



## Women in Colorado before the First World War

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The past few years have witnessed an outpouring of works dealing with the history of American women from the colonial period to the present. While notable advances have been made in synthesizing major aspects of the female experience in America from a national perspective, attempts at interpreting the history of women at the state and local levels have, on the whole, been less satisfactory.<sup>1</sup> On the one hand, researchers have uncovered fascinating details of the female world in various communities but they have related these stories with little attention to the broader context in which they occurred. On the other hand, scholars concerned with defining national trends have culled regional depositories for illustrative documents with which to embellish accounts composed from a limited body of materials. Taken out of context, these snippets

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<sup>1</sup> See Mary P. Ryan, *Womanhood in America from Colonial Times to the Present* (New York: New Viewpoints, 1975), and Lois W. Banner, *Women in Modern America: A Brief History* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1974).

of regional women's history appear as no more than tantalizing fragments. What is urgently needed at this juncture is a fresh angle of vision for regional women's history—one that centers on the local community and the state.

The task of recovering the history of American women from the perspective of the microcosm is a challenging one since it necessitates not only the designation of appropriate conceptual frameworks but also the identification of pertinent source materials. This article deals with these two interrelated aspects of writing grass roots women's history, using pre-1914 Colorado as the focus of inquiry.<sup>2</sup> Despite its preliminary nature and its limited time frame, this essay seeks to demonstrate, in the case of Colorado, the viability of new directions for research as well as the abundance and the richness of available source materials.

One of the fundamental problems facing the historian of women in Colorado before the First World War concerns periodization. Are the dividing lines that traditionally serve to demarcate epochs in the development of the state applicable to the narration of women's history? What factors are critical for understanding the contours of the female world in Colorado at different points in time? Are there readily discernible generational patterns in the history of Colorado women? Did the time of a woman's arrival in the state determine her potential opportunities? How distinctive was the experience of women in Colorado?

Another set of essential questions pertains to the variations in experience of women of different class, racial, ethnic, and religious backgrounds in pre-World War I Colorado. Which was more important in shaping the content of a woman's life, her background or the type of settlement in which she resided—mining, farming, or urban? How significant was the community's sex ratio in influencing a woman's options? Is it possible to speak of *the* Colorado woman in any respect during the pre-1914 period or must the historian constantly differentiate between groups of women according to their particular location in the social structure?

Answers to these and more specific questions must be worked out through intensive analysis of the extant source material. Rather than preparing a comprehensive but superficial discussion, the decision was made to concentrate on four basic subject areas: (1) the personal lives of women, (2) women and education, (3) women in voluntary organizations, and (4) women in the work force.<sup>3</sup> For each of these topics central problems will be noted and specific sources identified.

Reconstructing the personal lives of early Colorado women involves careful scrutiny of the firsthand testimonies of women in the form of manuscript diaries, journals, correspondence, as well as the scrapbooks and the memorabilia preserved by women.<sup>4</sup> Subjective evidence of this type has certain limitations. Diaries and journals are frequently contrived and the element of deliberateness embodied in such self-conscious compositions must be allowed for when utilizing them. The literary skill of the author, her perceptiveness, her degree of introspection, as well as her motivation for keeping a diary, all influence the resultant product. A scholar must be sensitive to the nuances of the author's style and must be aware of her individuality.

The personal correspondence of women is a valuable supplement to the more formalized productions of diaries and journals. Offhand observations in letters, especially those to other women, shed light on preconceptions and attitudes. The woman's scrapbook, despite its somewhat impersonal character, yields valuable insights into the content of the female world prior to the First World War. The invitations, pro-

<sup>2</sup> This essay does not treat two topics of major importance, the woman suffrage movement and feminism. On suffrage in Colorado, see two articles by Billie Barnes Jensen, "Let the Women Vote," *The Colorado Magazine* 41 (Winter 1964):13-25; and "Colorado Woman Suffrage Campaigns of the 1870's," *Journal of the West* 12 (April 1973):254-71; William B. Faherty, "Regional Minorities and the Woman Suffrage Struggle," *The Colorado Magazine* 33 (July 1956):212-17; and Helen L. Sumner, *Equal Suffrage: The Results of an Investigation in Colorado Made for the Collegiate Equal Suffrage League of New York State* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1909).

<sup>3</sup> For the study of feminism in Colorado, a beginning point might be analysis of Caroline Nichols Churchill's newspapers the *Colorado Antelope* (Denver, 1879-1882) and the *Queen Bee* (Denver, 1882-1893). The motto of Churchill's newspapers was "Devoted to the Interests of Humanity, Woman's Political Equality and Individuality." See also Caroline Nichols Churchill, *Active Footsteps* (Colorado Springs, Colo.: By the Author, 1909).

<sup>4</sup> Annie M. Green, *Sixteen Years on the Great American Desert; or, The Trials and Triumphs of a Frontier Life* (Titusville, Pa.: F. W. Truesdell, 1887) is a published account of the author's life in the Union Colony at Greeley from 1870 to 1886. See also Donald F. Danker, ed., *Mollie: The Journal of Mollie Dorsey Sanford in Nebraska and Colorado Territories, 1856-1866* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1959). Memoirs, reminiscences, and autobiographies are of less value to the historian than contemporary testimonies because of their authors' selective perception of past events. See, for example, Anne Ellis, *The Life of an Ordinary Woman* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1929) and Bishop Alma White, *Looking Back from Beulah* (Zarephath, N.J.: Pillar of Fire, 1929; originally published in 1902). *The Colorado Magazine* contains numerous reminiscences of women in Colorado.

<sup>2</sup> On women in Colorado before the First World War; see Anna Wolcott Vaile and Ellis Meredith, "Woman's Contribution" in James H. Baker and LeRoy R. Hafen, eds., *History of Colorado*, 5 vols. (Denver: Linderman Co., 1927), 3:1075-1147; the short biographies of Sarah Platt Decker, Anne Evans, Emily Griffith, Frances Jacobs, and Alma White, in Edward T. James, Janet Wilson James, Paul S. Boyer, eds., *Notable American Women, 1607-1950: A Biographical Dictionary*, 3 vols. (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1971); Elinor Bluemel, *One Hundred Years of Colorado Women* (Denver: By the Author, 1973); and James A. Semples, *Representative Women of Colorado* (Denver: By the Author, 1911).

grams, clippings, and other items treasured by Colorado women of this era suggest not only the boundaries of the woman's sphere but its magnified importance in the eyes of those who were confined to it. Similarly, collections of miscellaneous memorabilia can be sifted for clues as to the character of women's private lives.

Given its limitations, literary evidence is still of primary importance to the historian of women. Focusing on commonalities or shared experiences in the lives of women, rather than searching for the exceptional or the unique, enhances the value of diaries and correspondence to the social historian. Nevertheless, a critical problem remains because personal records of women throughout the social spectrum are unavailable. A survey of extant firsthand documents discloses that they are heavily biased toward women of a particular sector of Colorado society, white Anglo Protestants of the urban, middle, and upper classes.<sup>5</sup> Clearly, the lives of Black, Mexican, Indian, immigrant, Catholic, Jewish, and working-class women cannot be approached through this material. Yet, if the assumption is not made that a limited number of female diarists and letter writers naturally represent the experience of all types of pre-World War I Colorado women, there is no reason to reject the writings and the artifacts of these privileged women. Despite their limited social base, these documents constitute a source of data for answering a multitude of questions concerning the interests, outlooks, activities, and relationships of pre-1914 Colorado women.

One way of organizing the study of these documents is in terms of the stage of the life cycle of the woman writer. A major concern of current scholarship on women is the way in which girls are prepared for adult female roles. The diaries and correspondence of girls and single young women offer a useful tool for probing the socialization process in pre-1914 Colorado. Hazel Olive Bennett (Kettle) wrote some letters to her family in Conifer in 1902-3 describing her life while at school in Denver. These letters comment on teachers, friends, amusements, reading habits, interest in animals, as well as relating the feelings toward members of her family of this preadolescent girl. Already evident are ingrained social at-

titudes as when she informs her parents that "I had my washing done . . . at a darkey woman's place."<sup>6</sup>

A complete record of one year in the life of a twelve-year-old girl is found in the 1890 diary of Adelaide French, who lived on a ranch on the outskirts of Denver. This is part of a large collection of diaries and papers of a Colorado-born woman who never married, worked briefly as a teacher, spent much of her time in women's club activities and as an amateur historian, and survived into her ninety-sixth year. Other diaries from 1898 and 1902 chronicle French's activities as a young woman.<sup>7</sup>

Glimpses into the world of an adolescent female in rural Colorado in the late 1860s and 1870s are found in the miscellaneous entries in the diary of Mamie Derbyshire, a student at Lyons Seminary and a resident of Sterling. Accounts of friends, social events, and expenses offer hints as to the interests and values of this young woman.<sup>8</sup>

A more introspective portrait of the world of a late adolescent girl emerges from the correspondence of Ellen Roselle Hinsdale, a visitor in Pueblo in 1871-72. Written to Sarah Stanley, presumably her best friend back home, this series of letters reveals the substance of the relationship between two young women faced with the problem of finding a desirable husband. The oscillating emotional states of young Ellen Hinsdale, keyed as they are to her degree of success in locating suitable male companions, are apparent in both the content and the tone of the letters, as when Ellen writes her friend on 19 June 1872: "Sarah I am absolutely too happy to live. . . . There are *some lovely men* here now from 'the states' and a great many are going to stay here always and some are going to the mountains."<sup>9</sup>

Florence McCune's diaries for 1874, 1879, 1880, 1881, and 1885 offer abundant documentation on the life of a female resident of Denver between the ages of fifteen and twenty-six. This set of diaries is particularly valuable for delineating McCune's changing role within her family as she matures and family circumstances alter. McCune's observations on school, social activities, shopping excursions, familial life, and impor-

<sup>5</sup> Hazel Olive Bennett (Kettle) collection, 14 September 1902 (DPLW).

<sup>6</sup> Adelaide French collection (DPLW).

<sup>7</sup> Mamie Derbyshire collection (SHSC).

<sup>8</sup> Ellen Roselle Hinsdale collection (DPLW). Other potentially useful sources for the study of single young women are the Ada Morris papers (CU) and the travel accounts of Rose Bell (SHSC) and Helen Clark (DPLW).

<sup>9</sup> Not all of the extant literary evidence was produced by privileged women but the documents pertaining to rural women and women somewhat lower down on the social scale are of a more haphazard nature, as a rule. See, for example, the collections related to Elizabeth Clark Shinkle, Lizzie Mahon Gaynor, Louise A. Fisher, Mary Elizabeth Shellabarger, and Mary Edna Reynolds Guerber (SHSC).

tant public events, such as President James A. Garfield's assassination, bring to life the ongoing experiences of a bright and interested young woman. In 1881 McCune was faced with a major family crisis, the death of her father, and her reaction to this event and its impact on her life are vividly conveyed in the diary. Forced to shoulder more responsibility by taking a job in an office due to the decline in family fortunes, McCune relates problems of the work day: "had a regular old-fashioned time with the balance, Five hundred dollars out. found some checks caught in drawer." On occasion she is blamed for errors in the office. Conflicts with her widowed mother surface. After a particularly annoying incident, McCune writes petulantly, "I would like to know if I will ever be considered old enough to take care of myself." A hint of McCune's attitude toward marriage emerges in a diary entry of 25 May 1881: "Have had two proposals of marriage. . . . it is needless to say rejected both. Think I shall die Flora McCune as the only person I care anything about, cares nothing whatever for me." This remark was prophetic as the Denver City directories list a Miss Flora McCune, clerk in the county treasurer's office, at various points in time between 1886 and the early 1930s.<sup>10</sup>

Florence McCune and Adelaide French were among the minority of Colorado women in the pre-World War I era who remained single throughout their lives. Some women who exercised the option not to marry had careers as writers, teachers, and artists and were also involved in civic projects. Collections relating to the interests of Elizabeth Spalding (DPLW, SHSC), Sarah Griswold Spalding (SHSC), and Henrietta Bromwell (DPLW, SHSC) elucidate certain aspects of the lives of single women in Colorado during this era.

The more customary role for an adult woman in Colorado before World War I was that of wife and mother.<sup>11</sup> The diaries, journals, and correspondence of married women, while occasionally inward-looking, are primarily useful because of their descriptions of the daily round of activities, the



recounting of intellectual accomplishments, and the articulation of relationships within the family. The ways in which women interacted with their husbands, daughters, sons, parents, relatives, and servants, as well as friends outside the household, constitute a major theme of such accounts. Wittingly or not, the dynamics of family life are exposed and fragments of emotional interchanges emerge from the pages.

While the majority of pre-World War I female Colorado diarists emanated from the highest rungs of the social scale, one exception is Sarah L.D. Hively, a young woman of about twenty-two years, who moved from the Midwest to Denver with her husband after their wedding in 1863. In this often poignant diary, the new bride's disillusionment with her life in early Denver is graphically conveyed as she expresses longing for members of her family and rejoices at occasional

<sup>10</sup> Florence McCune diaries, 17 February 1885, 15 February 1885 (SHSC).

<sup>11</sup> It is possible to establish the statistical parameters of family life through a demographic analysis of census records. Using manuscript schedules for the 1860, 1870, 1880, and 1900 federal censuses as well as the 1885 state census, all available on microfilm, scholars can determine the size of families, family structure, the frequency of female-headed households, and living arrangements for single women. If supplemented by civil and religious records, information on age at marriage, patterns of intermarriage, and frequency of remarriage is also obtainable. A valuable compilation of laws and statistics on marriage and divorce in Colorado, as well as nationwide, for this period is U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Marriage and Divorce 1867-1906*, 2 vols. (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1909).



female companionship. The diary of this young wife and mother continues sporadically until 1878 and provides a rare glimpse of female life near the middle of the social spectrum during the era of settlement.<sup>12</sup>

The women of leisure who composed most of the extant testimonies chronicled everyday life in a rarified social atmosphere. Although these women led lives that, in certain respects, were clearly atypical of the majority of Colorado women, this elite segment of the female world was frequently emulated by women lower down the social scale. The activities of socially prominent women were written up lavishly in newspapers and magazines for others to savor. The diaries, correspondence, scrapbooks, and memorabilia of Alice Hale Hill (SHSC), Harriet Chaffee Ross (DPLW), Mrs. Owen Le Fevre (DPLW), Isabel Nesmith Evans (SHSC), Ruth Boettcher Humphrey (SHSC), Mrs. William Howland (DPLW), and Mrs. Henry Warren (DPLW), among others, are outstanding for documenting the ways in which women in the upper strata of society filled their time.

A great deal of effort was invested in entertaining guests as well as attending various social functions. The social calendar of elite women bulged, as they organized social events for other women, couples, and whole families. Isabel Nesmith Evans's meticulous compilation of her arrangements for dinners, parties, and teas between 1891 and 1907 brings to light this facet of the existence of upper-class women. A

<sup>12</sup> Sarah L.D. Hively diary (DPLW); see "A Journal of Cara Georgina Whitmore Bell about Her Early Married Life in America - 1872-1876," typescript (DPLW), for the memoirs of a wealthy English bride in the Colorado Springs region in the same period.

comprehensive picture of the variety of social activities attended by these privileged women emerges from the scrapbooks of Mrs. Henry Warren, wife of the Methodist bishop, in which are carefully preserved invitations to hundreds of such events.

The amount of time upper-class women spent in touring, especially outside the United States, is striking. The travel diaries of Alice Hale Hill, Mrs. Owen Le Fevre, and the young Ruth Boettcher (accompanied by magnificent photograph albums) all attest to the mobility that great wealth facilitated. Automobile excursions into the countryside surrounding Den-



ver played an important part in the journal kept by Harriet Chaffee Ross. She took great pleasure in these journeys, even though her descriptions are somewhat artificial in tone. The Ross journal also recounts the daily life of an upper-class woman, noting church attendance, reading habits, German and music lessons, walks with her young son, preparation for a new home, as well as the usual concerts, plays, dinners, and parties. On 16 August 1908 Ross wrote, for instance, that "yesterday I took some ladies to the theatre to see 'Clarice' - not a pleasant play. F. and I took dinner at the Country Club."<sup>13</sup>

<sup>13</sup> Harriet Chaffee Ross diary, 16 August 1908 (DPLW); "F." was Harriet's husband Frederick.

Crises also enter into the Ross journal—the death of her mother and her own illnesses. Ross was a middle-aged woman when she wrote this diary (she celebrated her nineteenth wedding anniversary in 1908). She seems to have had a distant relationship with her husband, a closer one with her mother, and her most meaningful contact with her son, who was about six-years-old.

F. is down on the Gulf of Mexico tarpon fishing. Left last Saturday. John and I are alone with the maid. I have not been well and this morning early the old pain in my heart came and was very bad for an hour - Then suddenly it left and I was so peaceful and rested that I turned over and suddenly realized that only a mighty effort made by myself would bring me back. . . . It was so beautiful and restful and there was only the tho't of little John who needed me.<sup>14</sup>

No one diary, journal, or scrapbook supplies a definitive picture of the life of Colorado women, of whatever age or marital status. Indeed, such subjective testimonies may be significant at times for what they exclude rather than what they include. Nevertheless, despite the difficulties inherent in capitalizing on this kind of source, any firsthand documents produced by women merit careful scrutiny as they provide windows on the female world, exposing the presuppositions and the priorities of women.<sup>15</sup> Moreover, the value of these personal accounts may be enhanced by placing them in context and supplementing them with other types of material. Educational records, which are occasionally a part of personal collections, supply essential information on the formative years of Colorado women.

The opportunity for an education, at least through high school, was generally available to all girls in Colorado prior to World War I. After compulsory public education was written into the territorial law in 1861, schools were started even in remote areas. In the more populated areas such as Denver, parents not only could choose between public and private schools for their daughters, but also between religious and secular institutions and coeducational schools and female academies. Most private schools also had provisions for board-

See also the perceptive and frequently fascinating jottings in the diary of Henrietta E. Bromwell as she traveled around Colorado and the nation between 1905 and 1908 promoting a book by her father (DPLW).

<sup>14</sup> Ross diary, 13 April 1911 (DPLW).

<sup>15</sup> Correspondence and notes in the Tabor Collection (SHSC) and the Byers Collection (DPLW) provide useful documentation for studying mother-daughter relationships in prominent Colorado families.



ing students, thereby allowing wealthier families in outlying areas a similar choice.<sup>16</sup>

The founding of Colorado College in 1874 and the beginning of the University of Denver in 1880 mark the start of private higher education in the state. The University of Colorado opened its doors in 1877. All of these institutions of higher learning were coeducational. It was not until Colorado Woman's College began operation in 1909 that the female population was offered a private women's college within the state. Prior to that time many of the state's wealthier girls went East to receive their bachelor's degrees. The trustees of Colorado Woman's College patterned their school after the elite eastern women's institutions, and thus the college became known as the "Colorado Vassar" or the "Vassar of the West."<sup>17</sup>

Numerous sources are available to study the various aspects of female education in Colorado before 1914. However, these documents tend to be biased toward middle- and upper-class students, because most of the material concerns private girls' schools. Collections that were kept either by institutions or former students contain many valuable items in addition to sentimental memorabilia.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>16</sup> An account of a remote school is given in the reminiscences of Mrs. C.P. Hill, "The Beginnings of Rangely and How the First School Teacher Came to Town," *The Colorado Magazine* 11 (May 1934):112-16.

"Especially did Wolfe Hall appeal to those doing business in isolated communities as a place where they might send their daughters to be educated in the faith of the Church surrounded by all Christian influences. Being the one school to undertake this work so early in the life of the territory, it became the pioneer educational faculty in the state" (newspaper clipping from the *Denver Post*, March 1920, Wolfe Hall Alumnae Association Scrapbook, Becker Collection, DPLW).

<sup>17</sup> Various issues of the Wolfe Hall *Banner*, both student and alumnae editions, list college plans of graduates and alumnae news, June E. Carothers, "Colorado Woman's College—The Colorado Vassar," *The Colorado Magazine* 28 (October 1951):290-98.

<sup>18</sup> For background information, institutional histories are useful. See, for example, Sister M.



The original Wolfe Hall was at Seventeenth and Champa in the 1870s.

Examples of institutional collections are the East Denver High School materials found at DPLW and the records of Saint Mary's Academy at SHSC. Public or private schools still in operation, such as the University of Denver, the University of Colorado, Loretto Heights College, and Colorado Woman's College, often keep their own archives. The official records of private girls' schools no longer functioning have apparently been destroyed. But, occasionally, resourceful alumnae have turned over their mementoes to various depositories. The greatest amount of material can be found on Wolfe Hall (1868-1913), with collections at both DPLW and SHSC. The information on Wolcott School (1898-1924) is somewhat more limited in scope, with only one major collection (SHSC).

Yearly catalogs contain information on the curriculum and purpose of the institution as well as listings of faculty and administrators. Often they explain the type of conduct expected of students enrolled at the school. Schools can also be seen from the pupils' point-of-view in student newspapers, annuals, and club records. Wolfe Hall's *Banner* began publication in December 1883 and monthly issues exist until 1889, about which time it became a yearbook. As a newspaper it

Celestine Casey and Sister M. Edmond Fern, *Loretto of the Rockies* (Denver: n.p., 1943); Carothers, "Colorado Woman's College"; Michael Churchman, *The Kent School, 1922-1972* (Englewood, Colo.: By the Author, 1972). (Wolfe Hall and the Wolcott School were antecedents of the Kent School.) William E. Davis, *Glory Colorado!* (Boulder, Colo.: Pruett Publishing Co., 1965); Sister M. Lilliana Owens, "Denver's Pioneering Academy, St. Mary's Academy" (M.S. thesis, St. Louis University, 1940) and her articles in *The Colorado Magazine* 14 (May 1937) and 16 (November 1939) on the founding of St. Mary's Academy; Wallace Blythe Turner, *Colorado Woman's College. The First 75 Years* (Boulder, Colo.: Johnson Publishing Co., 1962).

contained articles on school clubs, bits of news and gossip on the students, occasional tidbits on alumnae, literary pieces by students, in addition to coverage of major school events, such as field days or the move into a new building.<sup>19</sup>

Fragments of club records provide an inside view of certain aspects of student life. The East Denver High School clubs known as the Lyceum Society and the Attic Society have preserved minutes and publications. In the case of coeducational institutions, such records give an indication of the types of organizations that girls had an interest in or were allowed to join. In both coeducational and girls' schools, club rosters indicate which girls participated in what types of activities. Another valuable source of information consists of alumnae records. Wolfe Hall had a very active alumnae association, meeting for years after the school had closed. Some minutes of meetings survive, as do alumnae editions of the *Banner*, which give names, addresses, and often occupations of former students.<sup>20</sup> Included in most school collections are newspaper clippings or transcripts of articles that yield information concerning the opening of the institution and sometimes the closing, school activities, graduates, and honors bestowed on pupils.

The resources of school collections are of prime importance to the study of women's history in Colorado up to World War I. School curriculum forms the basis for several areas of investigation. Comparisons can be made between course offerings in private female and public coeducational schools and between private academies for girls and for boys. The curriculum of a Colorado female academy can be compared with that of a private girls' school in another region of the country. The evolution of curriculum over the years within the same

<sup>19</sup> It is interesting to note that in the 1890s Wolfe Hall began offering the sloyd system of light carpentry (see catalogs, 1892-1895). For younger girls the sloyd system introduced a course in wood carving and for older girls it was used to promote the study of design in drawing. The 1876 Wolfe Hall catalog states that "The teachers will keep a record of all recitations, report all failures and misconducts, and all pupils who are *absent or late in class, study room, at Chapel, table, or in the dormitory*, and give a memorandum of each report to the Principal, which will be sent to the Parents each month. All pupils must conform to all such rules as may be prescribed."

In addition to the Wolfe Hall *Banner*, various editions of the Wolcott School *Lariat* (DPLW) and the St. Mary's Academy yearbooks and newspapers are extant. Student publications for Colorado Woman's College, the University of Colorado, the University of Denver, and the State Normal School (Greeley) can be found at their respective libraries and occasionally at DPLW or other major libraries.

<sup>20</sup> In the East Denver High School collection (DPLW) there is a reunion book for the class of 1895 that contains a section entitled "Let Us Talk Informally about Ourselves." For the men, separate occupations are listed with names and data under each one. The biographical sketches on the women have all been grouped together under the heading "Shall We Join the Ladies," regardless of whether the women were pursuing careers, such as doctors, businesswomen, or teachers.



The educational experiences of women before World War I were varied as evidenced by the women's basketball team at the University of Colorado in 1901. While many women married, others entered the work force following graduation, such as these nurses in the maternity ward in Minnequa Hospital in Pueblo.



institution can be studied in conjunction with an analysis of the official school attitude toward the education of women.

Focusing on women's postgraduation experiences constitutes another important avenue of research. The Wolfe Hall materials provide an excellent source of data on which alumnae continued their education, married, or went to work. This type of information is often available for colleges. Whether graduates sought a career, marriage, or a combination of the two, indicates the priorities of pre-1914 Colorado women. Was there a correlation between school leadership and the path female students took after graduation? Did those girls who joined school clubs remain active in voluntary associations after graduation? A last point of inquiry centers around the fact that friendships formed in school often persisted for many years. Did adult voluntary organizations serve as vehicles for the perpetuation of such relationships?<sup>21</sup>

Whether resulting from friendships formed during school years, denominational affiliation, or neighborhood circles, the membership of women in exclusively female organizations was a widespread phenomenon in late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century Colorado as well as nationwide. The importance of women's clubs in structuring the everyday lives of middle- and upper-class women in both urban and rural areas of the state is apparent when newspaper society and women's pages as well as the obituaries of women of this era are examined. Although statistics on the proportion of women who joined clubs or the average number of clubs a woman belonged to are lacking, organizational records confirm the expansion of the club movement and the proliferation of women's voluntary associations in Colorado during this period.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>21</sup> It is important to note that a number of young women went to business schools, such as Colorado Commercial College, or to a nursing school, such as the Colorado Training School for Nurses. See the *Mecca Magazine* 3 (November 1901), SHSC, and the Louie Croft Boyd Collection, DPLW.

One example of continuing ties is the OTX, a secret girls' society formed by the students of Wolcott School in the late 1890s and outlawed by the school about 1905. It survived for at least seventy years, meeting weekly, except in the summer (from a letter to SHSC from James Grafton Rogers explaining a record book from the 1920s listing members, maiden names, present address, husband's name and date of marriage, college or further schooling, and children. It was a "Robin" book where each woman wrote a short biographical sketch, included pictures, and then sent it on to the next person on the list, thus providing the reader with an update on the members, many of whom were prominent leaders of Colorado society).

<sup>22</sup> Jane C. Croly, *The History of the Woman's Club Movement in America* (New York: Henry G. Allen & Co., 1898), pp. 260-301, discusses Colorado. For useful background material on women's organizations in the pre-World War I era, see Sophonisba P. Breckinridge, *Women in the Twentieth Century: A Study of Their Political, Social, and Economic Activities* (New York: McGraw Hill Book Co., 1933), pp. 11-41.



Constructing an accurate typology of the variety of women's organizations existing in Colorado before World War I constitutes a fundamental research priority. Such a listing must encompass church-related associations,<sup>23</sup> charitable or philanthropic organizations,<sup>24</sup> local branches of national organizations,<sup>25</sup> literary and cultural clubs,<sup>26</sup> clubs that combined social, cultural, and civic concerns,<sup>27</sup> political clubs,<sup>28</sup> alumnae organizations of schools or colleges,<sup>29</sup> and business and professional women's clubs.<sup>30</sup> The subject of women's organizational life in Colorado remains virtually unexplored despite the existence of voluminous records related to the numerous women's clubs and associations. Printed and manuscript sources from the state and the local levels, as well as regular newspaper accounts of club activities, form the basis for wide-ranging and intensive studies of the experience of women in the club milieu.

Annual announcements, reports, yearbooks, and programs of specific events contain information on the constitution and bylaws, committees, officers, members, history, and activities of clubs. This type of printed documentation survives for a significant number of women's organizations, including the Woman's Club of Denver, the Denver Fortnightly Club, the Clio Club, the Young Ladies Clio Club, and the Boulder Fortnightly Club, on the local level, and the Colorado State Federation of Women's Clubs, the Woman's Christian Temperance Union, Eastern Star, and the Daughters of the American Revolution, on the state level.<sup>31</sup>

From this material it is possible to reconstruct the formal structure of each organization, its goals and purposes, its connections with other organizations, both inside the state and on the national level, and the topics discussed at meetings. The structure of leadership within the club can be plotted through analysis of the tenure of club officers. In addition, a social profile of club membership is feasible if lists of club members are analyzed in conjunction with data on the background characteristics of these women.<sup>32</sup> It would be particularly interesting to learn how many club women were college educated or had ever engaged in paid employment. A comprehensive study of a group of women's clubs in a particular community might analyze patterns of overlapping club membership. Which organizations were certain types of women likely to belong to? What combinations of club membership were most common among certain women? What role

did limitations on club membership play in maintaining the exclusivity of certain organizations? A comparative study of membership qualifications and procedures for nomination to membership would offer insight into the character of different clubs. In some clubs, prospective members had to be proposed by a member and ratified by other members. How many women's clubs restricted participation to those with acceptable familial or friendship ties?

Valuable clues to the actual functioning of women's organizations are found in the manuscript club minutes that supplement the printed club programs, announcements, and yearbooks. For example, in the pre-1914 period, record books survive for the Round Table Club (DPLW), the Civic Federation (SHSC), the Boulder Woman's Christian Temperance Union (CU), the Woman's Home Missionary Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church (Ira J. Taylor Library of the Iliff School of Theology), and the San Juan's Woman's Club (DPLW).<sup>33</sup> Manuscript minutes clarify the internal workings

<sup>23</sup> Examples are the Girls Friendly Society and the Woman's Auxiliary of the Episcopal Church, the Woman's Home Missionary Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church, the Women's National Unitarian Alliance, Denver Branch, the Jewish Women's Council, Denver Section, and the Women's Catholic Order of Foresters.

<sup>24</sup> Examples are the Pioneer Ladies Aid Society, the Hebrew Ladies Benevolent Society, and St. Vincent's Society.

<sup>25</sup> Examples are the Young Woman's Christian Association (formerly the Home Club), the Woman's Christian Temperance Union, the Daughters of the American Revolution, and Eastern Star.

<sup>26</sup> Examples are the Clio Club, the Ladies German Club, the Fortnightly Club, the Round Table Club, the Monday Literary Club, the Tuesday Musical Club (all in Denver), the Boulder Fortnightly Club, and some of the clubs that comprised the Colorado State Association of Colored Women's Clubs, such as the Pond Lily Art and Literary Club.

<sup>27</sup> Examples are the Woman's Club of Denver, the Northside Woman's Club (Denver), and the Woman's Club of Boulder.

<sup>28</sup> Examples are the Women's Republican League, the Colorado Women's Democratic Club, the Woman's Populist League of Denver, and the Civic Federation (Denver), a nonpartisan association of women. See Sumner, *Equal Suffrage*, pp. 66-71, on women's political clubs.

<sup>29</sup> Examples are the alumnae association of Wolfe Hall, the Wellesley Club of Colorado, and the Colorado branch of the Association of Collegiate Alumnae.

<sup>30</sup> Examples are the Denver Woman's Press Club and the National Association of Women Stenographers, Denver Council. See Minnie Hall Krauser, "The Denver Woman's Press Club," *The Colorado Magazine* 16 (March 1939): 62-69.

<sup>31</sup> The Colorado Woman's Christian Temperance Union Papers 1881-1969 (CU) comprise a vast amount of useful source material on this period for both state and local levels.

<sup>32</sup> Directories of the social elite are useful in dealing with this question. See, for example, Mrs. Agnes Leonard Hill, *The Colorado Blue Book* (Denver: James R. Ives & Co., 1892); Charles D. Thompson, *Elite Directory and Club List of Denver* (Denver: By the Author, 1891); *The Social Year-Book, 1898, Denver, Colorado* (Denver: Carson Harper Co., 1898); *Who's Who in Denver Society, 1908* (Denver: W.H. Kistler Stationery Co., 1908); *Denver City Blue Book and Social Register for 1908-09* (Denver: White-Stevens Publishing Co., 1908); and *The Social Record and Club Annual or Denver's Prominents* (Denver: George V. Richards, 1910).

<sup>33</sup> The Ira J. Taylor Library contains the Joint Archives of the Iliff School of Theology and the Rocky Mountain Conference of the United Methodist Church. This depository possesses other records of value for the study of women in the Methodist church, as, for example, the "Minutes of the Association of Ministers' Wives of the Colorado Conference, 1892-1911."

of a club and expose its operational values. The earliest minutes detail the foundation of the club and the ongoing records reveal how closely the club followed the objectives of its founders. The consistency and regularity of procedures, the attentiveness to rules, and the meticulous financial and attendance records of many of the clubs is impressive. Whether departures from tradition in the conduct of club business were perceived as legitimate or not illuminates the social attitudes of club members.

What might be called the woman's club culture can be probed by examining the minutes in conjunction with club scrapbooks. Colorado women's organizations frequently kept scrapbooks or prepared them for special occasions, and these books contain club memorabilia, such as invitations, programs, and decorations from special events, pictures of members, newspaper clippings on the club, letters from or about club members, and items regarding guests. The scrapbooks of the Daughters of the American Revolution (DPLW), the Reviewers Club (DPLW), the Tuesday Musical Club (DPLW), and the State Association of Colored Women's Clubs (DPLW) provide the researcher with the small details with which to dissect the texture of club life. Immersion in such minutiae elucidates the vocabulary, rituals, and symbolism of club life as well as the patterning of relationships within the club.

With respect to literary and cultural clubs, papers delivered by club members provide evidence of the intellectual horizons of Colorado club women before the First World War. Topics chosen, the style of presentation, the acuity of perceptions, the skill of analysis, and the depth of research indicate the parameters of the woman's world.<sup>34</sup> When copies of papers given at club meetings do not survive, club minutes often give some account of the contents of the papers and club announcements list the titles of papers given during each year. The selection of guest speakers by some clubs and the topics of their lectures are also of interest in pinpointing the intellectual level of club members.<sup>35</sup>

In evaluating the functions of Colorado women's clubs before the First World War, it is not sufficient to note the involvement of these associations in cultural and civic projects. The impact of participation in these organizations on the women who inhabited the club world must also be consid-

ered.<sup>36</sup> Was the club world confining or liberating? How much of a woman's time was spent in club-related activities? What sorts of satisfactions did a woman derive from her involvement in women's groups? In what ways were her attitudes and outlook on life shaped by contact with other women in the club environment? How did the roles she assumed in the club context influence her behavior in other spheres? The manifold accomplishments of Colorado women within the club world must be assessed not only in terms of criteria specific to that environment but also by more universal standards.

Activity in the woman's club provided the path to involvement in the larger society for some women, whether in paid employment or public service. A case in point is Martha A.B. Conine who became a state legislator and campaigner in the national suffrage movement after playing a leadership role in the Northside Woman's Club in Denver.<sup>37</sup> That Colorado women's club leaders at times moved into professional or executive positions in the larger society testifies not only to their abilities but also to the function of the woman's club as a training ground wherein expertise and confidence were gained. The overlap and connections between the club and the work world need to be examined in light of the significant minority of women who moved with ease from one to the other.

While most Colorado women worked in the home, on the farm, or for philanthropic causes, a minority of the state's women entered paid employment before World War I. In 1900 about twenty-five percent of Denver women were classified as breadwinners. The number and types of occupations open to Colorado women between 1860 and 1910 must be ascertained and then related to nationwide trends. The deployment of the Denver female labor force needs to be studied and compared with that of other cities. And, of course, the wage scales of Colorado women workers must be contrasted with those of other regions.<sup>38</sup>

<sup>34</sup> In her first report as president of the Woman's Club of Boulder in 1903, Jennie H. Baker perceived the function of the woman's club as educator: "Promptness, business management, tact, breadth of vision and of heart—are a part of the education which a large club gives to the woman who seeks for real meaning in her club work" (Woman's Club of Boulder Collection, 1901-1974, CU).

<sup>37</sup> The Martha A. Bushnell Conine Scrapbook (DPLW) documents the progress of her career. See her article, "Woman's Work in Denver," in the September 1898 issue of *Municipal Affairs*. See also the Alice Polk Hill papers (SHSC).

<sup>38</sup> Mrs. William N. (Elizabeth M.) Byers is an example of a philanthropic worker. She was president of the Working Boys Home and School. Her papers concerning this work are located at DPLW; U.S., Bureau of the Census, *Statistics of Women at Work Based on Unpublished Information Derived from the Schedules of the Twelfth Census: 1900* (Washington, D.C.:

<sup>34</sup> See the collection of papers of the Denver Fortnightly Club (DPLW).

<sup>35</sup> See, for example, the minutes of the Round Table Club (DPLW).

Statistical data on female workers in Colorado before World War I can be gleaned from federal census reports, manuscript census schedules, and city directories. Published census documents for the years spanning 1860 to 1910 include information on employed women in Colorado and in the city of Denver. Using such statistics, a profile of the state's female labor force over five decades can be constructed, focusing on occupational concentrations, the location of immigrant and Black female workers in the occupational hierarchy, and the marital status of women workers. Comparisons with statistics on male workers, whether implicit or explicit, must accompany such analysis. The federal census of 1900, as an example, reveals that of Colorado's 27,966 female workers over ten years of age, 13,731 (forty-nine percent) were classified in domestic and personal service; 4,918 (eighteen percent) were engaged in manufacturing and mechanical pursuits; 4,178 (fifteen percent) were found in professional service; 3,982 (fourteen percent) were found in trade and transportation; and 1,157 (four percent) were engaged in agricultural pursuits. The largest single occupational classification for women in the state in 1900 was servants and waitresses (7,202), followed by teachers and professors in colleges (2,798), and dressmakers (2,542).<sup>39</sup>

In 1900 the state's female workers included 1,344 Black women and 5,578 women of foreign birth. These women workers were heavily concentrated in domestic and personal service, with ninety-three percent of the Blacks and sixty-nine percent of the foreign-born white women found in this occupational category. On the other hand, a prestigious occupation such as physician contained predominantly native white females.<sup>40</sup>

Census data also records the marital status of women workers. Single workers were in the majority in Colorado in 1900 (sixty percent), but seventeen percent of the state's female workers were married, twenty percent were widowed, and three percent were divorced. The relationship between

work and family patterns outlined by these statistics on the marital status of female workers can be clarified through intensive analysis of the manuscript schedules for the 1860, 1870, 1880, and 1900 federal censuses and the state census of 1885. Placing female workers in the context of the household helps determine the significance of cultural heritage in promoting or retarding the employment of women.

City directories, such as those of Denver, Fort Collins, Colorado Springs, Leadville, and Pueblo provide information on female employment in specific years not covered by the census.<sup>41</sup> Using consecutive issues of the Denver City directory, for example, female career patterns over time can be traced. Comparative analyses of occupational persistence between women in different job categories, as well as married and single women, open a fruitful line of research. In order to ascertain the distinctive characteristics of Colorado's female workers, these findings must be related to those on male occupational persistence. Did women change jobs more frequently than men? Were single women apt to give up their jobs after they married? Were working-class women more likely to change positions than white collar or professional women?

After outlining the statistical parameters of the female work world in pre-1914 Colorado, the historian must attempt to fill in the picture with more substance on the lives of working women in the state. Did women seek employment because of personal aspiration or financial necessity? Questions relating to working conditions, the role of labor organizations, discrimination against women on the job, and the nature of employer-employee relations need to be investigated. What were the positive satisfactions of work for women? How did female workers contribute toward business success? Were women innovators on the job?

As in other areas of women's history, firsthand accounts of women workers are biased toward women of the middle and the upper classes. Most of the extant literary evidence centers on professional and business women.<sup>42</sup> Diaries and personal scrapbooks dealing with career landmarks, speeches deliv-

Government Printing Office, 1907), p. 146. A basic reference on this subject is Robert W. Smuts, *Women and Work in America* (New York: Schocken Books, 1971; originally published 1959); and Sumner, *Equal Suffrage*, pp. 150-79, presents pertinent economic data.

<sup>39</sup> U.S., Bureau of the Census, *Special Reports: Occupations at the Twelfth Census* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1904).

<sup>40</sup> See the short biographical sketches of early female physicians in Mary De Mund, *Women Physicians of Colorado* (Denver: Range Press, 1976). Some women came to Colorado as doctors, but others were educated in Denver at the Denver College of Medicine, Gross Medical College, the Denver Homeopathic College, and the University of Colorado Medical School.

<sup>41</sup> *Denver City Directory* (Denver: Ballenger and Richards); *Fort Collins City Directory* (Ft. Collins: Courier Printing and Publishing Co.); *The Giles City Directory of Colorado Springs, Colorado City, and Manitou* (Colorado Springs: Giles Directory Co.); *Leadville City Directory* (Leadville: Ballenger and Richards); *City of Pueblo Annual Directory* (Pueblo: Chieftain Publishing Co.).

<sup>42</sup> The diaries of Florence McCune (SHSC), who became an office worker, form an exception to this rule.

ered, and personal and business correspondence, constitute a valuable source for studying such women.<sup>43</sup> Leonel Ross O'Bryan (Polly Pry) was a newspaper woman and editor of her own weekly paper, *Polly Pry* (1903-1905). She began her career in New York at the *New York World* and came to the *Denver Post* around 1898. As Polly Pry she was one of the special writers on the *Post* and among other things did a series of articles exposing corruption at such places as the Girls' Industrial School, the State Children's Home, and various Indian schools around the state. O'Bryan was consciously political, calling down government officials whenever she saw the need. In a letter to Governor Adams (17 December 1904) she stated that "your acts, as a public character, simply demand criticism and you receive it. I have no apologies to make to you for anything I have ever printed." While editing her paper she launched a fight for the Western Federation of Miners.<sup>44</sup>

Colorado-based and woman-oriented magazines, such as the *Mecca Magazine*, *Lillian Hartman's Colorado*, and the *Business Woman's Magazine* often featured active and influential women in their issues. These articles usually included brief biographical sketches of the women that discussed their careers, social activities, and political interests.<sup>45</sup> The editors at times utilized this material to support female candidates running for the state legislature or a school position.<sup>46</sup> In the 14 October 1899 issue of the *Mecca Magazine* an article appeared on Dr. Kate Lobinger, who was a candidate for state

<sup>43</sup> Examples are the collections of Mary F. Lathrop, lawyer (DPLW, SHSC); Ellis Meredith, writer and reformer (SHSC); Martha B. Conine, state legislator (DPLW); Maude Hawk Fealy, actress (DPLW); "Queen Ann" Bassett Willis, cattlemaster (DPLW); and Mary Rippon, professor at the University of Colorado (CU). See also the collection of Louie Croft Boyd, nurse (DPLW), which contains clippings on the professionalization of nursing and the history of the Colorado Training School for Nurses.

<sup>44</sup> There is a Leonel Ross O'Bryan collection at DPLW that includes scrapbooks of her newspaper articles, personal correspondence, and documents on the incorporation of the Polly Pry Publishing Company. Copies of the weekly paper, *Polly Pry*, are available at DPLW and SHSC. Additional information on O'Bryan is found in Ishbel Ross, *Ladies of the Press: The Story of Women in Journalism by an Insider* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1936).

<sup>45</sup> The *Mecca Magazine*, a weekly published in Denver beginning 12 November 1898, was edited first by Clara Foltz and then by Earl and Callie Bonney Marble. Issues are available at SHSC. *Lillian Hartman's Colorado* was "a weekly paper devoted to the interest of woman as a citizen, to the industries of Colorado, and the welfare of the American Republic." The first issue of this Denver-based paper was 11 September 1909. Copies through March 1911 are available at SHSC. *Business Woman's Magazine* was the official organ of both the Colorado Federation of Women's Clubs and the Business Woman's National League. It began in August 1903 with Louise Lee Hardin as the editor and later became the *Modern World*. Various issues are available at SHSC. See articles on Miss Marguerite Zearing, teacher and writer, *Mecca Magazine*, 9 January 1899; Mrs. Sadie May Fisher, a "Colorado scientific lady" who developed a "female remedy" known as Fisher's Uterine Tonic or "knowledge," *Ibid.*, 1 April 1899.

<sup>46</sup> See article on Dr. Katherine Polly, *Mecca Magazine*, 21 October 1899. Various issues of *Lillian Hartman's Colorado* feature women whom Hartman supported for public office.

**Business Woman's  
MAGAZINE**

THE ONLY  
BUSINESS  
WOMAN'S  
PERIODICAL  
IN THE  
WORLD

**FEBRUARY**

Over:  
Colo.

10¢ the Cop  
\$1.00 the Ye

LOUISE LEE HARDIN, Editor & Publisher

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Mary C.C. Bradford (1862-1938) served for twelve years as the state superintendent of public instruction in Colorado's schools.

Louise Lee Hardin, a native of Kentucky and an early president of the Denver Business Woman's Club, was the editor and publisher of the Denver-based Business Woman's Magazine, which began publication in July 1903.



superintendent of public instruction. She was a Vassar graduate and received her medical degree in 1890 from the Woman's Medical College of New York City. The next issue, 21 October, focused on Dr. Katherine Polly, the Republican candidate for superintendent of public schools in Teller County. Dr. Polly taught prior to her marriage, attended medical school with her husband, and always maintained her interest in education.

Clara Foltz was the editor and the publisher of the *Mecca Magazine* when it began in 1898. She was a lawyer, having practiced in New York, California, and before the Supreme Court in Washington D.C., and she envisioned a practice in Denver. Foltz was an ardent and consistent advocate of woman's suffrage and higher education for women.<sup>47</sup>

Each issue of *Lillian Hartman's Colorado* featured a woman whose talents and training fitted her for office. Hartman's plan was to set forth the qualifications of numerous capable women and demand the right to representation on the party tickets. Often the women she endorsed were important in voluntary activities. For example, Mrs. Dora Phelps was an orator and organizer, Mrs. Dewey C. Bailey was president of the Denver Woman's Club, and Mrs. Annie C. Whitmore was also Woman's Club president as well as a member of the Daughters of the American Revolution.<sup>48</sup>

<sup>47</sup> See *Mecca Magazine* 1 (November 1898).

<sup>48</sup> Mary C.C. Bradford wrote in 1908 that in the fourteen years since woman's suffrage in Colorado was achieved, women had not rushed to become office seekers. Their main interest

Mrs. M. C. Farnham, M. D.  
GYNECOLOGIST AND SPECIALIST

The only Physician and Surgeon  
West of New York City who

TREATS WOMEN EXCLUSIVELY



Business and professional women placed in the publications of the day, such as the one placed by Dr. M.C. Farnham in Business Woman's Magazine.

Office: Cor. Thirteenth and California Sts.  
Denver, Colorado

Newspaper articles often treated developments in the field of women's employment. For example, on 24 July 1901, the *Denver Times* included a column entitled "Edith Sampson Discusses Opportunities in Journalism for Women." In the same year, the *Times* also reported on the telephone girls of the Denver Telephone Exchange and on Mary F. Bradner, a successful Denver dentist.<sup>49</sup>

Included in the publications of the day were advertisements placed by professional and business women to introduce prospective female customers to their services. Mrs. Mary C. Farnham, M.D., gynecologist and specialist, ran advertisements in several places, including the *Business Woman's Magazine*, the *Denver Blue Book*, and *Thompson's Elite Directory*, describing herself as the only physician and surgeon west of New York City who treated women exclusively. The *Denver Blue Book* also contained an advertisement for the Woman's Exchange, which aimed "to provide a place where women's work of every kind that is purchasable may be placed for sale, and where orders for such work may be taken."

lay in the state legislature and positions in education. Mary C.C. Bradford, *Equal Suffrage in Colorado from 1893-1908* (Denver: Colorado Equal Suffrage Association, 1908); Summer, *Equal Suffrage*, also deals with the impact of woman suffrage on legislation and officeholding.

<sup>49</sup> The article on the telephone girls is in the *Denver Times*, 1 December 1901, and the article on Mary F. Bradner is in the *Denver Times*, 27 October 1901. See also the note in the *Leadville Chronicle Annual* (Spring 1881) on the millinery and dressmaking business of Miss Kate A. Morrissey. The Dawson Scrapbooks, volumes 67-69 (SHSC), contain clippings on unusual occupations of Colorado women.

Organizational records, such as those of the Denver Woman's Press Club (SHSC, CU), the Artists Club (DPLW), and the Denver Art League (DPLW), provide sketchy background information on members as well as enumerating the goals and accomplishments of the group. Membership lists of the Denver Teacher's Club, a predominantly female organization, are also available. Professional publications such as the *Business Woman's Magazine* and the *Colorado School Journal* yield further information on working women. Additionally, the *Colorado School Journal* sheds light on what was expected of a teacher prior to 1914 and what attitudes existed at this time about educating women in Colorado.

The lives of female workers at the lower end of the occupational scale can be approached by means of a few sources. The *Biennial Reports of the Bureau of Labor Statistics of the State of Colorado* provide documentation on women's wages, union membership, and strikes.<sup>50</sup> The *Colorado Trades and Labor Directory* also contains information on women's unions, such as the Bindery Women's Union No. 58 of Denver.<sup>51</sup> The *Eighth Biennial Report of the Bureau of Labor Statistics* focuses on women wage earners. Culling the replies to a questionnaire distributed to female wage earners, the bureau placed a special section in the report on the "Opinions and Convictions of Working Women," which included comments such as the following:

Save any money? I guess you don't understand the life of a clerk in one of the stores in Denver. I should say we don't save any money; it is only with the utmost economy that I make the \$5.50 per week which I receive pay my expenses.—Sales clerk (p. 23).

I like my place fairly well. The hours are too long and the wages too small. The employer makes a big profit on our work. She only hires us when obliged to and turns us off without notice. I am employed as steadily as my health will stand. We get no pay for extra hours. My wages and earning are better than when I lived in Chicago—quite a little better.—Seamstress (p. 58).

The life of one who works as a domestic, as I have for the last 12 years, is filled with disagreeable experiences. . . . She is expected to fire the furnace, to sweep the rooms, to make the beds, to cook and wait on table, to sweep the snow off the sidewalks in winter and to be dressed nice and tidy at all times, so that she can answer the door bell. . . . She must be blind, too, at times, and if the lady is in a condition induced by looking too frequently upon the wine cup, as is often the case, the hired girl must not see that.—Housemaid (p. 49).

Further insight into the character of employer-employee relations in pre-1914 Colorado emerges from an article in the August 1910 issue of *Lillian Hartman's Colorado* about Miss Leonore Truitt, a young woman who lost her job with the state government because she refused to be "friends" with her boss or give him a certain sum out of each paycheck. The publisher advocated organizing a Woman's Protective League to combat such blatant corruption. The case of a female civil servant who lost her job because she spoke out against the department of her boss is related in the Henry M. Teller letters at DPLW.<sup>52</sup> The 8 March 1901 issue of the *Mecca Magazine* reports the case of a fourteen-year-old female worker who won a suit against Daniels and Fisher's department store for an injury she suffered in the freight elevator, which she was obliged to take in the performance of her duties.

The student of women and work in pre-1914 Colorado faces the task of documenting the occupational histories of different types of workers, with respect to motivation for working, on-the-job experiences, and strategies for occupational advancement.<sup>53</sup> Researchers also must examine the ways in which work impinged upon marriage and childbearing. It is important to remember that the career patterns of a female Black domestic servant and a college-educated, Anglo-Protestant physician or lawyer equally merit investigation.

More questions than answers emerge from this preliminary overview of four basic subject areas in Colorado women's history before the First World War. It is encouraging to note, however, that additional sources for studying the lives of women in this period are yet to be uncovered. Searching for documents in this field has led to a number of potential leads and the process of tracking down these items is an ongoing enterprise. Nevertheless, it is appropriate, at this point, to suggest some lines for future research.

<sup>50</sup> *Biennial Report of the Bureau of Labor Statistics of the State of Colorado* for various years.

<sup>51</sup> *Colorado Trades and Labor Directory* (Denver: Colorado Trades and Labor Directory Co., 1898). See also Sumner, *Equal Suffrage*, pp. 170-78, on women in trade unions.

<sup>52</sup> H. M. Teller Collection letters 24, 48, 367 (DPLW).

<sup>53</sup> Information is also available on women who worked outside the law, such as prostitutes. Secondary sources on prostitution in Colorado include Larry Knudsen, "When Prostitution Was an Issue," *Boulder Daily Camera*, 11 March 1973; Max Miller and Fred Mazzulla, *Holladay Street* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1971); Fred and Jo Mazzulla, *Brass Checks and Red Lights* (Denver: By the Authors, 1966); Caroline Bancroft, *Six Racy Madams of Colorado* (Boulder: Johnson Publishing Co., 1965); Kay Reynolds Blair, *Ladies of the Lamplight* (Leadville, Colo.: Timberline Books, 1971); and Jacqueline Grannell Couch, *Those Golden Girls of Market Street: Denver's Infamous Red Light District* (Fort Collins, Colo.: Old Army Press, 1974).

It is essential to measure and explain the changes in the lives of Colorado women over the half century covered in this essay. In what ways were women affected by the economic and political evolution of the state, by its population expansion and institutional maturation? In turn, how did women influence the state's course of development or the history of particular communities? What does the victory of woman suffrage in Colorado in 1893 tell us about the women of this state? On Christmas Day 1897 the women of Colorado were given the opportunity of publishing a special issue of the *Denver Rocky Mountain News* detailing their interests and activities. How unique was this phenomenon and what is its significance?

Not only societal change but individual change falls within the province of the historian. Development over the life cycle constitutes a major theme of women's history and studying the ways in which stages of the female life cycle were experienced by Colorado women of different class positions and ethnic backgrounds will not only add to our knowledge of the state's female population but also improve our understanding of the state's culture.

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# The Colorado Cottage Home

BY SHERILYN BRANDENSTEIN

After the Civil War the United States entered a period of turmoil and transition, the effects of which lasted through the turn of the century. With industrialization accelerating, Americans and immigrants flocked to the nation's cities. Women and children were drawn out of their homes to work long hours in factories, often under unhealthy conditions. Working-class families were under increased strain, and a sense of unrest spread through the land.

As workers began to unite to change their plight, they looked to churches not only to help them obtain a more equitable economic situation but also to provide them with immediate social services. Although the Catholic church did respond in terms of both political and social activity, Protestants were more eager to work on the humanitarian and the spiritual aspects of societal problems than to back controversial politico-economic reforms. Events of the late nineteenth century brought on a surge of social service and charity work by middle- and upper-class Americans, many closely tied with organized Christian organizations.

The faith of these groups in reform efforts resulted partially from a new concept of human development coming from Europe, particularly England. Darwin's theory of evolution was being applied to social science, and human problems were increasingly thought to be "curable," rather than simply the results of a fate to be endured. In short, there was hope that society could be rid of illness, crime, and poverty through dedicated work with the victims of these problems.

Reformers were probably most zealous in their concern for children and thus, indirectly, for women. The environment in which children were born and raised took on more importance, and many people believed that the mother was the



most influential person in shaping a child's character. Out of this concern, for both children and young women, came a movement to "rescue" women who became pregnant out of wedlock. The proponents of this movement felt that they might be able to prevent these women from entering a life of vice and save their children from the dreaded label of illegitimacy by allowing adoption.

The movement, which began in England, quickly gained adherents in the United States. Charles Crittenton, a well-established New York businessman, led the crusade across this country, aided by the Women's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU). Although the WCTU was originally established to promote prohibition, it adopted other causes in its attempt to foster a wholesome family life. These included labor reform, woman's suffrage, and "social purity." Its members joined with the White Cross Society, a men's organization, to inspire public support for an equal moral standard for both sexes.

One tangible result of the WCTU's efforts was the establishment of numerous "rescue homes" for unmarried pregnant women. Besides offering health care and a refuge from public scorn, the homes were intended to be centers of reform, where the clients would come to realize the value of living virtuously thereafter.<sup>1</sup>

In Colorado the WCTU grew rapidly as women migrated here in larger numbers. At one time, there were fifty chapters scattered around the young, sparsely-settled state. Like their sisters in other states, Colorado WCTU members saw the need for a home for "unfortunate girls" and set to work to create one. In 1886 the Colorado Cottage Home was organized, although the first statement of purpose for the home was not formalized until 1889 at the Tenth Annual Session of the Colorado WCTU:

The object of this refuge is to give assistance to misled, unfortunate and unprotected women and girls; to advise the

<sup>1</sup> For a discussion of these reform sentiments, see Allen Freeman Davis, *Spearheads for Reform: Social Settlements and the Progressive Movement* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1967); information on European antecedents to American reform is found in Arthur Mann, *Yankee Reformers in an Urban Age* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1954); on Colorado in particular, consult Carl Ubbelohde, Maxine Benson, and Duane A. Smith, *A Colorado History*, revised centennial edition (Boulder: Pruett Publishing Co., 1976), pp. 267-80; and on Denver, see Ronald L. DeLoeme, "Turn-of-the-Century Denver: An Invitation to Reform," *The Colorado Magazine* 45 (Winter 1968):1-15; on religious reform influences, consult Aaron I. Abell, *The Urban Impact on American Protestantism, 1865-1900* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1943) and Henry F. May, *Protestant Churches and Industrial America* (New York: Harper, 1949); on Crittenton, see Otto Wilson, *Fifty Years' Work with Girls, 1883-1933: A Story of the Florence Crittenton Homes* (Alexandria, Va.: National Florence Crittenton Mission, 1933).

untaught and motherless; to care for them if sick, and place them in a condition to earn an honest living when well; to shelter those who have wandered from the right; and to shield all who give evidence of a desire to return to the path of virtue.<sup>2</sup>

The Colorado Cottage Home operated at various locations, primarily in Denver, between 1886 and 1932. One of the earliest public references to the home appeared in the *Colorado Springs Gazette* on New Year's Day in 1889. "In June, '86 Mrs. Catherine Beach, wife of the Baptist minister in Leadville (now an ordained minister herself) spent some time in Colorado Springs working in the interest of a Cottage Home for betrayed girls with the result of opening such a home in the city, where it remained about two years." There was little else to describe what the first home was like, except for a small announcement in the *Gazette* on 16 February 1888 stating that the home was moving to Denver. The announcement also indicated that the home had been located in the northeastern part of Colorado Springs, and that it had as its object the "reformation of the fallen." Although the Colorado Cottage Home was transferred to Denver in February 1888, no record of why the move to the larger city was initiated has been uncovered. The new location was at 615 Pearl Street, a comparatively isolated section of Denver at that time.<sup>3</sup>

Throughout the period that the home was in operation, a WCTU board member was always specifically responsible for its finances and general condition. The first woman to hold that position was Mrs. Mira R. Sprague, and she was followed by Mrs. Sadie Likens. Periodic reports concerning the home and requests for donations were made by board members in the WCTU publications. It is chiefly through these reports, made by the trustees of the home, that some information about the workings of the institution can be obtained.

An 1891 newspaper article provided some insight into the environment at the home: "The matron always attends the door bell. There are an average of nine or ten girls in the house all the time, some of whom are always recovered sufficiently to assist the matron in taking care or giving the very best treatment to those who are in need of it." A reporter visiting the home observed that "the door bell was answered

<sup>2</sup> *Minutes of the W.C.T.U. of Colorado, 10th Annual Session, Held at Fort Collins* (Denver, Colo.: John Dove, 1889), Box 6, Women's Christian Temperance Union Collection, Western Historical Collections, University of Colorado Libraries, Boulder (hereinafter cited as WCTU, CU).

<sup>3</sup> *Colorado Springs Gazette*, 1 January 1889, 16 February 1888.

by a stout elderly good natured woman with a bouncing, screaming girl baby in her arms. . . . On the walls hung several scriptural texts and a few well chosen pictures, giving the room a home-like appearance of quiet, peaceful rest."<sup>4</sup>

The care that the women received in the home was also reported on in the Denver newspapers. An article in 1891 noted that the women were attended to by two medical doctors, Clough and Miles, who were assisted by a woman physician, a Doctor Brown. Two other female assistants, listed as Doctors Bradnor and Clark, were also on the medical staff. The home employed, in addition to the matron, several nurses and aides. With the exception of the male doctors, no men were allowed to enter the premises.<sup>5</sup> Sixty-two admissions and fifty-nine births were recorded at the home in 1891. Such a high rate of successful births was unusual for the late nineteenth century, and it is evidence of the quality of prenatal care that was given to the women in residence. Along with the medical care, WCTU members began holding evening devotional and song services for the residents.<sup>6</sup>

In return for a place to live and to be cared for, the residents of the home were expected to pay three-to-four dollars per week while they stayed at the home. Any woman who could not afford this was simply expected to repay the home later when she had an income. According to numerous reports, almost all of those who were indebted to the Colorado Cottage Home eventually paid back the cost of their care. Also, the fifty state chapters of the Colorado Women's Christian Temperance Union supplemented the home's income by each contributing two dollars per month.

Denver businesses also participated in the upkeep of the unwed mothers. Several bakeries, a butcher, and a soap factory all made donations of their products to the home. But, local donations alone could not cover all of the costs involved in caring for both mothers and children. For example, the monthly expenses in August 1892 included forty dollars for rent and thirty dollars for the matron's salary. To defray some of the expenses, WCTU chapters were also taking the responsibility for particular rooms in the home, providing the decorating, the major cleaning, and other services.<sup>7</sup>

Apparently, the young women who came to the Colorado Cottage Home were from a variety of backgrounds. An early report on the home indicated that they did not particularly represent the lower class, for most of them came from "industrious" families and were fairly well educated and included teachers, school girls, and servants. Because the home offered a unique service and did not require immediate payment, it most probably had a full range of clientele.

For the most part, the residents of the home were appreciative of the care they received. Its location was isolated, so the women were free from public exposure during their pregnancies. Throughout the home's existence, the WCTU publications carried excerpts from letters of thanks that former residents and their parents had submitted. One young woman produced a story about how it felt to search desperately for such a refuge, then find the Colorado Cottage Home facilities available to her. Another wrote that "the splendid influence there has given . . . higher ambitions in life than I ever had before." On the other hand, in 1891 one young woman, not particularly impressed with the home, proceeded to spread rumors around Denver that one of the male doctors had a rather licentious manner of dealing with the patients.<sup>8</sup>

Most of the women were quite positive about their stay at the home, however. One girl wrote that "I do not know what poor girls would do if it were not for that Home. I think we should kill ourselves."<sup>9</sup> Perhaps this sounds somewhat melodramatic, but social ostracism was strong toward unmarried, pregnant women and for some it was totally unbearable. For all of the protection that the Colorado Cottage Home provided, the women probably depended on the friendships of each other and the staff during the long months of seclusion.

In the spring of 1903 the home discontinued operation at its Pearl Street address. Two different stories exist concerning the reason for the closing. A newspaper reported that "after fifteen years of struggling to carry on its work, with very indifferent support from the public, the Central W.C.T.U. decided yesterday to close its Cottage Home, where unfortunate girls have been cared for."<sup>10</sup> In May 1903, however, Mrs. Sprague wrote that the home was not closed. Rather, the

<sup>4</sup> *Denver Daily News*, 23 June 1891.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 14, 23 June 1891. *Denver Rocky Mountain News*, 21 June 1891.

<sup>6</sup> *Colorado W.C.T.U. Bulletin* (October 1892), WCTU, CU.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.* (August 1892), WCTU, CU.

<sup>8</sup> "Cottage Home Report," *Colorado W.C.T.U. Messenger* (September 1918):4, WCTU, CU; "Indignantly Denied," *Denver Daily News*, 23 June 1891.

<sup>9</sup> "Cottage Home Report," *Colorado W.C.T.U. Bulletin* (June 1892):2, WCTU, CU.

<sup>10</sup> *Denver Times*, 16 April 1903.

board had decided that after fifteen years in one place, the home might provide better services if moved to new quarters. She indicated that the girls would be cared for in private residences until a more suitable location was found.<sup>11</sup>

More than one year later, the Colorado Cottage Home began operating again at 1457 South Logan Street on the southern edge of Denver. A WCTU member described how members scrubbed and sewed and moved furniture to ready the new facility and then enjoyed a gala open house. The new location, on several lots near the Platte Park, was "on a gently rising knoll about 7 blocks east and north of the University campus, a most beautiful and sightly location. The only drawback, is that they will not be as accessible for a time as could be desired. Only 1 block from the car line, but the cars run only once in 15 minutes. Time and the growth of the city will remedy that."<sup>12</sup>

During the first year at this location, more than forty young women were cared for. The single house, which was sufficient at first, soon became full. The WCTU rented an additional cottage, but both buildings quickly became crowded. Obviously, a roomier place was in order.

Once again the Colorado Cottage Home moved, this time to 427 Fairfax Street in the southeast corner of Denver. The April 1906 move was to be the final one for the home. The WCTU acquired a three-story house and a full block of land with no other structures on the premises. A visitor reported on the new home about a year after the move:

The front door opened into a good sized reception hall, with the usual hall furnishings. On the left were double



doors opening into the parlor, where I was seated till dinner was announced.

Entering the dining room from the hall, I found a neat and well arranged table set for six or eight girls, the doctor, who is also the matron, the superintendent, and myself. The dinner, which had been prepared exclusively by the girls, was also served by them, and was good enough to set before the governor. . . .

I was conducted through the halls, and peeped into the sleeping rooms and went up even to the attic and then down to the basement. Had it been general inspection day, it could not have been cleaner nor more orderly.<sup>13</sup>

Sometime around 1907, a Mrs. Young became the matron of the home. She probably served in that position longer than any other matron, and her popularity among the young residents, as well as the WCTU members, was indicated in a number of reports. One of the trustees wrote that she was "motherly and kind, taking a deep personal interest in each inmate . . . also, economical, diligent and indefatigable in her care of material things."<sup>14</sup> The WCTU perceived that a matron should serve as a role model for the home's residents.

Throughout the time that the home was located at the Fairfax address, there were few structural changes made to the building, other than the attic being finished in 1917; however, a garden and trees were planted and other amenities were provided to add warmth and homeiness in its isolated location. By 1908 a supplemental building had been constructed behind the home to serve as a coal house and a laundry.

In the spring of the following year the Colorado legislature passed an act requiring all medical institutions to be licensed with the State Board of Health, so that the board might control and regulate such institutions. The Colorado Cottage Home had been cooperating with state and local government for some time in processing birth records and relinquishment and adoption papers for the illegitimate children born there. In the summer of 1909, the WCTU institution was issued license number fourteen to operate under the new hospital act as a maternity home, with deliveries being performed on the premises.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>11</sup> *Colorado Temperance Bulletin* (May 1903):3, WCTU, CU.

<sup>12</sup> "Cottage Home Report," *Colorado W.C.T.U. Messenger* (June 1905):3, WCTU, CU.

<sup>13</sup> E.W.A. Fisk, "As Seen by a Visitor," *Colorado W.C.T.U. Messenger* (May 1907):4, WCTU, CU.

<sup>14</sup> "Cottage Home," *Colorado W.C.T.U. Messenger* (September 1917):3, WCTU, CU.

<sup>15</sup> Colo., State Board of Health, "Colorado Cottage Home license," No. 14, 11 August 1909, Denver.

By the second decade of this century, the home had become known far beyond the Denver area. In the *Colorado W.C.T.U. Annual Report* for 1910 and 1911, Mrs. F.I. Smith, the Colorado Cottage Home trustee, reported that in 1909 twenty women from Colorado, four from bordering states, six from midwestern states, and one each from California and Kentucky had found assistance at the home. The social service establishment in Denver also took note of the home in the *Denver Directory of Agencies for Community Welfare*. In the 1913 edition of that compilation, the home was listed under "Hospitals, Dispensaries and Health Organizations" and was described as a place "to shelter betrayed girls before and during confinement." It secured "employment for them and adoption for their babies," and it could accommodate twenty adults.<sup>16</sup>

By 1917 the First World War had drawn the United States into troop commitments. Wartime affected life at the home significantly. Soldiers' lovers and wives found their way to its care. In fact, by May 1919, it was noted that "since Oct. 1, 1918, this house has been full to capacity, having cared for 32 girls, 8 soldiers' wives and forty babies." The home began to experience some difficulty meeting the needs of the increased demand on its services.<sup>17</sup>

The 1920s came, and the home continued its services; however, it gradually lost support, both in WCTU circles and from the general public. Although the WCTU had seen the Prohibition Amendment instituted in the United States in 1920, the law was constantly threatened with repeal, and it was hard to enforce, so the WCTU membership remained vigilant in its work for the cause. Throughout the Twenties, the Colorado Cottage Home Board was faced with the increasingly difficult task of raising sufficient funds to keep the home operating. Apparently, the dwindling WCTU membership felt that prohibition was a more important goal than providing care for unwed mothers. To stimulate public interest, the board circulated publicity sheets on the home among church people, doctors, and other concerned persons.

The Colorado Cottage Home next came to the public's attention in January of 1930. A front-page headline in the *Denver Post* read "Six Members Ousted from State W.C.T.U."

<sup>16</sup> *Colorado W.C.T.U. Annual Report, 1910-11*; WCTU, CU; *Denver Directory of Social Agencies* (Denver: City Federation of Social Welfare, 1913).

<sup>17</sup> *Colorado W.C.T.U. Messenger* (May 1919):4; WCTU, CU.

It seemed that during 1929, someone on the Colorado WCTU executive board made the decision to withdraw money from the WCTU savings account. The funds were transferred to the home account to pay for more than \$1,000 worth of repairs at the home in order to meet city building ordinances. The action was taken without consulting the other officers of the state organization or the general membership. Marie B. Nichols, who had been the corresponding secretary at that time, later learned what had happened and, with five other WCTU members, called for an investigation of the matter. She charged Adrianna Hungerford, the state WCTU president, with having transferred the funds. Apparently, Mrs. Nichols felt that the WCTU members should have been given the choice of approving the funding for repairs, or disapproving funding and closing the home.<sup>18</sup>

Mrs. Hungerford, who had long been influential in the Colorado WCTU, as well as Colorado politics, was wealthy and strong-willed. She personally had contributed large sums of money to projects that the union had supported. During a WCTU loyalty conference in January 1930, Mrs. Hungerford initiated a "trial," and she appointed several WCTU members from around the state to act as judges. They handed down a verdict in favor of ousting the six women who had made the charges of malfeasance. Now under attack themselves, the "insurgents" publicly stated that they would refuse to abide by the verdict of the judges, whom Mrs. Hungerford had appointed.<sup>19</sup>

When the February 1930 issue of the *Colorado W.C.T.U. Messenger* was published, it was filled with letters of endorsement and praise for the Colorado Cottage Home, giving the impression that Mrs. Hungerford, chief editor of the periodical, was gathering support for her actions. These letters came from WCTU district presidents and from two of the doctors who had worked at the home. One of them wrote that the home "was managed with a Christian spirit, in conformity with up-to-date scientific methods, and with splendid satisfaction and success." The other letters were equally beatific in their descriptions.<sup>20</sup>

This, however, was not the end of the controversy. In October 1930 the Colorado WCTU held its annual convention

<sup>18</sup> *Denver Post*, 24 January 1930.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>20</sup> *Colorado W.C.T.U. Messenger* (February 1930):5; WCTU, CU.

*Born in New York in 1859, Adrianna Hungerford led the Colorado Women's Temperance Union from 1898 until her retirement in 1942; she died in Denver in 1946. During her tenure as president of the Colorado WCTU, she built the organization into a powerful state and national political force.*



at Longmont. Police had to be called in to break up a riot at the state conference due to a "rebel counter-attack." Mrs. Nichols had shown up at the convention in Longmont and had attempted to vote as a delegate. When Mrs. Hungerford ordered Mrs. Nichols and her followers to leave the church, where the meeting was being held, they refused. A shouting match ensued and someone called for the police. Finally, the outlawed women did leave, but those members who sympathized with Mrs. Nichols followed her call for a CPA audit of the books of the WCTU and the home. Mrs. Hungerford's followers were so enraged by the scene that they nearly prevented the dissident women from obtaining overnight public lodging in Longmont.<sup>21</sup>

There seems to be no record of whether the protesting members were ever reinstated into the organization. It is evident that an audit was carried out in later months, and the whole controversy quieted down. Mrs. Hungerford, the firm-handed state leader, remained in her official position for a number of years.

As for the Colorado Cottage Home, a WCTU report in October 1931 indicated that there had been thirty-five women in residence there during the previous year. In a June report during the same year, it was observed that there were "many more girls this year who were unable to pay their way

therefore, the need for budget money will be greater."<sup>22</sup> The Great Depression was exacting its toll on the home. When the state convention of the WCTU was held in October 1931, plans were initiated to consider closing the home. The committee formed to make the consideration had the power to dispose of the property, for the home was nearly wiped out financially.

In March 1932, Mrs. Anna E. Keenan, the trustee for the home, announced that the work there would be suspended due to a lack of funds for its support. She went on to explain that the officers felt that prohibition was the most important issue at hand (the Prohibition Amendment was repealed in 1932). Finally, she expressed her thanks to all the Colorado women who had supported the home.<sup>23</sup>

The old Cottage Home building did not end its years of service with the demise of maternity care. In the coming years, it was home to several private tenants, and for a few months, housed senior citizens. During this period, the WCTU still owned the property, including the entire block on which the home was located. The house continuously needed repairs and the vacant lots were accruing improvement taxes. In short, the WCTU could not afford to keep the property.

In August 1935 the state officers of the Colorado WCTU decided to sell the property. The Conway-Bogue Company had made an offer, and WCTU officers felt that it was wise to accept it before prices in the area dropped any lower. Conway-Bogue negotiated for \$1,000 and the unpaid balance of the sewer tax. The officers decided to put half the money from the sale in the WCTU savings account and to pay the rest to Mrs. Hungerford for a loan that she had made to the WCTU.

Although this completes the history of the home itself, it remains important to examine the relationship of the home to the Colorado WCTU and to the people of Colorado. Certainly, the members of the WCTU would not have maintained the Colorado Cottage Home for forty-six years if they did not feel it provided a valuable service. Mrs. F.I. Smith, in a 1916 report, listed the three most imperative reasons for supporting the enterprise: "Over 95% of the girls sheltered and cared for have returned to the world virtuous and self-respecting women. . . . Second, the effort to shield the girl from public-

<sup>22</sup> *Colorado W.C.T.U. Messenger* (October 1931), (June 1931), WCTU, CU.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.* (March 1932), WCTU, CU.

<sup>21</sup> *Denver Rocky Mountain News*, 1 October 1930.

ity, that her downfall may be known to the few only. . . . Third, the delightful Christian homes which are open to the babies upon whom life is thus thrust. By this method of placing them, there is no stamp of illegitimacy upon them."<sup>24</sup>

This concern for the unwed mother and her offspring was repeated consistently in the WCTU publications. Yet, as understanding as these Christian women might have been toward a young woman who erred just once, they had little tolerance for one who preferred a life of "vice" and repeatedly "got in trouble." One description of the home included the stipulation that "only girls who have hitherto lived a virtuous life are eligible."<sup>25</sup> Also, in a *Colorado W.C.T.U. Messenger* report in 1914, a trustee complained that "widows, the mothers of children, and girls, too, far down in the scale of vice, have sought admittance to our home, but such cases properly belong to the Crittenton Home."<sup>26</sup> Thus, the WCTU was most indulgent to those who had made a single mistake and were prepared to mend their ways, but as a correctional facility, the Colorado Cottage Home was hardly intended as a haven for ne'er-do-wells.

Interestingly, the members of the WCTU usually assumed that the women who came to the home had fallen into such a "despairing situation" primarily because of the treachery of men. The young women were rarely seen as being responsible for their state. It was men who tempted young girls, took advantage of them, then refused to acknowledge them when the pregnancy was discovered, according to the WCTU accounts. The Christian women expected an exemplary man not to entice a young woman in the first place, but if he did (and he was not already married), he should at least marry her to save her from the disgrace of pregnancy out of wedlock. The innocence of unwed mothers was stated over and over again in WCTU reports of women who were "betrayed," "victims," and "unfortunate," and of men portrayed as "these destroyers of womanhood," or as the "dark shadow in the form of a seducer."

<sup>24</sup> "Cottage Home," *Colorado W.C.T.U. Messenger* (March 1916):5, WCTU, CU.

<sup>25</sup> *Denver Directory of Social Agencies* (Denver: City Federation of Social Welfare, 1923), p. 16.

<sup>26</sup> Initially assisted by the WCTU, the Florence Crittenton Home, which also served unmarried mothers, began in Denver in the 1890s. Linked in a nationwide system that Charles Crittenton created, the Crittenton Homes were founded primarily to assist women who sought refuge from a life of prostitution. The Denver Crittenton Home was supported by a wider range of donors than was the Cottage Home, and it offered a less judgmental environment to its clients. Today, the former Florence Crittenton Home is a part of Human Services of Northwest Denver. For a general treatment of the Crittenton Homes, see Wilson, *Fifty Years' Work with Girls, 1883-1933*.

Like the women of a later era, these turn-of-the-century WCTU members protested the double standard. An 1897 Colorado Cottage Home pamphlet included the following: "We are asked why we do not bring the seducer to the bar of justice. Solely because this would involve publicity for the girl. Under our present wicked social standard, which requires a pure life for woman but not for man, she would be forever ostracized." Despite this complaint about the social stigma endured by unwed mothers, the writer joined in the condescending chorus herself by referring, in the same pamphlet, to young women who "realize their mistake and bitterly repent their downfall."<sup>27</sup> It seems, then, that the WCTU did expect women to restrict their sexual activity to marriage; but they expected men to do likewise.

Such an attitude might seem isolated to a narrow group of puritanical women who were much enamored of religion and temperance in all things. It might be argued that these women were unusual in the frontier era of the American West, known for its unfettered life styles and its break from traditions, but that regional reputation needs some brief clarification.

Late in the nineteenth century, Colorado was the scene of gold and silver booms. Its population, particularly in the mountain mining towns, mushroomed at a fantastic pace. While it is true that saloons, red light districts, and gambling houses proliferated quickly, there was a genuine concern that the states to the east view Colorado as a civilized place. Consequently, there were newspapers almost as soon as towns were created, and churches, schools, and universities were established before the Colorado Territory was even three years old. Moreover, Colorado was the site for the town of Greeley, an intentional utopian community that thrived, with a library, a lyceum—and prohibition.

In this context, the WCTU members' moral temperment may not have been so extraordinary after all. Most of the people who migrated to Colorado in the nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries came here from the eastern and the midwestern United States, where the Anglo Protestant definition of work, right and wrong, and male and female roles clearly permeated everyday life. Their contemporary reaction to anyone who conspicuously failed to follow behavioral stan-

<sup>27</sup> *Colorado Cottage Home*, pamphlet, 1897, Box 7, Folder 7, WCTU, CU.

dards (such as criminals, the insane, or unmarried, pregnant women) was to isolate that person from the general society.

Although there may have been some people moving west to escape such a moral climate, most of them probably brought it along with them, feeling that these standards of living were a kind of proof of civilization. It was in this social milieu, very nearly like that in the rest of the United States at the turn of the century, that the benevolent women of the Women's Christian Temperance Union established the Colorado Cottage Home.

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# Josephine Roche: Social Worker and Coal Operator

BY MARJORIE HORNBEIN

In 1928 when Josephine Roche gained control of the Rocky Mountain Fuel Company (RMF), she announced that the company would pay higher wages to the miners in its six Colorado coal mines and would give them decent houses and safe working conditions. "Formerly the operators have been able to break labor through force," Roche said. "The usual thing is to have their own armed guards trying to terrify them into submission, then to call out the state militia." In 1928 such a statement by a mine operator was astounding, for the rights of labor—such as unions and collective bargaining—had not yet been accepted as a normal part of the democratic process.<sup>1</sup>

In fact the new policy set forth by Roche was a complete reversal of RMF's principles. Like most Colorado coal operators, its officials—including Josephine's father, John Roche, the company president since 1914—had no concern for the welfare of the miners. Machine guns had put down any labor disturbances, and barbed wire barriers had been erected to keep out any union organizers. The company had refused to meet with representatives of the coal miners. The officers would deal with "their men" individually, although they must have realized that individual bargaining was impossible.<sup>2</sup>

But Josephine Roche had different ideas. "It is not a question of our giving rights to the miners; they have these rights," she explained. "Capital and labor have equal rights."<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Denver Rocky Mountain News*, 25 May 1934, 24 March, 30 April 1928.

<sup>2</sup> *Colorado Springs Gazette and Telegraph*, 30 December 1934; Lee Taylor Casey, editorial in the *Denver Rocky Mountain News*, 30 April 1948; Gerald R. Armstrong, "Miss Josephine Roche, President: The Rocky Mountain Fuel Company, 1927-1951," address delivered to the Annual Meeting of Shareholders, 14 April 1975 (hereinafter cited as "Roche Address, 1975").

<sup>3</sup> Josephine Roche, radio speech, 16 February 1932, published in U.S., Congress, Senate, *Congressional Record*, 72d Cong., 1st sess., 1932, 75, pt.12:12,944 (hereinafter cited as Roche, radio speech, 1932).





*As a young woman, Josephine fought against child labor.*

Such notions aroused the antagonism of RMF's competitors who considered Roche a dangerous industrial radical. Others criticized her for tackling a man's work—no woman had yet been a coal mine operator—and considered her reforms "helplessly like a woman." But those who knew Roche realized that this forty-two-year-old woman mine operator had proven her understanding of labor's problems and had demonstrated her physical strength as well as moral determination to deal directly with the social issues.<sup>4</sup>

Josephine Aspinwall Roche was born in Omaha, Nebraska, in 1886, the daughter of John and Ella Roche. As a young child she showed remarkable compassion and understanding. For example, at the age of twelve she visited one of RMF's mines with her father who, at the time, was treasurer of the company. She wanted to go down into the mine, but her father refused, explaining that "it would be too dangerous." "Then how is it safe for the miners?" the little girl asked, a question that John Roche could not answer.<sup>5</sup>

Josephine attended private schools before enrolling at Vassar, where she graduated with a Bachelor of Arts. She studied for her master's degree at Columbia University, where one of her classmates was Frances Perkins; the two

women became lifelong friends and both held important posts in the administration of Franklin D. Roosevelt. In 1910, when she received her master's degree in social work from Columbia, her thesis was entitled, "Economic Conditions in Relation to the Delinquency of Girls"; it exposed the fact that in New York City most girls who were prostitutes had left jobs that paid them only six dollars a week.<sup>6</sup>

After her graduation Josephine went west to Denver, Colorado, where her family had moved in 1906, and she worked for a while as a probation officer in Judge Ben Lindsey's juvenile court. Within a year she returned to New York where she held a similar job in the New York Probation Society. In research for the Public Education Association of New York, Roche publicized startling facts about the living and the working conditions of children in industry—facts that led her to enter the fight against child labor. She found that "little children are cheaper than machines in factories."<sup>7</sup>

Meanwhile, in October 1912 the City Council of Denver passed an ordinance that provided for an inspector of amusements. Roche's former employer, Judge Lindsey, recommended her for the job, and she hurried home, hoping to receive the appointment, for in this position Roche believed that she could really help the youngsters who frequented the public amusement places. After passing the civil service examination, she was appointed Denver's first "lady cop" by Police Commissioner and newspaperman George Creel—an appointment that was confirmed by the Civil Service Commission.<sup>8</sup>

The job was not an easy one, particularly for a woman—for the inspector was to supervise public dance halls and to act as a guardian of children on the street. But Roche was neither timid nor hesitant in the performance of her duties. According to Judge Lindsey, "she served with amazing efficiency and could break up a dance hall row or a riot in front of a saloon better than any experienced policeman."<sup>9</sup> But Denver's first policewoman soon found more difficult obstacles that she was unable to surmount. Internal strife and dissension within the

<sup>4</sup> Caroline Bancroft, "Josephine Roche," *Junior League Magazine* 21 (May 1935):18; *Denver Rocky Mountain News*, 13 October 1950, 25 May 1934.

<sup>5</sup> Marian Castle, "Josephine Roche," *Forum and Century* 92 (August 1934):103-5; *Denver Post*, 16 June 1958.

<sup>6</sup> Roche Papers, Western History Department, Norlin Library, University of Colorado, Boulder (hereinafter cited as Roche Papers, CU); *Denver Express*, 14 March 1913; *Denver Rocky Mountain News*, 20 April 1975.

<sup>7</sup> *Denver Rocky Mountain News*, 25 May 1934; *Denver Express*, 14 March 1913.

<sup>8</sup> *Denver Times*, 24 April 1913; *Denver Rocky Mountain News*, 5 February, 5 August, 30 April 1913.

<sup>9</sup> Ben B. Lindsey, undated article, Roche Papers, Western History Department, Denver Public Library (hereinafter cited as Roche Papers, DPLW).

city administration became critical just at the time of Roche's appointment. In fact, commissioners on the Fire and Police Board were quarreling about regulations in the redlight district of Denver where Roche's assignment lay. The reform-minded George Creel had started a campaign to abolish the district and had counted on Roche's support. His proposal, however, met strenuous opposition from Fire Commissioner Thomas McGrew. The fight between the two commissioners became more heated when Creel charged that McGrew was in partnership with the redlight district and that he was, in fact, a regular patron of the saloons.<sup>10</sup>

On 2 February 1913 Mayor Henry Arnold entered the fray by asking for the resignation of Creel, whom he had appointed in June 1912. He charged Creel with inefficiency and interference with the police, but the real cause of Creel's discharge was his efforts at reform. "Creel has been waging a crusade in the redlight district," the mayor said. "Since he began his spectacular campaign, women of that district have been scattered over the city. The police has been in a quandary as to what to do with them."<sup>11</sup>

When Creel refused to quit, he was summarily discharged by the mayor on 15 February 1913. Creel's departure left Roche working for an administration that was hostile to her efforts. Fire Commissioner Thomas McGrew and Safety Commissioner Alexander Nisbet were opposed to any restrictions on the saloons, and the mayor had made his position clear by ousting Creel.<sup>12</sup>

In the few months she had served as inspector, Roche's activities had displeased these officials. She had written a series of articles criticizing the management of the dance halls and the moving picture theaters in Denver and had testified before a grand jury regarding violations of the ordinances that regulated these amusement centers. The administration shrank from this notoriety even as it removed Creel because of his efforts to improve the situation.<sup>13</sup>

Clearly, Roche would be the next to go. On 24 April 1913 she found a "small typewritten notice" on her desk advising her of her discharge. "I have worked hard and reported violations of the liquor and dance hall laws. That, I suppose,



*"No notice has ever been taken of my reports. My activities in behalf of social betterment were obnoxious to the administration."*

is the reason I am dropped," Roche said. "No notice has ever been taken of my reports. My activities in behalf of social betterment were obnoxious to the administration."<sup>14</sup>

However, many citizens apparently approved of her activities, for about six hundred of them came to a meeting sponsored by the Christian Citizen Union to protest her dismissal, and many churches and civic organizations passed resolutions asking for her reinstatement. Roche contended that because of her civil service status, the board had no authority to fire her. She brought suit in the Denver District Court and demanded to be reinstated. She was represented by Edward P. Costigan, whom she had supported in 1912 when he had run on the Progressive ticket for the Colorado governorship, and who would later play an important part in her career. On 30 June 1913 District Judge John Denison ordered the Civil Service Commission to reinstate Roche. She had won the lawsuit, but it would prove to be a hollow victory.<sup>15</sup>

For a time she resumed her nightly tours of inspection, but the Fire and Police Board, to whom she was responsible, remained unfriendly and uncooperative. On 5 August Roche announced that "in the face of undisguised opposition from the authorities," the continuation of her work had become impossible. She protested against the laxity. "For me it would

<sup>10</sup> *Denver Post*, 2 February 1913; *Denver Rocky Mountain News*, 2 February 1913.

<sup>11</sup> *Denver Post*, 2, 4, 5 February 1913.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 15 February 1913.

<sup>13</sup> *Denver Times*, 24 April 1913.

<sup>14</sup> *Denver Rocky Mountain News*, 26 April 1913.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 30 November, 28 April 1913; Fred Greenbaum, *Fighting Progressives: A Biography of Edward P. Costigan* (Washington, D.C.: Public Affairs Press, 1971), p. 49.

be impossible to continue to see nightly the wrecking of boys and girls that his wide open policy means, without being able to put up a relentless fight against the wineroms, the so-called cafes and the dives which are among the chief sources of our juvenile delinquency. This attitude makes my work manifestly a farce."<sup>16</sup>

So Roche was forced to resign after her first confrontation with the establishment. In a letter to one of the Denver newspapers, Costigan deplored the loss to the social welfare movement in Denver and said that Roche's resignation was "the most mournful commentary on conditions in Denver."<sup>17</sup>

In spite of the fact that she had been ousted by the local political establishment, Roche decided that the necessary social reforms could only be accomplished through political parties. She affiliated with Colorado's progressive group and in 1914 campaigned for candidates of the Progressive party—among them Costigan, who again was a candidate for governor. At about the same time she was elected state secretary of the Colorado Progressive Service Club, an organization whose purpose was public education on matters pertaining to governmental and municipal problems.<sup>18</sup>

Roche was already aware that one of the most persistent evils to plague Colorado was the plight of the coal miners—including those working for RMF, where her father was an officer and held a large amount of stock. This fact did not dampen her determination to change conditions in the mines. Already in 1914 she had stated that the miners had the right to organize and to bargain collectively.<sup>19</sup> That same year, in her report as secretary of the Colorado Progressive Service Club, Roche showed her displeasure with the mine operators. "Colorado history chronicles bitter conflict and bloodshed in the mining regions," the report stated. "At the Progressive Conference in October, 1913, representatives of the coal operators and of the miners were invited to attend and discuss the issues. The United Mine Workers accepted and Frank Hayes gave a comprehensive statement of their case. The operators, however, after repeated requests, said 'there was nothing to discuss.'<sup>20</sup>

<sup>16</sup> *Denver Rocky Mountain News*, 5 August 1913.

<sup>17</sup> *Denver Express*, 5 August 1913.

<sup>18</sup> *Denver Rocky Mountain News*, 24 March 1928.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 25 May 1934.

<sup>20</sup> Josephine Roche, *Report of Colorado Progressive Service*, 1914, p. 19, Roche Papers, CU.



*The Miners Hall in Louisville in 1913 was a gathering place for the local UMW union 1668. Here many grievances were voiced against the Rocky Mountain Fuel Company. These included poor living conditions, such as the miners' homes in the RMF town of Superior.*



The "bitter conflict and bloodshed" were climaxed by the Ludlow "massacre" when violence erupted in the coal mines and several miners and their wives and children were shot by the military troops sent in by Governor Elias Ammons. In April 1914 the Denver Progressive Club passed a resolution deploring and condemning the tragedy at Ludlow and opposing the action of Governor Ammons. "The militia in the field is a constant menace . . . it has taken sides with the operators," the resolution declared.<sup>21</sup> Ludlow and its aftermath further honed Roche's sympathy for the workers and prepared her for the new role she was to play over a decade later. Perhaps ironically, she was to change conditions in the mines not as a social worker or as a progressive leader but as a mine operator. "Everything I did prepared me for Rocky Mountain Fuel," she later recalled, "and for the challenges it presented."<sup>22</sup>

Her opportunity came in 1927 when, with the death of her father, Roche inherited all of his stock holdings. This amounted to the largest individual holding but was not a majority of the stock. Consequently, at the stockholders' meeting in March 1927, Roche could name only three of the seven directors; she lacked the necessary majority to adopt a new labor policy.<sup>23</sup>

However, the board did agree to engage Merle Vincent as manager. Roche later said that Vincent had been chosen "because of his liberal views and his understanding of the complex economic forces involved." She did not explain why the board, which she did not yet control and which included "representatives of the old industrial system," agreed to engage the liberal Vincent. Vincent was a lawyer—an associate of Edward Costigan; he was a Progressive Republican and had sought the Republican gubernatorial nomination in 1910. He was not intimidated by the trustees of RMF who had engaged him, but he was sharply critical of the coal operators who, he believed, were responsible for the demoralized state of the coal industry. "Operators have consistently and continuously been at war with labor, with the public, and with each other. . . . When operators in their greed for business cut prices to bedrock, they make their men pay the loss," the new

<sup>21</sup> Denver Progressive Club, *Resolution against Ludlow Massacre*, 1914, Roche Papers, CU.

<sup>22</sup> *Denver Rocky Mountain News*, 20 April 1975.

<sup>23</sup> "Annual Report of Rocky Mountain Fuel Company for Year Ending December 31, 1922," DPLW; Memorandum of RMF submitted to Trustee in Bankruptcy, 29 February 1944, Roche Papers, CU.

manager said.<sup>24</sup> The miners' working and living conditions had become intolerable—payment in company script instead of cash, living in company houses, trading only at company stores, no check-weighmen in the mines (miners to check the tonnage figures recorded by the company), and no system of collective bargaining.<sup>25</sup>

Although they strongly disapproved, Roche and Vincent were unable to change these conditions. They were also unable to avert the strike in November 1927. When the strike seemed imminent at the Columbine Mine, one of RMF's mines in northern Colorado, Vincent ordered "the gates to be left open and . . . no shooting, even though the mine be destroyed." But Ted Peart, superintendent of the Columbine, did not heed Vincent's instructions. He still followed the antilabor policy of the company, and aided by the state police, he sought to break the strike by throwing bombs at the strikers.<sup>26</sup>

Frank L. Palmer, a former editor of the *Colorado Labor Advocate*, a publication of the Colorado Federation of Labor, was arrested (although the charge for his arrest remains obscure) and released only after the protests piled up on the desk of Governor William Adams. In fact, charges against the state police were so widespread that the American Civil Liberties Union asked for an inquiry into "the brutality and lawlessness of the state police."<sup>27</sup> The shooting and the destruction only increased the miners' dissatisfaction, and they became easy prey for agitators and for organizers of the Industrial Workers of the World. This was the condition of the coal mines in March 1928, when Roche bought the RMF stock holdings of Horace W. Bennett. Acquisition of these shares increased her holdings to fifty-one percent of the stock and gave her control of the company. A new board was elected, and Merle Vincent became president; Roche and John Lawson, vice-presidents.<sup>28</sup>

An executive position was a completely new role for Lawson, who had been a miner, a member of the International Board of United Mine Workers (hereafter called UMW), and the president of the Colorado Federation of Labor. Yet, Law-

<sup>24</sup> Josephine Roche, "Mines and Men," *Survey* 61 (15 December 1928):341-44; Greenbaum, *Biography of Edward P. Costigan*, pp. 16, 21, 28; *Survey* 61 (15 April 1928):91.

<sup>25</sup> *Pueblo Chieftain*, 13 November 1935.

<sup>26</sup> Frank L. Palmer, "War in Colorado," *Nation* 125 (7 December 1927):623.

<sup>27</sup> *War on the Colorado Miners*, February 1928, pamphlet of the American Civil Liberties Union, Roche Papers, CU.

<sup>28</sup> *Colorado Labor Advocate*, 24 December 1936; *Denver Rocky Mountain News*, 27 July 1928; Roche, "Mines and Men," pp. 341-44.

son had such confidence in the new policy of RMF that he felt he "was still working shoulder to shoulder with all workers."<sup>29</sup> Costigan changed his role, too. Formerly the lawyer for UMW, he now became the counsel for RMF.<sup>30</sup>

Roche, Vincent, Lawson, and Costigan all agreed that business should be a mutual enterprise, operated not only for profit but also for the benefit of the workers. They asked the UMW to unionize the mines, and RMF became the first coal producer in Colorado to contract with the miners' union.<sup>31</sup> The agreement "seeking a new era in industrial relations" is regarded as one of the famous labor capital compacts of United States industrial history. It sought to establish collective bargaining and through cooperative endeavor to stabilize employment and production. It provided for arbitration, a seven-dollar-a-day wage (the highest in the state), and the establishment of health and sanitation facilities. Organized labor, as a whole, recognized the significance of the contract, and "Labor's Central Coal Committee" attempted to persuade the public to buy the union-mined coal of RMF.<sup>32</sup>

The new policy provided substantial gain for both labor and management. The semiannual report of the company, submitted 30 July 1929, stated that "while the wage contract increased the earnings of the men . . . it has not resulted in increased production costs because of the cooperation and increased efficiency which has characterized the new relationship."<sup>33</sup> In fact, so successful was the new policy of RMF that in August 1929, United States Supreme Court Justice Louis Brandeis wrote to Roche that he "was very glad to learn from *Labor* how well your noble experiment has fared."<sup>34</sup> Through the "noble experiment," the RMF—the only Colorado coal operation to employ union labor—had become the second largest coal company in Colorado. The largest was the Colorado Fuel and Iron Company (CF&I), whose labor policy, known as the Rockefeller Plan, was based on a paternalistic

system of representative conferences between labor and management but held that wage cuts benefited the miners, as the cuts made more working days possible.<sup>35</sup>

As early as 1929 John Lawson foresaw trouble with the powerful CF&I. In an interview with the editor of the *Colorado Labor Advocate*, Lawson said that "powerful forces in Colorado have been determined to do what they can to make our experiment fail . . . these forces consider every dollar paid in the form of higher wages as a dollar lost to employers' profits and dividends. Employers with that point of view have no patience for real cooperation between workers and management . . . so they seek to discourage and crush the new hopes and achievements." Lawson's fears were soon realized and in March 1921, RMF withdrew from the Northern Colorado Coal Producers Association, charging that the code of trade practices of the association had been violated.<sup>36</sup>

But competitors of RMF persisted in their efforts to break the company, and on 4 May 1931 Roche sent Edward Keating, the publisher of *Labor*, the following telegram: "All operators in northeastern Colorado except RMF are to reduce wages . . . miners protested. RMF against wage cut." Keating replied that "the Rockefeller interests are undoubtedly the head and front of your opposition . . . Public sentiment is against wage cuts especially by millionaires like Rockefeller."<sup>37</sup>

RMF and the Colorado Federation of Labor filed a protest with the Colorado Industrial Commission. They charged CF&I with illegal reduction of wages, but the commission approved the decrease, which brought a miner's wage down to \$5.22-a-day.<sup>38</sup> RMF could only reiterate its belief that "wage cuts will not stabilize costs or markets. . . . The probable effect of such wage cuts will be to decrease the output per man and further demoralize market and price. . . . One of the chief causes of the present depression is the constantly dropping payrolls of the nation."<sup>39</sup> The wage cut made possible a price cut, and the CF&I advertised the "highest quality coal at the lowest price in twenty years." The price war threatened

<sup>29</sup> Barron B. Beshoar, *Out of the Depths: The Story of John R. Lawson, A Labor Leader* (Denver: Colorado Labor Historical Committee, 1942), p. 354; Castle, "Josephine Roche," pp. 103-5; interview of John Lawson with editor of *Colorado Labor Advocate* (1929), Roche Papers, CU.

<sup>30</sup> Roche, "Mines and Men," pp. 341-44.

<sup>31</sup> Editorial, *Denver Rocky Mountain News*, 28 July 1934; *Time Magazine* 24 (26 November 1934):11-12; *Denver Post*, 12 April 1950.

<sup>32</sup> Roche, radio speech, 1932; *Time Magazine* 24 (26 November 1934):11-12; Castle, "Josephine Roche," pp. 103-5; *Denver Post*, 17 August 1928; Roche, "Mines and Men," pp. 341-44.

<sup>33</sup> *Pueblo Chieftain*, 13 November 1935; *Advance*, 16 August 1929, Roche Papers, CU. During 1929, the company's production gained twenty-nine percent, and the miners' average earnings increased from \$1,661.01 in 1928 to \$2,104.30 *Labor*, (national weekly newspaper of Railroad Workers of America, 15 March 1930); Armstrong, "Roche Address, 1975."

<sup>34</sup> Supreme Court Justice Louis Brandeis to Roche, August 1929, Roche Papers, CU.

<sup>35</sup> *Time Magazine* 18 (7 September 1931):18; Bancroft, "Josephine Roche," p. 18; Palmer, "War in Colorado," p. 623; H. Lee Scamehorn, *Pioneer Steelmaker in the West: The Colorado Fuel and Iron Company, 1872-1903* (Boulder, Colo.: Pruett Publishing Co., 1976), pp. 172-74; George S. McGovern and Leonard F. Guttridge, *The Great Coalfield War* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1972), pp. 342-44.

<sup>36</sup> Interview of Lawson with editor of *Colorado Labor Advocate* (1929); letter to Northern Colorado Coal Producers Association, 24 March 1931, Roche Papers, CU.

<sup>37</sup> "Fuel for Liberalism," *Economist* 149 (21 July 1945):85; telegrams in Roche Papers, CU.

<sup>38</sup> *Denver Post*, 24, 27 May 1931; *Time Magazine* 18 (7 September 1931):18.

<sup>39</sup> Statement by RMF, 31 July 1931, Roche Papers, CU.

the sale of RMF's union-mined coal. In fact, the very existence of the company was in such jeopardy that in August 1931, Roche appealed directly to John D. Rockefeller, Jr., the principal bondholder of CF&I. "Anti-social methods of the past," her telegram stated, "are again being employed by your company. . . . The chaos of the coal industry cannot be corrected by forcing labor to take lower and lower wages." Rockefeller acknowledged receipt of Roche's telegram through a subordinate, but he took no action.<sup>40</sup>

During this crucial period the miners themselves came to the aid of RMF. Through the autumn months they loaned the company one-half of their wages, which amounted to \$80,000. The Northern Colorado Coal Producers Association immediately charged that the miners' loan was, in fact, a reduction in wages, but RMF denied the charge. Quirino Madonna, who was then employed as a mine clerk at "Rocky," as he refers to the company, said that the loans were all paid back, a fact that contradicts the charge of the association. Roche, too, was giving the company financial help. She was placing part of her salary and her personal funds back into RMF.<sup>41</sup>

By 1932 the coal industry, like the rest of the economy, was suffering from the nationwide depression. The Colorado companies had an additional problem, for owing to the introduction of natural gas to Denver, there was less of a demand for coal. On 12 May 1932 CF&I announced a further reduction of fifteen percent of all wages and salaries. However, this cut was denied by the Colorado Industrial Commission, which found "the men are not receiving a living wage under the present scale."<sup>42</sup>

Meanwhile, RMF stated that since 1928 its miners had received the highest wage scale in Colorado's mining industry—a basic daily wage of seven dollars. Unfortunately, owing to the depression, in 1932 the company was forced to lower its wage to \$5.25. At the same time, the management did what was possible to ease the hard lot of the miners. Work was divided so that all of the men could have some employ-

ment, and the officers helped the men and their families to maintain a decent standard of living.<sup>43</sup>

In fact, their efforts were so outstanding that they received the praise of Eleanor Roosevelt, who wrote in her syndicated column that to alleviate the seasonal layoff, Josephine Roche had donated surface land for the miners to use as farm land. Similar testimony came from Madonna, who spoke of his former boss with affection and appreciation. He remembered that she instructed the company stores to give the miners credit to purchase all necessities. She provided paint and other materials for the repair and the improvement of their homes. She was, Madonna said, "a real human being and a good friend to her employees."<sup>44</sup>

Meanwhile, in 1930, with the support of Josephine Roche, Costigan had been elected to the United States Senate from Colorado. Through his election, the liberal progressive element of the Democratic party gained strength. Liberals planned to use this foothold to defeat incumbent Democratic Governor Edwin C. Johnson in 1934. They claimed that because of his conservative ideas, the governor was practically a Republican. In 1934, it was essential, the Progressives reasoned, to elect a Democrat who would clearly be identified with Roosevelt and the New Deal.<sup>45</sup>

Roche met the requirements of the liberal Democrats; she was an enthusiastic supporter of Roosevelt and his New Deal legislation. On 24 May 1934 she announced her candidacy for the governorship. She would run in the primary election against Governor Johnson on a New Deal platform that included such progressive measures as unemployment insurance and old age pensions.<sup>46</sup>

Roche's determination to unseat Governor Johnson precipitated a hard and bitterly fought campaign within the ranks of the Democratic party in Colorado. The governor protested the conservative label that had been given him and announced that he was a real progressive and a follower of President Roosevelt. In fact, the Johnson people claimed that Roosevelt disliked such radicals as Roche and really hoped for

<sup>40</sup> *Colorado Labor Advocate*, 24 December 1936; Roche to Rockefeller, 1 August 1931, Roche Papers, CU.

<sup>41</sup> "Fuel for Liberalism," p. 85; interview with Quirino Madonna, miner and mine clerk at RMF, 1926 to 1945, 27 July 1974; correspondence between Northern Colorado Coal Producers Association and RMF, Roche Papers, CU.

<sup>42</sup> Memorandum from RMF to Trustee in Bankruptcy, 29 February 1944; findings of Colorado Industrial Commission, 17 June 1932, Roche Papers, CU; RMF Report to Stockholders, 1 February 1933, Business Department, Denver Public Library.

<sup>43</sup> RMF statement to the press, 3 June 1931, Roche Papers, CU; Castle, "Josephine Roche," pp. 103-5. The coal code of the National Recovery Act, signed by Roche in September 1933, required five-dollars-a-day minimum pay (*Denver Rocky Mountain News*, 17 September 1933); interview with John Lawson, *Colorado Labor Advocate*, 24 December 1936.

<sup>44</sup> *Denver Rocky Mountain News*, 11 August 1935; interview with Madonna, 27 July 1974.

<sup>45</sup> Greenbaum, *Biography of Edward P. Costigan*, pp. 117, 136-38; interview with former United States Senator John Carroll, 27 July 1974.

<sup>46</sup> *Labor*, 4 September 1934; *Denver Rocky Mountain News*, 9 September, 24 May 1934.

the reelection of Governor Johnson. The Johnson supporters raised the issue of Senator Costigan's part in the campaign. They criticized him for attempting to be a "governor maker" and for seeking to place his former client in the governor's chair. Roche, if elected, would be no more than Costigan's "rubber stamp," Governor Johnson told the voters a week before the primary election.<sup>47</sup>

Costigan did campaign actively for Roche. He praised her record as the head of RMF and said that during her seven and one-half years as a coal mine operator, her mine had succeeded where her competitors had failed only because "she loves justice and practices it." In the rural areas the senator assured the farmers that Roche was as close to their problems as she was to those of the miners at RMF. Costigan persuaded the young John Carroll (later United States Senator from Colorado, 1956-1962) to resign his posts as deputy United States district attorney and Democratic Denver County chairman to manage the Roche campaign. But Carroll was somewhat of a reluctant manager—he thought Colorado was not ready to elect a woman governor.<sup>48</sup>

Despite the efforts of Colorado's senior senator and the endorsement of the American Federation of Labor, Roche lost the primary election—and she never again ran for a political office. Governor Johnson carried fifty-seven out of Colorado's sixty-three counties. Roche carried Denver where the number of votes cast set a record—never before had so many persons voted in a primary election.<sup>49</sup>

Roche did not stay out of political life for long, however. Only days after the general election, President Roosevelt appointed her assistant secretary of the treasury, an action that discounted the Johnson campaign statement that the president viewed Roche as a radical. The Senate confirmed Roche on 22 January 1935, and she was placed in charge of the Public Health Service—a field of social service in which she had long been interested. As assistant secretary of the treasury she worked to obtain a "definite program of medical care for those who cannot obtain it" and national financial support for all aspects of public health. She ranked as the second most important woman in the administration—next to



<sup>47</sup> *Denver Post*, 2, 3 September 1934.

<sup>48</sup> Greenbaum, *Biography of Edward P. Costigan*, pp. 139, 137.

<sup>49</sup> "Roosevelt, Roche and Recovery," *Literary Digest* 118 (1 September 1934):8; *Denver Post*, 12 September 1934.

her former classmate Frances Perkins, who was secretary of labor. The following year the president again turned to Roche; she was to administer the National Youth Administration—a program to assist the youth of the country in getting jobs and an education.<sup>50</sup>

Despite the challenge and the importance of her work in Washington, D.C., Roche's first interest was still in Colorado with the RMF where she had invested a large part of her personal wealth and initiated a new policy. J. Paul Peabody had been elected president of RMF in 1934 when Roche went to Washington, D.C. Peabody's death in September 1937 cut short Roche's career in government, and she resigned on 14 September 1937 to become a coal operator once more and to manage a company, which by 1937, had gone into such a critical financial condition that on many occasions Roche accepted no salary.<sup>51</sup>

She borrowed money from her personal friends—among them Herbert Lehman, governor of New York, and Oswald Garrison Villard, editor of the *Nation*. In June 1938 a loan of \$72,000 from the government's Reconstruction Finance Corporation made it possible to bring the much needed mechanization to the mines. Another friend was the United Mine Workers Union, which Roche had invited to unionize her coal mines in 1928. A decade later the union returned her friendship with loans from Lewmurken, a dummy corporation organized by John Lewis and the UMW. Lewmurken had been organized to help just such companies as RMF—those who had been friendly to labor and who had undergone financial difficulties—and by 1941 Lewmurken held promissory notes signed by Josephine Roche to the amount of \$450,000.<sup>52</sup>

In 1938 the coal industry had suffered one of the most adverse years in its history owing to the decreased demand for coal. Production at RMF was twenty-three percent less than in 1937; the company suffered a corresponding financial loss and was forced to ask its bondholders for a reduction in interest and an extension in the time of maturity, owing "to

the acute and precarious financial condition of the company." Roche told the bondholders that "the heavy drain of annual bond interest has curtailed needed improvement and development." She pointed out that "when the company's bonds were issued twenty-five years ago, the demand for coal was twice what it is now." Maybe Roche's explanation of the company's difficulties made the reduction a little more palatable to the bondholders; in any event, ninety-three percent of them agreed to it.<sup>53</sup>

Although the first loan from the Reconstruction Finance Corporation had been repaid, another application from RMF for a larger loan was denied. Despite Roche's influence in the administration, the RFC was not satisfied with the financial condition of the company. The first months of 1939 brought no relief to RMF, and in June, John Lewis, president of the UMW, sent the Coal Mine Management, a Cleveland, Ohio, concern, to reorganize the company and to take control from Lawson and Roche. According to the *Chicago Sunday Tribune*, "the once highly touted social experiment conducted in the Colorado coal fields has run into the rocks."<sup>54</sup>

By 1944 only one of the company's mines was in operation, and it was obliged to file a petition for bankruptcy in the federal court in Denver. District Judge Foster Symes appointed Wilbur Newton trustee in bankruptcy, and Newton's plan for reorganization was later approved by Symes and the Securities and Exchange Commission. Lewmurken became the company's biggest stockholder with twenty-three percent of the common stock. According to *Labor*, the union had lost one-half million dollars in RMF, but the union leaders still remembered that RMF had, in 1928, opened the way to union organization of Colorado coal mines.<sup>55</sup>

In his report to the court, Newton emphasized the fact that the company's bankruptcy was the result of its being heavily in debt. "It was impossible to build up a reserve," Newton said, "because a quarter million dollars went in interest on the bonds annually." He noted that Roche "was tireless and unselfish in her efforts to preserve the company as a going concern."<sup>56</sup>

<sup>50</sup> *Denver Rocky Mountain News*, 17 November 1934; *Denver Post*, 22 January 1935; *Denver Rocky Mountain News*, 17 November, 8 December 1934, 31 October 1937, 16 September 1938, 27 June 1935.

<sup>51</sup> "Fuel for Liberalism," p. 85; memo of RMF to Trustee in Bankruptcy, Roche Papers, CU; *Denver Rocky Mountain News*, 31 October 1937.

<sup>52</sup> Report of Wilbur Newton, Trustee in Bankruptcy, *Denver Post*, 10 July 1944; memo of RMF to Trustee in Bankruptcy, Roche Papers, CU; *Time Magazine* 24 (26 November 1934):11-12. The name "Lewmurken" was made up of the first syllables of the surnames of John Lewis, Philip Murray, vice-president of UMW, and Thomas Kennedy, the secretary-treasurer.

<sup>53</sup> RMF letter to bondholders, 15 January, 1 February 1939, Roche Papers, CU; "Fuel for Liberalism," p. 85.

<sup>54</sup> *Chicago Sunday Tribune*, 29 September 1940; *New York Herald Tribune*, 29 September 1940.

<sup>55</sup> "Fuel for Liberalism," p. 85; *Denver Post*, 13 February 1944; *Labor*, 11 August 1945; *New York Sun*, 23 July, 11 August 1945.

<sup>56</sup> Report of Trustee in Bankruptcy, Roche Papers, CU.



Although Roche still held the title of president and was one of the five directors of the new organization, her career as a coal operator had, in fact, ended. But her steadfast devotion to the cause of labor remained. In 1947 she became an assistant to John Lewis, the president of UMW—"a man of great courage and wisdom," Roche said, and "completely devoted to the cause of labor." A year later she was appointed director of the UMW pension fund. It was "a privilege," she said, "the highest that has ever come my way." The fund's purpose was "to recognize human need and to allay squalor and utter poverty," a goal that had been very close to Roche ever since her days as a young social worker.<sup>57</sup>

In April 1950 Roche was again reelected president of RMF. A few months later she resigned owing "to the heavy and increasing pressure" of her work with the union that, in her view, "represents the advance guard of all progress in the labor movement." Roche remained active in this position until 1 July 1971, when, because of failing health, she resigned as a trustee and as a director. She remained in Washington, D.C., until her death on 29 July 1976.<sup>58</sup>

As social worker, politician, coal operator, and union official, she was a woman ahead of her time. Through her work, courage, vision, and steadfast loyalty to her ideals, she made important contributions to the advance of women, labor, and humanity.

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<sup>57</sup> *Business Week*, 28 April 1945, pp. 72-75; *Denver Post*, 13 October 1950, 29 April 1948, 12 April 1950; Roche to James Farley, 18 May 1948, Roche Papers, CU.

<sup>58</sup> *Denver Post*, 12 April, 13 October 1950; interview with Carroll, 21 July 1974; *Denver Post*, 30 July 1976.

# Patience Stapleton: A Forgotten Frontier Writer

BY JOANN DALTON

The population of Denver tripled during the decade of the 1880s as thousands of settlers came to the Queen City of the Plains from regions east of the one-hundredth meridian. One of these emigrants was Patience Tucker Stapleton. Arriving in Denver from Maine in 1882, she quickly gained renown for her newspaper articles, short stories, poems, novels, and work for woman's suffrage, all within a decade before her untimely death in 1893. Relatively unknown to this generation, her life and writings are, nonetheless, worthy of investigation from a historical standpoint. To date, the information written about her is scanty and sometimes inaccurate.<sup>1</sup> Through an examination of her life history and a content analysis of her literature, a realistic personality assessment can be made that may contribute to the history of Colorado.

Patience Stapleton lived in a time when the United States was changing dramatically. This change was more rapid than in any other period in American history, for the United States was growing into an industrialized and urbanized nation from a rural and agrarian one. Many of the traditional agrarian ideals, morals, and character traits were still prevalent, despite the vast changes resulting from the rise of big business, corporations, trusts, and labor. Although many rural values seemed outdated in a more urban America, they still remained in the heart of the American character. In many

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<sup>1</sup> *The Glory That Was Gold* (Central City, Colo.: Central City Opera House Association, 1934), p. 112; Francis S. Kinder and F. Clarence Spencer, eds. and comps., *Evenings with Colorado Poets: An Anthology of Colorado Verse* (Denver: World Press, 1926), p. 263; *Denver Republican*, 26 November 1893; *Denver Rocky Mountain News*, 26 November 1893; *Denver Times*, 25 November 1893.



ways, the life of Patience Tucker Stapleton personified the conflict that arose between the traditional and the contemporary attitudes and ideals.

Patience was born Martha Armstrong Tucker on 9 March 1861 to Mary Armstrong and Richard Holbrook Tucker, a seafaring family in the small merchant village of Wiscasset, Maine. Her father and grandfather were both sea captains, and Patience's early life was centered around and influenced by the sea.<sup>2</sup> Beginning to write "as soon as she discovered pencil and paper,"<sup>3</sup> Martha's inspiration from the picturesque cliffs and ocean waves of her early youth is depicted throughout her poetry, short stories, and novels. "The sea, the shining blue sea! How it rolls and plays upon the sand and seethes and splashes, rises dark and thunderous, or cooes so softly on a summer day! And the beach! So many miles of hard, smooth sand, where one may drive a horse to death and never realize the flight of time nor distance."<sup>4</sup>

For her early education she was sent to a convent in Whitefield, Maine, for at that time convents were considered excellent educational institutions for young ladies. During these years the nicknames of Patty and Patience somehow emerged from her real name Martha.<sup>5</sup> Later, Patience went to

a boarding school in Farmington, Maine, and remained there for two years. This is where she first showed promise as a writer. A play entitled "Imogene," written when she was fifteen, was produced by the school because the headmaster viewed it as an exceptional effort for such a young girl. It was a youthful fantasy that reflected Patience's vivid imagination. During her stay at Farmington, she became famous for her writing, which enthralled her friends and often sent them "shivering to their rooms."<sup>6</sup>

From Farmington Patience went to Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, to attend the Moravian Seminary where she completed her formal education. Throughout her school years, she "endeared herself to teachers and friends by her brilliancy and acuteness and her grasp of things sometimes humorous and always original."<sup>7</sup> She was admired for being studious, observant, and omnivorous in her writing.<sup>8</sup> These early years seem to have been especially happy times for Patience, for they are often referred to through characters in her novels. "Oh! those happy convent days, when I could learn all I wanted to, where all was peace and poetry, and marvellous purity of words and deeds and thoughts. There was such music in the dim, dark church, where one could dream of coming years and all that golden future which a girl pictures."<sup>9</sup>

After graduating in 1877, Patience took a job as a teacher in Bethlehem's public school system for a year. When the term ended she returned to her home at Wiscasset. Her parents, at this time in their late fifties, welcomed their daughter home with open arms. While there, in 1879, Patience had her first short story, entitled "Jim," published in the magazine *Youth's Companion*, and her short story won an award for the best story of the year. Soon more pieces were written, published, and readily accepted by the public.<sup>10</sup>

The Tuckers felt that Patience should remain at home like other "proper" young ladies of the time. Patience, however,

<sup>2</sup> U.S., Department of the Interior, Census Office, 1870 federal manuscript census for Wiscasset, Maine, State Library, Lincoln, Maine.

<sup>3</sup> *Denver Republican*, 26 November 1893.

<sup>4</sup> Patience Stapleton, *My Sister's Husband* (New York: John W. Lovell Co., 1890), pp. 55-56.

<sup>5</sup> Fannie S. Chase, *Wiscasset in Pownalborough* (Wiscasset, Maine: Judith Chase Churchill, 1941), p. 590.

<sup>6</sup> *Denver Rocky Mountain News*, 26 November 1893.

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

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>9</sup> Stapleton, *My Sister's Husband*, p. 36.

<sup>10</sup> Chase, *Wiscasset in Pownalborough*, p. 590.

had little inclination toward a quiet, secure life in Wiscasset and informed her parents that she was leaving home to support herself. As one newspaper reporter observed: "She went out to battle with the world rather than to retire to her father's home."<sup>11</sup>

Despite the family's objections, Patience moved to Boston, determined to earn a living by writing.<sup>12</sup> Boston at this time was a thriving, industrial city. One of America's oldest cities, it offered a sophistication and culture that Wiscasset could never provide. Furthermore, the Massachusetts's metropolis was a publishing center in the United States, and this made it even more attractive to the aspiring writer. This experience of breaking family ties for the sake of independence, no matter what the consequences, was constantly portrayed in her literature. "Why must she find work.... No other girl goes away 'n brings sorrer 'n disgrace on their honest parents."<sup>13</sup> Some have speculated that she ran away from home, but there is no evidence to prove it.<sup>14</sup> Nevertheless, her desire for freedom, to move on to another life, was another theme that she extracted from her own experiences and often used in her short stories.

When Patience arrived in Boston she was not yet twenty, but she was optimistic about her future. She wrote for daily newspapers and learned stenography. Perhaps this poem best describes her early days as a reporter.

The wierd spell of the fog was on me: I  
could not think or write  
I loathed the small, dull office where I  
worked from early light—  
Editor, printer, reporter, for the Preble  
Bay Beacon Light.  
A poor excuse for a paper, but the people,  
generous and kind,  
Paid unasked out of scanty purses. Of course  
I didn't mind  
If some subscribed in Mackerel, always the  
best in the find.<sup>15</sup>

She continued to publish her short stories while working for newspapers and obtained a modest amount of popularity and financial independence. Her father, who had held a grudge against her since her departure, forgave her after it was evident that she could make it on her own.<sup>16</sup>

By 1882 Patience felt a need for further challenges and decided to settle in Denver. Denver in the 1880s was quite a

change from the sophistication of Boston. Most of the streets were unpaved and there were only a few plank and stone sidewalks. The thick dust in the summer and the heavy mud in the winter added to the unpleasantness. Horse and buggy transportation was still in its infancy, and the sewer system was inadequate for the expanding population. Housing construction also failed to keep pace with the population increase between 1880 and 1890. Although the population before the eighties was male dominated, it had begun to equalize by the time Patience arrived in 1882. At that time, Denver was mostly a white-Anglo-Protestant community with less than one thousand Blacks and even fewer Chinese and Mexican Americans.<sup>17</sup>

Patience arrived in Denver and quickly found a job as society editor on the *Denver Tribune*. At this time, she changed her name from Tucker to Thornton, using it as a pen name for her articles.<sup>18</sup> Because Denver was such a change from Boston, at times it must have seemed comical to Patience that she was editing a society page in such a "wild frontier."

In 1883 Patience traveled back to Wiscasset with her fiance William Stapleton, and they were married in the Tucker home on 28 August.<sup>19</sup> William Stapleton was then managing editor of the *Denver Rocky Mountain News*. Returning to Denver, the newlyweds worked on rival newspapers for a year. In 1884 the *Tribune* merged with the *Republican*, and in 1888 Stapleton, coincidentally, became the managing editor of the *Denver Republican*. Both husband and wife were devoted to writing and to one another. William once remarked to a close friend that his wife, "was worth a ship-load of such fellows as I am."<sup>20</sup>

<sup>11</sup> *Denver Rocky Mountain News*, 26 November 1893.

<sup>12</sup> *Denver Republican*, 26 November 1893.

<sup>13</sup> Stapleton, "Christmas at Montsweag," *The Major's Christmas* (Denver: News Printing Co., 1886), p. 167.

<sup>14</sup> *The Glory That Was Gold*, p. 112.

<sup>15</sup> Stapleton, "A Story of Preble Bay," *Colorado State Editorial Association Report for 1886* (Grand Junction, Colo.: Grand Junction Democrat Printing, 1886), pp. 50-52.

<sup>16</sup> *Denver Republican*, 26 November 1893.

<sup>17</sup> *Denver City Directory* (Denver: Corbett and Ballenger, 1893), p. 644; Jerome C. Smiley, *History of Denver, with Outlines of the Earlier History of the Rocky Mountain Country* (Denver: Times-Sun Publishing Co., 1901), pp. 480-87, 648-51; Carl Abbott, "Boom State and Boom City: Stages in Denver's Growth," *The Colorado Magazine* 50 (Summer 1973):216-20.

<sup>18</sup> "Colorado Portrait and Biography Index," Vol. 4, Western History Department, Denver Public Library, Denver.

<sup>19</sup> Chase, *Wiscasset in Pownalborough*, p. 590.

<sup>20</sup> *Mecca Magazine* 2 (30 June 1900):8.



The drawing of "poor little thing" from Patience Stapleton's story "The Cruise of a Prairie Schooner."



A covered wagon at a toll gate, an illustration from "The Cruise of a Prairie Schooner," a story that was published in the *Great Divide* in 1894.

In 1886 Patience published her first book, *The Major's Christmas*, a collection of short stories tied together by the theme of Christmas. This book does not contain any of her experiences in the West, probably due to the fact that it was published only a few years after she moved to Denver. The significance of the book lies in the fact that it was a forerunner of greater literary triumphs.<sup>21</sup>

In the spring of 1886, Patience also wrote a serial for the *Denver Rocky Mountain News* called "Jean McClure." She had the series published in book form in 1893 and entitled it *My Jean*. The book is an interesting, fast paced, melodramatic novel, typical of the times. The story involves the misfortunes of an orphan girl and the many people around her. It takes place in Denver, the mountain mining towns, and the cattle ranges to the east. Her first and most popular novel, *Kady*, appeared in 1888. It was republished through another company in 1892, and critics have proclaimed this her best work. *Kady* is a romantic story that takes place in the Colorado Rockies. *Babe Murphy* and *My Sister's Husband* were both published in 1890. *Babe Murphy* is another melodramatic love story set in a small mining town outside of Denver. *My Sister's Husband* is about events in a Maine town similar to Wiscasset, and it also describes an orphan girl and her experiences. *Cosmopolitan Magazine* also published a series by Patience in 1891-92 that later appeared in book form under the title *Trailing Yew*. This novel, which has been described as the "sweetest of all her stories," is a picture of her childhood home.<sup>22</sup>

An analysis of her life and writings reveals the difficulty that Patience had in coming to grips with what she saw herself to be and what her friends and family expected her to be. Her name changes and moves across the country as well as excerpts from her works show that she had resolved the problems of her identity. Martha Armstrong Tucker had the nicknames Patty and Patience while she was in grade school. It is not known if this was entirely her decision, but if these names were her doing, it is of significance to note the dissimilarities between Patty, Patience, and Martha. She is listed as Patience Thornton, society editor of the *Denver Tribune*, in the *Denver City Directory*. Then, with marriage her name changed again to Stapleton. And after marriage she

<sup>21</sup> *Denver Republican*, 26 November 1893.

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

used the name Patience Tucker Stapleton rather than Thornton. In addition to all of these legal names, Patience also used several pen names for stories and articles. It is certainly possible that her many names reflected one aspect of her difficulties in achieving a positive identity on her own terms.

This problem also manifested itself in the number of times that she moved. After high school graduation, Patience taught at a public school in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, for one year. From her teaching position, Patience returned home to live in Wiscasset. A year later she moved—against her parents' wishes—to Boston. After a year's residence in Boston, she moved again. Her relocation to Denver, the most dramatic move, was her final residence until her death eleven years later. These highly mobile actions perhaps further disclose another level of her search for a positive and rewarding self-image.

In addition, her works expose this conflict. Patience's writings demonstrate her search for something: "I was a born wanderer, my ancestors mariners bold, who sailed many a sea, and, I have no doubt, were restless, discordant elements in the quiet village lives of their helpmates. . . . I was tired of the din of voices, the same old facts year after year."<sup>23</sup> In her novels, she consistently created protagonists who had inner conflicts. In *My Jean* the main character is an orphan who questions and searches for her real identity and family throughout the entire book. *My Sister's Husband* is a story of a girl who must choose between her desires and needs and her family's wishes; the main character is again an orphan. The protagonist in *Babe Murphy* also had to make the decision between living a secluded, abnormal life with her father or breaking family ties to live with a new-found friend. The leading characters in all three novels are young girls with overpowering struggles that need resolution. Thus, the major themes and characters that Patience developed in her novels seem to depict her experiences in resolving her own dilemma of achieving a workable identity.

A discussion of Patience's relationship with her family can bring some insight to her conflict. She was the third of five children, with no more than two years difference between each child. She had two brothers and two sisters,<sup>24</sup> so she may

have felt lost as the middle child. The difficulties of this position in a large family, with the children's ages so close together, could have intensified her inner discord. The fact that she returned home to live with her parents after many years in boarding schools, and after a year of supporting herself may be attributed to a search for something in her home life that she felt was missing.

There was a struggle between herself and her parents in their familial relationship. The Tuckers obviously felt that their daughter should have remained at home; however, Patience was determined to enter the world and support herself. She often used this conflict for themes in her literature. In one of her short stories, a father lost one of his twin daughters by drowning. When the other daughter grew up and did not meet his expectations, he remarked, "Worse than death had been this child's fate. The brook was kinder than the world, and the soul it had taken was pure and unsullied."<sup>25</sup> This statement depicts the extremity of a father's emotions toward a daughter who was a disappointment to him. Perhaps Patience's inner strife stemmed from her difficulty in directing her life against paternal pressures. Such a situation was constantly recreated in her works. In another short story, the daughter broke family ties for the sake of independence. Although the child simply wanted to support herself, the father's reaction was "why must she find work. . . . No other girl goes away 'n brings sorrer 'n disgrace on their honest parents."<sup>26</sup> Once again, this portrays intensely negative paternal emotions. In both of these stories (and others) the father banished his disobedient daughter from his life. After the parent-child separation, Patience then depicts tremendous guilt feelings and loneliness that the father must contend with. It is possible that her literary concentration on this particular theme was one channel in which Patience could vent her suppressed resentment toward her own father.

Despite this conflict in her literature, Patience Stapleton presents an optimistic attitude toward life. Perhaps she was searching for happiness by creating in her short stories an idealism that never really materialized in her own life. Nonetheless, certain themes that recur in her literature reflect her faith in people. One theme is the belief that a selfish person can be transformed, through guilt and self-reproach,

<sup>23</sup> *Great Divide* 11 (February 1894):12.

<sup>24</sup> 1870 federal manuscript census for Wiscasset, Maine.

<sup>25</sup> Stapleton, "Jacob Kohler's Repentance," *The Major's Christmas*, pp. 140, 160.

<sup>26</sup> Stapleton, "Christmas at Montsweag," *The Major's Christmas*, pp. 167, 170, 175.

into a generous human being. This is the basic direction pursued in most of her short stories. Many of the tales involve either a miserable, selfish, lonely, proud, cold, or hateful person. Through various incidents her leading characters learn to give, love, and help those in need. This character metamorphosis enables each of these individuals to discover happiness.

Miss Ham in "A Fairy Godmother" is described as a mean, selfish, lonely old maid. She is finally touched, though, by a young invalid who had the courage to tell her that she was a "hard, selfish old woman." His words force Miss Ham to face her own cruelty and in doing so she repents. From that moment on, Miss Ham, who is quite wealthy, helps the entire town by reestablishing the mill so that the men can return to work. The poor receive Christmas baskets, and she builds a hospital for the old, crippled, sick, and orphaned. "When old Miss Ham died years afterwards, the whole village followed the hearse to the grave, from the grandsire to the little babies in arms, and the villagers wept as if they had lost a dear mother. Her memory will ever be with them. What grander moment can there be, than a loving remembrance in the hearts of the people! What stone can last so long! What epitaph be so just!"<sup>27</sup> Patience believed in the reformation of even the most uncharitable people.

Her enthusiastic and encouraging view of life is undeniably prevalent throughout her works, especially in her philosophy that the hard-working, unselfish person is the most successful. A good example of this appears in "The Modern Magician," where she presents the theme that the honest and dedicated person is the one who will obtain his goals in life, no matter how difficult the obstacles he must overcome. In this tale, a rich man who is deceived by his benefactors, goes into the city disguised as a bum; he seeks out and tests people for their trustworthiness and dedication to an honest life. In typical Horatio Alger fashion, through his influential position of money and status, he arranges a job for a boy named True without the boy realizing it. Opportunities are provided for True to steal, but he never succumbs to temptation. As a result, the wealthy man found the boy he was looking for, and True is granted his wishes, symbolic of the idealism inherent in much of Patience's literature.

Another of Patience's captivating stories takes place in a mining town, sixty miles from civilization. Through the eyes

of the "Oldest Inhabitant," she narrates the discovery of coal, the investments of a speculator, and the opening of the mines. She describes the railroad that brings in the workers, the mine owners becoming more greedy and corrupt, and then the closing of the mines. A vivid portrayal is drawn of the situation in the town when there was no work and the men spent all of their time in the bars—until the bars closed because the men had no more money to spend in them. Her sympathy for, and understanding of, these people and their problems is reflected once again through her optimistic view of mankind. "Some folks is afraid of miners; thinks they're rough and unlawful, but I knowed many of 'em had great honest hearts under their ragged clothes, and they was pitiful to me in their helplessness."<sup>28</sup>

Patience's published works established her as one of the first frontier women writers of consequence. "She is the first literary woman of Colorado, the first and perhaps the only one who has transferred the glory of Colorado's pines and the beauty of Colorado's mountains and the pathos of Colorado's people to the pages of entertaining books."<sup>29</sup> Though her works can hardly be described as great literature, there is much to be gained from them. She very realistically portrayed the problems and the difficulties common to the West in the last half of the nineteenth century. However, after an extremely accurate description of the conditions, she invariably used coincidence, luck, or religion to solve the conflicts she created.

Despite these contrivances, her work is enjoyable, readable, and heart-warming; her earnest and sincere approach to writing created fascinating and spirited literature. Her confidence in man's ultimate goodness derived from her understanding of people, their dreams, desires, hopes, and disappointments.

I thought of the tide of humanity that  
will ever ebb and flow  
Through the office of a newspaper. Brim  
men who dream on and wait  
With white, expectant faces, struggling  
with the world's scorn, and cruel fate,  
Hopeful that in the delusive future their  
thoughts may yet make them great.<sup>30</sup>

<sup>27</sup> Stapleton, "A Fairy Godmother," *The Major's Christmas*, p. 234.

<sup>28</sup> Stapleton, "Oldest Inhabitant," *The Major's Christmas*, p. 89.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>30</sup> Stapleton, "A Story of Preble Bay," p. 51.

While her love of life and dedication to living prevail throughout her writings, her methods of attaining "happy endings" detract from the overall literary quality of her work. Nevertheless, as awkward as her techniques are, the cheerful resolutions are a way of reflecting the exuberance and optimism of the new West. Her perspective was typical of the pioneer spirit that embodied the belief that people could conquer problems through faith and hard work. While her optimism was obvious, she does touch upon feelings of dissatisfaction. "Once he went to California to find gold, other folks got it, but he came back poorer than he went. Then he tried to discover oil in Pennsylvania, and we went there."<sup>31</sup> More often, though, she concentrates on positive attitudes of hope for the future. Hope was synonymous with the American frontier, and it was continually portrayed in her novels. "One night these emigrants camped beside a creek, knowing on the morrow they would behold the land of their dreams. It was livelier here. Many other travelers were camped at the spot and all were full of energy and excitement. . . . Groups of men formed at the fires and around the wagons, all talking of the new city to be, and the wealth they should make."<sup>32</sup>

Though idealism prevails in all of her stories, her writing is a sound historical evaluation of life in the West. Patience Stapleton had a keen eye for details that produced an accurate description of frontier life. Her concern for literary detail stemmed from her complete involvement and commitment to the West. The frontier was not simply an abstract term to her, but a picture composed of real people with real problems. Her understanding of industrialization and urbanization was depicted in her literature, for in her lifetime Patience witnessed the rise of industry and technology. She watched the industrial revolution leave a path of misery in its wake. This suffering from "progress" was dealt with in many of her works. "The big saw-mill in Bankton stopped running on the 20th of November; the hands were out of employment, and the fierce land wolf Poverty howled around the poor homes of the mill men, crept in by their firesides and never left them. The town was like a place that had been plague stricken. The poorer shopkeepers looked wistfully for customers that came not, and at their well filled shelves that never attracted a buyer."<sup>33</sup>

<sup>31</sup> Stapleton, "The Oldest Inhabitant," *The Major's Christmas*, pp. 81-82.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 12.

<sup>33</sup> Stapleton, "Miss Bean's Revenge," *The Major's Christmas*, p. 293.

Urbanization was another common element in her stories. "Along the crooked, uneven streets of Denver were mud huts, loghouses, saloons built of wood, some decent residences and stores, a church and more saloons. In fact, the saloons seemed to be the most popular part of the town. A few grand old cottonwoods, the growth of centuries, towered above the village dumb reminders of its peaceful past before the pioneer's axe echoed along the Platte."<sup>34</sup>

The belief that there were many new channels to take and many opportunities for finding a better way of life was reflected in Patience, herself, who was willing to try various life styles. Her attitude toward change and "moving on," as reflected in her works, was consistent with her life and was demonstrated by her own attempts at change and her willingness to place herself into new situations. "Now, I feel in this new country there is a future for me, I will win honor and fame and you will not be ashamed of me . . . it's like a dream," he went on eagerly."<sup>35</sup> Patience's role in the woman's suffrage movement was consistent with her belief in change and her willingness to participate in change. She used the *Denver Republican* as a vehicle for her suffragette editorials, and women's rights was also a common theme in her literature. "The chivalry of men is dying out forced away by the rising of womanhood. . . . I hope the time will be near, when women's work shall be faithful and well done, and women's faces wear no longer a stamp of idle sin, or narrow intelligence and silly vanity."<sup>36</sup> In her works a strong woman often comes to the rescue of starving children, helpless towns, and unhappy families. Patience's entire life, in actions as well as words, demonstrated her dedication to women's rights, and her personal successes in Boston and Denver gave credence to her writings.

However, her fiction reveals the conflicts between the roles that women were expected to play and what she thought they ought to be. Perhaps this arises from the conflicts that she experienced with her father. Her description of a woman who opposed her husband's beliefs is a good example: "She struggled between love and genius, duty and ambition, and then and there she resolved to take the step."<sup>37</sup> In another

<sup>34</sup> Stapleton, *My Jean* (Chicago: Morrill Higgins and Co., 1890), p. 32.

<sup>35</sup> Stapleton, "The Oldest Inhabitant," *The Major's Christmas*, p. 16.

<sup>36</sup> Stapleton, *Babe Murphy* (Chicago: Belford and Clarke Co., 1890), p. 222.

<sup>37</sup> Stapleton, "Christmas at Montsweag," *The Major's Christmas*, p. 162.





At 7:15 A.M. on 24 November 1894, women were in line to vote at the precinct headquarters in a residential district in Denver.

incident, when the protagonist's thoughts turn to a canal that went through and ruined her land, she thinks of her neighbor who was working to build the canal: "He being a man, of course succeeded."<sup>38</sup> Patience showed her image of the fairer sex by writing that "Nancy Jane had no fear of women, but regarded them with much contempt. They seldom bought books at the shop; this showed they were illiterate."<sup>39</sup> Patience's entire life, nevertheless, demonstrated her dedication to women's rights; only her fictional works reveal any direct conflict about the role of women.

Those who have written about Patience Stapleton claim that her greatest achievement was the contribution she made, through her editorials, to the Colorado women's suffrage movement in 1893.<sup>40</sup> She approached the subject from a variety of angles, utilizing different perspectives to influence readers. For the more conservative minded, she directed her remarks toward man's historical consciousness: Women "are citizens of this country. They are subject to its laws. If it is unjust to subject men to laws in the making of which they have no voice, it is equally unjust to deny women a voice in framing the laws to which they, equally with men, are subject."<sup>41</sup>

She similarly used logic, economic factors, and the humanitarian sense of "fair play" to gain supporters for women's suffrage. Some of her editorial remarks seem directly applicable to her own life and position as a journalist. "Every

profession is open to them, and every avenue of employment to which they are physically adapted is crowded by self supporting women."<sup>42</sup> Through these articles she exerted a great influence on and for the suffrage movement.<sup>43</sup> After the women's franchise was secured, the following notice appeared in the society pages of the *Denver Republican*: "This lady never wielded her pen with greater effect than during the recent equal suffrage campaign. Some of the ablest and most telling articles written in behalf of woman suffrage were hers. Their temperate tone, and clear, logical reading made them count with even the most conservative men."<sup>44</sup>

Just after the campaign, on Friday, 10 November, Patience departed Denver for what her friends thought was to be a visit with her family in the East: "Mrs. Patience Stapleton left the city early last week to spend a few weeks with her parents in Wiscasset, Maine."<sup>45</sup> Denver was shocked to find that the trip was actually for the treatment of a tumor that Patience had been suffering from for some time. Surgery was necessary, and two weeks after leaving Colorado, Patience Stapleton died from the effects of the operation. In November 1893 she was buried in Woodlong Cemetery on the isle of Monaltan near her parent's home in Wiscasset.<sup>46</sup>

Patience lived a life of chances and met the challenges that arose. This was evident after her departure from the security of her home to start a new life in Denver. She was an individualist who gave up her comfortable life in the East for a region that was still comparatively "uncultured and wild," but full of opportunities. Patience had to be strong, self-assertive, and self-confident in order to withstand the hardships that prevailed in Denver in the 1880s. In a sense, then, she was the archetype of the "rugged individualist"—a single woman who went West alone, to find a freer, more fulfilling life. Though it was a hard life, she never regretted her decision to settle in Denver:

<sup>38</sup> Stapleton, "Miss Bean's Revenge," *The Major's Christmas*, p. 293.

<sup>39</sup> Stapleton, "The Major's Christmas," *The Major's Christmas*, p. 36.

<sup>40</sup> *Denver Republican*, 26 November 1893; *Denver Rocky Mountain News*, 26 November 1893; *The Glory That Was Gold*, p. 112; Kinder and Spencer, eds. and comps., *Evenings with Colorado Poets*, p. 263.

<sup>41</sup> *Denver Republican*, 13 October 1893.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>43</sup> Kinder and Spencer, eds. and comps., *Evenings with Colorado Poets*, p. 263.

<sup>44</sup> *Denver Republican*, 12 November 1893.

<sup>45</sup> *Denver Times*, 25 November 1893; *Denver Republican*, 12 November 1893.

<sup>46</sup> Chase, *Wiscasset in Pownalborough*, p. 591.

What a glad and glowing world about us always! Do we regret the East ever in our hearts? The wide, green fields and shady woods, fern-carpeted, caressed by vagrant brooks; the pastures odorous with wild flowers and blossoming shrubs, where the cows go homeward in pensive file, and the jangling bell of the leader chimes in the twilight air. Some times perhaps, when some old friend sends us a bunch of May flowers, that I can never call trailing arbutus, for they were such familiar friends. They used to be the little chink of sunshine stealing out of summer's golden portals. For winters were long and cold, and March and April resounded with the sobbing of the wintry wind and dripping of rain from the eaves. The sheets of rain across the sea where the gray waves with glancing gleam of white, thunder sullenly along the shore. Life, too was gray and gloomy in those days. But here, how joyous! We are not drifted in and kept housed! God's sunlight is given in abundance. I never hear that one note of the meadow lark but I seem to feel the happiness of dwelling in this land. He does not sing a song; he has but one glad triumphant note. He rejoices at just living. Perhaps like him we are not capable of extended effort. We fall below our ideals; we dream more than we work, but are we not glad, too, of just living?<sup>47</sup>

Despite the inner conflicts she had to contend with, and the intensity at which her crises seem to have manifested themselves, Patience perhaps had found herself at last in her optimistic hopes for the future of the West. Keeping this in mind, and the drastic changes occurring in American society, Patience Stapleton's life is representative in many ways of this period in American history. A hopefulness for the future and a faith in mankind reflected in her literature was in tune with western America's character in the 1880s. Her optimism coupled with her personal conflicts make for an intriguing comparison with the dissension created by an industrialized, urban society that was hanging on to a core of idealistic, agrarian values in the late nineteenth century.

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<sup>47</sup> *Denver Republican*, 10 May 1891.