus, Ohio, he insisted it be shipped via Burlington as far as possible because of the more cooperative attitude of that line.<sup>27</sup>

All these conflicts and disagreements nearly obscured the main business of the Wootton Land and Fuel Company: producing coal. The development of coal production was slow, partly because of the Santa Fe's delay in laying tracks but also because

of Ownbey's desire to build the company slowly and strongly, laying the groundwork for a coal empire.

A government fuel-testing plant in Denver requested forty tons of Wootton coal in December, 1907, for analysis. By March of the following year Ownbey could report to the stockholders that their coal was testing eighteen to twenty-two percent better than other coal of the Rocky Mountain region. Later tests showed it produced one thousand more BTUs than other coal from the Trinidad area. Naval authorities also found it of superior quality for steam purposes.<sup>28</sup> Rejecting offers to lease the land and let others mine and ship the fuel, Wootton hired its own miners and began shipping small quantities as early as December, 1907. The coal for many of these first shipments was merely that dug as the mine tunnels and openings were being developed. Gradually, though, the company began earnest production and sought out coal customers. By December, 1908, the amount of money received for coal shipped was nearly equivalent to the costs of production; the difference between these figures, however, varied considerably in succeeding months.<sup>29</sup>

In April, 1909, the Santa Fe officials advised they were unable to buy coal from Wootton until 1911 and 1913 because of contracts with other companies. Ten months later, however, Superintendent J. M. Kurn ordered fifteen cars of coal. Ownbey was extremely surprised but affirmed that he could ship fifteen cars per day at \$1.15 to \$1.40 per ton, depending on the length of the contract. Thus, Wootton finally began to sell to the railroad which crossed its property and in which two of its three major stockholders were large investors. By March, 1910, the company was selling the Santa Fe 225 tons of coal per day at \$1.35 per ton.<sup>30</sup> Ownbey used his friendship with another eastern contact to sell coal to a second railroad. Anson Beard was the son-in-law of James J. Hill and a friend of Ownbey. Hill controlled the Great Northern Railroad and through it the Chicago, Burlington, and Quincy and the Colorado and Southern. Beard used his relationship with Hill to influence the Colorado and Southern to buy Wootton coal.<sup>31</sup> By September, 1910, Ownbey could advise Cheney that the company was shipping five hundred to six hundred tons of coal per day and was making a profit.<sup>32</sup>

<sup>24</sup> Prime to Ownbey, October 4, 1907; Ownbey to Prime, October 5, 1907.

<sup>25</sup> Cheney to Ownbey, October 12, 1908; Cheney to Walker D. Hines, October 14, 1908; H. W. Sharp to Ownbey, November 27, 1908.

<sup>26</sup> Ownbey to J. E. Gorman, December 13, 1908; J. T. Atwood to Ownbey, January 2, 1909.

<sup>27</sup> Ownbey to F. B. Houghton, February 3, 1910.

<sup>28</sup> John W. Groves to Ownbey, December 19, 1907; Ownbey to Mills, March 18, 1908; *Denver Republican*, August 21, 1911, p. 3.

<sup>29</sup> J. C. Bailey to Ownbey, December 29, 1908.

<sup>30</sup> Telegram from Kurn to Ownbey, January 9, 1910; telegram from Ownbey to Kurn, January 9, 1910; Ownbey to Joyce, March 16, 1910.

<sup>31</sup> Ownbey to Anson Beard, June 23, 1910.

<sup>32</sup> Ownbey to Cheney, September 28, 1910.





*The interior of the company store, ancillary activity of the Wootton Land and Fuel Company.*

While coal production and sales gradually increased, Ownbey developed other enterprises on the Wootton property. One source of profit was the company store. Since Colorado law forbade the payment of wages in anything but cash, there was some doubt whether the company could operate its own store. Ownbey, however, received a legal opinion that indicated the company's articles of incorporation permitted the store. Profits on this enterprise varied from fifteen to thirty percent.<sup>33</sup>

Another use of the land was the raising of cattle. Previously leasing for grazing had occurred, but now this practice was halted. The T-lazy-S brand was adopted and is still in use on the Wootton Ranch today. Hundreds of Herefords were bought, fed, and then either sold or slaughtered for use on the property.

<sup>33</sup> James McKeough to Ownbey, February 27, 1908; Clayton C. Dorsey to Ownbey, March 3, 1908; Henry Bertocchio to Ownbey, July 9, 1909.

About one hundred acres of the land were also planted in feed for the cattle or in vegetables for ranch use.<sup>34</sup>

A third use of the land was a game preserve. Ownbey once stated that its purpose was to get a lower tax assessment from the county evaluators; it was also well known, though, that he was an avid hunter and that this area served as a private hunting refuge for himself and various business associates and customers.<sup>35</sup> The home built by "Uncle Dick" Wootton had been a famous landmark, and Ownbey and Cheney decided to rebuild it for a hunting lodge. At a cost of about \$20,000 they



*The hunting lodge, a reconstruction of Wootton's home.*

reproduced the original with the addition of conveniences such as hot and cold water and baths. Also added to the property were chickens, turkeys, geese, ducks, cows, pheasants, and squirrels, to provide a variety of foods for visiting guests.<sup>36</sup>

Parallel to the organization of the Wootton Land and Fuel Company and the production of coal occurred a separate but significant series of developments resulting in expansion of the

<sup>34</sup> *Denver Republican*, August 21, 1911, p. 3.

<sup>35</sup> Ownbey to Mills, September 21, 1908.

<sup>36</sup> Ownbey to J. B. Andrews, April 7, 1909.



land which the company was able to exploit. Three main events brought about this increase: the settlement of a land dispute with the CF&I, the acquisition of the Turner Fuel Company, and the purchase of the Dolan B. Smith land.

The first of these developments was not actually concerned with acquiring much new land but rather with settling a dispute over the title of the Wootton land. When Ownbey purchased the property, the Rocky Mountain Coal and Iron Company, all of whose stock was owned by the CF&I, also laid a claim to it, and a court action ensued. L. B. Maxwell had deeded several thousand acres of land to Dick Wootton in the 1860s, and a later grant, which the CF&I acquired, contained all the Maxwell land in Colorado not already given to someone else. Since Wootton had not filed his deed at the time of the later grants, the new grantee also claimed his land.

Several dates were set for the final arguments in the case, but these were continually postponed as both parties sought an out-of-court settlement. Finally, in April, 1907, a compromise was reached and the court case was dropped. This settlement involved the purchase of the Turner Fuel Company.

About three thousand acres of the grant from Maxwell to Wootton was owned by a company incorporated in July, 1903, under the name of the Turner Fuel Company. The principal holders of the twelve hundred shares of stock were C. F. Turner, Hattie M. Turner, and Jesse G. Northcutt. The CF&I originally had laid claim to this land too but dropped its action when it learned that the case would be heard by Judge Northcutt, the same man who owned stock in Turner.<sup>37</sup>

The land adjoined the Wootton property, and Ownbey had decided quite early that he wanted to own it. Besides having additional coal land, the Turner property possessed other advantages. It contained large amounts of lumber which could be used to timber the mines; good grazing land was available for cattle; it would provide additional water—a commodity of which the Wootton land was short; and the situation of the Turner land made it possible that more of the Wootton coal could be loaded by the gravity method.<sup>38</sup>

The Turner owners offered their land for seventy-five dollars per acre in May, 1906, but Ownbey held out for a lower

price. It was offered for fifty dollars per acre in October. Ownbey then took out an option on it and made some preliminary surveys to determine its worth and exact acreage, this examination showing the acreage to be 2,833 instead of 3,000. Ownbey made a total offer of slightly over \$118,000.<sup>39</sup> However, he ran into difficulties in securing the additional money to complete the purchase. He obtained several extensions on his option in 1907 but was not able to convince Morgan and the others to advance him the total amount of cash he needed. C. F. Turner, meanwhile, raised the price to \$175,500. Finally he tired of the Colonel's repeated requests for extensions and the option lapsed. Judge Northcutt became impatient with the complex negotiations and dropped out of the conflict in January, 1907.<sup>40</sup>

In April Ownbey learned further details of the setup of the Turner Fuel Company which proved very profitable. The CF&I owned twenty-five percent of the stock of Turner, plus 140 acres of land that Ownbey wanted. He was able to persuade the CF&I officials to agree to a compromise whereby they would sell him all of their Turner stock, the 140 acres, and all claims to the Wootton property for \$35,000.<sup>41</sup> This was agreed to and the first important phase of the land struggle was settled. Whatever happened to the Turner land, Ownbey at least had a clear title to the Wootton property. To finance this purchase from the CF&I, Ownbey enlisted the aid of another New York friend, W. C. Prime, as well as Cheney. (J. P. Morgan was in Europe at the time, and his secretary, Joyce, was unwilling to advance the money to Ownbey.)<sup>42</sup>

Colonel Ownbey knew that Turner was in need of money, so he adopted a variety of tactics to secure the rest of the stock and the land at a reasonable price. First he attempted to get a Trinidad bank to push for payment of a loan which Turner had there, but this technique failed.<sup>43</sup> A second device was offered by Trinidad businessman H. B. Brown. He spoke with Turner's brother, John, who agreed to persuade "C. F." to sell. Brown suggested a careful approach, for "C. F." was regarded as a rather eccentric fellow. Ownbey called off all other direct negotiators and let Brown work through John Turner.<sup>44</sup> The Colonel was

<sup>37</sup> Certificate of Incorporation, Turner Fuel Company, July 9, 1903, Colorado State Archives and Records Service; Ownbey to Governor Jesse McDonald, May 25, 1905.

<sup>38</sup> Henry A. Drumm to Ownbey, December 30, 1907.

<sup>39</sup> Ownbey to Prime, November 12, 1906; [Dorsey] to C. F. Turner, December 6, 1906.

<sup>40</sup> Ownbey to Prime, January 6, 1907; C. F. Turner to Dorsey and Hodges, January 25, 1907.

<sup>41</sup> Ownbey to Cheney, April 11, 1907.

<sup>42</sup> Joyce to Ownbey, April 22, 1907; telegram from Ownbey to Cheney, April 23, 1907; Ownbey to Cheney, April 25, 1907.

<sup>43</sup> Ownbey to Brown, May 17, 1907.

<sup>44</sup> Brown to Ownbey, May 23, 1907; Ownbey to Brown, May 24, 1907.



not completely content with this idea though, so he hired a Wells, Fargo agent, E. C. Whittlesey, to investigate Turner's activities. He hoped Whittlesey could find some fraud, regarding recent operations of the Turner Company, that Ownbey could use in pressuring Turner since Ownbey held a minority of the stock in the Turner Fuel Company.<sup>45</sup>

C. F. Turner offered to sell his stock to Prime, in whose name most of the CF&I stock had been transferred. Prime, in cooperation with Ownbey, not only refused this offer but, as a large minority stockholder, also demanded an explanation of the increased indebtedness of the Turner Fuel Company.<sup>46</sup> The next step in this campaign of pressure was the purchase of 240 more shares of Turner stock from Jesse and Florence Northcutt. Ownbey now had control of 540 of the 1,200 shares.<sup>47</sup> At a special meeting of the Turner Fuel Company in September, 1907, he used this portion of stock to block attempts to increase the capital stock and bonds of the company. C. F. Turner had attempted to do this so he could raise additional money in order to reopen the Turner mines himself.<sup>48</sup>

Ownbey now waited, as he knew Turner had to have money. Ownbey received promises of capital from Morgan and in February, 1908, completed the purchase of the Turner company. All of the remaining stock went in Ownbey's name except ten shares to James McKeough and George McDonough so that they could qualify as directors.<sup>49</sup> By July the Turner mines were put into operating condition, needing only chutes, a switch for the railroad, and other equipment to begin shipping coal.<sup>50</sup> Ownbey was president and manager of the Turner Fuel Company, which was listed as a separate organization, though it and the Wootton mines were worked by the same miners. This separation of companies continued till April 16, 1910, when the Turner Fuel Company was dissolved and completely absorbed by the Wootton Land and Fuel Company.<sup>51</sup> Stock in this latter company was now redivided so that Morgan's interest totaled

approximately forty-two percent, Cheney's twenty-five percent, and Ownbey's thirty-three percent.<sup>52</sup>

The last major land purchase was less complicated; Ownbey bought 5,400 acres of land from Dolan B. Smith in April, 1909, for \$12,000. Smith was the son-in-law of Dick Wootton's daughter.<sup>53</sup> Thus, by mid-1909 Ownbey had acquired control of a vast acreage in the midst of one of the best coal fields in the West. Consequently, he was able to carry on the developments already described.

During this time certain relationships between Ownbey and Morgan became apparent. One was the obvious trust which Morgan had in the Colonel. Many times he advanced Ownbey thousands of dollars in order to make purchases. Morgan also let him handle the operation of the Wootton property without any intensive pressuring or prodding.<sup>54</sup> Ownbey made several trips to New York to see Cheney and Morgan and seemed to keep them content with his work.

He also sent trout and deer from the property to Morgan, and Morgan gave him two Scotch collies valued at \$1,000 each. Apparently relations between them were more than just businesslike.<sup>55</sup> They also agreed on politics, and the financier once gave the Colonel \$16,000 to use on various political issues, including \$6,000 to oppose William Jennings Bryan at the Democratic National Convention. A list of items which Ownbey once prepared for discussion shows the variety of ideas that passed between the two men. Of nine topics listed, three dealt with hunting and wild animals, five dealt with business affairs, and one concerned a political appointment.<sup>56</sup>

*The prized hounds welcome home the Colonel.*



<sup>45</sup> Ownbey to Whittlesey, May 27, 1907.

<sup>46</sup> C. F. Turner to Prime, June 5, 1907; [Prime] to C. F. Turner, July 10, 1907.

<sup>47</sup> Ownbey to H. K. Hollaway, July 17, 1907.

<sup>48</sup> Ownbey to Morgan, September 29, 1907.

<sup>49</sup> McKeough to Ownbey, February 27, 1908.

<sup>50</sup> Ownbey to Cheney, July 13, 1908.

<sup>51</sup> Notice of Dissolution of the Turner Fuel Company, April 16, 1910, Colorado State Archives and Records Service.

<sup>52</sup> Ownbey to Joyce, May 9, 1910.

<sup>53</sup> [Ownbey] to Mrs. Olive Van Kirk, April 17, 1907.

<sup>54</sup> Cheney to Ownbey, September 17, 1909.

<sup>55</sup> Ownbey to McDonough, February 3, 1908.

<sup>56</sup> Ownbey to Morgan, February 24, 1908; list entitled "Subjects for presentation to Mr. Morgan," December 18, 1909.



Thus, between 1905 and 1910 a huge business enterprise grew on what had been unused lands in southern Colorado. "No Hunting" signs protected the game from most hunters, white-faced cattle grazed on the hillsides, and thousands of tons of coal were being mined from the earth. Hundreds of men had been employed, and by 1911 there were forty-five homes and boarding-houses for these employees.



Above, the store and office building were part of the town, which also included a school, hospital, saloon, boardinghouse, and homes. Below, the office force could expedite affairs with a switchboard.



Company houses were augmented with a boardinghouse for single men.

The steward poses with a shift of men at the boardinghouse before mealtime.

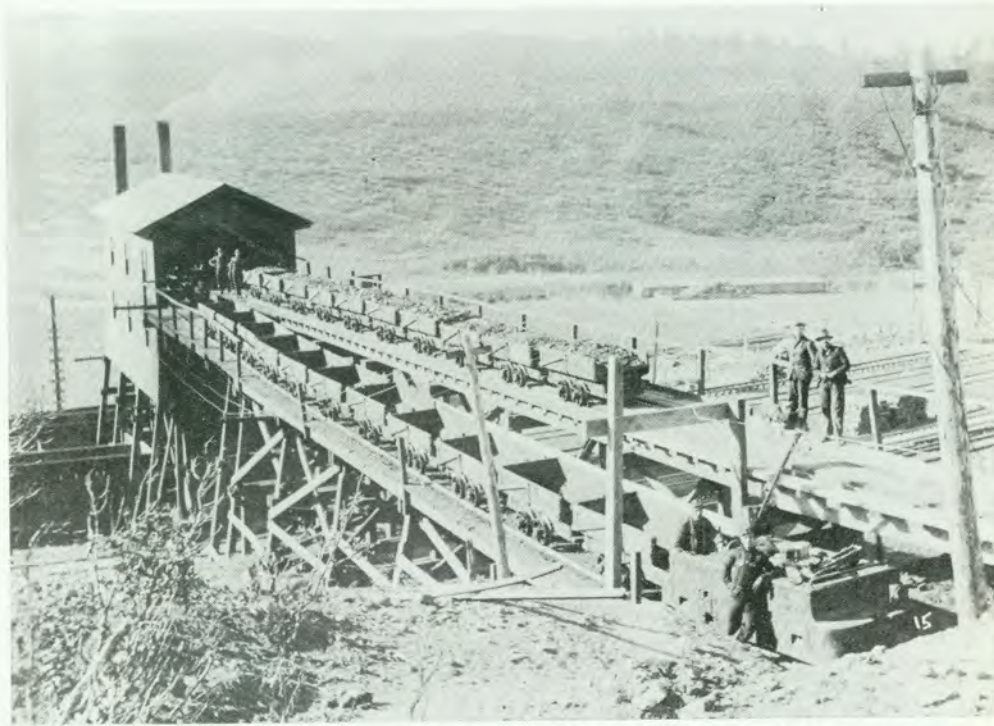
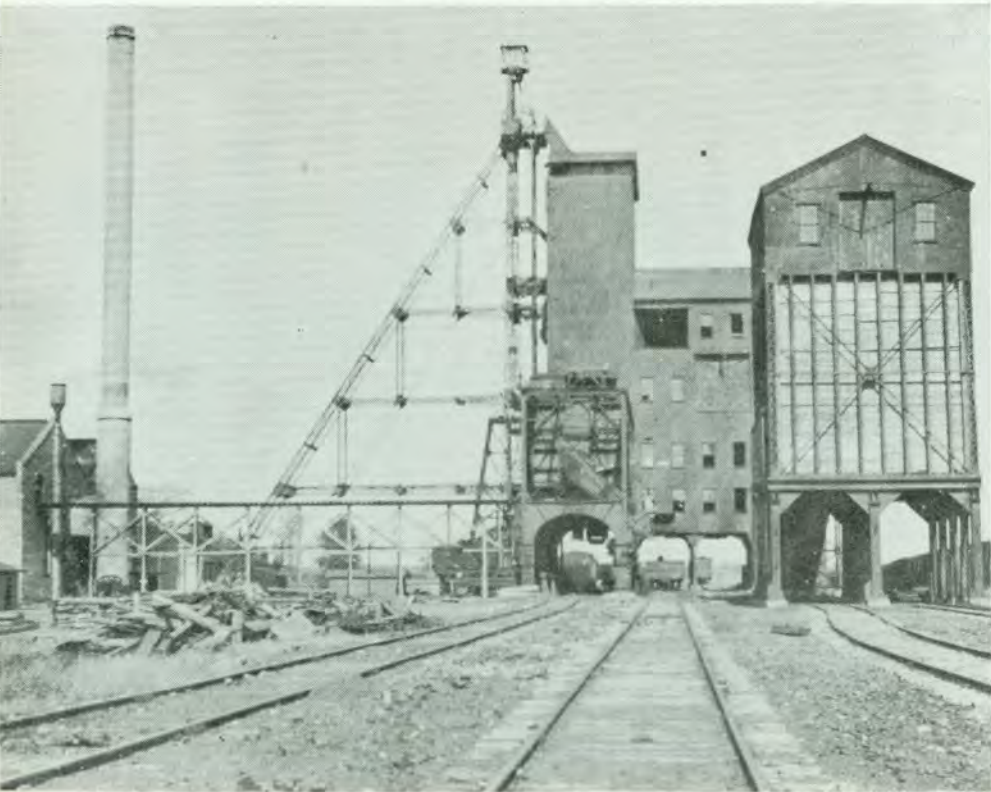




During a "dull" summer in 1911, five hundred tons of coal were produced per day, and during 1912 over 1,400,000 tons of coal were shipped. Approximately one million dollars had been invested. The land was no longer an experiment, no longer "Ownbey's folly," but a practical everyday success. Its real value was being enhanced by two factors: new coal discoveries on the property and the lack of additional coal lands in the West since the federal government was retaining the coal property which it held.<sup>57</sup>

The success of the development of the Wootton Land and Fuel Company can be traced to a combination of eastern capital and western resources. Ownbey just could not locate one million dollars from Coloradoans for investment in an uncertain coal mining venture. Capital was available in the East though, and the Colonel showed its owners where it could be invested. An-

*Mine buildings of the Wootton Land and Fuel Company.*



*Full cars enter the Turner Tipple to return empty.*

other factor in the company's success was the convenient location of the Santa Fe Railroad across its property.

Above these three factors though—resources, capital, and the railway—was one controlling item: the man who put them all together. In a real sense the development must be credited to James A. Ownbey. He was more than just a catalyst between resources and capital. He himself was the developer, moving from the role of a man holding a land option to the organizer of a vast industrial complex. He was ambitious, enthusiastic, and, most important, energetic. He looked after a multitude of details despite his age (fifty-one when he started this project), several incapacitating illnesses, and a serious accident with a runaway team at the mine. "Wootton" was no longer just the name of an old pioneer but also the title of a large new empire.

<sup>57</sup> *Denver Republican*, August 21, 1911, p. 3; Ownbey to F. C. Fox, February 8 [1913].



Ownbey himself had seemed to reach, or to be approaching rapidly, a pinnacle of success. A substantial indication of this was his purchase of the Culbertson home at 1001 Mapleton in Boulder for \$12,500. At the time this was considered one of the finest homes in the city.<sup>58</sup> Even more indicative of his success were comments which Ownbey made. In the midst of his thousands of business letters are a few that he wrote to some old friends. In one of these he stated:

During the last few years, time and circumstances have treated me kindly. I have a lovely wife, a superior bright boy turning his 9th year, a comfortable, luxurious home, and enough of this worlds [sic] goods in sight to carry me to the end of life's journey.<sup>59</sup>

If the gruff old Westerner had had a good crystal ball, he would have seen that in every particular he listed in this statement, he was to be disappointed. His life, now so luxurious, would end in much less favorable circumstances. But this was far in the future and the Colonel's crystal ball was cloudy—or nonexistent. For the moment, one Southerner who had sought opportunity in the West had made a roaring success of it.

*LAWRENCE R. BORNE received bachelor's and master's degrees from Xavier University, Cincinnati, Ohio. He is currently studying for his doctorate in history at the University of Colorado, where his dissertation will deal with Colonel Ownbey's business career in greater detail.*

<sup>58</sup> W. H. Allison to Ownbey, May 17, 1907.  
<sup>59</sup> Ownbey to C. M. Moore, August 14, 1909.



# My First Months as Colorado's State Historian

BY LeROY R. HAFEN

After graduation ceremonies in the Greek Theater at the Berkeley campus of the University of California, my wife Ann and I bundled our clothes and belongings and the two children—Norma, eight, and Karl, five—into our Ford and set out for new adventure in Colorado. A leisurely two weeks over a sometimes rough road, with stops in southern Nevada and Utah to visit relatives and friends, brought us to Colorado. On the morning of July 1, 1924, we broke camp in a little aspen grove at Fairplay, cooked a hasty breakfast, and were soon descending toward the great plain where we thrilled at seeing the golden dome of the capitol shining in the midst of a great city that was to become our home.

I drove the Model T to Denver's public campground in Overland Park beside the South Platte, unloaded the rack at the rear of the car, took from the running boards the folding beds and bundles held on by the accordion-type baggage holder, and piled all in the tent. Then while Ann presided over the baggage and corralled the children, I prepared to report in for my new job with the State Historical and Natural History Society of Colorado.

After shining my shoes and putting on my best suit and straw hat, I headed for the State Museum. Albert Sanford, special assistant to the curator of history, greeted me warmly, and then introduced me to the librarian, Mrs. Elisabeth Galbreath, and to Ellsworth Bethel, curator of natural history. Allard Jeançon, curator of archaeology, was away in southwestern Colorado excavating in the Chimney Rock area.

Soon excusing myself for the urgent need to get the family located, I returned to the park. A day or two of house-hunting, between periods at the museum, brought us to the purchase of a red-brick bungalow in south Denver at 1270 South Clarkson.





*LeRoy R. Hafen as he appeared  
in The Colorado Magazine of July, 1924.*

The members of the Society's board of directors I met one at a time. Mr. Sanford, son of a Colorado Volunteer in the Civil and Indian wars and an old friend of Elias M. Ammons, president of the Society, took me to see the ex-governor of Colorado. My journal records: "Ammons is rather blunt and crude, but good hearted, and he has had wide experience in the state. He said, 'Bert Sanford is a helluva good man; any damn thing you want, don't hesitate to call on me.'" Being almost blind, he handled my brief case and remarked: "That is damn good leather."

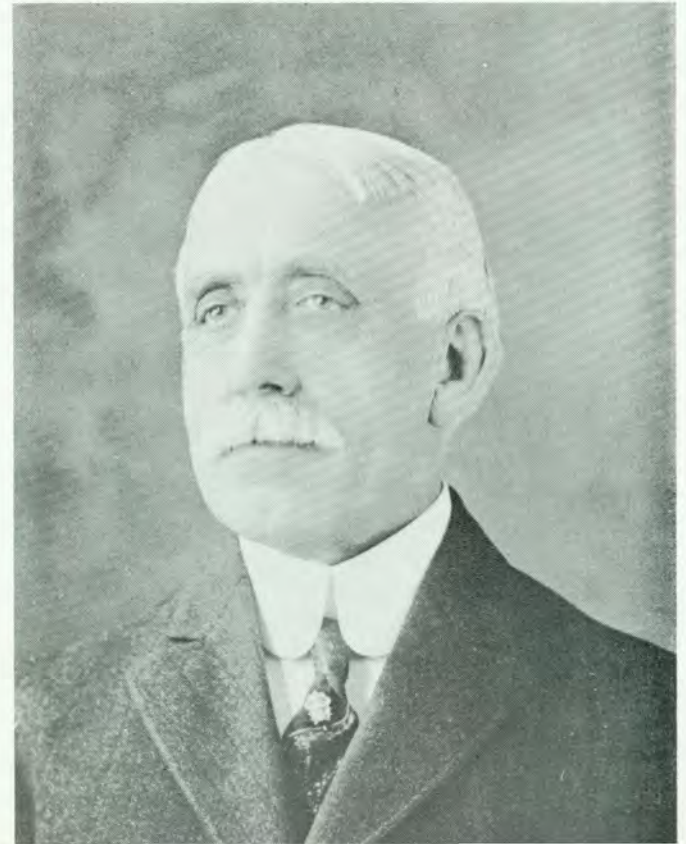
William G. Evans, son of Colorado's second and greatest governor, and father of John Evans, "first citizen of the state," was vice president. He took me on a tour of the big banks of the city, introduced me to the executive officers, and told them that he wanted me to know them, as we might be calling on them to pass the hat for the Society. He introduced me to

his sister, Miss Anne Evans, who had been active in the Food Administration of Colorado during the war and was in touch with prominent people in every county. She went over her lists and gave me the names of persons she thought would be interested in our historical work.

Dr. William N. Beggs, a practicing physician and secretary of the Society, was practically the managing executive. He had edited a bulletin for the Society and in the preceding November had started *The Colorado Magazine*. He was cordial and helpful.

Dr. Arthur J. Fynn, board member, was principal of a Denver school, and was author of the words and music of the Colorado state song, "Where the Columbines Grow." He was a good and helpful friend throughout his life.

*Arthur J. Fynn, an SHS board member of 1924.*





Mr. Ernest Morris, prominent attorney and active board member, had been largely responsible for my appointment as the Society's historian and curator of history. My predecessor was Thomas F. Dawson, who had been secretary to the United States Senate. Upon retirement he had come back home and because of his political prominence, his previous wide journalistic experience, and his interest in history was appointed as the Society's curator of history. When President Warren G. Harding visited Colorado in the summer of 1923, he was taken on a tour of Denver's mountain parks. As the caravan reached a sharp turn of the road in Bear Creek Canyon, the car in which Mr. Dawson was riding left the road, overturning, and Dawson was killed.

As the board of directors considered a replacement, the members decided that they should appoint a young, trained historian. Mr. Morris, having agreed to seek such a person, went to the University of California and consulted Dr. Herbert E. Bolton, famed historian and head of the history department. Following his recommendation, Mr. Morris interviewed me. The board asked me to write out my ideas as to the proper functions of a historical society and what should be undertaken. Presumably the proposals were satisfactory, for the board offered me the position at \$2,500 per year. Mr. Morris suggested that I might be able to augment my salary by teaching a class at the University of Denver.

I had trained for a teaching assignment and expected employment in a university. My wife asked Dr. Bolton how this position would compare with one in a university. "This is much better, much better," he said, "more time for research and writing."

At the historical society library it was fun going through the books and collections. Included was a complete run of the pioneer *Rocky Mountain News* from its first issue on April 23, 1859, and numerous books on the history of the region. I had brought with me from the Bancroft Library, University of California, copies of all the interviews H. H. Bancroft's agents had obtained from a large number of Colorado's pioneers. With special interest in the fur trade of the West, I began searching the writings of Frémont, T. J. Farnham, Dr. F. A. Wislizenus, Rufus Sage, and the various narratives of western explorers and travelers. The early issues of the newspapers were especially intriguing. The policy I had adopted in graduate school of putting on four-by-six cards notes on all subjects that I believed would

be valuable to me started the big file that has been my reliance.

On July 23 I joined the pioneer outing to Georgetown and Silver Plume. My car was needed, so I drove it along, although the thirsty radiator called frequently for water on the long and steep hills. The trip was a good occasion to get acquainted with pioneers and their descendants. At the picnic in the town park at Georgetown, J. S. Randall, early newspaper editor of that town, was the oldest pioneer, being over a hundred, as I recall.

Many of the original frame buildings of Georgetown, with their gingerbread trimmings, were standing, and the famous Hotel de Paris still preserved some of its splendor, but this first great silver mining town of Colorado had seen its best days and was already dreaming of its past.

I gladly took the opportunity to go far back into one of the mining tunnels at Silver Plume. I knew I must overcome the prejudice, early put into a young boy's head in the farming town of my youth, that mining camps were wicked and that no good could come from them. I drove back to town by way of Lookout Mountain to visit the Buffalo Bill grave and museum and then descended to Golden by the steep mountain road with its sharp hairpin curves.

Soon after the pioneer outing, Frank Byers, son of the great editor and founder of Colorado's pioneer newspaper, held the annual party commemorating his arrival as a child in pioneer Denver sixty-five years before. In the big frame house, shaded by tall trees, and on the lawns some 150 guests, mostly pioneers, gathered to hear and tell stories of the old days.

The experience of driving my four-year-old Ford to Georgetown had convinced me that it was time to trade it in for a new one. The agent said that open cars like mine, with detached cloth curtains, were going out, and he advised the purchase of a closed-in model—the trend he said was all in that direction. So we accepted the future and bought a Model T with metal top and glassed-in doors and windows—a "Tudor Sedan," equipped with a Ruckstel axle for mountain climbing.

With a handsome new car our family was ready for a drive to Boulder to see Colin Goodykoontz and to Colorado Springs to visit William Binkley, both of whom were Bolton men from Berkeley. Goodykoontz showed us about the state university and while I examined the library, in its old building, Ann took the children to the Chautauqua grounds where they heard a program of bird calls and saw other entertainment.



On the trip to Colorado Springs our children shouted and shrieked as hail harmlessly hammered the metal top of our new car until two inches of bird's-egg-size hailstones covered the ground and deciduous trees were stripped of their leaves. The Binkley family took us about the city, to Colorado College, especially out to Cheyenne Canyon with the spectacular Seven Falls, and to the Garden of the Gods. At the latter tourist attraction Indians and others were selling curios and trinkets, at one place exhibiting a "petrified Indian," said to have been found at Mesa Verde. Binkley took me to visit Irving Howbert, who had come to Colorado in 1860, had a marvelous library, and was writing a book of reminiscences—later published.

On August 23 Dr. and Mrs. Fynn, my family, and I drove down the Platte River to examine the ruins of the fur trade posts. Part of the walls and the hand-hewn timbers of Fort Lupton were utilized in a barn and chicken coop; the adobe walls of Fort Vasquez were two to three feet high; but Fort St. Vrain had been leveled. My study of the primary documents indicated that another fort had stood in the 1830s about six miles below Fort Lupton. Inquiries in Platteville produced a pioneer who recalled the ruins of an old fort at a place he called Baker's Point. Diligent search resulted in the location of a small mound near the head of a large canal. By digging until my fingers were blistered, I discovered the foundation of an adobe wall. A week later Mr. Sanford and I returned with shovels and unearthed more of the wall, and he took pictures

*LeRoy Hafen unearthing Fort Jackson foundations.*



of some of the adobes. Later research in the library of the Missouri Historical Society at St. Louis was to reveal some good accounts of the place, with an inventory and prices of the trade goods when the post—Fort Jackson—was sold in 1838.

On the morning of September 6, 1924, Mr. Sanford and I set out on a trip over the southern part of the state to gather historical information, interview pioneers, and solicit memberships in the State Historical Society (\$2.00 per year). With a tent, two folding cots, bedding, and camping equipment loaded in the back of my car, we left Denver at seven o'clock. By way of Colorado Springs and Canon City we drove to Salida; the last part of the road was so terribly washboarded that we and the car were nearly shaken to pieces. The next day we got in touch with town leaders, interviewed pioneers, acquired some historical manuscripts from the Forest Service, and obtained some memberships for the Society.

Sunday afternoon we headed west, climbing up through golden aspens to reach Monarch Pass at 11,200 feet elevation. Here, just at timberline, where stunted pines squat close to the ground, we had a wonderful view of the wooded ranges stretching to the horizon. We descended the Western Slope and reached the town of Gunnison just before sundown and made camp. We strolled uptown and began our contacts. Next day we visited Dr. Samuel Quigley, president of Western State College; Henry Lake, editor of the *News-Champion*; and Alonzo Hartman, oldest Gunnison pioneer, who had associated with Ouray, the most famous chief of the Utes. I interviewed Judge Sprigg Shackleford, but his hobbies of racehorses and game chickens were all he wanted to talk about.

From Gunnison we headed for Lake City, climbing divides to Cebolla Creek, and then to the Lake Fork of the Gunnison River. Lake City, once a queen of the San Juan mining region, had little of its former pride. The bank building stood vacant, and many shops were boarded up. At the creaking hotel we found a room for Monday night.

On the next day we visited the *Silver World*, the first newspaper published on the Western Slope, and obtained four duplicate volumes of the early files. Among the pioneers we interviewed was Frank Hough, county clerk, whose father was a friend of Kit Carson. He showed us the handsome buckskin trapper coat the old scout gave him. Later Hough's widow was to give the coat to the State Historical Society of Colorado, where it is now a prized exhibit.

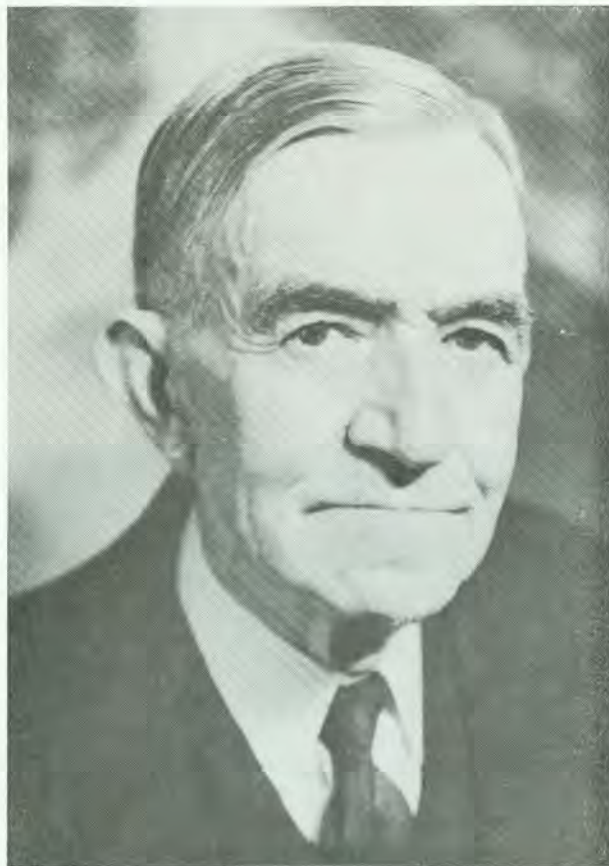


Driving out of Lake City we climbed Slumgullion Hill, where a mud volcano had spewed out yellow muck that covered a large section of the mountainside and gave the name to it. The road was so steep that I had to use the low gear of the Ruckstel axle in my new car to make the summit.

On the shore of nearby Lake San Cristobal we visited the site of the notorious crime of Alfred Packer, "the Man-eater." The bizarre story which Sanford told me is too well known in Colorado to be repeated here.

Tuesday night we camped near the falls on Clear Creek, and while I made a campfire Mr. Sanford tried the creek with his line. He soon returned with four fine rainbow trout. My

Albert B. Sanford



journal that night read: "Am sitting at the campfire on a warmed rock, with my overcoat on, with the moon shining in my face, the music of Clear Creek Falls in my ears, and mountain trout in my stomach. Am writing by campfire light."

The next morning Sanford took a picture of the falls. The water drops about one hundred feet and then courses as rapids through a volcanic canyon. After descending Clear Creek Valley, we reached the once-booming silver camp of Creede. A few houses were still squeezed against the walls of the narrow canyon of Willow Creek, but floods had washed away other relics of the past. Here N. C. Creede, an old-time prospector, had struck it rich in 1890. A mining camp sprang up quickly, with fresh pine-board shanties sprouting from the base of the rock cliffs and clinging like moss to the solid walls. The Rio Grande railroad reached the camp in 1891 and Cy Warman, styled "the poet of the Rockies," started the *Creede Chronicle*. In an early issue he wrote the famous lines:

It's day all day in the daytime,  
And there is no night in Creede.

Farther down the Rio Grande we stopped at the town of Del Norte, once known as "The Gateway to the San Juan." Here we found William Cochran, one-time associate of Warman and editor of the *San Juan Prospector*. He had a file of this newspaper for 1875, which we later obtained for the historical society. Continuing eastward, the narrow river valley soon opened out into the great, broad, level San Luis Valley. It reminded me of the San Joaquin Valley of California, though it was not so productive. Its high elevation prevented the growing of many crops, but the pasture was excellent for the raising of livestock.

By nightfall we reached Alamosa, the main city of the valley. My journal for September 10 at Alamosa reads: "Have a room at the Victoria Hotel. Was cheered by a letter from my wife tonight. Otherwise, it looks rather discouraging, since it has been raining and is raining now. My straw hat is very inappropriate; wish I had brought my cap. It feels like winter. Their streets are dug up for paving. The Normal School building to the west is completed, but school has not yet begun." This was to become the Adams State Teachers College.

We visited other towns in San Luis Valley. Here the Mormons had made some settlement, beginning in 1879. The Mormons, "Modern Israel," named two of their towns "Ephraim" and "Manassa." It was in Manassa that Jack Dempsey was born—



hence his sometime description "The Manassa Mauler." The oldest town west of the river, founded by the early Spaniards, was Conejos. Here the first church in Colorado was erected. We visited it, but since the priest could not speak English and I could not speak Spanish, we learned but little. We saw the home of Lafayette Head, early pioneer and onetime lieutenant governor of Colorado. His long, typically Mexican, adobe house was surrounded by tall longleaf cottonwood trees. I obtained a historical document signed by Head, explaining and justifying the Mexican practice of buying Indian children. He explained that the Indian children were not really slaves but were adopted members of the family, who, after reaching maturity and marrying, were freed to set up families of their own.

We visited the site of Zebulon Pike's stockade, built on the left bank of the Conejos River in 1807. Here the army lieutenant and explorer had been captured by Spanish soldiers and then escorted to Santa Fe. In February, 1807, one hundred Spanish troops had come on the scene. They invited Pike to Santa Fe to explain his presence. He was taken through New Mexico and into old Mexico, where he was detained for several months. Being looked upon as intruders, the Americans were tried before Spanish officials and were deprived of their papers. Finally they were released on the Texas-Louisiana border to return home. We found that the Conejos River was cutting into the bank and threatening destruction of the old fort site. For some years our Society worked for and obtained appropriations to protect the ground. Later we acquired the land and reconstructed the stockade of logs, with sharpened spikes projecting over the top of the walls.

On our return home we drove northward through the San Luis Valley, over Poncha Pass, and to the Arkansas River. We stopped for the night at Fairplay. "Old Prunes," the pet burro of the town, still wandered the streets, braying her presence to the sleepy settlers. A year or so later she died, and the citizens of the town buried her on Main Street, erecting a large monument over the grave. The legend was written with glass marbles pushed into the wet cement of the monument. Before the long-time owner of Prunes died, he requested that he be buried beside his old crony. So this was done. The unique graves and the monument above them are still a principal tourist attraction of the historic town of Fairplay.

That night we visited some pioneers of the town. The next morning I interviewed the editor of the Fairplay *Flume*, and

Mr. Sanford took pictures of the historic red sandstone courthouse. We were told of the time when an outlaw was hanged from a pole projected from a second-story window of the building. We went a mile below town to see the big gold dredger at work. The endless chain of iron shovels dug up the gravel and dumped it into a sluice-like arrangement that separated the native gold from the gravel and sand. The dredger was eating up the stream bed of the Middle Fork of the South Platte and washing the gravel from a depth of fifteen to twenty feet. Behind the dredger was left a rocky desolation of rounded stones and gravel piled in rows and ridges in the rear of the earth-eating monster.

Nothing of consequence occurred on the remainder of the way home. I quickly hid my straw hat and put on felt headgear. We had had a profitable and enjoyable trip.

*LeROY R. HAFEN, who retired as Colorado State Historian in 1954, is now teaching at Brigham Young University. With his wife Ann he edited The Far West and the Rockies (1954-62), fifteen volumes, and is now editing Mountain Men and the Fur Trade of the Far West (1965-), seven volumes now published.*



## My First Year in the Gunnison Country

BY HARRY C. CORNWALL

EDITED BY DUANE VANDENBUSCHE

*Born in New York in 1860, Harry Cornwall received a mining engineering degree from the Columbia University School of Mines in 1879 and came in that year to the Gunnison country to make a fortune in the boom town of Ruby Camp, located not far from present-day Crested Butte. Cornwall stayed in the Gunnison country for seven years and at different times was a mining engineer, politician, speculator, and rancher. He saw the Gunnison country in its early formative days and left what is perhaps the best extensive written account ever set down of the region.*

*In 1928, nearing seventy years of age, Cornwall was persuaded by members of his family to write his memoirs, which are now on file in the library of Western State College, Gunnison. Except for a few deletions and some minor changes in capitalization and punctuation, the following excerpt concerning young Cornwall's adventurous trip to Colorado in 1879 and his first year in Ruby Camp is published as he wrote it.*

My brother George and I were among the "early settlers" of Ruby Camp in Gunnison County, Colorado, in the town later named "Irwin" where we located in the summer of 1879, and the events of which I write occurred . . . in that and adjacent sections of Colorado.

Our father had always been greatly attracted by Colorado. Back in the early Seventies he had invested considerable money in a cattle ranch in San Juan County in that state. In pursuance of his love for the West and largely with the hope of making a fortune both for himself and us boys, we were educated as mining engineers, with the idea firmly implanted in our minds that we would surely be able to "strike it rich" in a very short

time because of our knowledge of mines and minerals. As I look back I cannot remember ever having any thought of following mining engineering as a profession for a salary. The sole idea was to "get rich quick" by getting hold of a rich mine. The result was what might have been expected: we went to Colorado with nothing but our educations and after seven happy, tumultuous years at mining, surveying and ranching, came back East with a world of experience, a wonderful supply of health on which to base the rest of our lives, and no money.

I am now nearly seventy years old, have lived a happy and fairly prosperous life with a happy marriage and a large family of which I am justly proud, but I look back to the Colorado years as among the happiest of my life and their memory is one of my most cherished possessions.

As compared to the real pioneers, the "Forty Niners," we were merely counterfeits and it seemed to us that we were very late comers to the West. Although only thirty years had elapsed since the great California gold rush in 1849 tremendous strides had been made and there were few of the hardships or dangers of the earlier days in traveling to and in the West.

The Indians were all on reservations and were supposedly under control. Denver was reached by two railroads with parlor and sleeping cars not quite so ornate or luxurious as those of today but still comfortable. Now, however, as I look back and compare the West of today with that of 1879 I feel as if I had been a real pioneer.

George and I graduated from the Columbia School of Mines, George as E. M. and C. E. in 1876, age twenty-one.<sup>1</sup> In his day these two degrees could be secured simultaneously but not when I graduated. I received my degree of E. M. in 1879, age nineteen. We were pretty young to graduate and start out as mining engineers but boys entered college, especially scientific schools, at an earlier age than at present, largely I presume because the requirements for admission were much less than now.

Immediately after graduation in 1876 George went to Ducktown, Tennessee, as assayer for the Ducktown Copper Company. He remained there nearly two years until the company shut down the mines. Then he came back to New York and shortly afterward went to Colorado.

When I graduated in May, 1879, George was at Ruby Camp which was then a new mining camp, with Dick Irwin a pros-

<sup>1</sup> "E. M." referred to mining engineering and "C. E." to civil engineering.



pector of long experience.<sup>2</sup> Ruby Camp was about fifty miles in a direct line in a southwesterly direction from Leadville, where George was to meet me.

I left home in June or July, 1879, when two or three months over nineteen years old. I must have had a large fund of self assurance and self reliance for my age as I did not feel in the least embarrassed at starting out on the trip alone although it was the first time that I had ever really been away from home, and traveling was somewhat more difficult than now.

There was then no railroad in Colorado farther west than the Denver and South Park which was being pushed to Leadville and was finished as far as Red Hill in South Park. I was to meet George at Leadville which was the most convenient point, as while the railroad had not yet reached the city, it was only about a ten hour trip from Denver by railroad to Red Hill and stage from there to Leadville.

The time from New York to Denver was four days and three nights or vice versa. I went from New York on the Erie to Chicago, then to St. Louis and Kansas City and from there to Denver by the Kansas Pacific. There were then only two railroads across the plains, the Union Pacific from Omaha to Cheyenne and San Francisco being I think the only trans-continental route and the Kansas Pacific from Kansas City to Denver.

The real thrills of the trip for a "tenderfoot" began when we reached the open plains in western Kansas. While there were no buffalo to be seen from the train, buffalo meat was a regular dish at the eating stations as there were still enormous herds in Indian Territory (now Oklahoma) and Texas. Antelope, coyotes and jack rabbits were continually in sight and we never tired of watching them. The great thrill, however, came when the mountains first came into sight. One can never forget the first view of the Rocky Mountains from the plains. It had been described to me many times but the actual view far exceed[ed] all anticipation.

I spent one night in Denver. While the city must have been crude at that time as compared to the present modern city, I have no very distinct recollections of the place. The train left

<sup>2</sup> Dick Irwin, who is discussed later in the work at greater length, was a noted mountaineer, prospector, and mining correspondent. In 1879 he discovered silver in Ruby Gulch and soon became one of the leading figures in Ruby Camp. Frank Hall, *History of the State of Colorado* (Chicago: The Blakely Printing Company, 1895), IV, 150; Carrie Strahorn, *Fifteen Thousand Miles by Stage: A Woman's Unique Experience During Thirty Years of Path Finding and Pioneering from the Missouri to the Pacific and from Alaska to Mexico* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1915), p. 231.

Denver early in the morning, reaching Red Hill about noon and the stage left for Leadville shortly thereafter.

Red Hill was simply a temporary terminus but as Leadville was at the height of her prosperity and as all freight was hauled by teams from Red Hill, it was a very busy place in 1879.

The stage trip to Leadville took from four to five hours and was over very winding mountainous roads. We climbed up over a range of mountains and went down the other side into Leadville. The drive down that grade reminded me of some of Mark Twain's stories.<sup>3</sup>



*Mosquito Pass, a heady route to Leadville.*

<sup>3</sup> Cornwall came over Mosquito Pass, at 13,180 feet one of the toughest and most rugged of Colorado's mountain passes. At one time the pass had been an old Indian trail. A toll road was incorporated in 1878 with the stage station on the east side of the divide. The pass ran from Alma on the east side of the divide to Leadville on the west and was very heavily used as a supply and transportation route into Leadville during the early boom days. Clyde and Chloe Edmondson, *Mountain Passes: Location and Information About Mountain Passes, Including Adventure Roads, Scenic Drives and Places of Interest in Colorful Colorado* (Longmont: Privately printed, 1963), p. 58. Although Argentine Pass is the highest Rocky Mountain pass on the Continental Divide, Mosquito, not on the divide, is the highest in North America. See Marshall Sprague, *The Great Gates: The Story of the Rocky Mountain Passes* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1964), p. 244.



Leadville, in the summer of 1879, was at the height of its prosperity as a silver camp. This prosperity has been excelled probably only once in the history of silver mining in our country, when the Comstock mines in Nevada were in their prime. The Leadville mines were producing enormously and fortunes were being taken from them for their lucky owners. There must have been thirty thousand or more people in Leadville and in the hills adjacent, with the city as a gathering point.<sup>4</sup>

All were hoping to strike it rich, all had their pockets full of samples of rock and were trying to either sell a prospect or to interest someone to supply money for developing a prospect. In the evening when the miners were in town it was impossible to walk along the sidewalks because of the crowds and even the streets were crowded. For several blocks in the center of the city the buildings on both sides of the street were almost exclusively occupied by saloons, gambling houses, dance halls or worse. Usually each building contained each of the first three. The usual arrangement was simply one large room with the bar at one side of the door, gambling tables . . . against the walls on both sides of the room, and a stage with a variety show across the back of the room. Strange to say the most popular acts consisted of singing ballads and the most popular were the very sentimental ones like "Home and Mother," "Where Is My Wandering Boy To-night," "Boyhood Days," and other kindred subjects.

The games at the card tables in the public rooms were principally Faro, Keno, Roulette, Draw Poker, and Stud. All of these games were open to anyone who wanted to sit in. There were private games for the initiated in separate rooms not open to the general public. Leadville was seething with prosperity and the gambling houses were doing a "land office business."

George arrived the next day and we started on horseback the following day for the "Gunnison Country" and Ruby Camp. I do not remember our exact route from Leadville but we must have gone down the Arkansas River and then over the main range of the Rocky Mountains through Marshall Pass and down Cochetopa Creek to Gunnison City, probably a week's trip.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Although there were many widely varying estimates of population in Leadville at the height of the boom, Don and Jean Griswold have concluded that "it is probable that there were at least 35,000 individuals in and about Leadville during her boom days." See *The Carbonate Camp Called Leadville* (Denver: University of Denver Press, 1951), p. 99.

<sup>5</sup> Cornwall is a bit confused concerning his trip from Leadville. He did follow the Arkansas River from Leadville to the Poncha Springs area, but from there he traveled the most used route into the Gunnison country: over Poncha Pass (9,011 feet) into Saguache, then over Cochetopa Pass (10,032 feet), down Cochetopa Creek, and into Gunnison.

The trip was wonderful to me through marvelous scenery up over the Rocky Mountains along streams full of trout and camping out at night where night found us. I remember that when I climbed awkwardly on to the pony allotted to me at Leadville he promptly bucked me off and tried to kick my head off after I reached the ground. I say "down to Gunnison City" but there was then no Gunnison City, only about two log cabins.

We arrived at Ruby Camp late in July, 1879, and moved into a cabin which George and Dick Irwin had built earlier in the summer. Ruby Camp was about thirty miles northwest from Gunnison City and ten miles west of Crested Butte. It was actually five or six miles west of the eastern line of what was then the Ute Indian Reservation. Fortunately, however, the nearest Indian Agency and Indian settlement was on the Uncompahgre River about fifty miles farther west. We were really inside of the Indian Reservation and would probably have all been chased away by the Government if the outbreak of the Utes at the White River Agency had not occurred that same Fall.

Ruby Camp was a silver camp and the name was given because all of the silver ore or practically all of it was in the form of "Ruby Silver." This is a sulphide of silver, comes in a somewhat crystalline form and is ruby red. When bruised or crushed it turns blood red. The first strikes of any moment were made early in the Spring of 1879 but the big strike which caused the rush in the Spring of 1880 was not made until a little later in the Summer of 1879. This was the Forest Queen mine and the story of its discovery reads like some of the old yarns of the California gold fields where greenhorns, when told to dig for gold in most unlikely places, sometimes unearthed rich deposits.

There had been a few discoveries and a small camp had sprung up. One day early in the summer a freighter or rather the driver of a freight wagon bringing supplies into camp from the railroad arrived somewhat early in the day. After his wagon was unloaded, as he did not want to start back to the railroad before the next morning, he said he "guessed he would go out and find a mine, he was tired of skinning mules." He asked "where could he find a mine" and was told to follow up the course of a little stream that ran into camp from the mountains on one side of the gulch, and he would surely find what he wanted. He started out and within about four hundred yards of camp stumbled over the outcrop of a vein that was rich in ruby silver. He named it the Forest Queen and sold it in a short time for fifty thousand dollars and the lucky buyers took



out about one million in two years.<sup>6</sup> The ground where the freighter made the find had probably been prospected a hundred times and it always was a mystery why the vein had not been discovered before.

The Forest Queen was the most profitable mine, in fact, probably the only profitable mine in the district. Thousands of claims were located and large amounts of money were spent in looking for rich ore in paying quantities but none of them, other than the Forest Queen, ever produced a profit for the owners. All in all, probably five dollars were spent in Ruby Camp for every dollar that was taken out of the ground. This is, however, usual in most boom camps. We had several claims in the near vicinity of the Forest Queen including the next claim on the same vein but never struck pay ore.

Late in the Fall of 1879, the Ute Indians at the Agency on the White River broke out and massacred the Agent and nearly all the whites at the Agency. The agent was named [Nathan] Meeker, hence the outbreak is known as the "Meeker Massacre" or the "White River Massacre." Meeker was a theorist with very definite and fixed ideas as to how an Indian should conduct himself and particularly as to the amount of farm work that he should be made to do. He maintained (and no doubt with good reason) that the Utes, with thousands of acres of wonderful land, should at least partially feed themselves by farming instead of having the Government supply everything that they needed. The net result of Meeker's efforts was the outbreak at which all the white men at the Agency were killed—the women might better have been killed and there was quite a brisk little Indian

<sup>6</sup> Another story persists as to the discovery of the famed Forest Queen mine. Robert E. Strahorn, who visited Irwin (Ruby Camp) in September of 1880, declared that a comic scene had led to the discovery. Strahorn related that W. A. Fisher, a tenderfoot who had come all the way from Maryland and had never seen a mine, made the discovery. Fisher arrived at the lower end of Ruby Gulch on the evening of July 7, 1879. The grade was a steep one and the mud at the point of entry was almost without bottom. The wagon was soon hopelessly stuck. O. P. Mace, another prospector who had just ventured into the region, pulled Fisher out with a brace of strong mules. Fisher gratefully told Mace that he would give him half interest in the first mine he found. The next morning Fisher started up the nearest gulch, which just happened to lead to the head of Coal Creek. "Not more than 200 yards above the town he found a tremendous dyke or vein of quartz crossing the gulch and laid plainly bare by the constant action of the stream. Verdant as he was he could not help seeing ruby, native and brittle silver." He named his claim on the north side of the stream the Forest Queen and that on the south side, the Ruby King. Fisher gave Mace his choice of either claim and Mace chose the Ruby King. Mace soon sold his mine for \$100,000 even though the rock had only been removed to a depth of ten feet. Fisher, who had a truly great mine, sold his at the same time for only \$40,000, according to Strahorn. Robert E. Strahorn, *Gunnison and San Juan: A Late and Reliable Description of the Wonderful Gold and Silver Belts and Iron and Coal Fields of that Newest and Best Land for Prospector and Capitalist, Southwestern Colorado; With Facts on Climate, Soil, Forests, Scenery, Game, Fish, Cities, Towns, Population, Development, Routes, Rates of Fare, Employment, Wages, Living Expenses, Etc.* (Omaha: The New West Publishing Company, 1881), p. 11.

war for a few weeks until enough troops could be brought in to overpower the Indians. The next year the Utes were moved to the present Uintah Reservation in Utah so we were not disturbed by the Government.<sup>7</sup>

Ruby Camp was about 100 miles in a direct line from the scene of the outbreak and we saw nothing of the actual trouble, but we certainly imagined a large number of massacres. I had always heard of the bold frontiersman, and had pictured him as a man without fear and with the most supreme contempt for Indians. My experience in Ruby Camp and elsewhere, not only in connection with the Ute outbreak, but on other occasions, entirely changed my views. The old original frontiersman who crossed the plains in the early days before the railroads were built must have been brave, but the latter ones in my day were a lot of counterfeits. There were, of course, exceptions but a large majority of the men at Ruby were as cowardly as rats and ran like rats when the news of the outbreak reached us. There were probably five hundred men in camp or in the district when we heard of the trouble. All were armed. A miners' meeting was called and we begged the men all to stay, because, with five hundred men and five hundred guns we could stand off all of the Utes on the reservation. In spite of our arguments at least four hundred and fifty men ran out of the country. Some of them were so scared that they could not even tie a pack on a horse. To my mind individual courage is largely a matter of pride. I was probably one of the worst frightened persons in the camp but was too proud to show it, so I stayed.

George, as I remember, was out in Denver at the time and was not in camp at all during the excitement [and] so missed all of the fun. We had in camp a man named Curtis who had been an Indian Agent, scout and interpreter for many years—he was brave. We organized for mutual protection and elected Curtis our commander with the title, "Captain." His first act as Captain was to send a messenger to the nearest telegraph office eighty or more miles away with a message to the Governor of Colorado offering the services of the "Ruby Scouts" in the campaign against the Utes.<sup>8</sup> This was without any knowledge on our part and without consulting anyone. In fact, there were no "Ruby Scouts." Curtis originated the name in his message. It was a clever piece of advertising for Curtis and we talked seriously

<sup>7</sup> See Marshall Sprague, *Massacre: The Tragedy at White River* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1957).

<sup>8</sup> The telegraph office was located in South Arkansas City (now Salida).



of lynching him as a token of our appreciation. If the Governor had accepted Curtis' offer, I think we would have lynched him. None of us were looking for Indians or wanted any fighting. All we wanted was to be let alone.

We built a large log cabin surrounded by a stockade and for several nights everyone slept inside with sentinels out, but after a few nights we deserted the big cabin for our own more comfortable ones and trusted to luck. We had arranged that three shots in quick succession meant "Indians" and was a call to arms and to gather at the stockade. Early one morning Jim Young went out from camp down the gulch to look for his horse which had been hobbled and turned out to graze. Only a short distance below the camp he ran across a big she silver tip bear whose cub had been shot the day before and who was correspondingly ugly.

She charged Young and he fired three rapid shots before he killed her. We all heard the shots, grabbed our guns and rushed to the stockade in all sorts of dress apparel. When Young returned in pride with the bear skin he was received with scowls for disturbing our beauty sleep with a false alarm.

I must not forget our camp butcher. He had been a draughtsman in the Patent Office in Washington, but had been threatened with tuberculosis and had come West in search of health, which, I am glad to say, he had found. His name was Stevens, and [he] was a good fellow but knew absolutely nothing about butchering. He, however, was compelled to do something for a living and in the absence of anything better, chose to be a butcher. His shop was under a big spruce tree where he had a huge spruce log one side of which had been hewed smooth for a table on which to cut his meat. He sold only beef and the only cuts were steaks. He would buy a steer or a cow from one of the ranches twenty miles or more away, would drive it up to camp, kill it and split the carcass down the backbone into halves. One of these halves was laid on the log table and was ready to be served to customers. He began cutting steaks at the neck and continued to do so until he reached the heel. All cuts were the same price. We always waited until he reached the loin when we bought enough meat for a week or two. There was no trouble in keeping it in that dry climate. Meat kept away from the flies would keep for weeks. Stevens prospered at butchering and finally bought a ranch where he prospered still more.

In the late Fall of 1879 after the Indian scare was over there were probably fifty men left in Ruby Camp. None of us ever

had spent a winter in that part of the country and while we expected considerable snow we had absolutely no conception of what was ahead of us. Had we known I think nearly all of us would have gone to a lower altitude.

No one had laid in anything like enough supplies for the winter but trusted to the camp stores and supposed that the stuff would be brought in somehow. We had a few snow squalls in October and early in November it began to snow in earnest. For forty days it fell without a break, equaling Father Noah's rainfall record. At the end of the forty days it cleared for a day or two and then snowed some more and continued to snow with short intervals of good weather until February. Long before the end of the first forty days' snowfall we were just as badly off as Mr. Noah's neighbors. The snow was at least ten feet deep. It was impossible to travel a foot off from the trails that ran from cabin to cabin. All roads were blocked and could not possibly be opened until the snow melted in the Spring. We were caught with only enough supplies for a few weeks [and had] nothing in the way of fresh meats or vegetables [and only a] very small supply of canned goods (called by the prospectors "air tights"), principally beans and tomatoes. About the only food to be had consisted of dry salt pork ("sowbelly"), flour and coffee.

The nearest broken road over which supplies could be hauled was about twenty miles from camp at Ed Teachout's ranch on Ohio Creek and it was impossible to open the road from there to camp. We tried to do so. Every man in camp turned out and worked a solid week shoveling and tramping snow. It was the hardest work in the world. We opened up about one mile and the next night along came another storm with some wind and the whole week's work was obliterated in a few hours.

Practically everything that we ate was packed on men's backs from Teachout's (generally on our own backs).<sup>9</sup> All traveling was, of course, on snowshoes. There were a few men who packed for hire. The tariff was fifteen to twenty five cents a pound but it was mankilling work especially as those professionals carried as much as one hundred pounds. We never carried over fifty pounds. Packing a load while walking on foot on a good trail is not to be compared with the same load while

<sup>9</sup> The men carried the supplies over present-day Ohio Pass, 10,033 feet in elevation. The elevation at Teachout's ranch was approximately 8,028 feet, so the men gained about 2,005 feet in elevation from the ranch to the pass, but only about 10 feet from Ohio Pass to Ruby Camp.



walking on skis and climbing up over a mountain pass at least three thousand feet. Very few men lasted more than a month at this professional packing, making a round trip a day (twenty miles each way).

The first forty day storm gave us about ten feet of snow on a level and this was added to every few days by fresh storms, but the sun and wind kept settling the snow so that at the deepest it was about fourteen feet. We arranged a platform about six feet square with an upright stick, in a sheltered spot where the snow would neither drift nor blow away. After a foot or two had fallen, and before it had had time to settle, we would sweep off the platform and record the depth of the snow that had fallen. The total fall for the winter recorded in this manner was eighty-four feet.<sup>10</sup> This sounds incredible but it is true.

One of the most beautiful sights that can be imagined is a spruce forest on a bright sunshiny morning after a heavy snow-fall where there has been no wind to blow the snow from the trees. We could look off across the valleys and mountains for miles, the trees simply loaded with snow and the contrast between the snow and the green of the trees in the bright sunshine made a most wonderful sight. Traveling through these spruce forests after a heavy snow on a bright day was not pleasant. As soon as the snow began to melt it would slide from the trees and huge masses, almost as large as a horse, would drop. Woe betide the unfortunate on which one of these landed. I have seen men actually knocked flat on the trail with much resultant profanity.

All travel, except from cabin to cabin right in camp was necessarily on snow shoes. We sent East to friends in Montreal for several pairs of regular Canadian web shoes but they were useless. The Colorado snow was so light and feathery that wearing these shoes, we sank below our knees and travel was simply impossible. Later in the winter the webs might have been used but the skis were much preferable. Skis were imperative and we were all busy making them. Fortunately, there was an endless supply of fire killed spruce timber available, which is the best timber in the world for these shoes. We were somewhat deficient in tools and especially in a proper device for bending the toes of the shoes. Fortunately, there were a few

<sup>10</sup> If true, the 1,008 inches of snow recorded at Ruby Camp during the winter of 1879-1880 exceeds the greatest amount of snow ever recorded in the United States for one year: 1,000.3 inches during the winter of 1955-56 at Ranger Station, Rainier Park, Washington. *Information Please Almanac* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1966), p. 481.

carpenter's tools in camp and by wrapping the toes of the skis in burlap and boiling them in our largest camp kettles we were able to make a pretty good bend for the toes.

Our first shoes for the soft snow were large, twelve feet long by four to four and a half inches wide. Later in the winter after the trails were packed and the snow had settled and crusted, the shoes were as short as seven or eight feet and three and one-half to four inches wide. At first, we were all clumsy and falls were numerous but it was not long before we became fairly skillful and could travel without much trouble. Within a short time there were regular ski trails between Ruby and Crested Butte and Teachout's ranch and we thought nothing of skiing down to the latter place (twenty miles) for a couple of square meals with fresh meat and potatoes and Mrs. Teachout's biscuit and syrup.

On level ground with a good ski trail one can travel much faster than on foot on a good road. We easily made the twenty miles to Teachout's in less than four hours.

Coming back from Teachout's to camp was a harder proposition than going down. About four miles from camp the trail climbed up about a thousand feet over the divide through a pass in the Anthracite range. This was after we had traveled about sixteen miles from Teachout's and that climb always looked pretty hard.

Late in the Fall of 1879 a chap named King recognized the chances of the location and established "Kings Ranch" and road hotel. The entire establishment consisted of a small tent twelve by fifteen feet in size, set on the ground without even a floor. The host King was landlord, clerk, cook, waiter, chambermaid and cashier; in fact the whole staff. The "hotel" contained a sheet iron cook stove, an Ariosa coffee box for a dining table and a bed on the ground across the back of the tent. The bed was of buffalo robes and blankets spread on a layer of hay and was just the width of the tent, twelve feet.

All guests slept in this one bed. Once in a great while there [were] both sexes but this made no difference. However, as all that was removed upon retiring were your boots it might be said that the proprieties were strictly observed. It did not matter whether there were four or fourteen guests, the bed was supposed to be just comfortably filled. The last night I stopped at King's ranch there were twelve in the bed, eleven guests and King, fortunately all men. Accordingly, each was supposed to occupy twelve inches of space. The thermometer that night was



55 degrees below zero, about the lowest ever recorded in that country. We nearly perished from the heat in that crowded bed. It was arranged that we should all start the night on our left sides. Then when anyone became so tired and cramped that he must turn over he was to yell "spoon" and all were to roll to the right side. This was fine in theory but the biggest man in the bed, a huge fellow named Thompson, a gambler, always stopped flat on his back and crowded at least two out of bed into the Arctic temperature.<sup>11</sup>

The menu, if satisfying, was somewhat monotonous, pork, baking powder biscuits with syrup, and coffee. [The] price per meal was one dollar and bed the same price, or three dollars for a one-night stop and the house was usually crowded. King prospered that winter and in the Spring of 1880 built a frame hotel with his profits. He never made expenses after the first winter and soon moved away. The snow crushed the hotel the next winter and the place was a wreck.

Fourteen feet of snow on a level [in Ruby Camp] meant, of course, that the roofs of all of the cabins (none of which the first winter were more than one story high) were way below the level of the snow. The weight of this enormous depth of snow on the roof of a cabin is tremendous and would crush the strongest cabin unless specially braced. It was accordingly necessary to keep the snow shoveled from our roofs. It was also necessary to keep a light shaft shoveled down to each window and a long slope or steps down to the door. A few who had used a little foresight had built their cabins with the floors some distance above the ground [and] were greatly benefited thereby. Trees for firewood were necessarily cut at about the level of the snow at twelve or fourteen feet above the ground. These tall stumps certainly looked odd after the snow had melted in the Spring, but it was not long before they themselves were cut for firewood as dry wood soon became scarce in the near vicinity of camp.

The peculiarities of the weather in our part of the country are worthy of mention. Up in Ruby Camp, which was in the

<sup>11</sup> King often used his strategically placed ranch to take advantage of the "victims" who stopped there. Everyone who came was sold a place to sleep for one dollar. As soon as the traveler fell asleep, the blanket was taken away by King and given to someone else who had come in. When the person without the blanket awoke from the cold, he was forced to sit or lie next to the fire for the rest of the night to keep warm. When one lost his temper over this treatment, King declared that there had been no promise to furnish blankets with the bed. It became a common saying in Ruby Camp to refer to anything that was lacking to be "as scarce as King's blankets." Carrie Strahorn, *Fifteen Thousand Miles by Stage*, p. 224.

spruce timber and in the mountains at an altitude of from ten to eleven thousand feet, the snowfall was enormous, but the temperature was generally speaking, not excessively low.<sup>12</sup> Twelve miles away and from two to three thousand feet lower in altitude and in the open valley out of the timber the snow was seldom more than eighteen inches deep but the temperature was very much lower. On clear nights from December first to March first the thermometer there always ranged from ten to thirty degrees below zero or fully thirty degrees colder than up in the mountains.

While there was not much ski racing or coasting during the first winter in camp following winters saw it a regular part of our program. Several of the camps held regular meetings with a series of races and one winter, Gunnison City did the same



"Norwegian snowshoes" required the most expedient braking systems.



with contestants from all over the country.<sup>13</sup> Our races were all simply straight slides down the side of a mountain. We knew nothing in those days of jumping or cross country contests; in fact, we had so much of the latter to do as a matter of business that it would not have appealed to us as sport if it had been suggested. Our courses were about half a mile long and down a slope steep enough to develop a tremendous speed. The best time for a half mile course from a standing start was about forty-four seconds. Falls were frequent but the snow was deep and fairly soft so no serious accidents ever occurred.

Our skis for racing were differently prepared than those for traveling. It would hardly have been possible to travel on racing skis which would slip out from under one at every step. We spent hours rubbing bees wax on the bottoms of these skis and in polishing them with blocks of hard wood. The result was a surface as smooth and slippery as glass.<sup>14</sup>

One winter after the railroad had reached Crested Butte we had some sort of a delegation of newspaper people in camp. Among them was Nellie Bly, probably the original newspaper woman of that name. We, of course, arranged some ski races for the entertainment of the visitors and they also tried their hands at the sport. Miss Bly, who was squired by John Phillips, the editor of our local paper, had quite a bad spill. In those days women did not wear trousers and legs were supposed to be sacred from the public eye. Miss Bly stood on her head and rolled over several times with quite a display of shapely limbs and lingerie. Phillips laughed boisterously. "Sir," said she, "I have seen enough of you to know that you are no gentleman." John was equal to the occasion. "Madam, I too have seen enough of you to know that you are no gentleman."

Traveling on snow shoes after the snow began to really settle in the Spring was impossible during the day. The snow

<sup>12</sup> Ruby Camp's elevation was actually 10,044 feet.

<sup>13</sup> Most of the early towns of the Gunnison country formed "snow-shoe" or "ski-racing" clubs, which sufficed as the only real outdoor entertainment during the winter months. Harry Cornwall was elected secretary-treasurer and George Cornwall was named to the executive committee when the Gunnison County Snow-Shoe Club was organized in the winter of 1886 "for the object of encouraging snow-shoeing and all other winter sports." E. R. Warren, "Snow-Shoeing in the Rocky Mountains," *Outing*, IX (January, 1887), 352.

<sup>14</sup> Many of the skis used for racing were made out of staves from fifty-gallon wine kegs. The wood was oak and the "ski" was one inch thick, four inches wide, and from four to four and a half feet in length. Paul Panion, an old-timer from Crested Butte, recalls that Christmas candle wax was melted on the bottom of the skis to gain added speed. According to him, the leather toe attachments were either screwed or nailed on the ski for support. The heel was not tied down, which meant that it was almost impossible to turn while coming down a hill. Few of the early skiers, Panion remembers, ever made it to the bottom of the hill with their skis on. Interview with Paul Panion, Crested Butte, September 10, 1969.



*Irwin, Colorado, ski buffs of 1883.*

by ten or eleven o'clock became so soft and sticky that it stuck to the shoes and at every step it would be necessary to lift the shoe with about twenty pounds of snow. It was not possible to slide the shoe along the trail as would ordinarily be done. Consequently, we did all of our traveling at night, waiting until the crust had frozen hard enough to hold us up on skis. This made ideal skiing and we could reel off five miles an hour with very little exertion. At each step we would slide two or three feet. Ideal skiing conditions would be a hard crust strong enough to support the skis without breaking through with about one inch of dry snow on top to prevent the skis from skidding.

In the Winter of 1879-80 we who had remained in Ruby Camp realized that there would be a "boom" in the Spring because the fame of the Forest Queen strike had spread all over the country. Leadville had made a wonderful reputation, and thousands who had reached there too late to make any strikes would surely rush to the new silver camp. Ruby Camp was in a gulch between the hills with about two hundred yards of fairly level ground between the hills which rose up to the mountains on one side and to a divide which sloped down to Anthracite Creek on the other side. There was just enough



of this level ground for two streets up the gulch and two or three cross streets. We called a meeting, organized a town company and located a townsite which included all of the available land in the gulch and a little way up the hills on each side. We were very altruistic and agreed that the town lots should be sold entirely for the benefit of the town, all money received to be put into the town treasury to be spent for town improvements, such as grading streets, laying sidewalks, etc. I made the original map of the town showing the layout of the streets and lots. Then we fixed prices of lots at twenty dollars for corner lots and ten dollars for inside lots and those who had both faith and money bought freely. Fortunately, George and I had plenty of faith but unfortunately, we had not much money; however, we bought quite a few lots. Those [were bought] in late winter. Early in the Spring of 1880 the "rush" did materialize and each day saw a stream of newcomers of all ranks and classes pouring into the camp. This began long before the snow had melted sufficiently to allow the roads to be opened so everyone had to come in on foot for at least the last ten miles and either pack his belongings and grub on his back or haul it on a hand sled.

The majority of the newcomers were prospectors, but there were men (and some women) from other lines of industry; merchants, gamblers, saloon keepers, and worse. We were offered an enormous rental for our cabin by two ladies, but the offer was declined with thanks. By June, town lots on the main streets were selling at one thousand dollars for inside lots and two thousand dollars for corner lots. The same had cost ten and twenty dollars each three months before. So we did pretty well with our lots. We were also as busy as possible surveying mining claims and assaying samples of ore. The regular price for surveying a claim for the original record with the land office was fifteen dollars. With a helper I could survey three or even four in a day if they were near together and near to the camp. The proceeds from this work and from the sale of the town lots made us very prosperous. We carried our money in buckskin money belts until it became too bulky and then hid it in our cabin.

Early in the Spring, in order that we might have some regular authorities to handle the affairs of the camp and to handle the crowds, we called a town election and elected a regular set of town officers headed by a Mayor. We were still inside of the Indian Reservation [and] so had no connection with the county

government, being in effect almost a little republic by ourselves. There were two tickets in the field and the election was most fiercely contested. I was a candidate for City Engineer on one of the tickets, although I was then only twenty years old. Everyone voted, even those who came into camp as the voting was in progress.

Each party actually had a reception committee which grabbed each newcomer and rushed him to the polls. The contest between the rival committees was frequently heated but fortunately there were no fights. We won and I was elected City Engineer at a salary of thirty dollars a day for the days upon which I worked for the town, but as I could earn at least forty-five dollars surveying mining claims, I worked for the town only when the other work failed.

Our Mayor was Ed Trevor, a most picturesque and interesting man. Then we had a Board of Aldermen, or Councilmen and a Marshal who certainly did keep order. He was always in times of trouble backed by Trevor who had a deserved reputation as a "bad man" which helped restrain the tough element.

The authority of the town officers was limited to the actual boundaries of the town. Outside of those, the Vigilante Committee (of which more later) was supposed to act.

When the election was called it was decided that the town would receive more individuality if it had a name other than "Ruby." Ruby Camp or Ruby Mining District was nearly ten miles square and contained several small camps in addition to the main town. Accordingly, the main town was named "Irwin" after Dick Irwin who came into camp with George. Irwin was



*Richard Irwin, seen here at age 58, was a founder of Irwin, Colorado.*



an old mining man with a marvelous experience. He had prospected the whole length of the Rocky Mountains from Canada down to Chihuahua, Mexico. [He] had been a pony express rider in [his] younger days. He was a small blond man, slight and rosey cheeked and very quiet and unassuming but was absolutely fearless and was one of our leaders.

Our Vigilante Committee was a good example of the courage of the bold frontiersman.

As I have said, Ruby Camp was several miles inside of the Ute Indian Reservation, and we were accordingly outside of the jurisdiction of the county authorities. Those of us who spent the winter in camp and were preparing for the rush that we knew was coming in the Spring, knew that the crowd would consist of all sorts of people with a certain percentage from the lawless element.

The authorities in Irwin could handle the situation in the town but mine jumping was what we most feared and as the mines were all outside of the town, the town authorities could do nothing to prevent it. So we organized a Vigilante Committee. The committee was small at first but later in the Summer we took a good many men selected from the newcomers until it numbered probably two hundred men.

I shall never forget the first meeting where the original members were initiated. This meeting was held a mile or more from camp in the woods, or rather in a little natural opening or clearing or, as these are called in the West, "park." The trail and the park were patrolled by armed guards and all comers were compelled to give a countersign before being admitted.

The ceremony was held near a large fire and the oath was blood curdling. It was awe inspiring and reminded me of the old days of the Vigilantes in California.

No doubt the fact that there was a Vigilante Committee which was known to everyone did restrain the lawless element and hold many in check who would otherwise have caused trouble. By the end of June probably five thousand men were gathered in and around Irwin.

The large majority of these lived in tents and it was a rule as fixed as the laws of the Medes and Persians that if the occupant of a tent went away for an hour or a month and tied the flaps of the tent together the door of that house was closed and it must not be entered. There was only one case of petty thieving from a tent that summer. The thief was caught in the act and in the absence of any other place of confinement, as this

was before our town calaboose was built, he was taken to our cabin where two men guarded him. There was a hurried meeting of the Vigilante Committee and it was decided that an example must be made to impress the fact that no thieving would be tolerated.

About nine o'clock that evening the door of the cabin was smashed in, the guards were overpowered and the prisoner was dragged into the woods. His hands were tied behind his back, a rope was put around his neck and passed up over a limb and he was given five minutes to prepare for the end.

Just as he was being drawn up some of the more moderate ones intervened and a fierce discussion arose. The most violent ones insisted upon immediate death, saying, "Oh, hang the ---- and be done with the job." Others said to whip him, tar and feather him and ride him on a rail. At one time he was actually drawn up from the ground for a few seconds. Finally, the more moderate ones prevailed and he was turned loose with a swift kick and given ten minutes in which to get out of camp, never to return under penalty of hanging. The man was never seen again except that about daylight the next morning he was met on the road about twenty miles from camp, still running.

During the Summer of 1880 Ruby Camp, with Irwin as a center, enjoyed a real western mining camp boom with all of the attendant features. A population of about fifty grew to at least five thousand in two months. The large majority of the newcomers were prospectors and were mine crazy. There were, however, quite a few others [such as] storekeepers, saloonkeepers, divekeepers, gamblers, etc. I have never seen a community where money was so plentiful; everyone had a huge roll.

George and I had been joined by Frank Craven, a classmate of George's at the School of Mines, and we three carried on a surveying and assaying business under the name of Cornwall, Craven & Cornwall.<sup>15</sup> Nearly all of my time for the first three summers that I was in Colorado was spent in this work. It was very interesting if fatiguing and at times had its exciting and even tragic moments.

As a preliminary step to surveying claims it was necessary to secure an appointment as United States Deputy Mineral Surveyor. This was largely a mere formality for George and me

<sup>15</sup> Craven stayed in Ruby Camp only until the end of the summer, when he accepted a position as superintendent of some mines near Central City. He died tragically at a young age in Liverpool, England, in 1889, while on his way to take a position at the gold mines in South Africa.



*CORNWALL,*  
*CRAVEN &*  
*CORNWALL.*

U. S. DEPUTY MINERAL

*Surveyors,*  
**AND ASSAYERS.**

SURVEYORS FOR THE TOWN OF IRWIN.

Irwin, Gunnison Co., - Colo.

as we had our degrees as mining engineers from the School of Mines.

Mining claims in Colorado at this time, that is, claims in connection with fissure veins, could be fifteen hundred feet along the vein and one hundred and fifty feet each side of the vein, or a plot fifteen hundred by three hundred feet.

Before the claim could be recorded, the discoverer was required to perform at least one hundred dollars worth of work on the vein. The official accepted measure of this amount of work was a shaft sunk ten feet or an open cut with a vertical face of ten feet. After the claim had been surveyed and recorded the owner was compelled to do one hundred dollars worth of work each year in order to continue title. If he failed to do this amount of work his title became invalid and the property was open to location by anyone who might fancy it.

After five hundred dollars worth of work had been completed on a claim, a full title, or as it was called, a "patent" could be secured. This patent was really a deed from the Government and was good forever, no further work being required to continue it.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>16</sup> See Robert Strahorn, *Gunnison and San Juan*, pp. 47-48, for a synopsis of the mining laws in effect at this time.

Surveying claims for the original record was done quite hurriedly and in more or less of a haphazard manner. Many of the discovery shafts or cuts where the surveys were started were in almost inaccessible places in cliffs and running a line and measuring distances up or down the face of a five hundred foot cliff [was] of necessity largely a matter of approximation. Our measuring was done with a five hundred foot steel tape which helped a lot in rough country. The distances were by Government rules, all in horizontal measurement, so when we stretched the tape over rough country it was necessary to take the angle and compute the horizontal equivalent of the distance shown on the tape.

These original surveys were made with a magnetic compass and were no doubt more or less inaccurate. Our regular fee was fifteen dollars for each claim and as I could survey three or even four claims a day it may be imagined that the work was done pretty rapidly. In addition to our regular work, George and I did some speculating in town lots and really did pretty well. We also did some buying and selling of mining claims which I think cost us considerable of the money we made in our other ventures.

Money came in so fast that it looked to us as if making money was about the easiest thing in the world. We averaged about forty dollars a day apiece at our work besides several large sums from sales of town lots. We thought it would always continue (if we ever gave the matter any thought).

I remember that when we were back East the next winter when I was probably speaking boastfully of our work and how easy it was to make money, one old friend whom I looked upon as an old old man (he was probably fifty) said to me, "That is all very fine, but what is it leading to in the way of a permanent business?" My reply was that we would make a million apiece during the next year or two when our mining claims began to yield, and then we would quit. As I believe I expressed myself, "Any fool can make a million in Colorado in two years and not half try."

The population of Irwin in the Summer of 1880 was certainly a mixture. All classes were there and there were no lines of social distinction. At the height of the season there was a ball in a newly erected hall (later a dance hall). Everybody attended and "Durango Nell" and "Timberline Kate" (so called because her hair was getting thin) were apparently just as honored guests as the wives of the merchants, mine managers or



professional men. There was in fact considerable jealousy between the professional ladies and the wives of the camp. As one of the professionals expressed it, "How can we compete with the married women of the camp whose husbands support them?" Each one who entered the hall was required to surrender his gun or guns which were checked at the door. The dance was a great success, although ladies were greatly in the minority. To offset the shortage certain of the men were required to tie a handkerchief on their left arms to take ladies' parts in the dances.

By the middle of August, 1880, the principal street in Irwin was built up on both sides for nearly two blocks. The buildings were largely of logs, some two stories high and nearly all with the square false fronts which characterized all of the frontier towns of that period. A few were occupied as offices, some as stores, restaurants and hotels, but the majority were saloons and dance halls.<sup>17</sup>

*Irwin as it appeared in 1881 or 1882.*



By this time we had bought or had built on the main street a two story log house about twenty-five or thirty-five feet in size where we had our office on the ground floor and one large sleeping room above.<sup>18</sup>

Our neighbor on one side was Charley Utter, a professional gambler who ran a gambling house a little farther up the street, and his lady companion, "Cheyenne Nell." Utter was an old partner of Buffalo Bill or "Wild Bill" [Hickok], I have forgotten which. He was a very blond medium sized man with bright red cheeks and wore his hair in long ringlets down on his shoulders. These ringlets were about one inch in diameter and twelve inches long. Every morning after a late breakfast, Utter spent at least an hour in the barber shop where his hair was freshly curled. The barber used regular curling tongs for the purpose. Utter was supposed to be a bad man, always carried a gun, but was very quiet and unassuming.<sup>19</sup>

The Fall of 1880 saw the end of the boom in Ruby Camp District. All of the floating population went out when winter came and never returned. In the Spring of 1881 the entire district had settled down to what we all hoped [and] expected would be a permanent prosperous mining community with good ore production. Unfortunately, this was not the case and the district ran down hill steadily from that time and was abandoned a few years later.<sup>20</sup>

We owned two or three mining claims which we expected would make us rich but although we did a good deal of work on them we never found ore in sufficient quantity to pay.

George and I had several thousand dollars at the end of the prosperous season of 1880 and as there was absolutely no surveying to be done during the winter we went back East and spent the winter at home in Brooklyn.

<sup>17</sup> According to George Croft, who visited Irwin in September, 1880, the town and surrounding areas contained "a great number of stores, of all kinds, one stamp mill, one large sampling works, six saw mills, one bank, three church edifices, Episcopalian, Methodist, and Presbyterian, one theatre, many hotels, chief of which is the Elk Mountain House, a brass band, and one weekly newspaper, the *Pilot*." *Croft's Grip-Sack Guide of Colorado: A Complete Encyclopedia of the State* (Omaha: The Overland Publishing Co., 1881), p. 110.

<sup>18</sup> In June, 1881, the editor of the *Elk Mountain Pilot* looked back on one year of successful operation and commented on the changes that had occurred in Irwin during that time. One year ago, he said, Cornwall, Craven & Cornwall "did business in a log cabin, but now have a two story frame structure which is a credit to the town." June 16, 1881, p. 2.

<sup>19</sup> See Agnes Wright Spring, *Colorado Charley, Wild Bill's Pard* (Boulder: Pruett Press, 1968), pp. 117-18.

<sup>20</sup> The absence of high-grade ore, increased costs of extracting the ore, extremely harsh winters, and a lack of good transportation were the major reasons for the demise of the Ruby Camp District in the early 1880s.



With Ruby Camp dying in 1881, Harry Cornwall and his brother, recognizing the inevitable, bought 160 acres of good bottom land along Ohio Creek ten miles from Gunnison and twenty miles from their former residence and settled down. During the remainder of his years in Colorado, Harry Cornwall lived on his ranch, though he still maintained his interests in Ruby Camp and ran a surveying office in Crested Butte. The ranch proved profitable, though not nearly so profitable as Cornwall's mining and town enterprises during his first year in Ruby Camp.<sup>21</sup> When the Ute Indians were moved out of the Gunnison country to the Uintah Reservation in Utah in 1881, Cornwall was employed as a government surveyor, opening up new lands to white settlers.

Early in the spring of 1886, it became necessary for Cornwall to go to New York to settle some business. He left in March, intending to return late in April in time to make contracts for the summer surveying from his Crested Butte office. However, he was delayed in New York until so late in the spring that the opportunity of obtaining summer work with the miners had passed. Accordingly, though with reluctance, he accepted a position in New York and within a year became involved in the insurance business in which he remained for the rest of his life. He never again returned to Colorado or to his beloved Gunnison country.

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<sup>21</sup> An excerpt from Harry Cornwall's manuscript concerning his and George's ranching activities was published under the title "Ranching on Ohio Creek, 1881-1886" in *The Colorado Magazine*, XXXII (January, 1955), 16-27.



# The Colorado Territorial Board of Immigration

BY RALPH E. BLODGETT

The first two decades which followed the great Colorado gold rush of 1858-59 were strikingly dissimilar. The decade following that momentous event was one of stagnation and frustration. While the United States census of 1860 stated that Colorado Territory had a population of 34,177,<sup>1</sup> a census ordered by Territorial Governor William C. Gilpin in May, 1861, showed that the population had slipped to 25,371,<sup>2</sup> and a territorial census of 1866 computed the population to be 27,931.<sup>3</sup> Denver, Golden, Colorado City, and Boulder all had fewer residents in the middle of the decade than in 1860.<sup>4</sup> Many of the "Fifty-Niners," who had come to Colorado expecting to make quick gold strikes, had soon become discouraged and returned to the States or moved to the new mineral discoveries in Montana, Idaho, and Nevada. The Civil War and Indian attacks on the Plains had greatly reduced immigration into Colorado. The decision of the Union Pacific Railroad to go to the north through Wyoming and the refusal of President Andrew Johnson to approve statehood for Colorado added to the gloom of the early and middle 1860s.

However, by the end of the decade there were indications that conditions would improve. By 1870 the population had risen to 39,684.<sup>5</sup> Farming, which had been stimulated by food demands

<sup>1</sup> *Population of the United States in 1860: Compiled from the Original Returns of the Eighth Census* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1864), p. iv.

<sup>2</sup> Writers' Program, Work Projects Administration, *Colorado: A Guide to the Highest State* (New York: Hastings House, 1941), p. 43. This source states that the 25,371 figure was incorrect because many of the miners were in the mountains prospecting and thus were not counted.

<sup>3</sup> Message of Governor Alexander Cummings, *Council Journal of the Legislative Assembly of the Territory of Colorado*, 6th Sess., 1866, p. 17, hereafter cited as *Council Journal*.

<sup>4</sup> LeRoy R. Hafen (ed.), *Colorado and Its People* (New York: Lewis Historical Publishing Co., Inc., 1948), I, 290.

<sup>5</sup> *The Statistics of the Population of the United States Compiled from the Original Returns of the Ninth Census* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1872), I, xvii.



of the miners in 1858-59, was progressing as farmers acquired knowledge of the climate and soils and learned how to irrigate effectively. The number of farms, the number of acres under cultivation, and farm production all increased. The Indians of eastern Colorado were subdued, and the mining industry began to expand on a more stable basis. The Civil War was completed and many people were eager to renew the westward advance of settlement. Railroad service became available when the Denver Pacific Railroad joined Denver with the Union Pacific at Cheyenne in June, 1870, and the Kansas Pacific linked Denver with Kansas City in September of the same year.

In the decade of the 1870s amazing developments took place in Colorado. Population increased from 39,684 to 194,327, or nearly five hundred percent.<sup>6</sup> Ten new counties were created, and one of them, Lake County, became the second most populous county in the state by 1880.<sup>7</sup> New mining areas, such as the Silver Cliff region,<sup>8</sup> were opened and old mining settlements, such as the Leadville, Black Hawk, and Central City regions, were revived and expanded as satisfactory methods of treating refractory ores were developed. Agriculture continued to expand and agricultural colonies were established at Greeley, Longmont, Fort Collins, Evans, and in the Wet Mountain Valley in Custer County. Railroads provided both transportation and cheap land for settlers. The southwestern part of the territory was opened for development when the Ute Indians ceded part of their reservation in 1873. And Colorado was admitted to the Union as a state in 1876.

The advances of this decade were achieved despite such obstacles as the discovery of gold deposits in the Black Hills of Dakota which drew off many miners who might have come to Colorado; the Panic of 1873 that slowed investments and building, especially in railroads; and the grasshopper plagues which destroyed many of the crops of Colorado in 1874 and 1875.<sup>9</sup> Many different agencies contributed to this decade of progress in Colorado. The Board of Immigration, created by the territorial legislature on February 9, 1872, was one of the most important.

<sup>6</sup> *Statistics of the Population of the United States at the Tenth Census* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1883), p. 51. Except for the gold rush period of 1858-59, this was the greatest percentage increase in population in the history of Colorado.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 51-52. Arapahoe County (Denver) had a population of 38,644, while Lake (Leadville) had 23,563 residents.

<sup>8</sup> In *ibid.*, 112-13, Denver is listed as the largest city with 35,629 residents; Leadville ranks second with 14,820 people; and Silver Cliff is third with 5,040 residents.

<sup>9</sup> Hafen (ed.), *Colorado and Its People*, I, 340-41.

The Board of Immigration was composed of five members appointed by the governor. The statute defined the duties of the board as follows:

It shall be the duty of the said Board to adopt and put in execution such measures as will best promote and encourage immigration to the Territory, and for this purpose it shall publish and disseminate such useful information as can be obtained concerning the developed and undeveloped resources of the Territory, and may provide for one of its number, or such other person as the Board may select, to attend such Agricultural and Institute Fairs as may be deemed expedient for the display of the Agricultural and Mineral products of the Territory.<sup>10</sup>

The legislature appropriated six thousand dollars for the use of the board in carrying out these duties.<sup>11</sup>

There were several reasons why Colorado Territory wished to attract immigrants. First and foremost, the territory had to increase its population before it would be admitted into the Union as a state. In March, 1864, Congress passed an act enabling the governor of the territory to call for an election of a convention to form a constitution for a proposed state to be submitted to the people of the territory.<sup>12</sup> Such a convention was held in July, but the voters rejected the constitution by a vote of 5,006 to 4,219.<sup>13</sup> Opposition to statehood was based upon the small population and the apprehension that statehood would necessitate an increase in taxes.<sup>14</sup>

In August, 1865, a new convention met and drew up a new constitution, which was approved by a vote of 3,025 to 2,870.<sup>15</sup> President Andrew Johnson was notified that the territory had now fulfilled the terms of the 1864 enabling act. The president refused to issue the proclamation declaring Colorado a state, however, because the proceedings in Colorado were not consistent with those stated in the enabling act, and he referred

<sup>10</sup> *General Laws, Private Acts, Joint Resolutions, and Memorials Passed at the Ninth Session of the Legislative Assembly of the Territory of Colorado* (Central City: D. C. Collier, Printer, Register Office, 1872), pp. 137-38, hereafter cited as *General Laws, Ninth Session*.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 138. Since this appropriation was to cover both 1872 and 1873, it was only three thousand dollars per year. The board was allowed to solicit donations and contributions from those interested in promoting immigration to Colorado to supplement this appropriation.

<sup>12</sup> Alice Carlene, "The Movement for the Admission of Colorado as a State, 1867-1876" (unpublished Master's thesis, Marquette University, 1948), pp. 28-29. This author states that during the consideration of this enabling act in Congress the subject of Colorado's population was debated. The sponsor of the bill said he had been informed that Colorado had 60,000 residents at the time and would have 127,000 by the time the statehood arrangements were completed. The population was actually less than 30,000.

<sup>13</sup> Eloie C. Dyer, "Statehood Movement in Colorado, 1859-1876" (unpublished Master's thesis, University of Colorado, 1913), pp. 9-13.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 16.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 15. A clause to grant civil rights to Negroes was defeated by a vote of 4,192 to 476.



the question to Congress.<sup>16</sup> A bill was immediately introduced in the Senate to admit Colorado into the Union. In the ensuing debate upon this bill, objections were raised concerning both the irregular methods of adopting the constitution of 1865, a clause which restricted the franchise to "white" citizens, and the sparseness of population in Colorado. On this last point, opponents of the bill argued that it would be unfair to the older, more populous states to admit Colorado to the Union and allow the 30,000 people of Colorado to have a representative in Congress when the rules of representation required a population of 127,000 for a representative in the existing states.<sup>17</sup> The bill passed Congress in May but was vetoed by the president. In his veto message, President Johnson stated that the people of Colorado did not at present need a state government, that the majority of Colorado residents had not clearly demonstrated that they desired statehood, and that the admission of Colorado into the Union would be unfair to the older, more populous states.<sup>18</sup>

After considerable debate about the population of Colorado and the denial of voting rights to Negroes within that territory, Congress passed another bill to admit Colorado into the Union in January, 1867.<sup>19</sup> An amendment making the denial of the franchise illegal because of race or color was attached.<sup>20</sup> President Johnson vetoed this bill also. He declared that the territorial legislature of Colorado had passed a law, over the veto of the territorial governor, denying the franchise to Negroes and mulattoes in direct opposition to the amendment to the statehood bill; that since they had earlier rejected a state constitution, the people of Colorado should vote on the statehood question; and that the population of Colorado was only 27,909, when a population of 127,000 was required for a congressional representative.<sup>21</sup>

An attempt was made to override this veto, but the required two-thirds vote could not be obtained in the Senate.<sup>22</sup> In December, 1871, the Potter Amendment to an apportionment bill

<sup>16</sup> *Congressional Globe*, 39th Cong., 1st Sess., 1865-66, pp. 210-11.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 1327-31, 1351-56, 2033-36, 2135-46.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 2589, 2609. Dyer, "Statehood Movement in Colorado," pp. 30-32, states that within Colorado those who favored statehood insisted that the population of the territory was at least 50,000 or 60,000. Opponents pointed to the 1866 census which showed only 27,913 residents. The statehood forces charged that these figures were totally incorrect. Their opponents answered that even if the population of Colorado was 60,000, that was only about one-half of the 127,000 required.

<sup>19</sup> *Congressional Globe*, 39th Cong., 2d Sess., 1866-67, pp. 360-64.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 484-87.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 791, 818-20.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 1928.

required that a state must have sufficient population to entitle it to one congressman; the required population was now set at 135,000 before a territory could be admitted into the Union.<sup>23</sup> Thus, Colorado would have to increase its population to 135,000 before it could become a state.

Second, Colorado needed to encourage immigration to develop its vast mineral and agricultural resources. Territorial Governors John Evans (1864), Alexander Cummings (1866), and Edward M. McCook (1870), and Acting Governor Frank Hall (1867) all stressed, in their annual messages to the territorial legislature, that the lack of laborers and capital was hindering the development of the territory and recommended that the lawmakers take appropriate action to encourage immigration to Colorado. For example, Governor Cummings declared: "The prosecution of every branch of business is hindered by the impossibility of obtaining a sufficient supply of labor. And any inducements which may be in your power to offer to immigrants of all classes, will be well repaid by the increased facilities for business of all kinds which their coming will afford."<sup>24</sup>

Third, an increase in the population would broaden the tax base and enable the government to increase its revenues. This not only would make it possible to carry out more governmental functions, but also would provide the extra finances needed for a state government. Within Colorado, one of the chief arguments against statehood was that a state government would require more revenues and, thus, an increase in taxes. An increase in the population would create more taxpayers and help solve this problem.

Fourth, Colorado needed more farmers to supply food products for the miners and to create a more stable population for the territory. Many persons within the territory were afraid that the miners might quickly leave Colorado if the mines began to play out or if new mineral deposits were found elsewhere. Farmers were more steadfast and did not abandon their land as readily as miners.

Two factors greatly stimulated the agitation for a Board of Immigration. First, thousands of requests for information about Colorado were received from prospective settlers. Acting Governor Hall reported receiving many "communications" from throughout the United States seeking information about the

<sup>23</sup> Dyer, "Statehood Movement in Colorado," p. 42.

<sup>24</sup> Message of Governor Alexander Cummings, *Council Journal*, 5th Sess., 1866, p. 26.



resources and potentials of Colorado.<sup>25</sup> Governor McCook affirmed that requests for information about the resources of Colorado were being received almost every day and stated his belief that it was the "duty" of Colorado "to collect and disseminate substantial information" about the potentials of the territory.<sup>26</sup> Newspapers reported that they were also in receipt of countless letters asking for information about Colorado.<sup>27</sup>

Second, other states and territories, including Kansas, Nebraska, Minnesota, Michigan, Dakota, Iowa, Wisconsin, Virginia, and North Carolina, were trying to attract both foreign and domestic emigrants. Most of these competitors had created official immigration agencies and were reporting successes in their efforts. Several of the governors and many newspaper editors commented at length about the danger that Colorado would not receive its share of immigrants.<sup>28</sup>

In the face of increasingly strong pressure from the governors and the newspapers, the territorial legislature finally passed an act to create the Board of Immigration on February 9, 1872.<sup>29</sup> Governor McCook appointed Jacob F. L. Schirmer of Arapahoe County, E. P. Hollister of Arapahoe County, David C. Collier of Gilpin County, Joseph M. Sherwood of Larimer County, and A. W. Archibald of Las Animas County to the board.<sup>30</sup> As provided in the statute, George T. Clark, territorial librarian, was selected as secretary of the board.<sup>31</sup>

The most formidable barrier facing the Board of Immigration in its efforts to attract immigrants to Colorado was the idea that a Great American Desert extended eastward for several

hundred miles from the base of the Rocky Mountains. This idea, which originated from the reports of Zebulon M. Pike and Stephen H. Long, had been reinforced by reports of western travelers and reiterated in schoolbooks and on maps. As late as 1866, Major General John Pope, commander of the Department of the Missouri, which included Colorado, could report that between the agricultural regions along the Mississippi and Missouri rivers and the Rocky Mountains there was a belt of land at least five hundred miles wide which extended from Canada to the Gulf of Mexico and which was "beyond the reach of agriculture, and must always remain a great uninhabited desert."<sup>32</sup> It was necessary to counter this idea and to convince prospective immigrants that agriculture could be pursued profitably in Colorado.<sup>33</sup>

The first step in this process was the collection of information about the territory, its resources and productions. By the statute creating the Board of Immigration, the county commissioners of each county of the territory were to appoint one citizen to act as a corresponding secretary to supply information on the resources of the county to the board. At the first meeting of the board (February 20, 1872) the secretary forwarded copies of the statute to the county commissioners and asked them to appoint corresponding secretaries.<sup>34</sup> Most of the counties complied, but the corresponding secretaries did not supply as much information as was desired. It was extremely difficult to acquire trustworthy information about the resources and products of the counties, and the corresponding secretaries did not receive adequate compensation to give the task the time and attention needed. However, a few did supply abundant information, and the members of the board gathered additional data on their own initiative.

This information was printed and distributed throughout the United States and northwestern Europe in the form of a circular, two pamphlets, and a report to the legislature.<sup>35</sup> Quite naturally, these publications had much in common. The main burden of all of them was to demonstrate the economic resources and po-

<sup>25</sup> Message of Acting Governor Frank Hall, *ibid.*, 7th Sess., 1867, p. 13.

<sup>26</sup> Message of Governor Edward M. McCook, *ibid.*, 8th Sess., 1870, p. 21. In this same message (p. 22) Governor McCook urged the legislature to encourage "Chinamen" to come to Colorado to provide the plentiful cheap labor needed.

<sup>27</sup> See, for example, the *Rocky Mountain News* (Denver), April 9, 1866, p. 2; January 2, 1867, p. 1; May 6, 1867, p. 2; *Daily Central City Register*, January 28, 1870, p. 1; *Colorado Chieftain* (Pueblo), March 21, 1872, p. 1.

<sup>28</sup> See Governor Edward McCook's messages to the Territorial Legislature in 1870 (*Council Journal*, 8th Sess., 1870) and 1872 (*Council Journal*, 9th Sess., 1872). See also the *Rocky Mountain News* (Denver), February 19, 1868, p. 1; January 5, 1872, p. 2; *Denver Daily Tribune*, August 8, 1871, p. 2; *Caribou Post*, February 10, 1872, pp. 1-2.

<sup>29</sup> In his 1872 message, Governor McCook made immigration the first topic of his message. The *Rocky Mountain News* (Denver), October 16, 1866, p. 1; October 22, 1867, p. 1; February 19, 1868, p. 1; January 5, 1872, p. 2; January 10, 1872, p. 1, and the *Denver Daily Tribune*, August 8, 1871, p. 2, encouraged the creation of the Board of Immigration.

<sup>30</sup> In March, 1873, Jacob F. L. Schirmer and E. P. Hollister resigned from the board and were replaced by Fred Z. Salomon and William N. Byers, both of Arapahoe County. *Report of the Board of Immigration of Colorado Territory, for the Two Years Ending December 31, 1873* (Denver: William N. Byers, Public Printer, 1874), p. 4.

<sup>31</sup> *General Laws, Ninth Session*, p. 139. Members of the board were paid five dollars per day while attending meetings of the board, and fifteen cents a mile for each mile traveled to and from such meetings. The secretary was to be paid as the board saw fit, but not more than seven hundred dollars.

<sup>32</sup> U.S., Congress, House, *Report of Major General John Pope, of the Condition and Necessities of the Department of the Missouri, February 25, 1866*, Ex. Doc. 76, 39th Cong., 1st Sess., 1866, p. 2.

<sup>33</sup> Land companies, railroads, agricultural colonies and newspapers, as well as the Board of Immigration, would attempt to counter the Great American Desert idea and would provide numerous examples of the bountiful crops produced in Colorado.

<sup>34</sup> He also forwarded copies of the statute to the agricultural colonies and newspapers. He asked the colonies to appoint corresponding secretaries and the newspapers to reprint the statute. Both of these requests were carried out.



tentials of Colorado. Mines and mining, which had tapped only a minute part of the greatest mineral deposits in North America, were characterized as improving and expanding. Farming was described as being highly profitable because the Homestead and Pre-emption laws and the railroad grants provided thousands of acres of fertile land at very low costs, while irrigation supplied a reliable source of water and the miners a large expanding market. Statistics on the production per acre of the principal crops of Colorado were almost always enclosed to support this claim. Grazing and dairying industries could also be successfully undertaken because Colorado possessed abundant native grasses, the correct climate, and a more than adequate market. Colorado also offered a more than sufficient supply of lumber, water, and coal for timbering and manufacturing enterprises.

Other advantages of Colorado were described. The magnificence of the mountains and mountain parks; the surplus in the territorial treasury and the resultant low tax rates; the mildness and healthfulness of Colorado's climate, always supported by charts showing weather records and statements from Colorado doctors; social developments, such as schools, churches, society, and entertainments; the present and proposed miles of railroad track and telegraph lines; the potential for summer resorts, fishing, and hunting; lists of postal facilities, newspapers published, distances, and altitudes above sea level; and information about wages, prices, and labor in Colorado were included within these publications.

The board also appointed individuals as agents in England, Germany, and the United States.<sup>36</sup> All of these agents, who served without compensation, helped distribute information about Colorado and encouraged immigration to the territory.<sup>37</sup>

<sup>35</sup> Twenty-five thousand copies of the eight-page circular *Official Information on the Resources of Colorado*, thirty thousand copies (five thousand in German) of the thirty-six-page pamphlet *Official Information of Colorado: A statement of Facts prepared and published by authority of the Territorial Board of Immigration*, and twenty thousand copies of the forty-eight-page pamphlet *Resources and Advantages of Colorado* were printed and distributed (see *Report of the Board of Immigration*, p. 5). Two thousand copies of the *Report of the Board of Immigration* were ordered printed and distributed by the legislature. Thus a total of seventy-seven thousand pieces of information was printed and distributed.

<sup>36</sup> The agents were Edward Reed, London; J. Alex Pace, Southern States; J. B. Davis, New England States; G. H. Adams, Middle States; J. G. Cooper, New York City; G. Ludeke, New York City; A. B. Robbins, Pennsylvania; T. M. Douglass, Ohio; E. P. Drake, Indiana; H. W. Horton, Western States; C. Walbrach, Germany; and P. Gottesleben, Germany. John Clough was general agent in Denver. *Report of the Board of Immigration*, pp. 3-9.

<sup>37</sup> Since all of these agents worked without compensation or funds to carry on their activities, their successes were limited. However, some of them did remarkable work in promoting the settlement of Colorado. For example, Edward Reed in London spent three thousand dollars of his own money in advertising Colorado and issued thousands of the board's pamphlets. *Ibid.*, 9.

The secretary of the board was fully occupied in answering letters and other requests for information about Colorado. In the two years he received and answered approximately seven thousand such requests and issued nearly four thousand certificates of reduction of fares which the board obtained from the railroads leading to Colorado for all "Bona Fide settlers."<sup>38</sup>

Under the terms of the statute of 1872, the Board of Immigration went out of existence on December 31, 1873. It had promoted and encouraged a large immigration to the territory. From the vote of September, 1873, various sources estimated the population of Colorado at somewhere between 100,000 and 125,000.<sup>39</sup> The average monthly increase was estimated to be about 3,000 persons.<sup>40</sup> The population of Colorado would be 194,327 by the time of the official census in 1880. Moreover, many of the immigrants were farmers or people with money who came to Colorado for health reasons.<sup>41</sup> Statehood would soon be achieved also. In his annual message to Congress in December, 1873, President Ulysses S. Grant recommended the passage of an enabling act for Colorado and stated his belief that Colorado now had sufficient population to warrant statehood.<sup>42</sup> When a bill was introduced in Congress in 1875 to allow Colorado to form a constitution and a state government for admission into the Union, the major debates were not on population, but rather on land grants within the state and on federal payments to Colorado to reimburse the expenses of holding the constitutional convention.<sup>43</sup>

It must be admitted that the Board of Immigration was not alone in attracting immigrants to Colorado. Railroads advertised the West, furnished transportation to and from the new settlements, provided cheap land, and carried on a number of other activities to promote settlement in the West.<sup>44</sup> The agricultural colonies helped promote immigration to Colorado by circulating

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.

<sup>39</sup> In his January 6, 1874, message to the territorial legislature, Governor Samuel H. Elbert estimated Colorado's population at 125,000 persons (*Council Journal*, 10th Sess., 1874, p. 28). The *Colorado Springs Gazette and El Paso County News*, December 20, 1873, p. 3, estimated the population to be 104,860.

<sup>40</sup> *Colorado Springs Gazette and El Paso County News*, December 20, 1873, p. 3.

<sup>41</sup> Gilbert C. Fite, *The Farmers' Frontier, 1865-1900* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1966), p. 183. Fite states that the number of farms in Colorado increased from 1,738 in 1870 to 4,506 in 1880. *Report of the Board of Immigration*, pp. 6-7, declares that this influx of money made it possible for Colorado to survive the Panic of 1873 with fewer hardships than the rest of the nation.

<sup>42</sup> *Congressional Record*, 43d Cong., 1st Sess., 1874, p. 18.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 43d Cong., 2d Sess., 1874-75, pp. 1671-90, and 44th Cong., 1st Sess., 1876, pp. 1120-25.

<sup>44</sup> The railroads sold land-exploring tickets, the cost of which was credited toward a land purchase; gave additional credit for bringing a certain amount



printed information, sending agents to the East, and encouraging private individuals within their settlements to write their friends in the States. Newspapers and land companies also provided information and encouraged immigration. Private letters from people living in Colorado to their families and friends in the East undoubtedly had considerable influence on those who were considering moving to Colorado.<sup>45</sup> Since no attempt was made to ascertain what caused these settlers to immigrate to Colorado, it is impossible to determine how much influence any one of these agencies had by itself. Working together, either intentionally or unintentionally, they did attract a great mass of people to Colorado.<sup>46</sup>

In his *History of the State of Colorado*, published in 1889, former Acting Governor Frank Hall stated that the Board of Immigration was *too* successful in attracting immigrants to Colorado. The board was unable to provide for the arriving immigrants and could not move them to areas where their labor was needed. Hall charged: "It is better to have no Board of Immigra-

Frank Hall served  
as territorial secretary  
for seven years.



tion at all, better not to waste time and money in advertising and entreating, unless proper avenues are opened and the way cleared for such worthy people as may respond and are disposed to remain."<sup>47</sup> These criticisms are valid, at least in part. The *Rocky Mountain News* in April and May of 1873 made special appeals to all those who needed laborers to notify the secretary of the Board of Immigration, so that he could send immigrants to areas where they were needed. The newspaper further advised immigrants to go to the mining or farming regions where they could find employment, and not come to Denver where there were many more laborers than openings.<sup>48</sup> Some immigrants did experience difficulties in finding employment.

In answer to Hall's charges, it must be pointed out that many agencies, not just the Board of Immigration, were actively promoting immigration to Colorado with little or no concern for the welfare of the immigrants once they had arrived. The Board of Immigration was not instructed to look after the newcomers once they had migrated to Colorado, but was only "to adopt and put in execution such measures as will best promote and encourage immigration to the Territory."<sup>49</sup> In addition, the board did not have sufficient funds to care for the flood of immigrants who arrived.<sup>50</sup> The expenditures account of the board shows that approximately four thousand dollars was expended for printing pamphlets, fifteen hundred for paying the members and the secretary, four hundred for postage and express, and one hundred for stationery.<sup>51</sup> There was no money left to help the new arrivals.

of land under cultivation within a certain time; provided inexpensive or free shipment of the farmer's personal belongings; established emigrant houses for the families while the settlers were searching for land or building a home; provided credit, installment buying, and cash discounts in land sales; and made special land and transportation agreements with colonies. Fite, *Farmers' Frontier*, pp. 31-32.

<sup>45</sup> The "pull" of all these efforts to attract settlers to Colorado was combined with the "push" of conditions in the East and in Europe. Disquieting circumstances, such as the Panic of 1873 in the United States and the wars in Central Europe in the 1860s and 1870s, caused many people to think about moving to the West. Thus they were susceptible to the promotion campaigns of those agencies trying to attract them.

<sup>46</sup> These agencies often worked together intentionally. Examples of this cooperation are the reduction of railroad fares obtained by the Board of Immigration, distribution of material provided by railroads and agricultural colonies by the board, and the copying of information in the board's publication in newspaper articles.

<sup>47</sup> Frank Hall, *History of the State of Colorado* (Chicago: The Blakely Printing Company, 1889), I, 518.

<sup>48</sup> *Rocky Mountain News* (Denver), April 4, 1873, p. 2; May 16, 1873, p. 2.

<sup>49</sup> *General Laws, Ninth Session*, p. 137.

<sup>50</sup> Several newspapers were quite critical of the small appropriation made by the legislature for the Board of Immigration. See, for example, the *Caribou Post*, February 10, 1872, p. 2, and February 24, 1872, p. 3; the *Daily Central City Register*, February 10, 1872, p. 1; and the *Rocky Mountain News* (Denver), January 10, 1873, p. 4.

<sup>51</sup> *Report of the Board of Immigration*, p. 6.



Like almost all western states and territories, Colorado needed more people to achieve statehood, to develop the natural resources, to broaden the tax base and acquire more revenue to pay for expanding governmental functions, and to give the territory a more stable economy. The Board of Immigration was one of the most important agencies which successfully attracted a great tide of immigration to Colorado in the decade of the 1870s. The territorial legislature and the governor both approved and praised the work completed by the board. The legislature ordered two thousand copies of the final report of the board to be printed and distributed;<sup>52</sup> and Governor Samuel H. Elbert stated that the board had made "a faithful and judicious expenditure of the money appropriated" and recommended that a similar appropriation be made for its use in 1874.<sup>53</sup> Although the legislature did not immediately re-enact the statute creating the Board of Immigration nor make additional appropriations for its use, new agencies to promote immigration to the state were created in 1889 and 1909.<sup>54</sup> These later bodies include a Bureau of Statistics to collect and publish important information about the advances and potential of the state as recommended by the territorial Board of Immigration.<sup>55</sup>

Perhaps the enticements offered by the Board of Immigration and other agencies stressed the bright opportunities of Colorado too much and failed to explain adequately that patience and hard work would be necessary to make a living in Colorado. As in the gold rush days, some immigrants came to Colorado expecting to make quick profits with little effort. They soon became discouraged and left Colorado, denouncing it as a fraud. Nevertheless, the vast majority of immigrants remained, and, after making adjustments to the environment, especially the necessities of irrigation agriculture, formed the foundation for a growing, prosperous state.

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<sup>52</sup> *Council Journal*, 10th Sess., 1874, p. 201.

<sup>53</sup> Message of Governor Samuel H. Elbert, *ibid.*, 12.

<sup>54</sup> In 1889 the state legislature created a Bureau of Immigration and Statistics which functioned until 1897. In 1909 the State Board of Immigration was created, and it carried on its activities into the 1930s.

<sup>55</sup> *Report of the Board of Immigration*, p. 7.