

THE NEW EMPIRE OF THE ROCKIES

A History of Northeast Colorado

Steven F. Mehls



Bureau of Land Management

Colorado

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THE NEW EMPIRE OF THE ROCKIES
A History of Northeast Colorado

By Steven F. Mehls

Bureau of Land Management
Denver, Colorado
1984

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CANON CITY DISTRICT OFFICE
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
3080 EAST MAIN STREET
P. O. BOX 311
CANON CITY, COLORADO 81212

or

COLORADO STATE OFFICE
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
1037 20th STREET
DENVER, COLORADO 80202

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DESIGNED BY: Leigh A. Wellborn
SERIES EDITOR: Frederic J. Athearn

FOREWORD

This volume represents the fourth in a series of five Class I Overview histories prepared by the Colorado State Office, Bureau of Land Management. The purpose of these works is to develop a synthetic history of a given area in order to provide our managers and staff specialists with a baseline overview of the history in a district. We have prepared these documents district by district, and they are regularly used by BLM personnel for orientation, training, and literature searches by professional consultants.

In addition, these Class I's are basic to the operation of BLM's Cultural Resource Management Program, because they provide the background that is required for field examination and evaluation of historic properties located on Bureau lands in Colorado. The overview is also used for the preparation of Resource Management Plans and Environmental Impact Statements.

This work is the first time an author has attempted to write a broad view of northeastern Colorado, covering the area from the Continental Divide to Kansas and from Wyoming south to near Colorado Springs. This massive region represents a quarter of Colorado and contains the vast majority of Colorado's historic sites and events. That Steve Mehls was able to cover this huge area, within very strict page limits is a testament to his ability to abstract the important events in our history. It must be noted that the major cities, like Denver, Colorado Springs, Boulder, Fort Collins, and Greeley are only mentioned. This is because there is no public land in these places and the Bureau's mandate is to manage the public lands, not private estate. Therefore, some of northeastern Colorado's history is briefly noted, with the emphasis placed on the interaction between the Federal Government and its role in the settlement of the West.

I am pleased to present to both the general public and to the professional community this history; our latest effort at providing sound research, while at the same time serving the reading public. I hope you will enjoy this work.



Kannon Richards
State Director, Colorado
Denver, Colorado

DEDICATION

**To the memory of Gene Gray and
hundreds of others who gave their lives
while managing America's public lands.**

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John Beardsley, BLM District Archaeologist, Canon City District, deserves a special thank you, but the largest obligation of all is owed to Dr. Frederic J. Athearn, BLM's Colorado State Historian. His professional insights and editing of this work did more than anything else to strengthen the document. Of course, the secretaries and typists who put endless hours at their machines deserve more praise than I can give. Virginia Garcia, Branch of Cartographic Services, did the typesetting for this work and she deserves special accolades for her dedicated efforts.

Finally, two others get extra-big "thank yous", my wife Carol for her help and encouragement and my new son Robert whose squeals of delight and laughter (and some editorial drools) about what "da-da" had written convinced me that I was reaching at least one audience.

Steven F. Mehls
Denver, Colorado
1983

INTRODUCTION

Northeastern Colorado represents a significant portion of this state, for here began much of Colorado's history. This corner of Colorado has seen most of the events that have shaped our state and has participated in the building of the entire state through its history and traditions. When the 1858 Gold Rush started, thousands of would-be miners poured into this region seeking precious minerals located in the foothills of northeastern Colorado. These people were the first permanent settlers, and since the mountains offered up their treasures with little initial difficulty, towns were soon founded and grew along the waterways of northeast Colorado.

The population base of this state, much of its economic activity, and its agricultural foundations all had roots in the northeast quarter of our state. It is small wonder that most Colorado history started here and then radiated from the region. Prior to the 1858 rush, not much happened in northeast Colorado. There was some fur trapping and buffalo hunting, but this did not amount to long term settlement. Only a few places like Fort Lupton and Fort Vasquez, represented Europeans on Colorado's frontier. By 1850 these remote outposts were gone, along with the fur trade.

Yet the area was surprisingly well-known by that time thanks to early explorations by men like Zebulon M. Pike (1806) and Stephen H. Long (1819). Both of these men brought knowledge of eastern Colorado to the general public through their journals and maps. Long pronounced the place unfit for settlement and gave it the title "The Great American Desert", sealing its fate for the next forty years.

But human greed overcame fears of a "desert". In 1858 gold was located along Dry and Cherry Creeks. Thanks to considerable promotion by "port Towns" like St. Louis, Leavenworth, Kansas and St. Joseph, Missouri, one hundred thousand eager gold seekers rushed to what was then called Pike's Peak. As in any such boom, there was not enough to go around, so many frustrated miners went home. These were the despised "Go-backers". However, thousands of others stayed. Businesses were quickly founded to service foothills mining communities

like Central City, Blackhawk, Idaho Springs and Gold Hill. Denver, Boulder, and Golden soon became supply centers located at the mouth of canyons in which mining went on at a frantic pace.

The early years saw Long's "desert" become an enemy. Goods and services were imported across the plains, no small feat considering hostile natives, the lack of water or established roads, and quite primitive equipment. Thousands of tons of food and manufactured goods came down the Santa Fe Trail, over the Smoky Hill Trail, up the Platte River Road, and even southward from the Oregon Trail in Wyoming.

The first settlers to reach northeast Colorado were trespassers. They found native Americans already living along the waterways. The Arapaho, the Cheyenne, some Utes, and even a few Blackfeet roamed the eastern plains. At first, the natives looked upon the hordes of miners as temporary visitors. When cities, farms and ranches began to spring up, the natives became fearful that their land was about to be taken. These fears led to confrontations between Anglos and natives. The tension increased well into the 1860s. The Hungate Massacre of 1864 crystalized public sentiment, and the U.S. Army was used to quell rebel natives. Several battles, most notably Beecher Island (1868) and Summit Springs (1869) cleared the plains of native residents. By 1870 there was no threat and expansion onto the eastern grasslands began.

As cities grew, (Denver in particular) they became more self-sufficient. The plains were cut off by native raiders during the early 1860s so developing a local supply source became most important. Near Golden, in 1859, David K. Wall planted and irrigated the first garden in this region. This led to further experiments in making the "desert" bloom. By the late 1860s, settlements were founded along the South Platte, the St. Vrain and the Cache la Poudre Rivers. One of the first, and most famous, colonization projects was the Union Colony at Greeley. Its success caused others to colonize the northeast's bottomlands. Later, successes like Longmont and Fort Collins generated more attempts at colonization. But for each town founded, there were numerous failures like David Green's Green City. By the mid-1870s the rich bottomlands were occupied and newcomers were forced to locate on the dry plains.

The 1870s saw another clash, this time between cattle operations such as those of John W. Iliff and sodbusters determine to take up their 160 acres of public land under the various homestead acts. This conflict did not end until the late 1880s when bad weather, poor management,

and low prices virtually wiped out the range cattle business. From that point forward, feed lots, better grazing management and controlled herds marked modern plains cattle ranches. At the same time the cattle industry slowed, dryland homesteading boomed.

The first wave of “drylanders” came during the mid-1880s and this phase lasted to the 1893 Panic. That depression decimated crop prices and by 1896 dryland farming had ended. Wheat was the main crop from the northeastern plains. It required minimal moisture, it could be planted in winter, and there was considerable demand for this grain at the time. In this manner, Colorado’s eastern plains were opened to agriculture.

While farming was the primary use of the flat, arid, plains, the mountains were scenes of frantic mining activity. After the first gold discoveries, mining declined due to a lack of readily available “free” minerals. Hardrock techniques used in California generally proved unsuccessful in Colorado and by the mid 1860s local mining was in a state of deep downturn. Towns that boomed in the early 60s were now ghost towns. South Park was particularly hard hit. Denver, Boulder and other mining oriented supply towns also suffered a severe slump in their economies. By the end of the Civil War in 1865, Colorado’s lustre was gone. Not only was local ore nearly impossible to separate, but there was no cheap transportation into the mountains to haul it out.

But technological innovation came to the rescue. In the late 1860s, Nathaniel Hill devised an ore milling process that made hard rock mining cost-effective. His Blackhawk, Colorado mill dominated mineral processing in these early years. With the separation problem solved, all miners needed was a cheap way to move ores and goods. In 1870 General William Jackson Palmer incorporated the Denver and Rio Grande Railway. It first went to newly founded Colorado Springs. This was only the beginning, because by the late 1870s not only did the Rio Grande go nearly everywhere, but there were numerous other railways. The Colorado Central went to Georgetown and Silver Plume (1872), the Denver, South Park and Pacific arrived in Fairplay in 1879 and then Leadville in 1884. The Denver Pacific connected Denver with the Transcontinental at Cheyenne in 1870 and the Rio Grande reached Pueblo in 1872, then it proceeded to build up the Arkansas River to Leadville, arriving in the “Cloud City” in 1883.

Railroad transportation revolutionized the mining frontier. Not only was it less expensive to move ores, but getting goods into mining camps became far more reasonable. This, in turn,

stimulated exploration that manifested itself in new discoveries of both gold and silver. As it happened, silver was the queen of minerals from the late 1870s until 1893. Discoveries at Caribou Georgetown, Silver Plume, and finally Leadville (1879) brought about a new rush to the Rockies. Silver mining also stimulated the plains economy for more farm goods were needed as the state's population swelled. Cities like Denver, became major commercial centers based upon the silver pouring from the Rockies. Industrial expansion caused various smelters, originally located near mines, to be moved to Denver. Denver was also the hub of a rail network that served all of the mountains and the eastern plains. By 1883 Denver had rail systems running to Chicago, Omaha, St. Louis and Kansas City. As new rails crossed the eastern flatlands, towns sprang up along the rights of way. Dryland farmers were brought to the eastern plains by rail and their crops were shipped east by the same bands of steel.

The year 1893 was the end of an era. The price of silver collapsed, the nation was thrown into its worst depression since the 1870s, and Colorado's economy suffered terribly. Railroads went bankrupt, farmers abandoned their fields, and miners fled the mountains, leaving behind more and more ghost towns. The 1893 disaster also caused the formation of a new party; the People's Party (also called Populists). This group demanded massive reforms in agriculture, currency, taxation and other basic social institutions. The life of this new national third party came to an end in the election of 1896 when the "Silver Crusade" culminated in a classic specie confrontation between silver interests (miners) and gold capitalists (industry). William Jennings Bryan, a "Silver Democrat" delivered one version of his "Cross of Gold" speech at the Boulder, Colorado, Chatauqua Auditorium to the applause of thousands. But William McKinley, a "Gold Republican" overcame popular sentiment and won the election, wiping out both the Populists and the "free silver" movement. Colorado mining never recovered from the silver debacle although Cripple Creek, a booming gold center, did do rather well at this time. As the 1890s ended, change swept over Colorado. Traditional mining disappeared, the open range cattle industry was gone, dryland farmers were wiped out and the booming cities slowed their growth.

Prosperity began to return by 1900. Mining may have been stunted, but agriculture developed even more than before. Irrigated lands, along with the introduction of sugar beets, brought about a revival of farming from Fort Collins to Sterling. Where irrigation was not

possible, dryland wheat farming started again. More economic slack was taken up by an increasing number of tourists arriving by rail. Intensive promotion by the railroads lured easterners “Out West” where they could see the wonders of nature, stay in quality hotels and spend lots of money. The tourist boom extended to health care too, for many persons with lung diseases came to the clear, crisp air of Colorado to recover. Colorado was famous for its health facilities. By 1915 automobiles brought tourists into Colorado where they camped, visited places like Pike’s Peak and spent money. It is not purely coincidence that Rocky Mountain National Park came into being in 1916. Thanks to intense lobbying efforts by the residents of Estes Park, Colorado, they also saw tourism as an economic windfall; not to mention they could claim that the city saved a valuable piece of Colorado’s wilderness, that just happened to be fifty miles from Denver.

The creation of a national park in northeast Colorado was symptomatic of major land tenure changes in this region. Most of today’s national forests were created at this time. For instance, the Arapaho National Forest was carved out of the mountains west of Denver in 1905, while the Pike Peak Timber Reserve was established in the same year. President Theodore Roosevelt took advantage of the 1891 General Revision Act to withdraw these federal lands. Homesteading was effectively ended on the front range, although the far eastern plains did remain open until 1934 to homesteaders.

World War I brought considerable prosperity to a region that was languishing. Agriculture did well because of European food demand. Local industry recovered when more minerals were needed for arms production. In fact, there was a “boomlet” in Boulder County, near Ward, when tungsten was discovered. Steel makers needed it and through 1918 Ward, Caribou and Nederland did quite well. In fact, thanks to minerals a new railroad was built from Boulder to Ward to haul tungsten. This period was also the final thrust onto the eastern plains. Dryland wheat farmers took up virtually every last acre of public lands. Intensive cultivation brought quick wartime profits and deep regrets ten years later.

The end of the Great War in 1918 burst the bubble. By 1919 the nation was in a depression and Colorado agriculture suffered intensely. Wheat, sugar beets, corn and cattle prices all collapsed. Soon marginal farmers were bankrupt and farms went on the auction block. But this

was just a prelude to complete disaster. To save themselves, farmers began cooperative marketing; finally legalized during the 1920s. Mining, like farming, also suffered from a depressed economy. Precious mineral development was nearly non-existent while ores like zinc, tungsten and other industrial minerals were minimally produced. Coal mining, mostly in Boulder County, suffered from declines in sales. Several violent strikes took place during the 1920s at Lafayette and Louisville. Natural gas destroyed the local coal industry.

One of the last major developments during this era was the construction of the Denver, Northwestern and Pacific Railroad (usually called the Moffat Road), from Denver to Steamboat Springs, Colorado. David H. Moffat's standard gauge line hoped to reach Salt Lake City through northwestern Colorado, and thereby give the Rio Grande some real competition. However, Moffat went broke at Steamboat Springs. Denver had a railroad that went nowhere. The Moffat Road reached Craig, Colorado in 1915 where it finally died. One of the railroad's most serious problems was using the 11,000 foot Rollins Pass. Finally, after years of lobbying, the construction of a tunnel under the Rockies was approved by Denver voters. This was to be a rail tunnel, with a parallel water diversion tunnel. Begun in 1924 and completed in 1928, the Moffat Tunnel provided a direct connection through the Rockies and shortened the rail route by 180 miles. Later, a cut-off was built between Orestod and Dotsero connecting the Rio Grande with the Moffat Road, thereby giving Denver its first direct access to the West Coast. In 1947 the Rio Grande bought the ailing Moffat Road and consolidated the Moffat Tunnel route to Salt Lake City under one railway.

Other events of the twenties included the rise of the Ku Klux Klan to the governor's office in 1924 and the equally quick demise of the Klan as a political power when the voters discovered their own stupidity. The northeast quarter of Colorado was a Klan stronghold, particularly Boulder, Denver, Sterling and Greeley where Klan rallies built voter support. The 1920s were also a period of depression for Colorado despite the national boom. While optimism may have been rampant in the United States, Colorado did not really participate. In October, 1929 the end came as the stock market collapsed and the nation was plunged into the worst depression in its entire history.

The 1930s saw real trouble as farm prices dropped, industrial output stopped, and mining was abandoned. At the same time the economy died, the West was gripped by a terrible drought

that lasted for years. Overtilled soils on the plains dried up and blew away. Colorado lost its economic base overnight, and the crisis lasted well into the thirties. There was nothing to save the northeast corner of this state but massive federal aid.

The 1932 election of Franklin D. Roosevelt promised a "New Deal" for America. One of his first actions was to give immediate aid to agriculture and industry through the "alphabet" agencies like the AAA, the SCS, the NRA and so on. All of Colorado, including the northeast region, benefitted from agricultural stabilization and higher farm prices. In addition, work projects like the WPA, CCC, and PWA built roads and trails in the national parks and forests, new schools, post offices, and on a larger scale, water diversion in the form of the Colorado-Big Thompson Project. While federal aid poured into the local economy, and the situation did look better by the late 1930s, it was world war that once again "saved" northeast Colorado.

War broke out in Europe during 1939 and soon there was a huge demand for food, arms, and minerals. Both wheat and sugar beet farmers profited. So did the mineral industry that produced industrial war materials. Transportation, railroads in particular, did well hauling both troops and goods across the region. More importantly, military installations and factories added to the local economy on an unprecedented scale. A few examples were Lowry Air Field, Buckley Naval Air Station, an expanded Fitzsimmons Army Hospital and the Remington Arms plant located in Lakewood, Colorado.

As the war ended in 1945, northeast Colorado's growth continued. Not only did the military stay, but so did industry. The federal government added to this area's population by establishing various civilian and military institutions like the Denver Federal Center in the early 1950s. This came about due to considerable Denver Chamber of Commerce and other growth groups lobbying the government to locate in Denver. Other governmental installations included the National Bureau of Standard at Boulder (1952) and the Rocky Flats Nuclear Weapons Plant in Jefferson County (1953).

While agriculture remained a mainstay of the economy, there was established a large population corridor from Fort Collins to Pueblo during the 1960s. For the first time, economic and political power concentrated on the front range. Farmers, miners and ranchers found themselves dealing with city dwellers and having to share power with them. Tensions increased and conflicts between metro Denver and the eastern plains, where agricultural and political

clout were traditions, became common. The power struggle continues to the present. But with several million people in the Denver metroplex and more arriving every day, it is only a matter of time before northeast Colorado becomes urbanized to the point that it begins to resemble Los Angeles.

This history, written by Dr. Steven F. Mehls, represents a synthesis of secondary materials gathered over a year's time. The purpose of this work is to provide a basic narrative history of northeastern Colorado which, in turn, gives BLM managers information with which to make decisions as to the best means of managing historic sites found on public lands within this area. Since most such Bureau lands are either in the foothills or out on the eastern plains, the history of cities like Denver, Boulder, Colorado Springs, Greeley or Fort Collins were deliberately shortened in order to concentrate on places that are of more direct interest to the Bureau. The bibliography, however, does represent an extensive literature search that covers most secondary materials available for this region's history as of 1981. Cities that were "glossed over" are also contained in the bibliography.

This history is probably the first time anyone has gathered and reduced the massive amount of literature pertaining to northeastern Colorado to a single volume. While there are undoubtedly shortcomings, especially regarding detailed local history, this document provides the reader with a sound overview of nearly one-quarter of Colorado. As always, we have tried to give a readable narrative, while at the same time producing history that can be profitably used by both professionals and the general public.

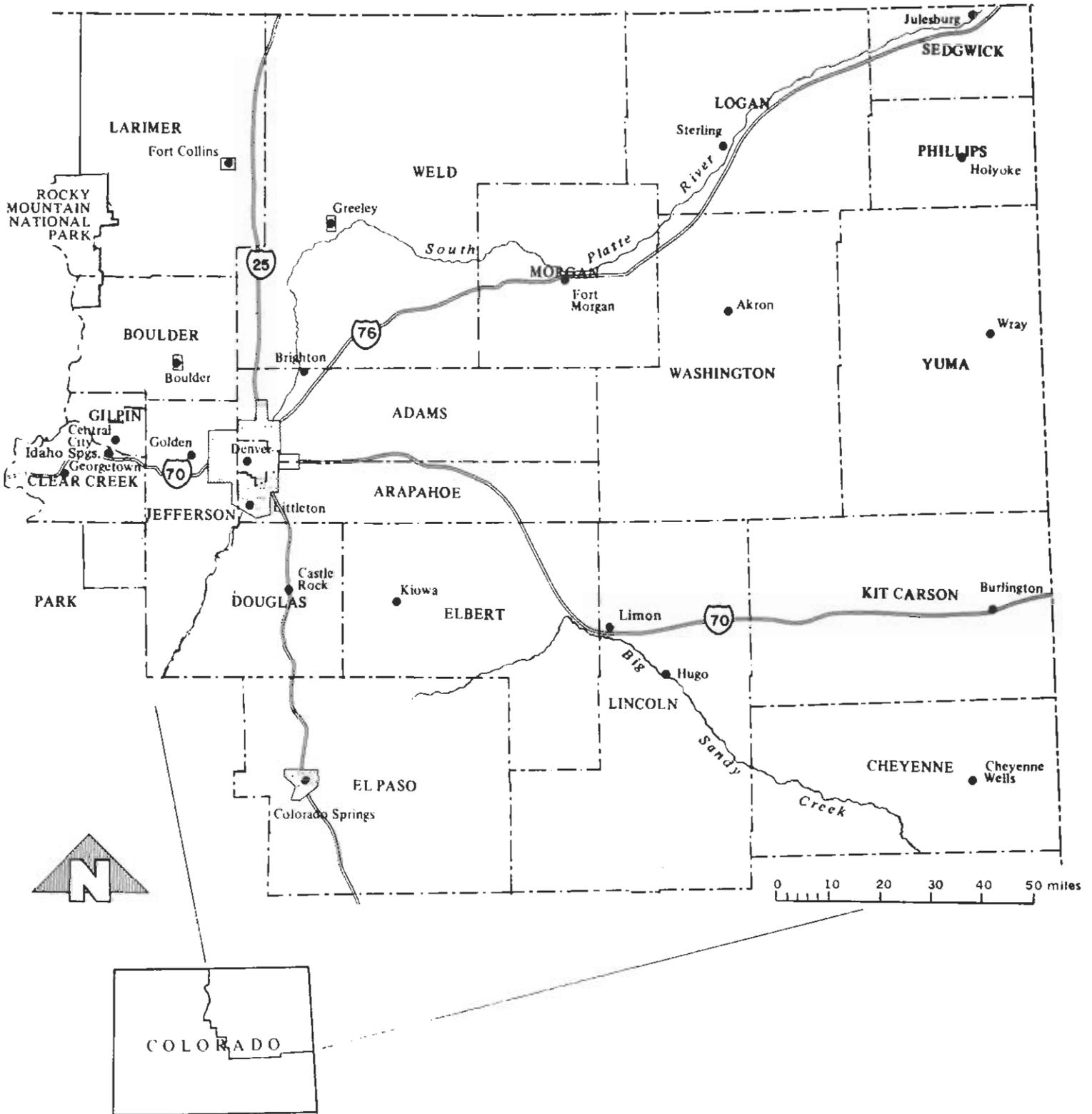
Frederic J. Athearn
Denver, Colorado
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Chapter I THE NATURAL SETTING

As over the centuries, northeastern Colorado today is still a land of contrasts. This region is bounded, on the east, by the Colorado-Kansas/Nebraska line, to the south twenty miles north of Pueblo, to the west the Continental Divide, and to the north by the Wyoming/Nebraska border. The area contains most of Colorado's major cities, but in other parts it is possible to travel for miles without seeing another soul. The northeastern corner of Colorado encompasses extremes of climate, geology and geography. From arid Great Plains to snow capped peaks of the Continental Divide, the land rises from 3,458 feet above sea level to well over 14,000 feet at Pike's Peak. Over the years travellers have described the region in terms from the "Great American Desert" to a scenic paradise in the Rockies.¹ The physical environment determined human use and occupation patterns in the region for thousands of years especially during the last century of intense use by Euro-Americans. Ranching and dryland farming dominated the plains. Along the front range, more intensive agricultural use and settlement took place, while the mountains provided a basis for Colorado's gold rush. Today, the Rockies are still highly prized for recreational purposes.²

If any one factor affected settlement and land use patterns in northeastern Colorado, it was, and still is, availability of water. Rivers and creeks that flow eastward from the mountains provide most of the area's water supply. The region's primary river is the South Platte. This stream and its alluvial valley provides a route, and land, for settlement. It diagonally bisects northeastern Colorado. This corridor became one of the primary areas for development during Colorado's early period of Euro-American use.³ The South Platte's headwaters are in the mountains above South Park. The river flows across that valley before turning north-northeast to exit via South Platte Canyon, a spectacular gorge cut from solid granite. Once free of the Rockies, the waterway proceeds north through the present-day Denver metropolitan area. It then heads for the extreme northeast corner of the state creating a broad and fertile floodplain. The river can vary from a nearly dry streambed to a raging torrent; often making this transition in less than a day.⁴ Along its course the South Platte is joined by many tributaries. The major streams are: Cherry, Clear, Boulder Creeks the St. Vrain, Big Thompson and Cache la Poudre Rivers, Bijou Creek, Spring Creek and Cedar Creek. The South Platte ends in Nebraska where it joins the North Platte to form the Platte, which in turn flows into the Missouri River. A few of the South Platte's tributaries like Cedar and Bijou Creeks originate from springs and groundwater on the plains.⁵

Not all northeastern Colorado's watercourses flow into the South Platte. Between modern Denver and Colorado Springs there is a natural division of the drainages known as Monument Divide, or more popularly, Monument Hill. South of this feature, streams run to the Arkansas River. Foremost among these drainages are Fountain and Big Sandy Creeks.⁶ The other major river system in northeastern Colorado is the Republican River. This waterway in Colorado has two major branches, the North Fork and South Fork. The



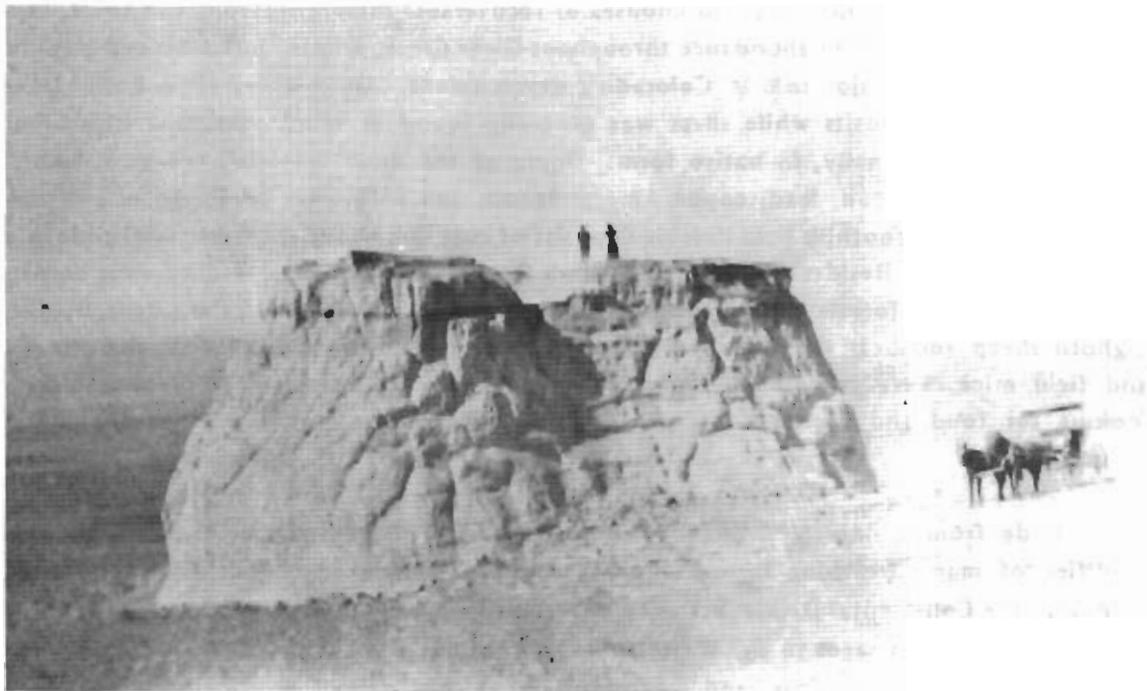
Arikaree River is a major Colorado tributary of the Republican River that flows east from the state into Kansas and Nebraska. All of these streams rise from springs on the plains. As with the South Platte, most of these creeks vary from swift moving floods to dry beds, depending on season and rainfall. None of the watercourses of northeastern Colorado can be used for commercial transportation.⁷ In addition to these problems, the plains rivers present other hazards to both man and animal. Many of the streambeds contain pockets of quicksand that are fatal. Also, during wet periods, river banks become quagmires of mud that are totally impassable. Even with these drawbacks, the rivers of northeastern Colorado are the land's lifeblood. Where surface water is not available, Anglo-Americans have gone to great lengths to secure this resource by other means such as drilling wells hundreds of feet deep to tap aquifers.⁸

If rivers were the mainstay of northeastern Colorado, it was the mountains that first lured Europeans into the state. Some of North America's most famous ranges are located within the region. Pike's Peak and Long's Peak as well as Mount Evans are all within the area. Pike's and Long's Peaks served as landmarks along the front range for centuries before Euro-Americans arrived. Later, trappers, explorers and travellers during the nineteenth century viewed these pinnacles as beacons signalling the end of their journey.⁹ Not all mountains in the area are as famous or as spectacular as Pike's Peak but they were important to the region because of the resources they held. Mountain valleys contained vast stretches of lush natural meadows for grazing or cultivation. Further, these areas were naturally well watered which encouraged dense riparian growth. The hillsides were covered with Engelmann spruce, Douglas fir, Lodgepole, Ponderosa and Yellow pine as well as aspen.¹⁰ Additionally, the high country held vast storehouses of recoverable minerals. Gold and silver, two precious minerals found in abundance throughout Clear Creek, Gilpin, Jefferson and Boulder Counties, played a major role in Colorado's development. Gold occurred in both placer (loose) and lode deposits while silver was generally found in veins, combined with other minerals, or occasionally, in native form. Some of the other materials proved valuable. Uranium, tungsten, iron, lead, copper, molybdenum and zinc were all found in the high country, while the foothills held useable deposits of coal, limestone, gypsum, sandstone and refractory clays.¹¹ Besides minerals, Colorado's Rockies also provided resources for human consumption. The forests and meadows teemed with wildlife of all varieties. Deer, beaver, bighorn sheep and bear dominated mammalian species, while smaller animals, like skunks and field mice, were common. Eagles, hawks and other birds flew the mountain skies looking for food and shelter. Because of the climate, reptiles did not flourish in the mountains.¹²

Aside from a natural abundance in the Rockies, the mountains are also a major modifier of man's behavior throughout northeastern Colorado. The steep slopes and, especially the Continental Divide, act as an obstacle to travel. These geographic formations offer few natural passages to the Western Slope from the front range. Ute Pass, west of present-day Colorado Springs, and Kenosha Pass, at the head of South Platte Canyon, allowed access to the high country from southern reaches of the foothills. West of Denver,



The eastern plains are a flat, featureless area that Stephen Long called the "Great American Desert".



Indian Burial Rock, near Franceville, Colorado, 1908.
Photo Courtesy USGS.

Clear Creek Canyon, Loveland and Berthoud Passes all permit travellers to cross the Divide. Rollins Pass, southwest of Boulder is another route west. Milner and Cameron Passes serve the same function west of Fort Collins.¹³ The Continental Divide is not only an impediment to man but also to natural forces such as air movement and moisture flow. High peaks of the Divide are major climatic modifiers, not only for northeastern Colorado, but also much of the Great Plains. The mountains catch moisture laden air masses and as they rise they cool, causing precipitation in the form of rain or snow, most of which falls during winter and spring months. The mountainous areas of northeastern Colorado receive an annual average of thirty-five inches of precipitation. During the winter many of the mountainsides are covered with yards of snow. North America's long standing record snowfall of seventy-six inches in twenty-four hours occurred along the Divide at Silver Lake; headwaters of North Boulder Creek. Not only do the mountains control the amount of precipitation, they also give rise to climatic peculiarities such as Chinook winds and upslopes. The Chinook is a warm wind caused by air masses being forced down along the Continental Divide. As the air falls, it gains temperature and velocity so that when it reaches the plains it is warm and brisk, at times reaching in excess of one hundred miles an hour along the foothills. An upslope is the antithesis of a Chinook. This formation is a mass of moist air that drifts in from the south and then backs up against the mountains. As it rises and cools, these clouds release their moisture as rain or snow. With upslopes it is not unusual for conditions to be cloudy and raining at 5,000 feet while it is clear and dry in the mountains at 9,000 feet.¹⁴

The mountains and foothills have their own climatic patterns as do the eastern plains. Because the Continental Divide forces precipitation to fall in the former areas, few westerly storms reach the flatlands. This causes the plains to have a semi-arid climate with about ten inches of annual rainfall. Often, when storms do reach this part of northeastern Colorado, they come in the form of thunderstorms. These violent displays of nature's power sometimes leave destruction in their path. Tornadoes, hail and lightning make each storm potentially dangerous and costly. During winter months the clouds often unleash ice storms or blizzards, accompanied by high winds, that can paralyze activity for days at a time. Further, rainfall varies from year to year, with periodic dry spells when precipitation does not arrive at all. This leads to dust storms or sometimes the unusual phenomenon of a "snuster," when dust blows and mixes with falling snow, causing mud to fall from the skies.¹⁵ As if the moisture extremes are not enough, temperatures also vary considerably throughout northeastern Colorado. On the plains, they range from well below zero (°F) to 120 (°F). The mountains have a more temperate climate in that while winters may average cooler than the plains, summer highs rarely exceed 85 (°F).¹⁶

Almost as striking as climatic differences are the soils found in northeastern Colorado. The majority of mountain lands are composed of eroded and decomposed granite, gneiss and schist. Alluvial floodplains along the mountains near creeks and rivers contain rich soils that are a mixture of weathered granite and brown to chestnut, fine grained soils. Away from mountain-fed waterways, composition is more sandy with certain areas being little

more than sandhills. Under these lands lie considerable quantities of bituminous and lignite coal, oil, and natural gas.¹⁷ The wide range of soil types led to a variety of vegetation on the plains. Buffalo and blue grama grasses grew on much of the plains region when Anglo-Americans first reached northeastern Colorado. These two forbs were highly nutritious for animals. Sagebrush, soapweed and greasewood took over many areas already not covered by grasses. For miles there were no native trees on the plains, however, cottonwoods and box elders grew along stream banks providing limited amounts of wood. While certain types of insects found this environment inhospitable, destructive grasshoppers flourished. Another natural phenomenon that could destroy vegetation by the hundreds of acres was prairie fire. During the summer, when grasses dried out and temperatures rose, lightning, spontaneous combustion or natives could start blazes that blackened the plains for miles.¹⁸ This environment sustained a wide variety of animal life over the centuries. During prehistoric times dinosaurs, including pterodactyls, roamed the foothills. As these creatures became extinct they were replaced by newer species. Among these were mammoths, Giant Bison, ground sloths and North American camels.¹⁹ Thousands of years ago these mammals were themselves replaced by newer animals. The American Bison (or buffalo) took the place of Giant Bison. At the same time antelope and deer appeared and, with the buffalo, dominated the plains wildlife system. Predators also came in the form of coyotes and grey wolves. In addition to feeding on larger animals, these carnivorous mammals ate rabbits, prairie dogs and prairie chickens, three of the smaller, yet most numerous species on the plains.²⁰ Because of the abundant food supply provided by small animals and the warm, barren environment, rattlesnakes and birds of prey like eagles and falcons, once abounded in northeastern Colorado. Additionally pheasants and quail fed these hungry feathered predators. Occasionally ducks and geese following the Rocky Mountain flyway became dietary supplements for the area's animal hunters.²¹

Among hunters on the plains was man. Humans have occupied northeastern Colorado for possibly as long as 15,000 years. The earliest inhabitants left evidences of their activities near present-day Fort Collins, Dent and Greeley. Using weapons fashioned from stone, these natives hunted the mammoth, Giant Bison and ground sloth. When not hunting, gathering edible plants took up much of their time. These people changed their hunting techniques and lifestyles as different breeds of game became available.²² Once buffalo appeared in northeastern Colorado, its inhabitants took up hunting the creature. They would either stalk lone or small groups of buffalo or, if possible, drive an entire herd over a cliff. Cultural modification for hunting buffalo led to development of the Archaic Plains cultural tradition, based on buffalo hunting and gathering edible plants. The importance this animal played in plains culture can not be underestimated. It supplied food, clothing, shelter and it became the center of religious ceremonies for these people.²³ Once these cultural changes had taken place, prehistoric man slowly evolved into Native-Americans typically associated with the Great Plains. Bands and tribes began to form and competition between various groups for hunting territories occurred. Northeastern Colorado became the center of conflict that continued for hundreds of years with different tribes.²⁴

By the 1500s two tribes dominated northeastern Colorado. The Pawnees, centered in what would become Nebraska, controlled, albeit in a loose manner, much of the South Platte Valley north of that river. These tribesmen soon gained a reputation as fierce warriors and able hunters. Once contact was made with French and British traders from Canada and the Mississippi Valley, the tribe became staunch friends of Europeans, an association that continued into the late nineteenth century, long after U.S. citizens had replaced the French and British.²⁵ Euro-American incursion onto the Great Plains from Spanish settlements in New Mexico, and French villages in Canada and the Mississippi Valley did more than any other event to revolutionize Native-American lifestyles.

The Jicarilla Apache, the other dominate tribe of northeastern Colorado from 1500 to 1750, held land between the South Platte and Arkansas Rivers. The Apache were the first natives of the region to come in contact with Europeans. At first this happened through intertribal trade with the Pueblo natives of New Mexico and later from direct meetings with Spaniards. While the Jicarilla were some of the first tribes to meet Spanish traders in Colorado, they were by no means the only northeastern Colorado tribe to benefit from European presence. The Europeans brought horses to the New World and these animals found their way into Native American hands by the closing decades of the seventeenth century. Once in possession of the horse, plainsmen enjoyed a mobility never before experienced. The natives could cover much larger areas on hunting and war expeditions, bringing tribes into greater conflict over territorial rights. Horses, because of their economic value, became a highly prized possession among Plains dwellers. Wars and raids often were conducted to capture horses. The introduction of the horse led to many changes for the plains tribes including reallocation of territory and the development of archtypical horsemen of the plains. At approximately the same time as the horses' arrival, firearms also became available to the inhabitants of northeastern Colorado. These new weapons came west from French trading posts in Canada (and the Mississippi Valley) during early years of the eighteenth century. Muzzle-loading rifles, while not as fast or reliable as bows and arrows, did increase the ability to kill both game and enemies. Warfare, previously a contest to secure honors, quickly became deadly business for the inhabitants of the region.²⁶

Economic and power shifts that occurred concurrently with cultural changes led to new tribes asserting their influence in the area, usually at the expense of another group. Among these were the Comanche, who between 1719 and 1749 continuously raided and eventually invaded Jicarilla lands. The Jicarilla were driven south and finally out of Colorado.²⁷ The next fifty years witnessed the arrival of two new tribes in northeastern Colorado, the Kiowa and Arapaho. They filled a vacuum left by Jicarilla departure and became friends of the Comanche. The Comanche did not do much to stop this migration because northeastern Colorado was on the extreme edge of their sphere of influence.²⁸

During the eighteenth century Utes, native to Colorado's western mountains, began using the front range for hunting. They too acquired horses in the late 1600s and the Utes

ventured far onto the plains in search of buffalo. They also bathed in the medicinal waters of Manitou Springs. However, these natives were not alone in their invasion of other tribe's traditional hunting grounds. Arapaho, and later the Cheyenne, went into the mountains at times crossing the Continental Divide seeking game in both Middle and North Parks.²⁹ The early nineteenth century was a time of flux and conflict for northeastern Colorado's native population. During the early 1800s the Cheyenne, displaced from homelands in Minnesota, drifted into the South Platte Valley. They soon became allies of the Arapaho due to a common linguistic heritage. Once relocated, the ex-Minnesotans quickly adapted to plains culture and became proficient horsemen and buffalo hunters.³⁰ While the Arapaho welcomed their Cheyenne neighbors, other tribes found a much cooler reception in the region. The Sioux, who by 1850 were a dominate force on the northern Great Plains, intensified their use of northeastern Colorado's hunting grounds. At various times the Sioux warred with, and then allied with, both Cheyenne and Arapaho. Nevertheless, Sioux presence tended to decrease the area's political stability.

Throughout the eighteenth and well into the nineteenth centuries Pawnee raiding parties frequented the northern Colorado plains. When they arrived it was as enemies of the Arapaho and, later, Cheyenne. The Pawnee did more than other tribes to make northeastern Colorado the scene of nearly constant warfare from 1750 to 1850. Supplied by Europeans, the Pawnee raided Cheyenne and Arapaho villages stealing horses and taking captives as slaves. Because of warfare and a need for sanctuary, the land between the North and South Platte Rivers became a neutral ground open to various tribes during the early nineteenth century.³¹ The front range and foothills also developed into a war zone during those years. Ute bowmen continued their buffalo hunting and raiding to capture horses on the plains. Each time they were detected, Cheyenne and Arapaho war parties chased them back into the mountains. Occasionally these plainsmen made revenge raids and stealing trips on Ute mountain camps. Neither side was able to stop the other and this conflict continued into the 1860s.³² At the same time thousands of Anglo-Americans arrived in northeastern Colorado's foothills to take advantage of nature's bounty. These people came looking for precious minerals locked in the mountains. Some were successful, most were not. Either way many stayed to settle the region. However, miners were not the first Europeans to come into northeastern Colorado, for the South Platte Valley already had a two hundred year history of exploration and limited Euro-American use.

NOTES Chapter I

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CHAPTER II EXPLORATION AND THE FUR TRADE

The mountains and plains of northeastern Colorado held a special fascination for European traders and explorers from the early 1500s until late in the nineteenth century. Spaniards, Frenchmen, Britishers and Americans travelled through the region, recording their findings for use by others. These journals did little but add to the mystery of the area over the centuries. The first known expedition to reach the Great Plains took place in the 1540s. Spanish religious and military leaders led this effort to find Cibola, the "seven cities of gold." In 1536 Alvar Nuñez Cabeza de Vaca and a small band of settlers returned to Mexico City, the seat of New Spain, with stories gleaned from natives. These tales told of "Cibola", a kingdom to the north where cities were built of gold. This led Fray Marcos de Niza to take a party into the American Southwest during 1539. He did not find legendary cities but he did return with stories of even greater wealth to be found in Cibola. Persistent rumors caused the Spanish government to take serious note of the north. In February, 1540 Francisco Vasquez de Coronado heading another expedition, moved northward to find the "seven cities of gold". Throughout the remainder of 1540 and into 1541 Coronado and his party moved to the Rio Grande having found Cibola to be the mud huts of Acoma. The Spaniards' wanderings led them into southeastern Colorado and onto the Plains. While Coronado never reached the South Platte Valley, his voyage of discovery became the basis for Spain's claim to the entire Great Plains including most of northeastern Colorado. The expedition did not find any "cities of gold" and its survivors returned to Mexico in 1541 on the verge of starvation.¹ Coronado's failure effectively ended Spanish involvement on the Colorado plains for over a century. During the late 1590s Euro-Americans hesitatingly expanded settlement north into New Mexico and from here explorers again ventured into Colorado. As early as 1659 an expedition from New Mexico was reported to have reached the South Platte River. The men named it Rio de Chato (River of the Flat Bed). For the remainder of the seventeenth century Spain consolidated her holdings in New Mexico and did little new exploration.² This situation changed quickly during the early 1700s. Spain, after a revolt in 1680, regained control of her New Mexican province. Reports were received about other Europeans, trading with natives on the Great Plains and violating Spanish claims to the area. The French, who became Spain's primary rival, felt they had a legitimate right to the area because of a 1682 claim to the Mississippi River Valley and all lands drained by it.³

To discourage French adventurers, Interim Governor Antonio de Valverde led a military expedition to the Arkansas River in 1717. Two years later Pedro de Villasur went north from Santa Fe, New Mexico with orders to proceed up the Rio de Chato looking for Frenchmen. In 1720 Villasur reached the area where the two Platte Rivers join. At that point he and his party were killed by Pawnees, possibly at the instigation of Frenchmen who were trading partners with the natives.⁴ Villasur's defeat led to increased French activity in northeastern Colorado; indeed throughout the northern plains. In 1739 and 1740 the Mallet brothers, Pierre and Paul, led a trading expedition up the Platte from the Missouri River. They traded guns and other European wares along the way. At the confluence of the Plattes the party used the South Platte and traversed northern Colorado. Once they reached

the foothills their route became uncertain. Most likely it was south to the Arkansas River and then back toward Santa Fe. Not only did the Mallet trip bring new goods to area tribes it also gave the name Platte, meaning flat, to the river. Other Frenchmen followed the Mallet trail until 1763.⁵ Over the next sixty years Spaniards occasionally ventured as far from New Mexico as northeastern Colorado. In 1766 a trader named Ulibarri headed north with the South Platte as his goal but only reached the Arkansas. Twenty seven years later Pedro Vial explored the Smoky Hill River while on a reconnaissance. As late as 1817 Spanish troops were patrolling an area around the future site of Denver. By then they were feeling new pressures on their empire, this time from the newest power in North America, the United States.⁵

In 1803 President Thomas Jefferson completed one of the largest real estate transactions of all time when he purchased Louisiana from Napoleon of France. The French previously reacquired the land from Spain. This new addition to the United States contained nearly all lands between the Mississippi River and the Continental Divide, north of the Red River to the Forty-ninth parallel.⁶ Not only did this purchase nearly double the size of the United States, but it also brought our new nation into direct conflict with Spain and Great Britain. Most of the questions arose due to faulty knowledge of western geography. While the Louisiana Purchase gave northeastern Colorado to the United States, Spain questioned the actual location of the border. Not until 1819, and the Adams-Onis Treaty, was the southern border of the United States finally set at the Arkansas River.⁷

As these border disputes were being settled by diplomats, Jefferson sent out explorers to inventory his purchase. Most famous of these efforts was the Lewis and Clark expedition up the Missouri River, into the Pacific Northwest. Second only to that party in fame was Lt. Zebulon M. Pike and his explorations of the Arkansas and Red Rivers. In the summer of 1806 Pike and his men left Fort Belle Fontaine near St. Louis and headed west. Pike made his way across the plains to the Arkansas River and then into northeastern Colorado. During the trip the Americans were warned by Pawnee natives that Spanish troops were patrolling the area in an effort to keep out Americans. Pike did not heed the warning and pushed on. He divided the party, sending half in search of the Red River, while he looked for the headwaters of both the South Platte and the Arkansas. It was during his efforts to find the South Platte's headwaters that Pike discovered the peak that today bears his name. He did not climb the mountain but did ascend another in the Colorado Springs area, possibly Cheyenne Mountain. Pike named "his" peak Grand Mountain and wrongly estimated the elevation at more than 18,000 feet. From here Pike and his men made their way into the San Luis Valley. After building a stockade for winter shelter, the band was captured by Spanish troops and taken into New Mexico. Pike and his men were held for a time and then released, but only after most notes and observations had been confiscated. In 1810, having returned to the United States, Pike published a journal of his adventures. In it he described the Great Plains as a desert and labelled the region "The Great American Desert," a name and concept that stuck well into the late nineteenth century. The idea of "desert" had considerable impact to the settlement of northeastern Colorado.⁸

The next official government exploration in northeastern Colorado came ten years after Pike made his findings public. This effort was commanded by Major Stephen H. Long of the United States Army. Long was originally sent west in 1819 to explore the Yellowstone River but when he reached the Council Bluffs, along the Missouri River, orders came to cancel the expedition. Instead, the party was directed to wait at Fort Atkinson, Kansas until 1820 and then explore the Platte River basin. On June 6, 1820 Long and his men pushed off to the Platte. The river was known to Americans since 1800 but until Long's trip nothing had officially been recorded. Long was to catalog the flora and fauna as well as to make climatic and astronomical observations. To do this Edwin James, a naturalist, accompanied the expedition. After crossing what later became Nebraska, the party reached well into Eastern Colorado where the Rockies were seen on June 30. Proceeding down the South Platte Valley they came to foothills near the future site of Denver. Long modestly named Long's Peak after himself. From these hills, the expedition moved southward along the front range until Pike's Peak was reached. Edwin James climbed the mountain, being the first person ever so recorded. After making observations in the Pike's Peak region the party moved onto the Arkansas. At that point Long divided his forces, sending one group east along the Canadian River and the other down the Arkansas. After their arrival in the east, both Long and James published journals of the trip. While Dr. James' account became more popular, both stressed the arid climate of the plains, saying that the best use of this land would be for pasture.⁹

Long's expedition added much new information to the body of knowledge for northeastern Colorado, but it is doubtful that the first Anglo-Americans to use the area's resources ever read Long's pronouncements. These were the fur trappers and traders who roamed throughout the West during the first forty-five years of the nineteenth century. The mountain men came to hunt beaver and other fur bearing animals required by the East and Europe. Fashion trends of that era said that gentlemen wore beaver felt hats and it was all American trappers could do to satisfy this demand. Many mountain men went West with the idea of making their fortune and then returning East to settle down. Most were young, single men who sought adventure as well as riches. Little did they know that their activities proved the cutting edge of American settlement in northeastern Colorado.¹⁰ The earliest recorded trapper to venture into this region was Baptiste La Lande who arrived in 1804. He followed the Platte and then the South Platte west into the Rockies, trapping along the way. Eventually he made his way south to Santa Fe, New Mexico where Spanish authorities awaited. The next year James Purcell set out for the South Platte and Rockies. Purcell, travelling with a small mobile group, followed the South Platte into the mountains where they trapped. During their stay members of the group reportedly panned for gold, with some success. Purcell and his men were later captured by Spanish troops and detained at Santa Fe as had been La Lande. Spanish military activity in the area discouraged other fur men from going into the mountains of northeastern Colorado.¹¹

This situation changed by 1820. Clarification of the U.S.-Spanish boundary in the Adams-Onis Treaty and the withdrawal of Spanish troops, as well as encouraging reports



This reconstruction of Fort Vasquez near Platteville, Colorado
reminds us of the fur trade of the 1840s.
Photo by J. Perry.

from other trappers, led to a "boom" in northeastern Colorado's fur trade during the 1820s. By 1818 or 1819 trappers were working the South Platte's mountain tributaries like Bear Creek. These men were based in St. Louis, Missouri and worked for one of many fur companies. As if to symbolize faith the American Fur Company had in the South Platte Valley as a potential source of furs, the organization built a short-lived post near the site of what later became Fort Lupton. By 1820 both the Platte and South Platte were well established routes for mountain men heading into and out of the high country. The Forks of the Platte in Nebraska was a standard landmark for these travellers. Most of these men came from St. Louis and other Missouri River towns, but over the years this changed, as they made their way north from Taos and Santa Fe, New Mexico.¹²

One of the foremost St. Louis traders to impact the fur business in northeastern Colorado was General William Ashley. With years of experience in the west by 1824, he set out late in that same year hoping to make it west before winter set in. Accompanying Ashley were Jim Beckwourth and Thomas Fitzpatrick, men who later became famous for their exploits in the Rockies. The small group made its way across what was later Nebraska, making slow progress because of snow storms and cold weather. Just before the party starved to death it reached a Pawnee village at the Forks of the Platte where the fur men received help from the natives. After regaining their strength, the trappers moved down the South Platte and into today's Colorado. During their time on the plains the Americans learned that with proper preparation and equipment one could survive during winter. The trappers also discovered that even though the native grasses appeared worthless, they were actually high in food value for livestock. However, this important knowledge was not spread.¹³

During the 1820s fur lured many mountain men to northeastern Colorado. Among them were Andrew Sublette, Louis Vasquez and James Ohio Pattie. They found the mountain streams rich in beaver and the plains full of buffalo whose skins and tongues were valuable trade commodities. Sublette and Vasquez, particularly, were important to northeastern Colorado's fur trade because they stayed in the area and worked streams year after year. That allowed them to develop an intimate knowledge of the region. It also led them to experiment with using the South Platte as a waterway for flat-bottomed boats to float hides downstream to St. Louis. They tried in 1826, without success, and the idea was abandoned for some twenty years.¹⁴ While this activity was taking place in the northern part of the region, other mountain men were at work further south, along Fountain Creek and other tributary streams near present day Colorado Springs. Ezekiel Williams and Jacob Fowler found Fountain Creek a profitable hunting ground. Many of those who trapped the southern regions of northeastern Colorado were based in Taos, New Mexico and did most of their trading at Bent's Fort on the Arkansas River.¹⁵

The success of that post led others to copy it in Colorado, particularly along the South Platte during the 1830s. The first of these fur forts was Fort Lupton, founded in 1836 by Lancaster Lupton, near the site of an old abandoned American Fur Company post.

The new "general store" on the plains was an overnight success and soon competition developed. Before Fort Lupton was a year old, Louis Vasquez and Andrew Sublette built Fort George (later called Ft. Vasquez) at what is now Platteville, Colorado. In the next year two more fur posts were built along the South Platte. Fort Jackson, six miles down stream from Fort Lupton, was opened in 1837 but closed the next year. In 1837 the Bent family entered the northeastern Colorado fur market when Bent's partner, Ceran St. Vrain, established Fort St. Vrain. Later a town of that same name was also founded. One last post, outside the area, yet important to northeast Colorado's fur business, was Fort Laramie on the North Platte in modern-day Wyoming. With a line of posts from Laramie on the north to Bent's Fort on the south, the Colorado front range became an active center of fur trading. The exchanges around the area operated in much the same way. Supplies such as guns, knives, lead, gunpowder, traps, tobacco and liquor were bartered to the trappers for their beaver pelts. Natives of the region also participated in the exchange, trading away their animal furs and buffalo robes for metal goods, guns and liquor. Because of the posts, many Native Americans became alcoholics and suffered diseases such as smallpox to which they had no natural immunity. At times, to facilitate trade or insure peaceful coexistence some traders would marry a member of a local tribe.¹⁶ Unfortunately for these entrepreneurs the fur market entered into a steep decline only a few years after they opened for business. By 1840 European fashions were changing and silk hats replaced the fur hat. To further exacerbate the situation, beaver became scarce along northeastern Colorado streams at about the same time. Intense trapping nearly exhausted supplies. Owners of the forts tried to attract new trappers while encouraging Native hunting. Some trappers like Rufus Sage and "Kit" Carson did try the area's creeks with some success, but their efforts could not bring back the prosperity of previous decades.¹⁷

In an effort to cut costs Ceran St. Vrain tried again, as Vasquez and Sublette had, to use the South Platte to float furs to market. St. Vrain's assistant Baptiste Charbonneau was put in charge of the effort. Attempts in both 1840 and 1842 failed to float barges or to even get out of what is now Colorado. As their plight worsened, fort owners, one at a time, closed their posts. By the late 1840s South Platte forts were abandoned as the fur trade in northeastern Colorado halted. However, not all trappers left northeastern Colorado. Antonine Janis, whose father named the Cache la Poudre River, settled on that stream with a few other French-Canadians. Elbridge Gerry, new to the area in 1840, built a home on the South Platte at the mouth of Crow Creek. Oliver Perry Wiggins did likewise and then later opened a store that became the town of Wiggins. Other retired mountain men built farms for themselves in the area. For those who chose not to stay, there were two alternatives. The first was to go back east and settle down. The second was to use their knowledge of the West to get jobs as scouts for the Army or other exploration parties.¹⁸

During the 1830s American explorers and U.S. Army officers continued investigating northeastern Colorado. In 1832 Captain Benjamin Bonneville followed the Platte River trail westward on his journey to the Pacific Northwest. Part of his detachment drifted into northeastern Colorado before rejoining the main force. Some of the men later returned to

the area to settle.¹⁹ Three years after Bonneville went west, Colonel Henry Dodge, in command of the First U.S. Dragoons, led his troopers west along Major Long's route into Colorado. Along the way, Dodge made some observations about the majesty of the plains. His primary purpose was to show the flag and awe local natives with United States power. It is questionable whether that goal was obtained.²⁰

The next decade witnessed more exploration in northeastern Colorado, mostly by the newly formed U.S. Army Corps of Topographical Engineers. By the 1840s America, as a nation, firmly set its eyes on the West as the land of the future. A spirit of "Manifest Destiny" prevailed which, in essence, was the feeling that it was "preordained" for the United States to take possession of and to settle areas from the Mississippi River to the Pacific Ocean. Physical manifestations of this ethic were, among other things, the great migrations to Oregon during the 1840s.²¹ To help facilitate such movement, the government sent out explorers to find routes westward for her settlers. Foremost among these was John C. Fremont, nicknamed "the Pathfinder". He was a Captain in the Corps of Topographical Engineers but, more importantly, his father-in-law was Senator Thomas Hart Benton of Missouri. Benton, one of the West's biggest boosters in Congress was always looking for ways to further the cause of Manifest Destiny.²² In 1842 Fremont was sent west with orders to find, if possible, an easier route through the Rockies for Oregon immigrants. The year before, a trail of sorts, was laid out by Thomas "Broken Hand" Fitzpatrick, ex-mountain man and trader. This, the Oregon Trail, dipped into northeastern Colorado between Old Julesburg and Lodgepole Creek. Fremont decided that travel would be easier if the trail followed the South Platte rather than the North Platte and accordingly he spent a good deal of the 1842 season in northeastern Colorado. Fremont hired Lucien Maxwell and "Kit" Carson as guides. The party left Chouteau's Landing on the Missouri River (near present day Kansas City) in June, 1842 and marched across the plains. Fremont continued west, along the Platte, until he reached northeastern Colorado. He spent most of the summer exploring the South Platte, and the front range from Fort St. Vrain to Fort Laramie seeking a route that followed the South Platte into Colorado and then northwest into Wyoming. At the end of fall the party returned to Missouri with much information but no new trail. A member of expedition was Charles Pruess, a German-born cartographer, whose maps of the West were the best to that date.²³

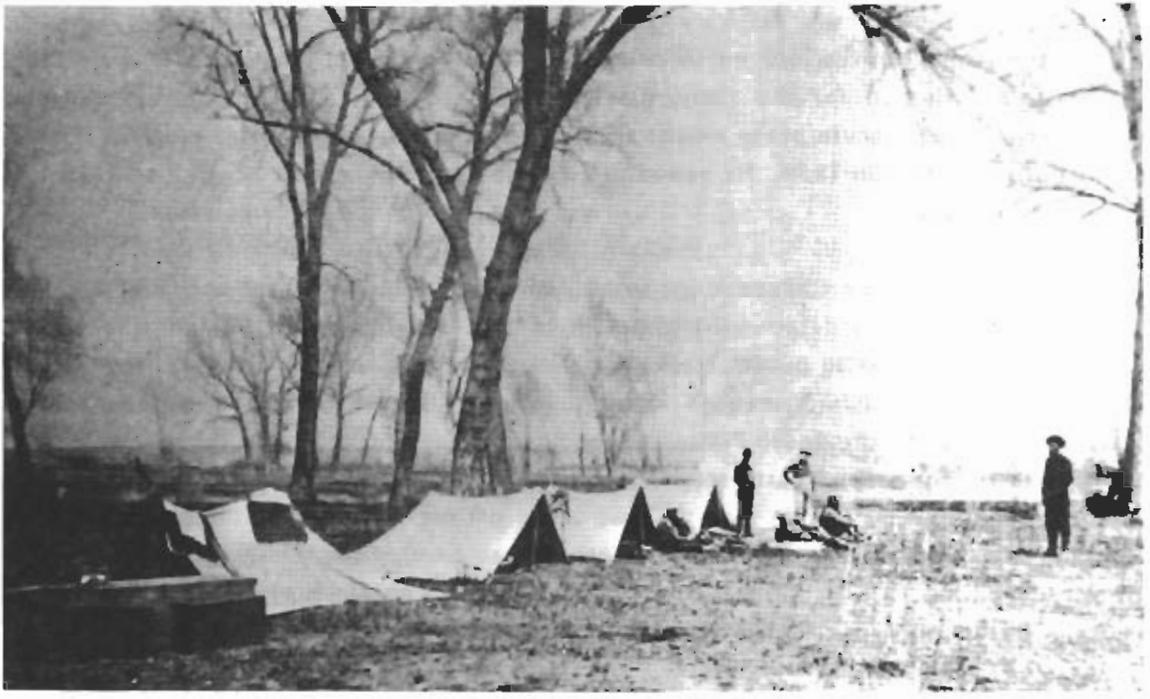
Next year 1843, "the Pathfinder" returned to northeastern Colorado, still searching for a suitable route to Oregon. This time he used "Kit" Carson and Thomas Fitzpatrick as guides. Also, William Gilpin a publicist of the West accompanied the party gathering material for his future writings. The expedition followed the Kansas and Republican Rivers instead of the Platte. They reached Fort St. Vrain on July 4, 1843 and celebrated the holiday at this post. Using a site referred to as "Fremont's Orchard," along the South Platte, as a base of operations the group spent part of the summer exploring the front range between the future sites of Denver and Pueblo before turning westward and following the Arkansas River onto the Western Slope. Having made it to the Pacific, the party returned to Colorado on its way east the next year. Some evidence suggests that members of Fremont's group tried to cross Rollins Pass from Middle Park. While "the Pathfinder" failed to find a

replacement for the Oregon Trail, his travels did add greatly to the body of knowledge extant about Colorado. Fremont found the plains of northeastern Colorado best suited for grazing when he made recommendations for future uses of lands he recorded. Also, because his journals were widely published public interest in the West was increased.²⁴

During the summer of 1845, a new American group visited northeast Colorado. Colonel Stephen Watts Kearny and five companies of the First U.S. Dragoons followed the Platte west to South Pass. From there this group turned south and followed the front range to the Arkansas River, turning east along that water course to return to the Missouri River. This patrol was carried out as a show of force to the area's native population.²⁵ In 1846 Francis Parkman travelled through this region on his way to the Arkansas River. He reported abandonment of Fort Lupton and a generally lethargic state of the fur trade throughout northeastern Colorado.²⁶ The last expedition of the 1840s to touch northeast Colorado was that of Captain Howard Stansbury of the Corps of Topographical Engineers. In 1849 he performed a reconnaissance of the Oregon/Platte River trail in hopes of locating a railroad route to Salt Lake City.²⁷

The next decade saw more exploration and military penetration in the region. The end of the Mexican War, in 1848, led to new interest and activity in the Southwest, including Colorado. In 1851 General John M. Pope, later famous in the Civil War, was sent west to lay out a road for the Army to supply Bent's Fort and other Southwestern posts. Pope followed the Republican and then Smoky Hill Rivers into mid-central Colorado and laid out a pathway to Bent's Old Fort. Part of this road was used later by settlers on their way to Colorado and it became the Smoky Hill Trail.²⁸ Five years later Lieutenant F. T. Bryan was sent into the area to look for a way to reroute the Oregon Trail. He explored the Cache La Poudre and located Bryan's Pass but his route was not a practical alternative to existing pathways.²⁹

The natives of northeastern Colorado found themselves under increasing pressure during the 1840s and 1850s. By the 1840s the Cheyenne were firmly established in the region but they found the Pawnee and Kiowa stubborn rivals. In 1840 an agreement, of sorts, was reached between Cheyenne and Kiowa thus ending their disputes. At the same time, the fur trade was at its peak, with the line of forts along the South Platte in full operation. As this decreased, the natives found their lands, especially just north of present day Colorado, being used as a "national highway" for immigrants headed to Oregon. The Federal Government was aware of these pressures from continuing problems along the trail. In 1846 the government decided to establish an Indian Agency on Colorado's eastern plains. Thomas Fitzpatrick, mountain man, guide and long-time friend of the Arapaho and Cheyenne was appointed as Indian Agent.³⁰ Fitzpatrick did what he could to reduce tension between the races but he was unsuccessful. Within a year of appointment, his charges were again raiding and harassing wagon trains on the Oregon Trail. This continued until 1851, when a pact was negotiated with most of plains tribes. The Treaty of Ft. Laramie, guaranteed right of safe passage for immigrants on the Oregon Trail and effectively



Hayden Survey Party in 1871.
W.H. Jackson Photo, Courtesy USGS.



Ferdinand V. Hayden's Party along Clear Creek, 1873.
W. S. Jackson Photo, Courtesy USGS.

divided the plains natives into northern and southern groupings. The document set aside northeastern Colorado for the Cheyenne and Arapaho. The Americans hoped such an arrangement would secure peace on the trail, but this failed. Fitzpatrick remained Indian Agent until his death in 1854. He hoped to establish an agency on the South Platte but this never came to pass.³¹

Problems with the Cheyenne led to an Army expedition into the South Platte Valley during 1857. A cavalry detachment commanded by Colonel Edwin V. Sumner was sent on a twofold mission, first to punish Native Americans and then to survey the southern border of Kansas. Upon reaching western Kansas, Sumner divided his command sending one detachment north to the South Platte and then down that river to the Solomon before they returned east. The second party stayed south patrolling southwestern Kansas.³² In 1858 Captain Randolph B. Marcy was the last army officer to travel through northeastern Colorado prior to the gold rush. A year before, he had covered the Western Slope from Fort Bridger, Wyoming to Fort Union, New Mexico trying to obtain supplies for his troops at Bridger. Rather than risk the perils of a return trip over the same route, he chose to travel up the front range to the Oregon Trail and then west. On the trip to Wyoming, Marcy recorded the existence of Manitou Springs. Some of his troops successfully panned gold from the South Platte near the mouth of Cherry Creek.³³ Soon after Marcy's departure from northeastern Colorado, gold seekers descended in considerable numbers. Their presence radically changed exploration and fur trade after 1860. The first official expedition undertaken after the gold rush was conducted by E. L. Berthoud and Jim Bridger. They were hired by Denver business leaders to blaze a new trail west from that place to Salt Lake City. In 1861 the explorers headed into the mountains, along Clear Creek, having heard of a pass across the Continental Divide. They discovered a pathway over the mountains that was named Berthoud Pass in honor of its locator.³⁴

The Civil War interrupted exploration in northeastern Colorado until 1867. That year John Wesley Powell, later to be famous for his theories on western water needs, visited Central City and studied the mining district's geology. He also travelled to Bergen Park.³⁵ Two years later Ferdinand V. Hayden, in charge of the United States Geological and Geographical Survey arrived in Denver and from there explored the front range north to Wyoming and south into New Mexico. He observed and recorded numerous coal beds in northeastern Colorado while predicting that the plains would make fine lands for stock raising. Hayden's reports were published and they did much to advertise the region's potential. Hayden's efforts marked the last great cataloging of northeast Colorado's resources.³⁶

From 1870 most of the exploration done in the region was highly scientific in nature, starting with Othniel C. Marsh's paleontological expedition of that year. The Yale University professor explored the Republican River. In extreme western Kansas he found fossilized remains of two dinosaurs, mosasaurs, (a large serpent), and the pterodactyl a flying dinosaur with twenty five foot wing span.³⁷ Marsh's discoveries led to searches for other clues to prehistoric times in northeastern Colorado. During the 1880s ancient remains

were unearthed near Morrison by Professor Arthur Lakes. His finds included many small dinosaur skeletons. Years later, between 1934 and 1938, archaeologists from the Smithsonian Institution excavated a site on the Lindenmeier Ranch near Fort Collins and discovered artifacts of pre-historic human inhabitants in the region. Archaeological investigations in northeast Colorado continue to this day.³⁸

The fur frontier also enjoyed a revival during the fifteen years after the Civil War. This time markets were for buffalo robes. During the 1840s demand developed but only after 1870 was it great enough for professional buffalo hunting. Huge herds, numbering in the millions, offered easy prey for robe seekers. Year after year, hunters with their heavy rifles went out to kill as many of the wooly creatures as possible. A proficient rifleman could keep ten skinners busy removing hides. Following were those who collected the skeletons. Buffalo bones were pulverized for use as fertilizer by farmers during the 1870s. By 1874 bison were becoming scarce on the northeastern plains and by 1880 so few were left as to make robe hunting no longer profitable.³⁹ The disappearance of the buffalo not only ended fur trading, but also removed one of the natives most utilized food sources.⁴⁰

NOTES Chapter II

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³Propst, *Forgotten*, p. 2., and J. Donald Hughes, *American Indians in Colorado*, (Boulder: Pruett Press, 1976), p. 46., hereafter cited: Hughes, *American Indian*.

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¹⁴Propst, *Forgotten*, pp. 10-13.

¹⁵Richard M. Pearl, *America's Mountain; Pike's Peak and the Pike's Peak Region*, (Denver: Sage Books, 1964), p. 6., hereafter cited: Pearl, *Pike's Peak.*, and Long, *Smoky*, p. 137.

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¹⁹Goetzmann, *Army*, p. 150., and Monaghan, *Overland*, p. 224.

²⁰Propst, *Forgotten*, p. 12., and Long, *Smoky*, p. 126.

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²²Goetzmann, *Army*, pp. 4-18 and 69-70.

²³*Ibid.*, pp. 68-77.

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²⁶Long, *Smoky*, p. 121.

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³⁹Glen Bolander interview, vol. 352, CWA, CSHS, Jonathan L. Lengel interview, vol. 359, CWA, CSHS, Manasses Litch interview, vol. 341, CWA, CSHS., Asa McLeod interview, vol 343, CWA, CSHS, and S.S. Worley interview, vol. 341, CWA, CSHS.

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Chapter III THE PIKE'S PEAK GOLD RUSH AND AFTER

The mountains of northeastern Colorado held vast treasures of silver and gold and it was here that initial discoveries of those metals were made. While fur trappers made use of the area's animal wealth they did not know about or were not interested in the resources that lay beneath ground. Some mountain men like James Purcell reported finding gold in streams they trapped. During his 1806 trip, members of that party found small amounts of placer gold in various river beds. Almost forty years later, William Gilpin, while accompanying John C. Fremont's expedition, discovered yellow metal in northeastern Colorado's creeks. Forty-niners on their way to and from California prospected the region with some success. Thomas Fitzpatrick reported finding gold in 1853. Five years later members of Captain Marcy's detachment panned the mineral from Cherry Creek.¹ Yet, not until the late summer of 1858 did a "rush" start.

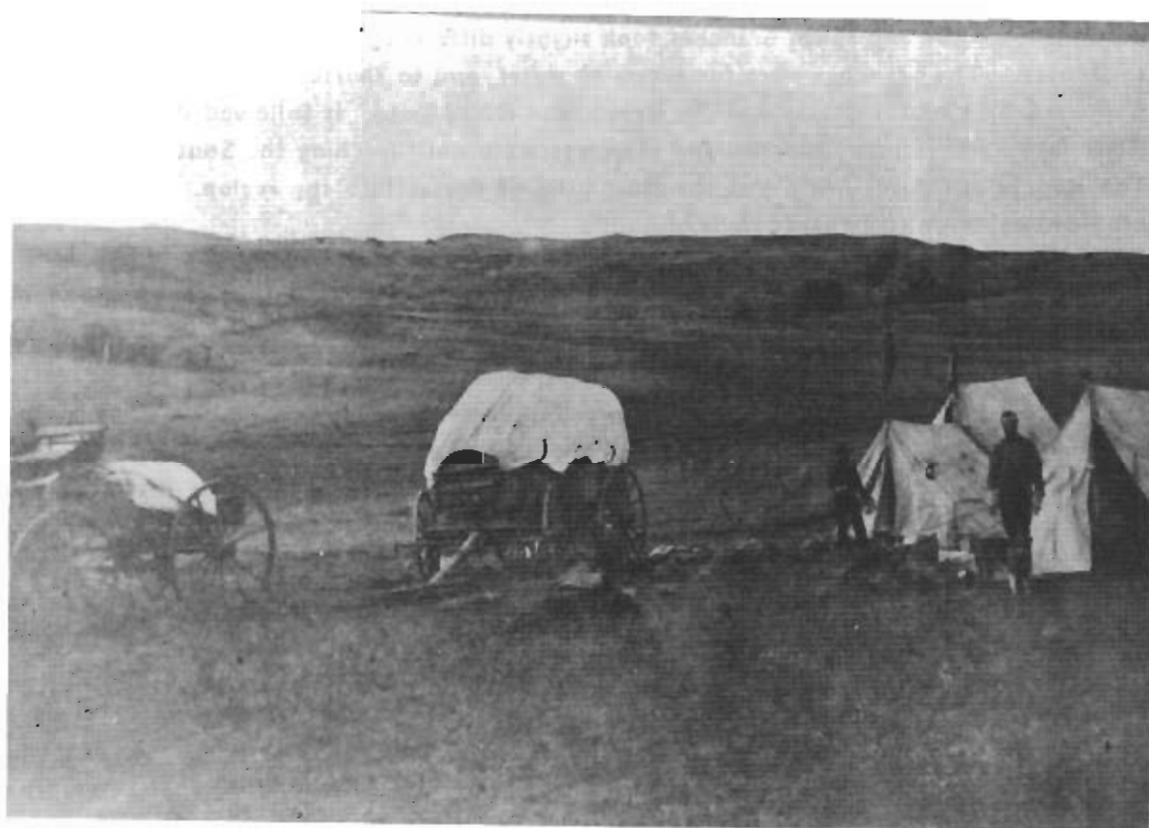
There were other prospectors in northeastern Colorado during the summer of 1858. Most famous was William Greene Russell who led a party of Georgians to the South Platte that year. Russell was involved in mining since the 1830s. He participated in Georgia's gold rush and went to California during the excitement of 1849. Russell passed through Colorado on his way west and after his experiences on the Pacific Coast he remembered the promising looking streams of the central Rockies. During the winter of 1857-1858 Russell formed a party in Georgia to prospect the South Platte. The next spring they headed west, passing through Indian Territory (Oklahoma). The group was joined by some Cherokees who had mined gold in Georgia prior to their removal. The enlarged party moved along the front range, then up the South Platte River to its confluence with Cherry Creek where prospecting began. After weeks of discouragement, placer gold was discovered at Dry Creek, near present day Englewood.² These initial finds were small but over the summer Russell's party was joined by other gold seekers, mainly from eastern Kansas. The Lawrence Party arrived only to find deposits along Dry Creek exhausted. However, convinced of the area's potential, group members stayed on and founded the town of Montana City. The site was not well located and the party soon moved their "city" to Cherry Creek, renaming it St. Charles. Some of the group returned to Kansas to encourage others to join them and to file claims. At the same time, Russell and his men established Auraria on the opposite bank of Cherry Creek. As news spread, more people came to the new diggings. Among them was General William H. Larimer and his small band of town promoters from Leavenworth, Kansas. Larimer and his associates arrived in Colorado in November, 1858 and founded Denver City on the site of St. Charles having bought out the St. Charles Town Company. Denver City was named in honor of Kansas Territory's governor, James Denver, a move Larimer made to garner support for his claims.³

Aside from town promoters, others joined the 1858 movement to Cherry Creek. By the end of 1858 population estimates ranged as high as 2,000 in the new mining camps. It was not until 1859 that a fullscale gold rush finally took place. This time lag, especially between Purcell's reports and the 1859 stampede was due to many reasons. Only by that

time were conditions right for this event. A financial panic, in 1857, developed into a full-scale depression by 1858. Frontier areas of the Mississippi Valley were especially hard hit by economic crisis. In an effort to revive their sagging businesses, merchants in the Missouri River towns like Leavenworth, Kansas or St. Joseph, Missouri took news of gold discoveries and embellished it. They then had propaganda circulated throughout the United States. These mercantilists no doubt felt that if a rush took place they would benefit from increased outfitting business, since they were in the closest proximity to the mines. Some towns commissioned guidebooks for the argonauts. These publications stressed quick wealth, the easy trip across the plains and unbounded opportunities. Of course each work suggested certain trails and towns as the "only" route west.⁴ With shady information available, many men in the Midwest spent the winter of 1858-1859 planning their trips to the Rockies. Most of those who participated in the rush were young men in their late teens or early twenties. They found it difficult to get started in life since the Panic of 1857 closed so many opportunities. Further, many were looking for one "great adventure" before settling down to a routine life of farming. The Pike's Peakers, by and large, were too young to have participated in the Mexican War and missed this adventuresome opportunity. Others saw the gold fields, especially after reading the promotional literature, as a way to make a quick fortune and then return to settle down. Along the same lines, some went west because they needed a new start, possibly from a love affair gone askew, debts or thanks to the law. Some men came to Colorado to avoid being caught up in increasing sectional tensions between the North and South. For these and other reasons, the "Fifty-niners" rushed across the plains to the gold fields during the spring of 1859.⁵

Possibly 100,000 people flocked to northeastern Colorado as a result of the boom. To encourage immigration, local Denver boosters also started their own campaign.⁵ Foremost among these propagandists was William N. Byers, editor of Denver's first newspaper, the *Rocky Mountain News*. Not only did he try to entice new miners west, he also was faced with the problem of keeping morale high for those already here. By mid-summer 1859, a movement back to the states took place. It was called the "go-backers". Byers, at first, attempted to stem the tide and then he rationalized that those leaving were undesirable scum and did not have what it took to build a new empire of the Rockies. Despite Byers and other boosters, many argonauts returned to their homes after finding gold much harder to come by than their guidebooks claimed. As a popular slogan of the day said: "having seen the Elephant".⁶

One reason for the go-backer movement was the difficulty many of the pioneers experienced on the trail to Colorado. The Fifty-niners were hardly the first to travel the region, but knowledge gained by previous travellers was not used by gold seekers. The Oregon Trail, used extensively since the 1840s, crossed extreme northeastern Colorado near Old Julesburg. By the 1850s the Oregon Trail was developed into a national highway, used by thousands on their way to the Pacific shores. Because of the California gold rush its name was changed to the Overland Trail.⁷ At Old Julesburg a branch of the trail turned southwest along the South Platte River, following Major Long's route of 1820. This



Along the Denver–Laramie Trail, 1902. Even this late, travel on the plains was tough. R. M. Chapman Photo, Courtesy USGS.

pathway was known as the South Platte Trail. It was extensively used by Fifty-niners and became one of the primary routes to Colorado during the 1860s.⁸ A second, well established route to the gold fields by 1860 was the Mountain Branch of the Santa Fe Trail, which passed through southeastern Colorado along the Arkansas River. At Bent's Fort the Santa Fe was joined by the Old Cherokee Trail that ran north along the front range to the future site of Denver. This route was used by Southerners who came to northeastern Colorado during 1859 and 1860. The Old Cherokee Trail remained a foremost north-south route in the region during the nineteenth century.⁹ Another pathway favored by some was the Smoky Hill Road. It ran west from Leavenworth, Kansas along an old Army road and, once in Colorado, it followed the Smoky Hill River from present day Cheyenne Wells northwest to Denver. In northeast Colorado there were three different routes of this trail; the north, middle and south branches took slightly different paths from present day Limon to Denver. The branches were for access to water, and to shorten the trip.¹⁰ The other trail used by hopeful miners was the Republican River Road. It followed the Republican River into northeastern Colorado and then westward until reaching the South Platte Trail. The Republican River route was the least used of routes into the region. But it shared problems common to all other trails.¹¹

Despite extensive available information on high plains travel, the Fifty-niners (and guidebook authors) mostly ignored it. This situation came about from excitement of the moment and from the optimism of many immigrants. However, once on the trail, potential miners found themselves ill-prepared. Often supplies necessary for survival were left behind or ignored so that more mining equipment could be taken. All forms of overland transportation were used; wagons, carts, buggies, horses, mules and by foot. More often than not a small band would assemble at a supply town and embark on the journey without hiring a guide or even organizing a wagon train.¹² On the trail, emigrants soon found many problems lay waiting for them. Securing a fuel supply was difficult since few trees grew on the plains. As a substitute, buffalo chips were used when they could be found. Equally crucial and scarce, were food and water for both man and beast. Streams and springs with water during spring run-off usually dried up by mid-summer. A party could go for days without the precious fluid as water holes dried up from heavy use. Another problem migrants found was a lack of game and forage along the trails. Many travellers took supplies for a few days, counting on living off the land for the rest of the trip. As native food sources were exhausted the trails grew wider and wider. At points along the way the Smoky Hill Road, for example, was as much as twelve miles across as foragers spread out. Numerous acts of cannibalism were reported by the Fifty-niners, in addition to discoveries of bodies of those who starved to death along the way. At one time the Smoky Hill route was nicknamed the "Starvation Trail" as food supply problems became terribly acute.¹³ The climate presented another challenge for voyagers. Those who travelled too early or too late in the season were often caught in blizzards and perished. For those who were on the trail during the summer, thunderstorms, hail, tornadoes and flash floods presented potential difficulties. Not only could a storm ruin an outfit but it also turned many areas, especially those along stream banks into quagmires that could trap a wagon for hours or days. The riverbeds contained hidden pockets of quicksand that could swallow people, animals or

whole wagons. These factors made travel slow; a trip from the Missouri River to Colorado often took more than a month.¹⁴ Another obstacle to travel also persisted in northeastern Colorado--native Americans. The area's inhabitants, for various reasons, attacked parties on the plains. Usually their raids were aimed at individuals or small groups that could be easily overwhelmed. At times, during the 1860s, native violence was so great that various trails were closed to travel. By the early 1870s, as railroads inched their way across the plains, travel became easier and safer. Despite all the problems, ten of thousands successfully made the journey to northeastern Colorado.¹⁵

After facing the perils of the eastern flat lands, the new settlers were often disappointed when they reached the Denver area gold fields. Others, more determined to find the precious mineral spread out into the mountains searching for the yellow metal. Their efforts were successful and strikes were made in 1859 in what later became Gilpin, Clear Creek and Boulder Counties. These finds, more than anything else, slowed the go-backer movement and laid foundations for Colorado's development. In January, 1859, John H. Gregory, who came to Cherry Creek, turned his attention to Clear Creek. He felt that gold could be found in the mountains to the west. Following Clear Creek to its forks, Gregory turned along North Clear Creek, and found promising gravels along the way. When he reached a place, soon to be known as Gregory Gulch, he hit pay dirt. News of the find was met with a mixture of skepticism and jubilation. Many felt it was a hoax but others abandoned Denver City and relocated at Gregory Gulch. The discoveries along north Clear Creek did much to silence criticism about Colorado, but, more importantly, Gregory's success caused others to prospect in the mountains.¹⁶ Another man who, like Gregory, saw the potential of Clear Creek, was George A. Jackson, a disgruntled Fifty-eightier not willing to give up yet. Jackson followed Clear Creek to its Forks and continued west along the stream. At Chicago Gulch, near present day Idaho Springs, Jackson found gold. Like Gregory's earlier discovery news of Jackson's work made its way to Denver City where it was highly publicized by local newspapers. With proven strikes as evidence, thousands poured into Clear Creek Canyon during 1859 and 1860. By the mid-1860s the area was firmly established as the center of Colorado mining.¹⁷

At the same time Jackson and Gregory made the 1859, strikes other prospectors were busy north along Boulder Creek. That waterway and its tributaries also held pay dirt in mineable quantities. Soon Gold Run in Boulder County rivalled Clear Creek for honors as the area's biggest mining region. Some of the first finds were made near what became Gold Hill and Jamestown. Population growth was so rapid that by 1860 Gold Hill was described as a center of culture where all the necessities of "civilized" life could be obtained.¹⁸ Further south others experienced success too. Travellers, wearied by crossing the plains, stopped at Fountain Creek along the Old Cherokee Trail and put their picks and pans to use. They encountered small pockets of gold and continued to prospect the area. While mining was going on other capitalists decided to take advantage of "gold fever" by founding a town. They platted the Colorado City Town company, but the diggings played out. The town remained as an outpost of settlement along the trail.¹⁹ Gold seekers also examined

the northern mountains. The Cache la Poudre River, with other streams, were prospected but with minimal results. Boulder and Clear Creeks remained the most prosperous and active of northeastern Colorado's mining regions. Yet even these locales experienced problems.²⁰

Early Colorado miners expected to repeat the California experience. Whereas a simple pick and pan or sluice box were all that were needed to remove streambeds in California, gold in Colorado was not found as nuggets but rather as "float" gold, that is particles too small to be recovered by conventional means. It became obvious that to make money in Colorado gold the vein (or lode) had to be mined from solid rock. Hence, underground hardrock mining developed quickly. Stamp mills were brought to Colorado as early as 1860 in order to crush gold from the rock after it was mined. Another technique, the arrastra, was also tried to pulverize ores. Due to the difficulties and costs, individual prospectors were replaced by capitalists and mining engineers in northeastern Colorado's mines. As localized placer deposits played out most miners moved on and by 1865 ghost towns already dotted the hillsides.²¹ Not all mining camps were abandoned and even those that were had an exciting, if somewhat short, life. These communities grew quickly at the site of a strike and because of their presence, Colorado's mining frontier took on a distinctly urban cast. Towns served many diverse functions and were necessary for miners' needs. Wrestling gold from the mountains was a full time job so those who did it had no time left for other pursuits like agriculture. To fill this void, merchants moved to the towns. Laundries, boarding houses, restaurants, saloons and rowdy houses were soon in business. Prices for goods and services were high but so too were wages. During flush times everyone prospered. Because of their rapid growth and often short lifespan, in addition to a transient population, most of the mining camps were dirty, crowded places that lacked any evidence of planning. The lifestyles of miners were hardly enviable. Work hours were controlled by the sun. Conditions in the mines varied, but usually they were unsafe, wet, cold, and dirty. For shelter miners often had only a tent, or a lean-to or rudimentary lumber shacks. They were cold in winter, warm in summer and wet when it rained or snowed. Diets consisted of beans, salt pork and sourdough bread. Only on rare occasions did fresh meat, and fruits or vegetables find their way onto tables. Since mining towns had unpaved streets and no sewers, sanitation was a continual health problem. Women were few in these male-dominated camps and those who did brave the mountains were usually prostitutes and dancehall girls. Saloons provided an escape from dreary conditions through alcohol, while they served as local social centers.²²

Law and order was another problem that all miners faced. Crimes like murder and theft had to be dealt with, as did claims protection. Being outside an effective span of authority, camp residents formed their own extra-legal governments. These were known as mining districts. The area's residents established systems as self-governing through elected officers chosen by a vote of all. These officials dealt with day to day problems like registration of claims and collection of fines. Major decisions on camp policy were made at town meetings. Trials for serious crimes were conducted in a similar manner. Most laws and

rules were from the East, but, regulations regarding claims were an area with little or no existing precedent and miners were forced to make their own as they went. Much of this was based on Spanish tradition as used in California ten years earlier. Many of these procedures were incorporated into later modern state and Federal laws. In dealing with severe criminal cases the miners' courts sought to assure a fair but speedy, trial. Except for especially violent crimes where hanging was called for, the courts usually whipped and banished or, just banished, the offender because there were no jails. These self-governing units functioned until a territorial administration could be established.²³

Sharing many of the same problems as mining camps was the infant city of Denver. From 1858 until 1860 Auraria and Denver City competed to attract settlers and business. Finally in 1860 the rival town companies agreed to merge under the name of Denver. This was partly due to hardships that both towns faced. They both had transient populations that tended to decrease political stability and when news of the Clear Creek and Boulder County gold strikes was made public, Denver was nearly depopulated. Like mountain camps, Denver was beyond the effective control of Kansas civil authorities and no town government had yet been established. The town company tried to handle problems like title to town lots but serious crime was beyond their power. By 1860 Denver was gaining a reputation for lawlessness. To stop criminal activity, local business and civic leaders formed vigilance committees. The "vigilantes", as they were popularly known, had direct methods of dealing with lawbreakers. The offender was notified to mend his ways. If no change took place he was taken, usually at night, by masked men and summarily executed.²⁴ Denver business and civic leaders, in 1860, were concerned with more than law and order. They had come west with visions of a prosperous future as had most miners. After arriving at Cherry Creek, it was decided that Denver should be built into the commercial center of the Rocky Mountain West much as San Francisco was for the Pacific Coast. In the early sixties membership in Denver's society varied constantly because of changes in social circumstances but goals remained the same. They identified a major impediment to Denver's growth as the town's isolation from the East. Repeated efforts were made to encourage stage and freight companies to extend their lines westward to Denver. Pleas came from the Denver Board of Trade, voice of the business community. This panel, and other boosters, were successful enough in their endeavors that by 1864 travellers and journalists who visited the city considered it quite stylish. Education, the arts and entertainment were provided for the citizenry by local entrepreneurs. By 1865 social class lines were distinguishable and a definite core of elite had established itself. This group guided the town's destiny well into the twentieth century.²⁵

One major need these movers and doers did not overlook was establishment of a territorial government for Colorado. It was felt that in such an organization they could make their needs known. Also, government would provide effective control of the area by a legally constituted authority and residents would no longer be forced to depend upon themselves for law and order. Finally, a territorial government for Colorado would unite all mining districts under one administrative unit. Until creation of Colorado Territory lands in

northeastern Colorado north of the fortieth parallel were part of Nebraska Territory while those areas south of the line were part of Kansas Territory.²⁶ Almost from the beginning, in 1858, the area's residents requested the Federal government's creation of a separate territory for them. As with the miners, other northeastern Coloradans realized they were beyond the effective control of Kansas and Nebraska. To fill this void, early settlers established the Territory of Jefferson. It was an extra-legal government not sanctioned by the national capitol. Nevertheless, the Territory of Jefferson's voters elected a governor, Robert Steele, a legislature, drew up a constitution and set about the business of ruling northeastern Colorado. Jefferson was supported by a lot of its members because it helped bring stability and order to the region and it laid long-term foundations for Colorado Territory. The territory also sent a "delegate" to Congress to carry on the fight for official recognition.²⁷

Washington, D.C., lawmakers were not ignorant of the situation in the Rockies, however, more pressing problems demanded their attention. By 1859 relations between North and South were so tense that Congress spent most of its time bickering about slavery within the territories along with other sectional issues. This kept the legislators from addressing the Colorado problem until early 1861, after most southern states had seceded from the Union. While awaiting the inauguration of Abraham Lincoln as President, Congress found time to act on Colorado's requests for territorial status. In February, after debates over borders and names, the national legislature created the Territory of Colorado, while also giving it its present boundaries. When news of these developments reached the Rockies most northeastern Coloradans were pleased that their objective was achieved.²⁸ To preside over this new territory President Lincoln named William Gilpin, long time booster of the West and loyal Republican, to the post of Territorial Governor. Along with this office Colorado also received a treasurer, marshal and court system. Many men filled these posts over the years, accomplishing much for the region, but none faced bigger problems than the first two territorial governors, Gilpin and John Evans.²⁹

At about the same time Gilpin arrived in Colorado the nation was plunged into Civil War. As chief Federal officer Gilpin was expected to keep the place loyal to Washington, as well as to aid the war effort as best he could. To accomplish these tasks Gilpin asked the legislature and people to remain loyal while at the same time he issued a call for volunteers to enter Federal service to fight the enemy. Two regiments were raised and to supply them, Gilpin issued drafts payable by the U.S. Treasury. This practice, unapproved by Washington, cost Gilpin his job, but not before hundreds of thousands of dollars in "Gilpin Drafts" were in circulation around Colorado. The other problem faced by Gilpin, and later John Evans, was that of loyalty. By 1861 a large number of Southerners had relocated to northeastern Colorado's gold fields. While no longer in the South they still felt sympathy and as such they were seen as potential traitors. Many also felt that Southern strategy in the West included invasion of Colorado's gold regions. Rumors abounded and there were occasional overt actions such as raising the "rebel" flag over a Denver business. Gilpin pressed the legislature to enact strict loyalty codes and to require an oath of allegiance from public officials and suspected traitors (Southern sympathizers). By 1862 and 1863 these

policies had driven the sympathizers underground and away from public displays; not that hard to accomplish since most of the region's population could trace its origins and loyalties to the North.³⁰

By 1864 another problem presented itself to the territorial government. The matter of statehood for Colorado. As with most political questions, there were two sides to this issue. Within the territory many, especially groups like the Denver Board of Trade, favored statehood as the ultimate form of political stability, and a necessity for continued economic growth. The opposition feared increased taxes and, in 1864 also that a draft to raise troops for the Federal Army would be extended to the new state. Besides local battles over statehood, Colorado's future also became embroiled in national bickering. The Republican party, especially a group of ideologues known as "Radical Republicans" feared that their new party might be defeated in the elections of 1864. When Colorado presented its request for statehood the Radicals saw to its defeat because they thought the new state might vote Democratic. However, the official excuse was that the territory did not have sufficient population to qualify. Four years later the situation was somewhat reversed. Radical Republicans now saw that they needed extra votes in Congress and Colorado could provide them. Again, sides were drawn within the territory and a battle fought. Despite Colorado forces, the final decision was again made in Washington. This time it was President Andrew Johnson who refused to sign an enabling act creating the State of Colorado because he realized what his enemies, the Radicals, were doing.³¹ From 1868 until 1875 the statehood question lay dormant. Development of the region's business agriculture, mining and industries occupied local attention. Nationally, the Republican Party was in complete control. However, by 1875 Colorado's growth and politics had matured to the point that a territorial government no longer met Colorado's needs and new calls for statehood were issued. The northeast part of Colorado, in particular, experienced rapid development during the early 1870s. In 1875 when the statehood question was raised many residents favored the step and after considerable debates a state constitution was submitted to Congress and duly accepted. President U.S. Grant signed the Enabling Act and on August 1, 1876 Colorado became a full fledged member of the Union. As part of the normal process Colorado relinquished, to the Federal Government, all claims to lands not already appropriated. The state's northeastern section was vital to the success of statehood. The region continued to dominate Colorado's political and economic life well into the twentieth century. This happened, in part, because by 1870 both the territorial and national governments had removed one obstacle to settlement, the natives.³²

In 1858 when Russell and other prospectors arrived, the area's native inhabitants did little to oppose them aside from raiding and killing some of the argonauts. The reason for this mild initial reaction was that most local natives had seen Anglo-Americans come and go in northeastern Colorado for decades. The Native Americans did not realize that thousands of the newcomers would stay. Lands along the front range that attracted most Anglo activity were also a no mans' land between the Utes and various plains tribes.³³

By 1861 the situation changed as the area's Native Americans opposed American encroachment. To reduce the friction Federal officials began a series of treaty talks with

various tribes. In 1861 negotiators attempted to convince plains natives to relinquish title to most of northeastern Colorado and to take up reservations along the Arkansas River. This became known as the Treaty of Fort Wise. Two years later, territorial governor John Evans worked out an agreement with the Ute giving them an informal "reservation" west of the front range. In 1865 a final treaty with Arapaho and Cheyenne leaders, the Treaty of the Little Arkansas, extinguished the last native claims to northeastern Colorado's plains. Three years later, A.C. Hunt, territorial governor and Indian Agent, entered into another contract with the Ute that established definite boundaries for their lands west of the Continental Divide. This series of treaties removed nearly all Native American title in the region. But, actual reduction of their power proved more complicated.³⁴

The natives of northeastern Colorado were dependent upon Euro-American trade by 1859, but, since the fur business declined during the 1840s tribesmen were forced to find new sources of supply. Many immigrants of 1859 and 1860 reported natives along the trails begging for food and metal goods and noted even a few who were starving. They could not satisfy their needs from occasional hand-outs, so many took to raiding small migrant parties and freight wagons along various routes. Horse and cattle herds kept at way stations also became targets for aggressions. This pattern continued into 1864.³⁵ Intensity of raiding increased as did Anglo-American reactions. The attacks on stage stations and against travellers, especially along the South Platte Trail, were so frequent that for a period during late summer 1864, Denver and the mining camps were actually cut off from communication with the outside world.

To counter these attacks Coloradans organized local militia companies and prepared to defend their towns. Families who settled at stage stations, along the various trails, turned their houses into fortresses. The territorial government sent repeated messages to Washington, D.C., for aid in the form of troops and supplies. No response came until 1864 because nearly all available men and materiel were in use to fight the Civil War. Taking matters into his own hands, Governor John Evans dispatched Major Jacob Downing and the First Colorado Regiment up the South Platte Trail in April, 1864. This detachment spent a month searching for hostiles and finally on May 2, 1864 they encountered a group of Cheyenne along Cedar Creek. A battle took place in which twenty-six natives died, sixty were wounded, and Downing's forces suffered one dead and one wounded. Feeling confident the natives were pacified, the cavalry returned to Denver.³⁶

Those optimistic predictions were soon shattered by revenge raids of the Cheyenne. Throughout the summer such events continued and in August tempers reached their limits. That month the Hungate family, who operated a layover station on the Smoky Hill Road about twenty miles southeast of Denver, were found murdered and mutilated. Their bodies were brought to Denver where public reaction was a mixture of indignation and panic. Stage and freight drivers refused to cross the plains and Colorado was isolated from the rest of the United States.³⁷ Responding to the hysteria, Governor Evans called for "100-day" volunteers to battle the natives. While these new troops, the Third Colorado Volunteers,

were mustered into service, General Samuel R. Curtis took 600 men up the South Platte Trail and successfully re-opened that route to the East. Curtis's efforts eased the crisis but not the mood of settlers in northeastern Colorado.

The Colorado Thirds leader, Brevet Colonel John M. Chivington, Methodist bishop of Colorado, had previous military experience fighting Confederates in New Mexico. He also viewed the plains natives as "heathen savages" who were instruments of the devil that should be smitten. This attitude was widely shared by other Euro-Americans in 19th Century Colorado. As the Civil War calmed in September and October, 1864, many citizens felt the Third Colorados would never see combat. However, their leader conceived a plan to gain glory for his troops and put an end to the native problem. In November, as the 100-day enlistments approached expiration, Chivington marched his forces southeast out of Denver to find and destroy hostiles. Learning that many Cheyenne and Arapaho, under Chief Black Kettle, had established a winter camp on Sand Creek near Fort Lyon, the Third Colorados proceeded in that direction. By the twenty-eighth of the month Chivington's scouts reported locating Black Kettle's village. During the night, troops surrounded the encampment and at first light, attacked. Men, women and children all fell before the rifles and sabres, and when the battle ended Chivington's soldiers had committed mutilations and other atrocities that rivalled any the natives had ever done. While this battle took place just outside northeastern Colorado, its ramifications were felt throughout the region.³⁸

The battle of Sand Creek enraged and unified many plains tribes into a common desire for revenge. The tribesmen felt betrayed because they had been told to gather at Fort Lyon (near Sand Creek) and were promised safety. Chivington's actions were seen as duplicity and as soon as the natives could re-group, the war in northeastern Colorado began again. This time the Sioux joined in opposition to American presence in the area.³⁹ The first new attacks came in January, 1865, when a band of plainsmen raided Old Julesburg. They returned the next month and burned the town. The war spread down the South Platte as marauding natives attacked stage stations and ranches. Again, travel on the plains became risky and for a time, during the spring of 1865, trails were closed; this time by the United States Army.⁴⁰

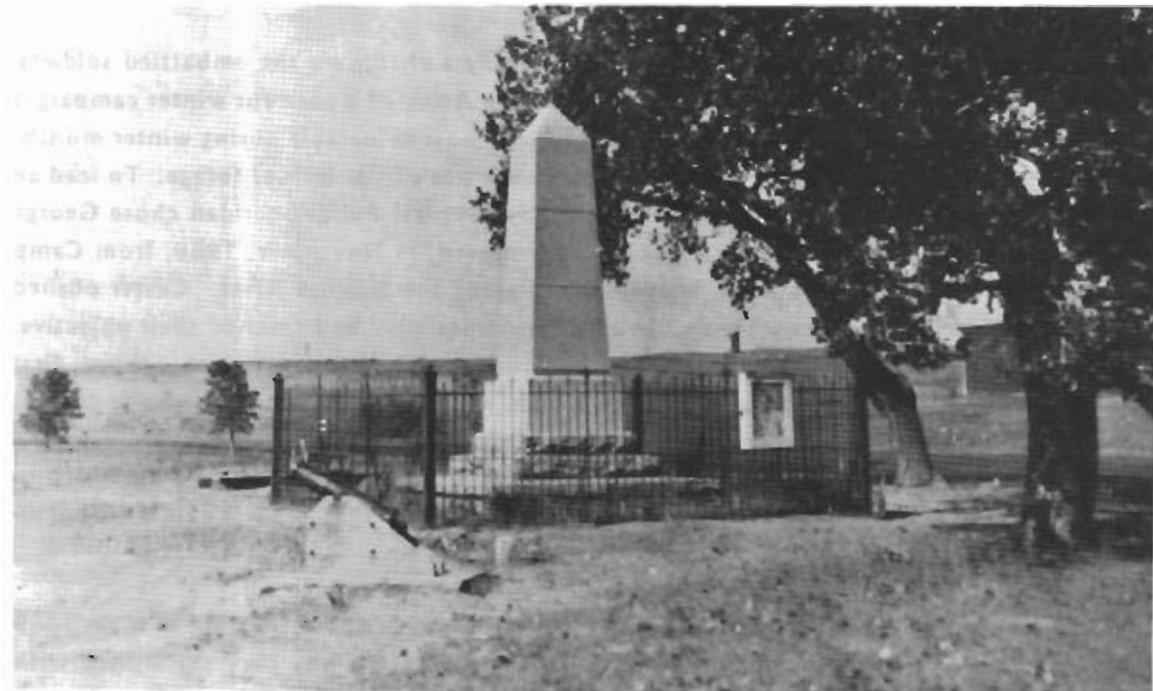
As early as 1863 the Army pondered how best to protect Colorado settlements and the Overland Trail. It was decided that a line of forts along the South Platte (and other trails) would be most effective. From these posts escorts could be sent with travellers. However, it was not until 1864 that any action was taken. That summer General Robert B. Mitchell received 1,000 troops to both patrol the Platte River Road and to establish outposts. At the same time, four sites were located and forts built throughout northeastern Colorado. Near Old Julesburg, Camp Rankin, later renamed Fort Sedgwick, was built. Further upstream the South Platte Valley Station, near present day Sterling, was taken over for military use. Near the mouth of Bijou Creek, Camp Tyler was established. It was soon renamed Camp Wardell and later Fort Morgan. Instead of using typical wooden stockades these "citadels" were constructed of sod and adobe. To protect westbound travellers on

northern stage roads the Army also built Camp (later Fort) Collins on the Cache la Poudre. Camp Weld, near Denver, was used as a base and supply depot for the regular Army.⁴¹

By 1865, as Colorado's war escalated, the Army had its forts established and began to fill them with Civil War veterans from both sides. To meet manpower needs the Federal government started a program of offering Confederate prisoners-of-war freedom in exchange for moving to frontier areas to man Army posts. The ex-Confederates swore an oath of loyalty and entered Federal service. Many were sent to posts in northeastern Colorado. They were nicknamed "Galvanized Yankees" an allusion to the galvanizing process used to stop rust on iron tools. Except for a few days a year battling natives, life for these soldiers involved garrison and escort duty. Morale was usually low and alcoholism became a problem. As the Civil War ended desertions diminished the Army's effectiveness as drafted soldiers returned home to rebuild their past lives. Nevertheless, presence of these outposts did make travel and life in northeast Colorado less risky. Many settlers felt the forts represented security and small communities soon sprang up around them.⁴²

During 1866 and 1867 relative calm existed in northeastern Colorado. Sporadic raiding and livestock stealing continued. As more and more Europeans moved into the area, the level of hostile activity increased, especially as the Union Pacific made its way west across Nebraska. The Army, fearful of a repeat of Sand Creek, took over responsibility for protecting settlers. In 1867 a new strategy was introduced to quash native activity. Roving patrols were sent out to look for hostiles. The government also undertook new treaty talks with the Cheyenne and Arapaho. By this agreement, the Treaty of Medicine Lodge Creek, the Cheyenne were removed to Indian Territory (Oklahoma), but maintained hunting privileges off the reservation. The Arapaho were sent to the Wind River reservation in Wyoming. That summer, to enforce its new strategy, the Army ordered Brevet General George Armstrong Custer and the Seventh U.S. Cavalry to patrol western Kansas, Nebraska and northeastern Colorado. His quarry was a band of Sioux, Cheyenne and Arapaho led by Chief Roman Nose. Custer found signs of Native American activity but he never engaged in battle with his foe.⁴³

Roman Nose decided, by 1868, that Anglo encroachment had to be stopped. He and his followers increased their attacks on homesteads and small communities in Colorado and western Kansas. To stop Roman Nose, Army officials determined to mount a summer campaign to force the natives onto a reservation. Among the units charged with this task was Major George A. Forsyth's Volunteer Scouts, a group of fifty frontiersmen who joined the Army for the summer to track native Americans. By September, 1868, Forsyth's force was on the Arikaree River in northeastern Colorado in hot pursuit of Roman Nose's band. On September 17, the hostiles ambushed the detachment. The soldiers made their way to an island in the river and dug in. The battle lasted more than a week as the group of fifty held off an estimated 1,000 warriors. After nine days, help arrived in the form of the Tenth U.S. Cavalry, a unit of black "buffalo" soldiers. Amazingly, the volunteers lost only five killed, but many were wounded. Among the dead was Lt. Frederick Beecher for whom both the island and battle were subsequently named. While native casualties were unknown,



**Beecher Island Memorial, 1931.
W.G. Pierce Photo, Courtesy USGS.**



Typical plains terrain, where gullies and washes cut the flat surface.

Roman Nose, the much feared war chief, died leading a charge on the embattled soldiers. The battle accomplished little except to convince the Army of a need for winter campaigns against the Native Americans.⁴⁴ The Cheyenne were most vulnerable during winter months because of decreased mobility while their ponies were weak from lack of forage. To lead an expedition into Indian Territory against the natives, General Philip Sheridan chose George A. Custer and his Seventh Cavalry. The Seventh moved, in November, 1868, from Camp Supply toward reported Cheyenne encampments along the Washita River. Custer pushed his men hard across the snowy plains. In late November they had reached their objective. Custer repeated Chivington's strategy and surrounded the camp at night. When first light dawned the attack began. Again Black Kettle was the victim but this time he did not escape. As the regimental band played the Seventh's battle song, "Gerry Owen," Custer's troops went about their business of extermination. The Battle of the Washita did much to break Cheyenne power but it was not until the next summer that the last battle for northeastern Colorado was fought.⁴⁵

Tall Bull, leading a band of Cheyenne and Sioux, left the reservation in May, 1869 and moved north toward their old hunting grounds. Along the way they skirmished with General Eugene H. Carr's Fifth U.S. Cavalry in western Kansas. They also raided a Kansas Pacific Railway section station at Fossil Creek. Carr's troops attempted to stop Tall Bull with little success. However, under increased pressure by the troopers, he was forced to move west into northeastern Colorado to rest. Helping guide the Fifth Cavalry was William F. "Buffalo Bill" Cody and Major Frank North's Pawnee Scouts. Finally, on July 11, 1869 the Pawnee Scouts located the hostiles encamped at Summit Springs. Carr decided to attack before his presence was discovered. Using the cover of hillocks and ravines, as well as a fortuitous dust storm, the army approached within a mile of the camp sounding the charge before they were discovered. Surprise was complete and the troops were in camp before the warriors could gather their horses and weapons. The Pawnee, in particular, relished this attack on their old enemies. By the end of that day Tall Bull was dead and Carr had crushed the last pocket of Native American resistance in northeastern Colorado.⁴⁶

Even before the Battle of Summit Springs the Army began to lessen its role in the area. A technological revolution took place and the older concept of static forts was replaced by that of a "mobile force". As railroads built across the plains, the Army sought to take advantage of this new agility. No longer would garrisons be necessary every few miles since now an entire army could be moved within a few days. Taking this into consideration, and the fact that most hostilities, by 1868, were outside of northeastern Colorado, the Army started to close its outposts.⁴⁷ Closure of forts did not mean the Army completely abandoned northeast Colorado. Detachments occasionally operated in the area. An experimental heliographic signal base was set up on Pike's Peak but it proved a failure and was soon closed.⁴⁸ By the early 1870s settlement became so intense in northeastern Colorado that the cavalry went the way of the buffalo into extinction.

NOTES Chapter III

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¹⁰ Neuhaus, "Transportation," pp. 12-13., and Long, *Smoky*, pp. 20-40.

¹¹ Long, *Smoky*, pp. 120-121., and Neuhaus, "Transportation," pp. 12-13.

¹²Frank A. Root, "Early Days in Weld County," *The Trail* 6 (December, 1913); 10., hereafter cited: Root, "Weld.", and Long, *Smoky*, p. 21.

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³⁷Kelsey, *Evans*, pp. 142-146., and Propst, *Forgotten*, pp. 59-64.

³⁸Kelsey, *Evans*, pp. 146-150.; Propst, *Forgotten*, pp. 67-72., and Adams, "Civil War," pp. 104-108.

³⁹Milton M. Quaife, ed., *My Life on the Plains by General George A. Custer*, (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1967), p. 42., hereafter cited: Quaife, *Life*.; Propst, *Forgotten*, p. 72., and Hughes, *American Indian*, p. 60.

⁴⁰Guy Peterson, *Fort Collins: The Post, The Town*, (Fort Collins: Old Army Press, 1972), pp. 48-49., hereafter cited: Peterson, *Ft Collins*.; Adams, "Civil War." pp. 108-109., and Propst, *Forgotten*, pp. 74-75.

⁴¹Propst, *Forgotten*, p. 60.; and Long, *Smoky*, p. 168.; Peterson, *Ft. Collins*, pp. 24-38.; J. F. Arbuckle interview, CWA, CSHS, volume 351., and Lute H. Johnson interview, CWA, CSHS, volume 351.

⁴²Peterson, *Ft. Collins*, pp. 24-38.; Propst, *Forgotten*, pp. 88-89.; Athearn, *Coloradans*, p. 208., and M. B. Gill interview, "More About Fort Morgan," CWA, CSHS, volume 351.

⁴³Quaife, *Life*, p. 99.; Athearn, *Coloradans*, pp. 75-77., and W.L. Hays interview, CWA, CSHS, volume 341.

⁴⁴See: Simon E. Matson, ed., "The Battle of Beecher Island," The Beecher Island Battle Memorial Association, 1962., and Merrill J. Mattes, "The Beecher Island Battlefield Diary of Sigmund Shlesinger," *The Colorado Magazine* 29 (July, 1952): 161-169.

⁴⁵Quaife, *Life*, pp. 334-360 and 533-535.

⁴⁶See: Ray G. Sparks, *Reckoning at Summit Springs*, (Kansas City, Mo.: Lowell Press, 1969)), and Propst, *Forgotten*, pp. 113-125.

⁴⁷Arbuckle, CWA, CSHS., and Robert G. Athearn, *Union Pacific Country*, Chicago: Rand McNally & Co., 1971), pp. 200-201.

⁴⁸John M. Gibson, "A Reminiscence of the Trip to and Building of the Signal Station on Pike's Peak," *The Trail* 10 (June, 1917): 14-19.

Chapter IV THE RANCHERS' FRONTIER

The gold rush of 1859 made northeastern Colorado desirable for settlement by Anglos. Some settlers were disgruntled miners who failed to strike it rich, while others arrived because the high country towns offered markets for produce of the plains. Those who settled the arid prairies also hoped to make their fortune from "nature's bounty". Among the first were cattlemen. They took the advice of Major Stephen F. Long and transformed the area into a huge pasture. The region's nineteenth century cowboy was America's first unique folk hero, with his peculiar garb and romantic free existence. The cattlemen's frontier in northeastern Colorado contained many elements of hardship and adventure normally associated with the "Wild and Woolly West" and made cowboy life the envy of many in the United States.¹

After the Civil War western cattle industries were based on three elements. First were large, open tracts of land that became part of the public domain as native claims were extinguished by treaty. These plains were available for general use and were known to be good natural pastures. Furthermore, Federal land policy allowed cattlemen to build home ranches as bases of operation. Federal rules were embodied in the Preemption Act of 1842 under which 160 acres could be purchased for \$1.25 an acre and the Homestead Act of 1862 that provided title to 160 acres after five years residence and payment of patent fees. Usually the stockmen located their homesteads around waterholes or along creeks and rivers to secure, and later monopolize, water supplies. Some who had riverfront property built rudimentary irrigation systems to parts of their ranches so larger numbers of cattle could be handled.² Water was the second (and often controlling) element of the cattle frontier. Livestock needed water to survive, but as hay became a common source of winter feed, by the 1890s, water was necessary to raise it. Because northeastern Colorado was not naturally well supplied man had to artificially water his fields by irrigation. Irrigated lands were found along most major waterways by the end of the nineteenth century.³ The third basic component of the region's cattle frontier was grass; plentiful on the Great Plains. Prairie forage proved highly nutritious for livestock. Originally many early Europeans who crossed the plains felt the natural grama and buffalo grasses were unsuited for domestic animals because of their dry, brown appearance as compared to bright green turf found back in the Midwest. William Ashley and his party, during the winter of 1824-1825, found plains forage to be useful, but it was not until the 1840s that this fact was "re-discovered." The revelation came by accident as trekkers on their way to Oregon freed lame oxen on the plains. The settlers assumed the animals would die, but when next spring arrived, new voyagers were amazed to find the stock fat and healthy, having survived the winter by using natural forage.⁴

The final ingredient for success on the cattle frontier were stockmen. Without them the region's natural bounty would have gone unused. Initially, many cattlemen were miners who did not make a go of it in the high country. Since most had previous experience with livestock on the family farm in the Midwest or South, they decided to use those skills

to make a living in Colorado. Furthermore, mining camps were good markets for whatever farmers could produce. Especially fresh meat, that brought premium prices because of its scarcity. Once these markets were established and news of the ease of open range ranching reached other parts of the United States others soon relocated to northeast Colorado with the intent of stock raising. After the Civil War ended and national conditions stabilized, cattle markets in cities such as Chicago and Kansas City demanded considerable beef which encouraged further ranching on the plains.⁵

The open range cattle industry boomed from the late 1860s into the late 1880s. It stimulated settlement of northern Colorado's arid regions. The success stories of the era portrayed cattlemen on the road to easy wealth. Popularizers of what became known as the "Beef Bonanza" based their boosterism on the use of "free" public domain to raise a calf to maturity. Immediately after the Civil War a cow from the over-stocked Texas plains could be purchased for \$4 and after two or three years of free grazing, the animal was worth \$40 to \$50 at market. So long as demand for beef remained high and grass was available, there seemed to be no limit to the wealth for cattlemen. Dreams of riches were soon realized in northeastern Colorado.⁶

Stockmen used the natural resource of grass in much the same way fur trappers or miners exploited their respective resources. Unoccupied Federal lands were utilized throughout northeastern Colorado by ranchers. As previously mentioned, this started with the Pre-emption (1842) and Homestead (1862) Acts, but by the late 1870s Congress had adopted two more pieces of legislation that cattle growers put to use. The Timber Culture Act of 1873 allowed a filer to claim 160 acres, in addition to any other land he might hold, if he planted and maintained 40 acres of trees for ten years. Later the stipulations were relaxed by decreasing the acreage of trees required. The "theory" of the law was that the existence of wooded areas changed atmospheric balances and thereby increased rainfall. This was known as "pluviculture". While the "scientific" basis proved quite faulty, the Timber Culture Act did allow settlers to add to their holdings. Four years later Congress took another step to encourage settlement in the arid West when it passed the Desert Land Act. This legislation allowed a person to claim another 640 acres (one section) by paying fees of 25 cents an acre. Claimants then had three years to bring water to the land by irrigation. If they did so and found a witness to testify to that fact to the General Land Office, they could then purchase the property for an additional \$1 an acre. These two laws were loosely written and were easily circumvented.⁷

Cattlemen on the plains were using (and abusing) the various statutes soon after they were passed. First arrived stockmen, attracted by alleged easy wealth and liberal Federal land policies, set about to "cash in" on the "Beef Bonanza." They were not concerned about bending the law if need or opportunity arose. After "pre-empting" or homesteading a ranch site, cattlemen informally took over adjacent range. As useable lands became filled, competition for remaining soil became intense. This led to stockmen filing claims under the Timber Culture and Desert Land Acts so they could better control the waterholes and prime range. This way a cattleman could dominate thousands of acres of surrounding public

domain. To fulfill the requirements of the law area ranchers used various ruses. A popular trick was to construct an irrigation ditch by dragging a pointed stick or plow behind a horse and rider. Another trick was to dump a barrel of water on the ground and call it "irrigated" to satisfy Desert Land Act provisions. Federal authorities had knowledge of these problems but were powerless to stop them under the law. However, changes in the legislation were finally made during the 1890s.⁸

Beyond the land fraud some ranchers, determined to control the best range, simply fenced portions of the public lands. Barbed wire was introduced into Colorado by John W. Prowers and its use quickly spread around the northeast corner of the state. As herd size grew and range availability decreased the demand for fencing increased. These barriers occasionally led to violence between competing stockmen, with fence cuttings and night riding the usual outcome. By 1884 the problems became serious enough to spark a Congressional investigation. Further, Department of the Interior officials administering the public domain became alarmed by a rapid spread of illegal barbed wire fencing on Federal land. They voiced their concerns to President Grover Cleveland who, on August 7, 1885, ordered all fences on public domain removed. Even after the new rules were issued in 1885, Federal lands remained barricaded until the 1890s, because the General Land Office simply did not have enough manpower to enforce the orders. While abuses of the public domain continued, they decreased by the early twentieth century because of changes in land laws and increased agrarian settlement in the region.⁹

The late nineteenth century stockmen of northeastern Colorado were much like their counterparts throughout the West. They developed their own costume of boots with pointed toes and high heels, chaps, a revolver slung on the hip, a bright plaid shirt, bandana, and a wide-brimmed hat. The cowboys (hired hands) were usually young single men from diverse backgrounds. Some were sons of Midwestern farmers who came west to make it on their own, others were drifters needing jobs and a few were just looking for a new start. During the late 1860s many prospective cowboys were Civil War veterans who had nothing to return home to after the conflict. Over the years the perception of a "cowboy" has changed, with his image romanticized into a gallant adventurer. Actually a ranch hand's lifestyle was far from romantic. During wintertime endless hours were spent in the bunkhouse with nothing to do. Spring brought a round-up with days of hot sun, driving dust and little sleep. Summer was spent tending the herds, moving cattle from one range to another and doing general work around the ranch. Fall saw another round-up for marketing and then preparation for winter. Very rarely did anything as exciting as a gun fight with natives or cattle rustlers take place. Most of the cowboy's working life was little different from that of a farm hand.¹⁰

If there was one part of the cattle frontier in northeastern Colorado that approached the romantic view of the "Wild West" it was the long drive: the transfer of thousands of head of cattle to and from the area's rangelands. The region's early cattle industry was based on animals imported from Texas. To get the cows from the South to Colorado required an overland march of hundreds of miles because railroads were unavailable until the later nine-

teenth century. Four cattle trails reached the area from Texas.¹¹ The first route was the Goodnight or Goodnight Loving Trail. Charles Goodnight, for whom the trail was named, became one of Colorado's most famous trailmasters and a respected member of various cattlemen's organizations. Herds on the Goodnight Trail were assembled in west Texas and then proceeded north-northwest from that state's panhandle, crossing part of New Mexico and then into southeastern Colorado. From there the drovers moved to where the trail somewhat paralleled the Smoky Hill River. A definite northern terminus was not established because sale contracts often called for herds to be delivered to a specific ranch. Goodnight made his first trip along this important pathway in 1864, however he was not the first to drive cattle into northeastern Colorado.¹²

John C. Dawson holds that honor because of his 1859 efforts to supply the new gold camps. He owned a cattle operation in Texas and when he heard of the commotion along the South Platte he decided to see if this place would not be a good market for cattle. Dawson's herd moved north-northwest from central Texas through Oklahoma toward Cherry Creek. The trip was successful, but before many more drovers could use Dawson's Trail, the nation was torn apart by civil war. This conflict halted trail drives from the Lone Star state until Goodnight's 1864 adventure. Once normal relations between North and South returned, herds followed both Dawson's and Goodnight's routes to the Rockies.¹³ A third path used to move Longhorns from Texas to, and through, northeastern Colorado was the Ogallala Trail. The primary objective of this route was not Colorado but rather Ogallala, Nebraska, an eastbound shipping point on the Union Pacific Railroad after 1867. This route was also used to move cattle north as far as Montana. The Ogallala Trail approximately followed the Colorado-Kansas border into Nebraska. It saw heavy use from the late 1860s until the 1880s.¹⁴

By 1884 western stockgrowers petitioned Congress for Federal monies to maintain a "National Cattle Trail" from Texas to Montana. Part of this proposed route crossed northeastern Colorado very near the eastern border of this state, much as the Ogallala Trail did. Because of the availability of railroads from Texas to Midwestern markets like Chicago, Congress chose not to fund the "National" route. Yet herds continued to use it into the 1890s.¹⁵

Along any of these four routes drovers faced similar problems. First was how to feed and water their charges. Water was needed every three to six miles and grassy areas every fifteen miles or so; the length of a typical day's march. Because of the varying availability of vital needs, trails seldom had narrow boundaries. The cattle moved along at a reasonable pace but not so fast as to lose too much weight. Often a drive to northeastern Colorado lasted from early March until late June. Along the road, drovers had to stop stampedes as well as protect the herd from marauding natives or cattle rustlers. If possible, the cowboys were to protect the stock from trail hazards such as the wrong food, that could kill hundreds of animals. Also, once in Colorado they had to tend the herd during quarantine. These were forced upon drovers by local laws set up to protect Colorado stock from the spread of "Texas Fever," a deadly cattle illness.¹⁶ Along major trails businessmen, founded

cow towns to serve the needs of cowboys and as places for prospective buyers to view the animals and strike bargains. These towns had their share of gunfights, drunken brawls and gambling, as associated with towns like Dodge City, Kansas. Two of the most famous cow towns serving northeastern Colorado were Trail City and Bovina, in Prowers and Lincoln Counties respectively. Among buyers at these towns were all the major ranchers in the area.¹⁷

One cattleman who brought in a Texas herd and rapidly became leader of the industry was John Wesley Iliff. He came to Colorado in 1859, a young Midwesterner out to make his fortune. Finding little opportunity in mining, he soon turned to shop keeping as a way to make a living. Iliff felt, quite correctly, that supplying local miners could be as profitable as being one of them. From his store in Denver he sold goods, traded for a freight wagon outfit and also began running cattle. It was from that part of his business that Iliff got his start as a rancher. He would buy herds from Texas or Missouri, fatten them and then sell the stock to butcher shops in Colorado's mining camps. This proved so profitable that by 1865 he had given up his other businesses to devote full attention to ranching.¹⁸ From the end of the Civil War to 1870 Iliff expanded his herds. He relocated the center of his operations to the South Platte Valley near present-day Iliff, Colorado. His successes were so impressive that he was labelled a "Cattle Baron" and was often used as an example by those popularizing open range ranching. By the mid-1870s Iliff's range extended from the South Platte north into Wyoming and from the eastern border of the state west to near Greeley. By controlling water supplies he successfully excluded others from the use of public domain within "his" range. He actually owned only a little over 15,000 acres. Once proven, his methods were copied by other cattlemen in northeastern Colorado during the 1870s and 1880s.¹⁹ These included Jared L. Brush, Tilghman P. Hersperger and John Wesley Prowers. Each became prosperous stock grower. Brush shared the South Platte basin with Iliff, using rangelands on the south side of the river. Hersperger and Prowers headquartered their ranches in Lincoln and Cheyenne Counties respectively. Hersperger built Karval to serve as center of his operations. All of these men took advantage of Federal land laws and the availability of "free" grass. The apparent ease these men enjoyed in accumulating wealth made it seem as if Horatio Alger was alive and well; living in northeastern Colorado.²⁰

To be successful the "Cattle Kings" had to operate their ranches efficiently. Initially stock growing was trial and error, but as time passed definite methods were established. This process took place between 1865 and 1870 and by the later years, set routines were worked out for daily and yearly ranch life. Use of the open range was the controlling factor underlying all these systems.²¹ During winter and summer months herds drifted aimlessly across the plains searching for food and water. Pioneer ranchers saw no need to tend cattle, they simply assumed the beasts could find what they needed on the vast open tracts. Herd supervision was especially lacking during winter because cold weather and snow limited cowboy mobility. In spring and fall round-ups were held to gather in the wandering cows and move them from one range to another, as well as to separate those ready for market. Cattlemen organized these semi-annual events and pooled labor to accomplish the task. The

spring roundup usually started in late March or early April and lasted as long as eight weeks, depending upon how dispersed the cattle were. It was held so winter losses could be discovered, calves branded, and herds moved to different pastures. This was an early version of range rotation. If the winter was harsh, herds from northeastern Colorado could drift as far away as Kearny, Nebraska or even into western Oklahoma. The fall round-up usually happened in September and its main purpose was to sort out those animals ready for shipment east and move others to winter ranges.²² Between round-ups life on the ranches was quiet. Infirm cattle were tended at home ranches. Cowboys planted crops and gardens to feed themselves. Cow ponies were groomed while horses were broken and trained. Irrigation works were built or repaired and preparations were made for the next round-up. In addition, the earliest ranchers of northeastern Colorado had to protect themselves and their herds from Native American raiding parties. Most cattlemen sought to avoid conflict, if possible, by giving a few head of cattle to the natives to pacify them. Much of the time there was little to do and cowboys often found amusements for themselves. They would attend any event from spelling bees to a wedding to escape the isolation of the ranch.²³ The "Cattle Kings" had much to do during periods between round-up. Prospective buyers were sought. So too were herds purchased. Conflicts over identification of animals also had to be resolved. Possible investors were toured and cajoled. To lessen these tasks cattlemen formed local and territorial (later state) associations.²⁴

In November, 1867 the first of these organizations was founded at Denver. It was called the Colorado Stock Growers Association. Northeastern Colorado ranchers were in the forefront of this movement, especially John W. Iliff. They saw the need for such an organization to handle services that could not be provided on an individual basis. The group served as a brand registry to sort out the confusion over ownership and identification. This organization published and distributed brand books so foraging herds could be returned to their proper owners. Further, the state association helped organize and conduct round-ups through local groups. Another problem cattlemen laid before the organization was predator control. Wolves and coyotes plagued herds and ranchers decided that offering bounties for wild animals would alleviate the situation. Initially this program was administered by the association, but at times both territorial and state government assisted cattlemen. Favorable legislation by means of lobbying, on matters like quarantines of trail herds was another function of the Colorado Stock Growers Association. They became a large enough political force during the late nineteenth century that cattlemen could control nearly any legislative action that affected their business. In addition to meeting these needs, the organization provided other services for its members. It opened lines of communication between the stockmen throughout the region and the state. News of improved techniques and methods was quickly spread to all members along with complaints about various obstacles to prosperity. At times the association helped fund experiments with new breeds and nutritional information. Because of the organization, ranchers had access to a large body of knowledge about their industry.

Cattlemen helped each other another way; through cooperative marketing. The association researched price trends and demand, then advised members about the best

times to sell and which buyers were paying the most. They also encouraged prospective buyers to visit Colorado and examine the herds.²⁴ Because of these activities, and once railroads reached Denver in 1870, that city quickly became one of the leading cattle brokerage cities in the Rocky Mountain West. This was furthered when representatives of major eastern packing companies opened offices in Denver. All this helped the city develop a reputation as a "Cow Capitol" by 1890. The Colorado Stock Growers Association played a major role in these efforts and developed ranching into a major industry in northeastern Colorado by the 1880s.²⁵

The attraction of outside investors to area cattle operations was another major factor in the industry's rapid growth. By the early 1870s, with native removal, and Iliff as an example, capitalists from both the East and overseas considered cattle as a way to make quick, large returns on their investments. Their goals were encouraged by J.S. Brisbin's book, *The Beef Bonanza*, that explained the workings of the open range cattle industry and assured investors huge profits. At first capitalists sought out established operations like Iliff and Brush, offering to invest in their ranches.²⁶ Later, emboldened by early successes, some set out on their own to form new companies to raise cows. One of these outfits was the Pawnee Cattle Company, that operated along the South Platte River, buying parts of Iliff's ranch after he died in 1878. Other land and cattle companies were established in northeastern Colorado by the mid-1880s. Some were backed by money from the Northeast while others received their capital from Great Britain and Europe. English industrialists had funds to lend and looked for large returns on their investments. The "Beef Bonanza" of the American West caught their attention.²⁷ Because these people knew little of day to day ranching methods and most never actually saw their property, they hired professional managers to operate the ranches. Distances between the owners and their employees, in addition to the intricacies of the business, led to conflicts and accusations of dishonesty or inefficiency. Investors were especially upset when prices fell and returns were not to their expectations. Also, loose bookkeeping systems many managers used led to disputes. This was exacerbated by the physical impossibility of counting each cow wandering over hundreds of square miles.²⁸ In an attempt to facilitate business and close the gap between owners and managers, area banks like the Koutze brothers' Colorado National Bank in Denver, set up special services for the cattle companies.²⁹ Another change large corporations brought to northeast Colorado ranches was the introduction of blooded stock to improve herds. While Texas longhorns were well suited to life on the plains, they produced meat that was low quality. As consumers demanded better beef, stockmen, especially the company operations, tried to fill this need. The use of barbed wire fences facilitated the segregation of inferior stock and protected herd quality. These efforts were halted, temporarily, in the late 1880s when the beef market collapsed.³⁰

Even before the "Beef Bonanza" bubble burst ominous indicators of the future were there for the observant. In 1879 Great Britain began restricting beef importations from the United States, primarily for health reasons. Next, the winter of 1880-1881 was unusually harsh and many cattle died from exposure or starvation. These omens little diminished enthusiasm for open range ranching in northeastern Colorado. Four years after the terrible

blizzards, market prices in Chicago started a decline and continued to fall for five years. This was due to glut thanks to rapid herd expansion as more and more attempted to take advantage of the bonanza.³¹ Increases in numbers of cattle led to another problem for ranchers--over grazing. By 1885 use of the plains was so intense that native grama and buffalo grasses disappeared only to be replaced by weeds and sagebrush. This lack of forage would have eventually ended open range ranching as it was practiced but during the late 1880s nature helped speed the process. The winter of 1885-1886 was a repetition of 1881, with cattle moving from northeastern Colorado's ranges to as far south as across the Arkansas River. Many cows died during that winter. Much of the summer of 1886 cattlemen spent erecting barbed wire fences to prevent stock from wandering off in winter, however no preparation for winter feeding was made.³² The snows started early in the fall of 1886. With only occasional breaks, winds blew ice storms and blizzards from the northern Rockies into the region from October until April. The ground was covered with a thick layer of ice that cattle could not break to reach what little food was there. As they attempted to find nourishment the new fences stopped them. Layer by layer they were trapped by wire and died. Other cattle sought shelter in ravines and draws, thus starving to death. When spring arrived and cowboys could again move out onto the range, they found that the losses were as heavy as many had feared. While no exact statistics were kept, the best available estimates are that only one of ten cows survived the winter. The only method many ranchers had of salvaging anything was to sell the dead animals' hides to skinners and to try and rebuild herds from survivors. The next winter was nearly as severe, but losses were fewer because much of the range was not restocked. Low prices and the winter catastrophes of the late 1880s ended the "Beef Bonanza" and just about destroyed open range ranching in the region after 1890.³³

These events did much to force cattlemen to accept a new role and style in their methods. During the 1870s and 1880s ranchers enjoyed prosperity but at the same time faced competition for land. It came from both dirt farmers, referred to as "sodbusters", and sheep growers. Both these groups were attracted by the potential wealth that northeastern Colorado offered. Ranchers opposed them because it was feared the range would be ruined for use by cattle. Sheep were particularly repugnant to stockmen because it was believed that the woolies fouled waterholes and ate the grass too close to the ground so that it would not grow again. Farmers fenced off land, used precious water and were a nuisance because they occasionally shot cattle trampling fields or if they needed meat.³⁴ Ranchers responded to these threats in a variety of ways. On more than one occasion shepherds (and their flocks) were killed or driven off. However, northeastern Colorado never was the scene of range wars like those on the western slope. Cattlemen, nevertheless, did support laws to restrict sheep grazing and they did try to enforce rules about usage of certain ranges. In dealing with farmers the situation was somewhat different because agrarians tended to settle along river bottoms and near areas where water could easily be obtained. Nevertheless there were numerous instances of fence cutting and threats by masked riders to discourage farmers. Possibly one reason violent acts were limited in the region was that many of the cattlemen shared some common interests with the opposition. Some such as Hersperger ran herds of cattle and flocks of sheep on different ranges. Other

ranchers took up farming on part of their land and some began to depend on farm commodities such as vegetables and hay. By the late eighties some sodbusters had even started their own cattle operations. This partial community of interest did much to ease a potentially volatile situation. Furthermore, at about the same time that pressures from sheepmen and farmers intensified, ranchers' attention was diverted to other problems: the beef market collapsed.³⁵

Aside from, and because of, dramatic changes that took place in the beef industry of northeastern Colorado during the 1880s ranchers modified other practices as well. When herd size was so quickly decreased by weather, cattlemen were forced to change many of their old methods. After the winter of 1886-1887 fencing of ranges continued but this was coupled with a new system of winter feeding. Growing forage received priority and numerous cowboys and cattlemen became farmers. This shift in occupational emphasis was furthered because cattle prices remained low until 1890 and some ranchers were forced to sell out in order to meet financial obligations. For those who remained in the cattle business the process of herd upgrading with blooded stock like herefords and shorthorns accelerated. These changes led to smaller herds that could more easily be protected and managed, with a resulting decrease in the use of open range.³⁶ For four years, beginning in 1890, beef prices enjoyed a brief resurgence. This slowed moves away from traditional methods and in 1891 ranchers were speaking of a return to the situation before 1885. However, conditions both within and outside northeastern Colorado prevented this. The consumer, once introduced to finer grades of beef was unwilling to accept Longhorn meat. Farmers plowed up many better ranges and they could not be stopped. Also, railroads covered much of the West by 1890 making the long drive unnecessary as well as unprofitable. While there no doubt was a fond remembrance of the way things were, most area ranchers realized that a return to the past was impossible. As if to act as punctuation for this point, the Panic of 1893 occurred and during the following depression, cattle prices tumbled. The last vestiges of the open range beef bonanza were swept away.³⁷

Among other things to all but disappear from the region during the 1890s were gun carrying, fast shooting bandits and rustlers, popularly called "badmen". From 1860 to 1900 northeastern Colorado had its share of minor criminals, highwaymen and murderers. Their appearance was almost inevitable given a boom atmosphere during the late nineteenth century. Outlaws came into the region with the Fifty-niners. The first, and in many ways most notorious, highwayman to make his home in northeastern Colorado was Jack Slade. When the Central Overland California and Pike's Peak Express Company (COCPP) began service to Denver in 1859 Slade was a company superintendant, based at Old Julesburg. Before leaving this job he brutally murdered Jules Beni and took to robbing stage coaches on the road between Camp Collins and Virginia Dale. Slade later moved to Montana and continued his outlaw career until vigilantes in Virginia City hanged him.³⁸ While few criminals in northeastern Colorado ever gained the reputation of Jack Slade, their presence made life dangerous for other residents. In addition to occasional murder (and subsequent lynchings) the most common crime in the region during the late nineteenth century was theft, particularly of livestock. In the 1860s and 1870s rustling was not a major problem



**Robbers' Roost near Virginia Dale, Colorado was the hangout
of numerous notorious outlaws, like Jack Slade.
W. H. Jackson Photo, Courtesy USGS.**

because of a limited number of ways to dispose of cattle. However, as time progressed and a marketing network developed thanks to new railroads, livestock thefts increased. During the 1880s a gang of rustlers operated with impunity throughout Yuma and Kit Carson counties. They found it easy to change cattle brands on the open range. Elsewhere the problem grew as ranching developed. While horse stealing was considered a more serious crime, rustling cattle cost the cattlemen more.³⁹ Many solutions were used to stop theft but it was not until the cattlemen's association became involved that the problem was controlled. The organization hired Dave Cook, founder of the Rocky Mountain Detective Association, to lead investigations. Cook not only tracked criminals, but he also started a central information exchange to aid other "private eyes" working on rustling cases. Cook convinced the Colorado Stockgrowers Association that the best way to solve the problem was to make it difficult for the rustlers to dispose of animals. To do this a system of market and stockyard observers was created at all major shipping points to check brands and registrations. Cook's solution worked well and by the 1890s rustling throughout Colorado was newly eliminated.⁴⁰

At this time open range ranching all but disappeared in northeastern Colorado. It had a short but colorful history, leading to tales of the "Old West". Like mining, stock raising was a high risk business with large potential profits for those who succeeded. The industry found another way to exploit this land's natural bounty. Cattlemen used parts of the region that might otherwise not have developed. Ranchers caused millions of dollars to be invested in Colorado by outsiders. Several factors led to the rapid decline of open range ranching. Among these were over-grazing, market collapse, harsh winters and the division of range caused by the spread of farmer's settlement onto the region's more fertile lands.

NOTES Chapter IV

¹See: Richard Goff and Robert H. McCaffree. *Century In the Saddle*, (Denver: Colorado Cattlemen's Centennial Commission, 1967)., hereafter cited: Goff and McCaffree, *Century.*, and Ora Brooks Peake, *The Colorado Range Cattle Industry*, (Glendale, CA.: The Arthur H. Clark Co., 1937)., hereafter cited: Peake, *Range*.

²Roy Robbins, *Our Landed Heritage*, (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1976), pp. 218-219., and Fred D. Johnson interview, Civilian Works Administration, Colorado State Historical Society, volume 352., hereafter cited: CWA, CSHS.

³David Allen Henderson, "The Beef Industry of Colorado," (M.A. Thesis, University of Colorado, Boulder 1951), p. 10., hereafter cited: Henderson, "Beef.," and Peake, *Range*, p. 15.

⁴Nell Brown Propst, *Forgotten People, A History of the South Platte Trail*, (Boulder: Pruett Publishing Co., 1979), p. 166., hereafter cited: Propst, *Forgotten.*, and Henderson, "Beef," pp. 7-10.

⁵Jonathan L. Lengel interview, volume 350, CWA, CSHS., and Winfield Morris interview, volume 341, CWA, CSHS., and Peake, *Range*, pp. 8-14.

⁶Peake, *Range* pp. 10-16.

⁷Lengel, CWA, CSHS., Morris, CWA, CSHS., Fred D. Johnson interview, volume 352, CWA, CSHS., and Kizzie Gordon Buchanan interview, volume 341, CWA, CSHS.

⁸K.G. Buchanan, CWA, CSHS., Goff and McCaffree, *Century*, pp. 118-126.

⁹Goff and McCaffree, *Century*, p. 120., and Propst, *Forgotten*, pp. 165-166., and Peake, *Range*, p. 75.

¹⁰Propst, *Forgotten*, pp. 148-152.; Goff and McCaffree, *Century*, pp. 92-98., and S.A. Munson interview, volume 351, CWA, CSHS.

¹¹Henderson, "Beef," pp. 7-10.

¹²Propst, *Forgotten*, pp. 49-51., and Peake, *Range*, pp. 22-24.

¹³Peake, *Range*, pp. 21-24.

¹⁴*Ibid.*, and Munson, CWA, CSHS.

¹⁵Margaret Long, *The Smoky Hill Trail*, (Denver: W. H. Kistler Stationery Co., 1943). p. vii., hereafter cited: Long, *Smoky.*, and Peake, *Range*, pp. 30-32.

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- ¹⁷Mary Liz Owen and Dale Cooley, eds., *Where the Wagons Rolled, The History of Lincoln County and the People Who Came Before 1925*, (n.1.: Lincoln County Historical Society, 1976), pp. 9-10., hereafter cited: Owen; Cooley, *Lincoln*., and Peake, *Range*, p. 25.
- ¹⁸See: Agnes Wright Spring, "John W. Iliff-Cattleman," in: *A Colorado Reader*, edited by Carl Ubbelohde, (Boulder: Pruett Press, 1962)., and Eugene Williams interview, volume 341, CWA, CSHS.
- ¹⁹Propst, *Forgotten*, pp. 105-111., and Joseph P. Dillon interview, volume 341, CWA, CSHS.
- ²⁰Owen and Cooley, *Lincoln*, pp. 40-43.; and Peake, *Range*, pp. 15 and 271.; Goff and McCaffree, *Century*, p. 53.; Kossuth Buchanan interview, volume 341, CWA, CSHS., and Williams, CWA, CSHS., Morris, CWA, CSHS.
- ²¹Goff, and McCaffree, *Century*, pp. 40-43., and Williams, CWA, CSHS.
- ²²F.A. Neville interview, volume 343, CWA, CSHS., Frank Tanberg interview, volume 341, CWA, CSHS., Williams, CWA, CSHS., and K. Buchanan, CWA, CSHS.
- ²³Propst, *Forgotten*, pp. 148-152., and Tanberg, CWA, CSHS.; Neville, CWA, CSHS.
- ²⁴Goff and McCaffree, *Century*, pp. 68-72.
- ²⁵*Ibid.*, pp. 110-119.
- ²⁶*Ibid.*, pp. 103-108.
- ²⁷*Ibid.*, pp. 104-110.; Propst, *Forgotten*, pp. 160-163., and Tanberg, CWA, CSHS.
- ²⁸Goff and McCaffree, *Century*, pp. 80-84., and V.V. Hargrave interview, volume 351, CWA, CSHS.
- ²⁹See: Gene M. Gressley, *Bankers and Cattlemen*, (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1972).
- ³⁰A.F. Sanford interview, volume 343, CWA, CSHS.; Lengel, CWA, CSHS., Propst, *Forgotten*, pp. 150-151.
- ³¹Mr. and Mrs. H. R. Neuman interview, volume 351, CWA, CSHS., Goff and McCaffree, *Century*, p. 109., and Propst, *Forgotten*, pp. 151 and 165.
- ³²Glen Bolander interview, volume 352, CWA, CSHS.; W.H. Delbridge interview, volume 343, CWA, CSHS.; Goff and McCaffree, *Century*, pp. 76-77., and Propst, *Forgotten*, p. 166.

³³Henderson, "Beef," pp. 7-9., Bolander, CWA, CSHS.; Hargrave, CWA, CSHS.; H. Wells, CWA, CSHS.

³⁴George E. McConley interview, volume 341, CWA, CSHS.; E. Williams, CWA, CSHS.

³⁵Hargrave, CWA, CSHS.; Lengel, CWA, CSHS.; McConley, CWA, CSHS., and H. Wells, CWA, CSHS.

³⁶Albert M. Bair interview, volume 358, CWA, CSHS.; Helen Slater interview, volume 352, CWA, CSHS.; F. Johnson, CWA, CSHS., and Peake, *Range*, pp. 272-276.

³⁷William H. Turner interview, volume 343, CWA, CSHS.; Tanberg, CWA, CSHS.; Henderson, "Beef," pp. 12-15., and Peake, *Range*, pp. 275-278.

³⁸Guy Peterson, *Fort Collins: The Post, The Town*, (Ft. Collins: The Old Army Press, 1972), p. 34., and Propst, *Forgotten*, p. 41.

³⁹Titus H. Abbott interview, volume 353, CWA, CSHS.; H. Wells, CWA, CSHS.; E. Williams, CWA, CSHS., and Owen and Cooley, *Lincoln*, p. 17.

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Chapter V THE SODBUSTERS ARRIVE

Farmers came to northeastern Colorado to make their fortunes from this land's natural wealth. They did not have dreams of instant riches as miners and cattlemen did, but they did have an optimistic sense that with work, the land could be transformed into an agrarian paradise. The sodbusters moved onto lands along major watercourses and into valleys along the front range. Once these places filled with people, newcomers made faltering attempts to till the arid plains. By the end of the nineteenth century these dryland efforts had yielded marginal success. Yet farm settlement, despite occasional setbacks, peopled most of northeastern Colorado.

While intense agricultural use of the region came after the Civil War, some individuals were farming as early as 1840. As fur posts developed along the South Platte, their occupants needed food. Because of the forts' isolation the occupants were forced to supply themselves. Some employees were put to work planting fields and gardens near the sites. Lands located along the South Platte were fertile and did not need water artificially brought to them. What irrigation that was used was done by hand, without elaborate ditches.¹ As the fur business declined, some trappers stayed in the region and took up farming. They built cabins and laid out fields. These earliest agrarians also tended small numbers of livestock and milk cows. However, most of their meat was supplied by hunting. The area also attracted a few new settlers. Some were travelers to Oregon who ended their journey in northeastern Colorado, while others were those who had heard of trappers' adventures in the West and wanted to share in it. A few newcomers were mountain men that arrived during the fur trade's final decline and were forced to farm to survive. The most famous was Elbridge Gerry, relative of the Massachusetts politician of the same name. Gerry arrived on the South Platte during the 1840s and prepared to live a life of relative seclusion. He married a native woman to ensure his safety. Gerry and other farmers along the South Platte formed a thin line of outposts for the first Fifty-niners as the human flood hit Colorado.²

The gold rush changed farming in northeastern Colorado almost overnight. Miners needed supplies and at first, depended upon foodstuffs imported from the Midwest. Flour cost as much as \$50 a barrel here but hungry miners were more than willing to pay these inflated prices. Further, because many of the Fifty-niners had farming backgrounds they turned to agriculture after they were unable to survive in the mines. These people found the mountain meadows and lands along the foothills fertile and they took up farms in those places. Farms did not spread very far out onto the plains. Farmers did not plant crops for survival but rather to sell. At this point agriculture in northeastern Colorado changed from subsistence to commercial farming. As fast as native title was extinguished by treaties, farmers filed claims.³ During the later nineteenth century Federal land policy was liberal and allowed the settlers numerous devices to secure farmsteads. When the first Fifty-niners arrived only one law was in effect; the Preemption Act of 1842. It allowed a claimant to secure title to 160 acres at \$1.25 an acre. Many of the area's first settlers used this statute to purchase land, a trend that continued throughout the nineteenth century. By 1862 the

Republican Party, now in power, felt the Preemption Act did not go far enough in peopling the West with farmers. As a remedy Congress passed the Homestead Act of 1862. It allowed a settler to exchange five years of living on public land for 160 patented acres, with the only cost being patent and survey fees. The Pre-emption and Homestead Acts allowed a number farmers to get a start in northeastern Colorado.

During the 1870s, as these two laws were utilized, Congress took further steps to encourage settlement of the Great Plains. They enacted the Timber Culture Act of 1873 and the Desert Land Act of 1877. Both were experiments at meeting the needs of plains farmers, especially the lack of rainfall. The Timber Culture Act encouraged tree planting in exchange for more land while the Desert Act required new irrigation systems. Neither law functioned as intended and ranchers, as well as farmers, took advantage of the loose phraseology for their own benefit. Nevertheless, these four basic acts were used to take up land in northeastern Colorado during the later nineteenth century. Some settlers said, years after the fact, that without "liberal" Federal land policy they could not have been successful in farming the prairies.⁴ Civil War limited the number of settlers who relocated until nearly 1870. At that point Native Americans were no longer a problem. Other changes that would affect land use patterns in the region took place. From 1860 until 1868 the South Platte Trail was northeastern Colorado's primary transportation route but by the latter year it was nearly abandoned. The construction of the Union Pacific Railroad through to Julesburg eliminated the need for a wagon road along the South Platte because now settlers could travel by rail to Sidney, Nebraska or Cheyenne, Wyoming and then from those points they found the trip much shorter into the area. Usually they used newly established roads linking Denver to the railroad. Equally, as both the Kansas Pacific and Denver Pacific moved toward Denver during 1869 and 1870 access to locations away from the old trails was made easier. These shifts in transportation patterns led to a redistribution of population.⁵

New routes through northeastern Colorado, by making access to the area easier, encouraged settlers to populate the place. Some came as individuals while others moved as part of a group effort. These were called colonies. A few survived while others simply disappeared. Each had its own purpose and objectives beyond simple farming. Some were founded as temperance colonies, others for religious reasons, and a few to provide homes for people with similar ethnic backgrounds. Colonizing efforts began in the late 1860s and their numbers flourished during the next decade. However, by the turn of the century most colonies disappeared as they were swallowed up in a greater wave of agricultural settlement throughout northeast Colorado.⁶

Among the first, and most famous, of these communities was the Union Colony of Colorado, more commonly known as Greeley, Colorado. In 1869 Horace Greeley, editor of the *New York Tribune* and a Western booster, with help from Nathan C. Meeker, a 19th century reformer, organized the "Colony of Colorado", soon renamed the Union Colony. They envisioned a liquor free agrarian Utopia, built on the high plains. Representatives of

the colony were sent to Colorado to find land. Greeley and Meeker worked to perfect the constitution of the colony. It was organized so that each member purchased shares and entered into a covenant in return for a farm site and building lot in town. The most outstanding feature of this agreement was prohibition of liquor within the colony's boundaries. By the end of summer, 1869, land was found in Colorado and membership rolls grew.⁷ In May 1870 the first trainloads of colonists began to arrive in Colorado territory. The land chosen was near the junction of the South Platte and Cache la Poudre Rivers. It was also along the Denver Pacific Railroad. The emigrants set about plowing fields, building shelters and constructing irrigation ditches, hoping to be established by fall of the first year. Over the summer work continued at a rapid pace as more people arrived. Most of these early emigrants came from the east coast, but a few Midwesterners also joined the colony. They moved to Colorado for many reasons, the primary being a promise of prosperity and the chance to fashion their own society as outlined in promotional literature. Once relocated, colony farmers faced hard work to ensure their community's future. Foremost was construction of an irrigation system to bring water to nearby fields. Meeker and his assistant General Robert A. Cameron, planned such a system once the tract was selected. They made the canals communal property and ownership of shares in the water project came with possession of land. The Union Colony effort was the first major irrigation undertaking in northeastern Colorado. Yet, as early as 1859 Euro-Americans artificially brought water to their fields. That year David Wall started a vegetable farm near Golden, Colorado, and to water it he built a small trench from Clear Creek into his fields. Others copied his practice and by the time the Union colonists arrived on the South Platte, irrigation as a method was well established. The Greeleyites brought water from the Cache la Poudre River to 60,000 acres after only one year of work. The success of large scale irrigation at that settlement encouraged others to do the same. The project proved that water systems could cover hundreds of acres efficiently. The apparent prosperity of the Union Colony led others to copy these methods.⁸

One settlement that became the foundation of another permanent community was the Colorado-Chicago Colony, commonly called the Chicago colony. It was founded in Illinois in late 1870 with the purpose of purchasing land and relocating to northeast Colorado. During 1871 representatives of the company visited Denver, and the front range, searching for suitable locations. While inspecting the St. Vrain valley they were impressed with what they found and in May a site was chosen; members of the colony were already arriving in Colorado. The land was near Old Burlington, but because the colonists wanted a temperance society they founded their own village, Longmont. Like Greeley, each member or family paid an initiation fee in exchange for a farm plot, rights to water and a town lot. Longmont filled rapidly with Midwesterners and became another "instant" city in northeastern Colorado.⁹

As colony fever spread across the United States and the successes of Greeley and Longmont were publicized, promoters turned their eyes to the region. They were encouraged by Coloradans like William N. Byers. In addition to his career as editor of the

Rocky Mountain News, he also was an agent for the National Land Company. This corporation was formed to advertise northeastern Colorado and more specifically, to sell lands granted the Denver Pacific Railroad by Congress. Byers wrote pamphlets, canvassed parts of the Midwest and took prospective buyers on tours of the region. Colony agents were among his most ardent customers. More importantly, work of people like Byers encouraged settlement in northeast Colorado; either individually or as members of communal organizations.¹⁰ The St. Louis-Western Colony was one group that Byers helped to find land in this region. Organized in Missouri during 1871, the company chose lands along the Denver Pacific at Evans, Colorado, south of Greeley. The organization bought 1,600 acres and by the end of the first year had 600 residents. Its covenants were more relaxed than those of the Union Colony, especially regarding the regulation of liquor sales. The St. Louis venture succeeded, but Evans failed to grow because Greeley merchants captured most local trade.¹¹ Another organization founded in 1871 and that purchased land from the National Land Company, located itself at Platteville, Colorado. This venture's backers saw colonies as a tool for land speculation and little effort was made to help settlers. Those who did move to Colorado found themselves on their own. Some eventually left Platteville while others stayed to farm.¹² Further south, along the South Platte River, another entrepreneur, Colonel David S. Green of Tennessee, established a colony known as Green City. He set about, in Memphis, to find immigrants. Green had flyers printed showing Green City as a bustling river city with steamboats at wharves, marble buildings and so forth. Thousands in the war ravaged South were interested in a new start and believed this propaganda. When they arrived in Colorado immigrants found desolate stretches of plains from which they scratched out farms. Others from the same part of the nation settled at what later became Sterling using a semi-communal organization prior to taking up individual farms.¹³

During the early 1870s colonies spread across much of Colorado and one man, General Robert Cameron, became the undisputed leader of this movement. He began his career with the Union Colony. After it became successful he left the organization and in 1872 started his own operation, the Agricultural Colony. This place was located near old Fort Collins. In 1869 another group of immigrants from Pennsylvania settled there as the Mercer Colony but when Cameron moved in, earlier efforts were quickly absorbed by the General's project.¹⁴ Within two years Cameron was busy on yet another settlement--the Fountain Colony of Colorado Springs. By then he was a recognized expert at community planning and growth. The Fountain Colony was founded earlier by General William Jackson Palmer as part of his program to develop lands along his new Denver and Rio Grande Railroad. Despite Palmer's support, the project faltered. Cameron was able to succeed and soon Fountain joined the ranks of Colorado's growing communities.¹⁵ The colony method became a popular way for land companies, and individuals, to settle this region. Without colonies and their access to considerable amounts of capital and labor, agriculture would have developed slowly in northeastern Colorado. After the colony craze passed, most water project construction was carried out by irrigation companies that built systems hundreds of miles long.¹⁶



Irrigation ditches were the lifeblood of northeast Colorado.
Photo by S. F. Mehls.



The white church on the plains served as a beacon of civilization
for settlers. Photo by J. Perry.

Because of the size of their work forces as well as a need for water, colonies were not only able, but were forced, to develop large irrigation systems. Spreading water diversion led to conflicts between users in the region, especially over how much water each should be allowed. During wet years there were few problems but during dry times water disputes occasionally sparked threats and violence. 1874 was such a year along the Cache La Poudre River, which then served as a water source for both Fort Collins (Agricultural Colony) and downstream Greeley. The upriver irrigators took what they needed, leaving Greeley's share greatly diminished. This upset farmers and they threatened to raid Fort Collins and destroy that town's canal system. Equally, Fort Collins residents vowed to protect their property to the last man. Fortunately the matter was turned over to the territory's legal system and legislature. Agreements were eventually worked out but, more importantly, the Cache La Poudre conflict made it clear that some type of rules were needed to deal with water questions in Colorado's arid environment. The English common law system of riparian rights was not adequate, so Colorado's Constitutional Convention addressed the matter as the Territory prepared for statehood in 1876. Out of these debates came a Colorado system that provided for definite claims to specific water amounts based on the principle of "first in time, first in right" so far as reasonable; but short of monopoly. The law also included a set of priorities for ranking uses like domestic and agricultural under which more important use took precedence over lesser need. Colorado's "doctrine of prior appropriation" was copied throughout the West.¹⁷

Water was but one of many problems faced by pioneer farmers in northeastern Colorado during the late nineteenth century. The environment proved greatest enemy to these people. Uncertainties of weather plagued them (and still does) much as nature had hurt cattlemen. Blizzards delayed plantings or killed young crops that were seeded too early. Summer droughts and extremely hot weather could wither vegetation in just a matter of days. Dust storms could denude fields. Severe thunderstorms were common to the area and had accompanying hail, high winds or tornados' that could ruin an entire year's crop within moments.¹⁸ If a farmer was fortunate enough to survive these hazards, nature still had one further way to break him. Periodically, under favorable climatic conditions, grasshopper populations would multiply and to find sustenance these insects ate everything they could find. At times they were so dense that their droves resembled clouds of dust rolling along the ground; thick enough to blot out the sun. When they arrived "hoppers" just ate until there was no more and then they moved on. Reports of chickens exploding after gorging themselves on the hoppers, or calves with their eyes eaten out were commonplace.¹⁹

Even if all these obstacles were overcome, life was still not easy for an agrarian in northeast Colorado during the later nineteenth century. Once crops were planted and growing, wandering cattle (or buffalo) often found their way into fields eating and/or trampling plants. To stop these incursions farmers erected barbed wire fences and on occasion would shoot an errant cow. At times this led to conflicts with local ranchers.²⁰ Barbed wire was used to fence due to a lack of wood on the plains. Timber common in the midwest was unavailable, except at high cost, in most of northeastern Colorado until

at least 1900. Wood traditionally provided settlers in other parts of the nation with shelter, fuel and fencing material. On the plains new sources were required. Barbed wire was one example of necessary invention. Another was the use of sod for housing material. Blocks cut from prairie turf made good shelter; warm in winter, cool in summer, even if a little dirty. The mark of success on the plains by 1900 was to build a real wooden house to replace an elderly "soddy". The matter of fuel was handled with equal imagination. When specially constructed stoves were invented to burn grass, hay or even "buffalo chips" (dried Manure), they were widely adopted but only proved temporary curse with the final solution coming after railroads arrived and local coal then became available.²¹

The last and most difficult problem settlers had to overcome was the isolation of the plains. In colonies this was a lesser problem, but as people moved from these places it often became acute. Many farms were located at distances that required at least an overnight trip to get to the nearest town and return. The starkness of the high plains, the oppressing silence and lack of human contact as well as the severe climate all weighed heavily on settlers. There were numerous reports of people going mad; often committing suicide, or killing others. Women, in particular, suffered from depression. Despite these drawbacks northeast Colorado continued to attract newcomers throughout the late nineteenth century.²² Settlers that moved to the region from 1860 to 1900 to farm came from all across the United States. The northeast, and New England, sent numerous settlers to northeastern Colorado. They came for land and farms. They took up farming after working years in the factories of New England. They tried to live out Henry David Thoreau's philosophy of returning to the land. Others moved to Colorado, after serving in the Civil War, because they found it impossible to return to their old lives for various reasons.²³ The Old South's sons found Colorado particularly attractive for the same reason. Discouraged citizens sought to escape oppressive Republican Reconstruction governments and the social revolution that took place in the South between 1865 and 1876. Some blacks from the South moved to Colorado during those years looking for the "promised land". The West offered a lure to nearly all sections of the nation.²⁴ These same attractions interested foreign immigrants in the possibilities offered by northeastern Colorado. Descriptions of the area made it sound like a land of "milk and honey" with riches there for the taking. These perceptions were reinforced by legends of success and wealth in the mining and livestock businesses. Further, land ownership carried considerable status in European society. In America all one had to do was move to the West and claim his or her 160 acres. To many in the Old World the possibility of property ownership, even if it meant a voyage of thousands of miles, was enough to convince them to move. Immigrants came to northeastern Colorado from all countries in western and northern Europe between 1860 and 1900 adding to the area's further development. Two of the most represented nationalities were the English and Swedes, followed closely by German settlers.²⁵

Just as thousands Europeans were prepared to emigrate, the United States was rocked by its first post-Civil War economic upheaval, the Panic of 1873. Caused by severe fluctuation of gold markets and the failure of Jay Cooke's banking house, the depression temporarily halted the construction of irrigation projects and hence settlement in the

area. However, by 1876 the delay had passed and people again began pouring into this region. Many of those who planned to move to northeastern Colorado before the Panic could now afford to and did so at once.²⁶ As farming expanded crop types changed and diversified. Originally most farmers of the 1860s grew fruits, vegetables, and wheat; commodities demanded by Colorado's mining camps. Cultivation was limited by a lack of machinery and the cheap labor to operate larger farms. During the early 1870s this trend continued because the growers needed products that generated quick cash to meet debts for both land and irrigation projects.

Settlers in Greeley and other similar colonies began planting orchards to meet that cash flow need. They also started growing large quantities of potatoes, corn, and wheat. After the Panic of 1873, crop diversification increased as farmers opened land that was not easily irrigated. In these areas they grew buckwheat, wheat, corn and a new crop, alfalfa. Some production of these varied crops was exported from the region but most was sold to local ranchers as livestock feed. This trend continued as cattlemen used more and more blooded animals. In addition to grain products, many farmers started herds, especially dairy, for commercial purposes. Even as the agrarian frontier expanded onto the plains few settlers entered the arena on a subsistence basis. Most grew crops to sell, due, in part, to the fact that by 1882 most of northeast Colorado was connected to the nation's market-places by rail.²⁷

The iron horse played a decisive role in the area's agricultural frontier; second only to land policies of the times. When the Denver Pacific and Kansas Pacific railroads built across northeastern Colorado both from and toward Denver during 1869 and 1870, lands along the rights of way interested settlers. Existence of transportation systems allowed newcomers to reach their farms easily and offered them steel highways to various markets. As in the case of Greeley, the railroad allowed settlers to relocate to Colorado without the hardships of a wagon trip across the Great Plains. Further, since some rail companies received land grants that they needed to sell. They worked through land agents and sold these properties to settlers using attractive prices and easy credit. Promoters and salesmen were hired to recruit buyers. These sales practices continued throughout the late nineteenth century by the various railways that penetrated the region.²⁸ During the early 1880s, as new railroads entered northeastern Colorado, efforts to sell land on the plains took on new intensity. The Union Pacific Railroad, the Chicago, Burlington and Quincy and the Chicago, Rock Island and Pacific [Rock Island] all established subsidiary land companies to attract people to the West. These operations included publication of information booklets, touring exhibits of Colorado's products, personal contacts with prospective immigrants and similar other activities. Each land company portrayed northeastern Colorado farmland as the richest available, claiming everything from a cornucopia to the Garden of Eden re-discovered. Competition for buyers intensified and the companies broadened their horizon, first to the East Coast and, by the middle of the 1880s, to Europe. Brochures and flyers were translated into varied languages. Offices were opened throughout much of northern and western Europe. Assistance in making travel arrangements was provided and land in

America's West was purchased sight unseen. Efforts like these not only sold railroad land but further increased interest in northeast Colorado.²⁹ Railroads accelerated this process once immigrants reached the Missouri River. Each company offered low priced fares; even free one-way passages to farmlands. If a prospective settler purchased other lands or decided to take up government land along the railway, the companies provided special services to move the new farmer, his family, and his goods in trains assigned for that purpose. The railroad cars were called "Zulu cars", because of their primitive condition. Nevertheless, thousands of people took this opportunity to move into northeastern Colorado.³⁰ To reinforce the work of railroads land agents in territorial and, later, state governments became involved in promotion of agriculture throughout the state. The state Board of Immigration published reports, offered brochures and helped arrange travel and financing for new residents. These efforts began in the 1860s and continued under various names until the early decades of the twentieth century. The state information board showed how best to secure land, and while less optimistic than railroads, they did encourage those who were timid about relocating. All these advertising campaigns did much during the 1880s to convince farmers that arid plains could be tilled much like the humid Mississippi Valley.³¹

Scientists of the period were also busy working on theories about agriculture in the dry lands of the "Great American Desert". As the more watered areas were occupied and as settlers moved into arid zones, thinkers determined that as dry lands were put to the plow, rain would follow. This "pluviculture" theory was popularized during the 1880s by promoters of northeastern Colorado. The idea gained followers among those seeking new farms as they moved, like a tidal wave, westward across Kansas, Nebraska and into northeastern Colorado. In something of "pincer movement" other settlers moved east from the front range and the two waves met on the high plains of eastern Colorado.³² The late 1880s witnessed rapid expansion of farming in the region. Because of promotion and alleged "scientific" studies about agricultural possibilities, "boom" psychology developed. This was reinforced by the successes of irrigators who proved the richness of plains soils. As the mania spread, marginal land was plowed up with little regard for the environment. In many cases to support their farms, the husband took a second job, possibly with one of the railroads on the plains, while other would be farmers moved west as part of rail construction and then stayed while keeping a job with the company as a section hand or the like. The dryland farming phobia became all consuming for these people.³³

Agrarians who moved into northeast Colorado's high plains were fortunate during the late eighties for in those years more than average precipitation fell and it appeared as if the theories about rain were indeed correct. New advances in farm machinery and the use of steam powered tractors allowed larger acreages to be operated by a single individual. As early arrivals made the prairies bloom, others were encouraged to follow. By 1889 indications of permanent agricultural settlement were visible across the region. As the same time, cattlemen experienced catastrophic winters and declining prices forcing them to retrench. As this occurred eager farmers quickly plowed up the range to grow corn and wheat.³⁴ The boom continued unabated until 1890. That year, as farmers continued to

overextend by buying more land and machinery, spring rains did not come. Seedlings dried up in the field, water holes evaporated and rivers ran dry. Late rains provided enough moisture for survival. Most settlers stayed on their farms, assuming that the worst had passed. However, the next year the rains did not come and, even worse, prices fell. The dry weather caused near panic as frantic measures were used to find moisture. Deep wells were dug with limited success, but other remedies like rain makers failed to produce results. As starvation became likely settlers on the high plains talked of returning East. By 1893 and the national depression of that year, the situation was so desperate for plains farmers that some abandoned their lands and a mass exodus ensued. Many said later that only those who had no money and could not afford to leave stayed.³⁵ The Panic of 1893 and dry years in the early 1890s also slowed the development of irrigated farms in northeastern Colorado. As banks felt money supplies tighten they called in loans which placed farmers in a precarious position as crop prices dropped and they were forced to sell parts of their holdings.³⁶

The drought of the early 1890s and the Panic of 1893 ended rapid expansion of farming in northeastern Colorado. From 1870 to 1893 settlers plowed under thousands of acres in the region and they planted numerous crops. Farmers hoped to make their fortunes from the land and build a future for themselves. Colony communities became the nuclei for settlement and some of these places evolved into permanent towns. Other people moved here because of the promotional efforts of land companies, railroads and state agencies. Initially farms were subsistence type but after 1860, agriculture quickly became commercial. Rapid expansion of railroads between 1870 and 1890 further accentuated cash farming as northeastern Colorado was connected to national markets. Technological innovations in farm methods during this period led to increased acreage production. Both irrigated and dry land farming were attempted during this time, however, dry land producers found themselves defeated by the environment. The successes and failures of farmers in northeastern Colorado between 1860 and 1890 not only put new lands into production but, more importantly, brought a larger, more stable, population to the region which then served as the basis for permanent development in the years that followed.

NOTES Chapter V

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⁷*Ibid.*, pp. 113-115.; See: James F. Willard, "Union Colony's First Year." in: *A Colorado Reader*, Carl Ubbelohde (Ed.) (Boulder: Pruett Publishing Co., 1962), hereafter cited: Willard, "Union,". and A. A. Woodbury interview, CWA, CSHS, vol. 343.

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⁹Athearn, *Coloradans*, pp. 116-228.; "Old Burlington" interview, CWA, CSHS, vol. 253., and Seth Terry interview, CWA, CSHS, vol. 345.

¹⁰Willard, "Union," p. 166., and F.L. Ketley interview, CWA, CSHS, vol. 343.

¹¹Lucas, CWA, CSHS.; See: James F. Willard, "Evans and the Saint Louis Western Colony," *The Trall* vol. 11 (March 1919): 5-11., hereafter cited: Willard, "St. Louis."

¹²Platteville, CWA, CSHS.

¹³Athearn, *Coloradans*, pp. 118-119.; James McDonald interview, CWA, CSHS, vol. 343.; T.K. Propst interview, CWA, CSHS, vol. 341.; and Eugene Williams interview, CWA, CSHS, vol. 341.

¹⁴ Evadene A.B. Swanson, *Fort Collins Yesterdays*, (Ft. Collins: Swanson, 1975), pp. 9-11., hereafter cited: Swanson, *Ft Collins*.

¹⁵ Amanda May Ellis, *The Colorado Springs Story*, (Colorado Springs: House of San Juan, 1975), pp. 9-14., hereafter cited: Ellis, *Springs Story*., and "Colorado Springs Pioneers," CWA, CSHS, vol. 345.

¹⁶ A. Cutler, CWA, CSHS, vol 350., and Jonathan Lengel interview, CWA, CSHS, vol, 350.

¹⁷ See Robert A. Dunbar, "The Origins of the Colorado System of Water-Right Control," *The Colorado Magazine* vol. 27 (October 1944): pp 241-262.; Robert A. Dunbar, "Water Conflicts and Controls in Colorado," *Agricultural History* vol. 22 (July 1948): pp 180-186.; and Donald Wayne Hensel, "A History of the Colorado Constitution in the Nineteenth Century," (Ph. D. Dissertation, University of Colorado, 1957), pp. 60-66., hereafter cited: Hensel, "Constitution."

¹⁸ W. H. Delbridge interview, CWA, CSHS, vol. 343., and A.F. Sanford interview, CWA, CSHS, vol. 343.

¹⁹ Lucas, CWA, CSHS., and J.A. Dawson interview, CWA, CSHS, vol. 351.

²⁰ Thomas H. Sisk interview, CWA, CSHS, vol. 343., and Williams, CWA, CSHS.

²¹ Glen Bolander interview, CWA, CSHS, vol. 352.; Joseph P. Dillon interview, CWA, CSHS, vol. 342.; George E. McConley interview, CWA, CSHS, vol. 341.; and Luella Bell McKenzle interview, CWA, CSHS, vol. 350.

²² Willard, "Union," p. 260., and Seth Terry, CWA, CSHS.

²⁴ Cutler, CWA, CSHS., and "Davis Family Reunion," CWA, CSHS, vol. 341.

²⁵ John Ross interview, CWA, CSHS, vol. 354.; Charles A. Yersin interview, CWA, CSHS., vol. 350.; J. Daniels, CWA, CSHS.; and "Old Burlington," CWA, CSHS.

²⁶ Hensel, "Constitution," p. 93.

²⁷ S. R. Smith interview, CWA, CSHS, vol. 351.; J. Dawson, CWA, CSHS., and E. Williams, CEA, CSHS.

²⁸ G.F. Brownies interview, CWA, CSHS, vol. 351., and Clarke, CWA, CSHS.

²⁹ Richard C. Overton, *Burlington West: A Colonization History of the Burlington Railroad*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1941), pp. 410-412.; Winfield Morris interview, CWA, CSHS, vol. 341., and Delbridge, CWA, CSHS.

³⁰J. Oliver Graham interview, CWA, CSHS, vol. 352.; F.A. Neville interview, CWA, CSHS, vol. 353., and N. Buchanan, CWA, CSHS.

³¹Lyle W. Dorsett, *The Queen City, A History of Denver*, (Boulder: Pruett Publishing Co., 1977), pp. 55-58.

³²C.L. Morgan interview, CWA, CSHS, vol. 351.; and Athearn, *Coloradans*, p. 141.

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³⁴Anna Himm interview, CWA, CSHS, vol. 350.; Graham, CWA, CSHS., and McKenzie, CWA, CSHS.

³⁵McKenzie, CWA, CSHS.; Wells, CWA, CSHS.; Bolander, CWA, CSHS.; and Himm, CWA, CSHS.

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Chapter VI MINING IN EARLY NORTHEASTERN COLORADO

Northeastern Colorado's mining frontier passed quickly. Within five years of discovery the "boom" was over. By 1864, mineral extraction in Boulder, Gilpin and Clear Creek Counties had become a corporate effort. Despite major changes, typical frontier traits remained; for example a male-dominated society. The new camps evolved slowly into permanent communities and as they did, the old pioneer atmosphere was lost. The mining industry grew slowly from the late 1860s until the early 1890s with interruptions; generally due to financial problems or a lack of adequate mining technology. Northeast Colorado led the state's mining industry from 1860 until 1878 when Leadville was discovered. During this same period, the mountains were a continued major source of wealth for northeastern Colorado; not only for gold and silver but also thanks to goods and services local mining camps demanded. As in earlier years individuals who could not, or did not, succeed in mineral occupations left the hills in order to take jobs in other businesses, or to prospect in other parts of the state. Northeastern Colorado's mineral industry also permitted the creation of extremely successful men; "Bonanza Kings", rivalling famous "Cattle Barons". These events occurred when easily recoverable ores were exhausted and different methods were forced upon miners.¹

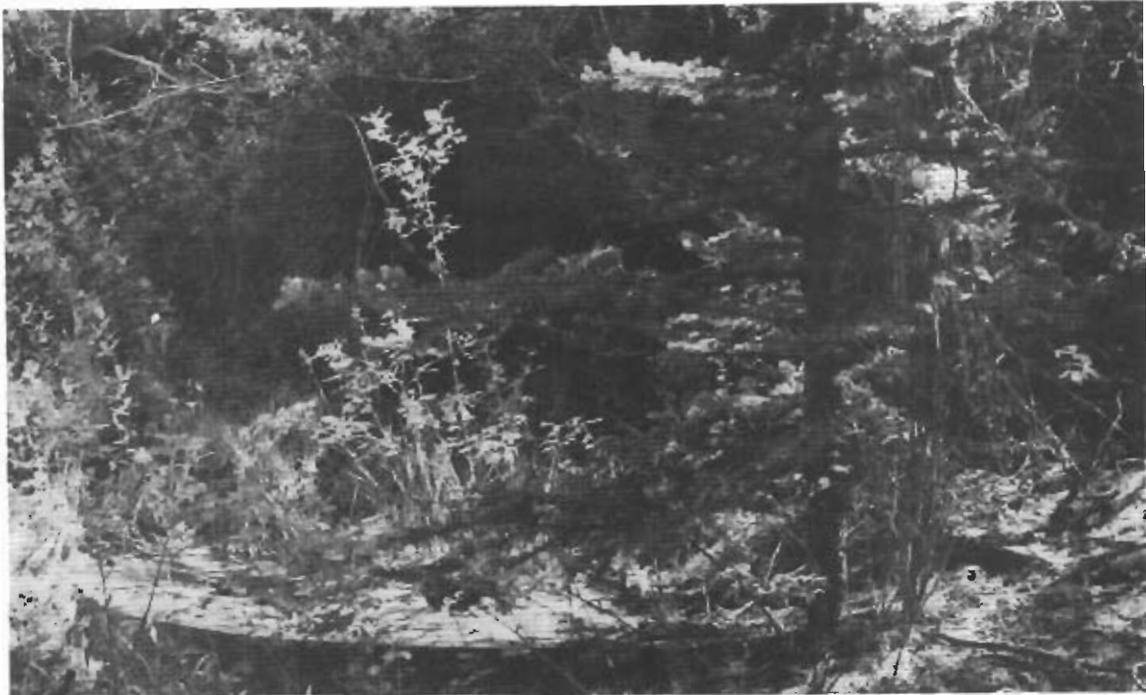
During 1858 and into 1859, prospectors found that gold was easy to recover using the simplest of tools like picks, pans and shovels. These worked well at first when there was "float" gold readily available and subsequent losses due to inefficiency were unimportant. However, this changed and as fewer gold flecks appeared in bottoms of pans and sluice boxes, miners sought the "mother lode" from which streams had eroded placer gold. Once started, practical ways to separate gold from the granite and quartz that surrounded it were needed as were ways to extract ores from the earth. Most Fifty-niners had little or no experience with placer mining when they arrived in Colorado but soon learned placer methods because of technical simplicity. However, as "hardrock" quartz mining took over, miners discovered their knowledge was wholly inadequate.² Few early residents had any experience with underground mining or the special problems involved. Further, operations as envisioned required investment capital. Changes in mining brought about the beginnings of a class system in Colorado's mining camps. Society was one in which those who had promising claims and could find investors became the businessmen and those who did not have good luck took jobs in the mines as common laborers. The process of changing mining from a frontier open to all into a specialized industry and the subsequent development of "classes" was well underway by the mid-1860s.³

Solutions to the above problems came from outside the region during the early years. Miners started, in 1860, importing stamp mills and Spanish designed *arrastras* to remove gold from raw ore. Stamp mills used in northeastern Colorado came from "back East" and were brought across the plains on wagons, but the basic designs were developed in the 1850s in both California and Europe. These machines were nothing more than large, mechanically powered mortar and pestal sets that crushed the ore by percussion. Once

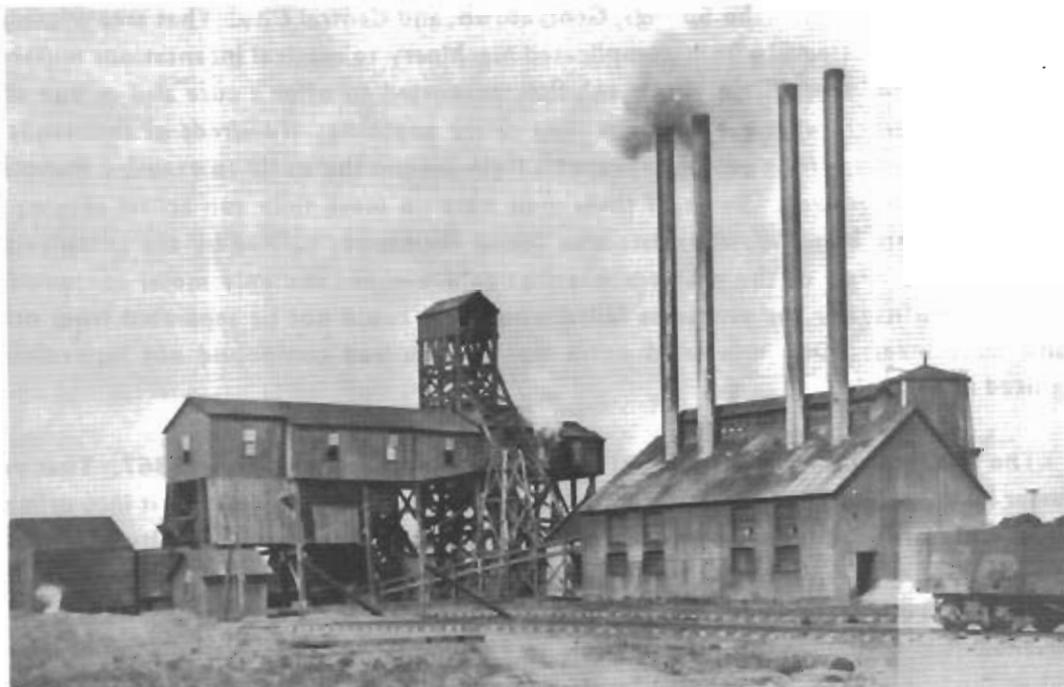
powdered, the mineral was mixed with mercury (quicksilver) to separate the gold. That mixture was then heated and vibrated to remove the precious metal. The *arrastras* were crude machines to pulverize ore. They operated much like large millstones grinding ores between two stone wheels. From that point a traditional quicksilver and heat process was used to refine gold. *Arrastras* were brought to the United States from Mexico by miners who participated in the California rush of 1849 and learned of Spanish mining methods at that time. Neither of these systems was overly efficient and both lost as much as 70 percent of recoverable minerals. The loss ratios were not immediately evident and when they were, mine owners searched for new methods to refine Colorado ores.⁴

One important factor was a need for improved methods to extract underground ores. Few Americans had experience with hardrock mining in 1860 and of those who did even a smaller number were willing to relocate to northeastern Colorado. Their experience was confined to shafts a few hundred yards long. In Colorado it was soon apparent that following a vein might take the shaft thousands of feet underground; usually through unstable rock. The first ventures went only dozens of feet into the hillsides before disaster struck. Cave-ins and black powder explosions were commonplace. Especially critical was lack of expertise in timbering tunnels. Some experience from California was used but mine owners were forced to look outside the United States for help. They turned to Great Britain's iron and coal mines in Cornwall and Wales. These operations went thousands of feet underground and had been used for centuries. Both miners and mining engineers from England and Wales had experience needed by Colorado; so many were recruited to move to the Rockies and work in the new gold mines.⁵

Great Britain also offered an answer to another problem faced by Colorado's early Bonanza Kings: financing. The English made their fortunes in the Industrial Revolution by 1860. These merchants sought investment opportunities and as stories of Colorado's gold fields reached them, more than a few were eager to share in the anticipated riches. However, they waited until more definite information about the mines was available before plunging into the gold market. Equally, the Civil War during the early sixties, with no evidence of victory, caused potential investors to stall on committing themselves. This obstacle was removed in late 1863 when was obvious that the Union would win the bloody struggle. At that point, new discoveries in Colorado further solidified the region's position as one of America's leading gold sources. Those two factors encouraged the British who began investing in the region's mines, a trend that continued well into the twentieth century.⁶ The same year saw increased interest by Eastern capitalists in Colorado's mineral business. The Civil War, while answering questions about the union and slavery, also caused rapid industrialization in the Northeast and Midwest. By the last years of the conflict, Northern industrialists profited from government contracts. They sought to invest their new wealth in other projects offering quick returns. They put cash into stock, both East and West. The American stock market went through a boom period from late 1863 until 1865 and Colorado's miners gloried in prosperous times. Mineowners who spent years searching for capital suddenly found themselves inundated with offers to purchase shares.



This Spanish *arrastra* is typical of early mining days in Colorado.
Photo by S. F. Mehls.



This coal mine at Dacono, Colorado was typical of many such
mines in the northern Colorado coal fields.
J.W.Groves Photo, Courtesy USGS.

The mania continued until 1865 when investors finally became scared by dangers in Colorado mining.⁷ One major problem "outsiders" encountered was the unscrupulous nature of many stockbrokers. Investors made perfect targets for dishonest dealers. Most purchasers never saw Colorado and few had any idea how a gold mine worked. They heard tales of easy wealth that had abounded since 1859. Some saw stock as the best way to share in the alleged riches. Easterners and Europeans were ready to buy literally anything purported to be associated with Colorado or its gold. Those bent on cheating investors found their job quite easy. Types of fraud ranged from simple over-statements about a mine's production to the sale of stock in non-existent mine companies. Distance to Colorado in addition to a lack of accurate information about conditions in the Rockies made it difficult for investors to verify stories about various companies. Thousands put money into Colorado mining stock ventures between 1861 and 1865 only to be duped. By that year problems inherent in Colorado mining investments were well known, yet suckers still sought out these stocks.⁸

Thanks to "stock fever", another craze swept Colorado's mining camps between 1864 and 1868. Mineowners, pressed by investors for decent returns on their money, were forced to find more efficient and reliable methods to refine ores. No longer were 70 percent losses acceptable. As mines went deeper and new ore bodies were discovered, gold sulphides became even more difficult to separate. Claimholders felt that the essential ingredient for success was to find a new process to recover quartz-locked minerals. As they became desperate for a solution more effort was expended. Chemists, alchemists and charletons were all consulted in the search. This "process mania" was centered in Clear Creek and Gilpin Counties between Idaho Springs, Georgetown, and Central City. That area witnessed numerous recovery attempts from complicated machinery to magical incantations muttered over ore piles prior to milling. Each solution purported to offer a cure and as one after another failed, owners were even more willing to try anything. Hundreds of thousands of dollars were spent importing geological experts from around the world to examine the mines hoping to find an answer. Some of these men were no more than con artists preying on fears. Others were *bona fide* scientists who found themselves baffled by the complexities of Colorado ores. Part of the problem was that gold was not the only metal contained in these rocks and usually the processes failed when gold could not be separated from other metallic substances. One unwanted extra was a silver-lead compound not immediately recognized as valuable.⁹

The frantic search for an efficient refining method continued until 1867. That year Professor Nathaniel P. Hill perfected the first successful local smelter and put it into primary use in northeastern Colorado. Hill was a chemistry teacher at Brown University who visited Colorado in 1864 to examine the territory's mines and evaluate the region's other resources for potential as producers. During his tour, a group of mineowners from Gilpin County approached Hill with their problem. While not immediately able to find a solution, the challenge intrigued Hill. In the best Victorian tradition, believing science could conquer all, he spent much of his free time experimenting with various refining techniques. Hill was familiar with English smelting methods and he felt these processes could be adopted to Clear

Creek ores. His work continued until 1867 when he organized the Boston and Colorado Smelting Company and next year opened his first plant at Black Hawk. The so-called Swansea process worked better than anything to date and overnight Hill's company had more business than it could handle. Others tried to discover what modifications Hill made to English methods. Having failed, mineowners were forced to come to terms with Boston and Colorado's managers or else ship their highest grade ores to Great Britain for processing. Some rocks contained so much gold that despite the high costs involved in transatlantic shipment, a profit could still be made. Despite such international competition Hill gained a virtual monopoly of Clear Creek smelting by the early 1870s.¹⁰

Despite all the problems northeastern Colorado mining presented, it continued a major part of the area's economy throughout the 1870s. From 1860 until 1875 Colorado mining was synonymous with this region. Mines in Boulder, Clear Creek and Gilpin Counties produced millions of dollars in gold and silver ores during that period. Much of this predominance came from development of earlier deposits, especially as new technology for mining and extraction became available. Still other wealth was added by new discoveries and by the rapid growth of silver mining.¹¹ Silver extraction was an outgrowth of gold mining in the region. It did not often appear as a "free metal", like placer gold, and its existence in commercial quantities went unknown for the first ten years of mineral activity in northeast Colorado. The ores that later proved out silver were a nuisance to gold seekers around Idaho Springs, Empire and Georgetown during the early 1860s. However, a few ex-Californians who had worked the Comstock Lode in Nevada, noticed the familiarity of some Comstock galena ores with the outcroppings along Clear Creek. By the mid-1860s silver rivalled gold for importance to the area's mineral business. Georgetown became the first center of this activity in Colorado. Silver mines profited from earlier experiences of gold miners and some prior difficulties were avoided. Nevertheless problems, especially for investors, were as commonplace in silver mining as in gold.¹²

Attempts to correct these matters, especially lack of accurate information, resulted in organizations like the British and Colorado Mining Bureau (B&CMB), founded in 1868 by Robert R. Old. Its purpose was twofold. First, the Bureau acted as a promotional agent for Clear Creek's mines in London and other British cities. The B&CMB published brochures, handled stock transactions and disseminated information interesting to potential investors. Secondly, the British and Colorado acted as an agent to mines that shipped ores to Great Britain for refining. The Bureau remained in operation for only a few years, and others soon imitated its methods as offices promoting Colorado mining stocks opened in major European cities during the late 1860s and 1870s. One of the most spectacular examples of this early promotion occurred the year before Old set up the British and Colorado agency. J.P. Whitney, a Georgetown mine owner and salesman, convinced Frenchman Louis Simonin to visit the region and take his views back to France. Simonin was amazed by what he saw and upon his arrival home published a series of favorable articles about his travels. Whitney was invited to display pictures and ore samples of Colorado's mines at the Paris Universal Exposition in 1867. While no definite records of the

capital these ventures brought to the region are available, all indications are that promoters were successful in their work. This hard-selling Colorado mines to Europeans, firmly established by 1870, continued, through local entrepreneurs, well into the twentieth century.¹³

One of the more ambitious foreign undertakings in the early years of Colorado's mining history occurred in Boulder County, near the headwaters of Boulder Creek. As early as 1862 prospectors worked the area but it was not until 1869 that Sam Conger recognized this locale's silver ores. Once news of these discoveries became public a small rush followed and Caribou was founded. By 1870 its owners were searching for investors. Bankers from Denver helped broaden the hunt. Dutch financiers were attracted to Colorado mining and local promoters got them into Caribou. The Dutch purchased claims at Caribou and spent heavily on improvements to their properties, including mills and other facilities. These activities led to the founding of Nederland, Colorado. The Dutch spent millions of dollars on the mines of Caribou but were unable to make sufficient profits. Creditors forced foreclosure and the property was purchased at a Sheriff's sale for \$70,000 by David H. Moffat and Jerome B. Chaffee, both of Denver. They were two men who originally encouraged the Dutch to buy the mines. The Dutch experience at Nederland was typical of what happened to more than a few foreign investors involved with northeastern Colorado's mines during the late nineteenth century. Outsiders spent millions on improvements, only to have their investments lost through legal proceedings. They soon became wary of "crafty" Americans.¹⁴

The decade of the seventies was a turbulent time for mining in northeast Colorado. The first major change resulted from the Panic of 1873. This financial upheaval began in eastern banking houses and spread across the country. Too many people had borrowed heavily to buy Colorado stocks. When banks called in loans, investors were forced to sell their shares for whatever they could get. This, in turn, led to lower prices for mining stocks and hence a capital shortage for Colorado's mines. The investors' rush into the territory was slowed and proportionate decreases in developmental work at many operations occurred. Most mines did not close but activity was minimized to control costs. This trend continued until late 1875 when national economic recovery caused buyers to go looking for new opportunities.¹⁵ During the second half of the decade gold and silver extraction in northeast Colorado was reinvigorated. However, earlier problems forever changed mining in the region. The Panic of 1873 removed the most speculative ventures and those that remained were operated in a more conservative manner. The last vestiges of the wild frontier disappeared. Precious metal mining in northeast Colorado evolved into big business and followed the industrial practices of the era. Mine and smelter operators merged their companies thereby beginning a vertical integration process. Many smaller corporations were consolidated to form larger outfits. Support for transportation improvements also came from mineowners. At the same time, an elite of business and political leaders emerged. Men such as Henry M. Teller of Central City, William A.H. Loveland of Golden and Jerome B. Chaffee of Denver, represented a new class of wealthy residents. By 1880 class lines were

firmly drawn as these "Bonanza Kings" exerted control over both the region and the state. Another reason for these developments was the discovery of new gold and silver deposits elsewhere in the state. Leadville became the center of interest for Colorado mining by 1878. To stay in business, northeast Colorado miners were forced to adopt more conservative (and efficient) mining methods.¹⁶ Leadville, and other mining camps outside the state's northeast corner, quickly moved to the forefront of the Centennial state's mineral industry during the early 1880s. These places were able to do so not only because of their natural wealth but moreover they were opened by miners already experienced in Rocky Mountain mining techniques. Much of their expertise was gained in northeast Colorado's mines, the area served as a training ground for laborers, engineers and financiers. Settlers with direct connections to places like Central City or Nederland became the pioneers of Leadville, Aspen, and the San Juans. Most of the industry's leaders got their start in Clear Creek, Gilpin or Boulder Counties. Among these were Jerome B. Chaffee, David H. Moffat, Eben Smith, N.P. Hill, James B. Grant, David R.C. Brown, H.A.W. Tabor, Henry M. Teller and J.J. Hagerman. Each man took wealth and knowledge gained on the Front Range and continued to re-invest it in newer Colorado mines. Many business practices and sales techniques first learned in the region were refined elsewhere in the state. Without expertise gained from the mines in northeast Colorado the Rocky Mountain mineral industry would have taken longer to fully develop.¹⁷

While precious metals caused most excitement and led to the rush of 1859, other minerals were also extracted in this area during the late nineteenth century. These operations very nearly paralleled gold and silver mining and experienced many of the same problems and solutions. Two activities dominated the non-precious segment: coal mining and stone quarrying.¹⁸ Coal was first discovered in 1859 by early residents. These finds were not difficult because in many places the outcroppings were visible from the surface. Federal explorer Ferdinand V. Hayden reinforced early information, late in the 1860s, when he issued reports stating the front range was underlain by coal from Fort Collins south into New Mexico. By 1870 the situation changed as more people settled the region and a need for fuel increased. The limited wood supply had been quickly used. Coal became a substitute heating source. Small mines opened along the foothills, and between Golden and Boulder, to meet this demand. These were one and two man operations to serve local markets.¹⁹ Availability of rail transportation led to a rapid expansion of the coal industry during the early seventies. Coal fields in Boulder County were among the first to benefit from the new (and cheap) method of moving coal to market. In 1871 a mine opened east of Erie, Colorado, the first in this region. It produced soft lignite coal, popular for use in home heating and cooking. The Erie operation led others to mine the "black diamonds" and soon output was large enough to warrant construction of a shortline railroad from the Denver Pacific mainline into the coal fields. This company, a DP subsidiary, was known as the Denver and Boulder Valley. Erie, Marshall, Lafayette, Louisville and other towns quickly became mining towns to serve the coal industry's needs.²⁰

During the early 1870s, as settlement spread north from Denver along the South Platte River to Greeley, other collieries were opened to meet growing demands for fuel. In

1870 Union colonists helped develop a mine at Eaton, Colorado, to supply their needs. Other settlements purchased from this mine and started similar operations. These usually were small companies or were individually owned. Most remained minor industries throughout the late nineteenth century. However, a few developed into larger firms that shipped coal to other parts of the nation. Northeastern Colorado did not gain a reputation for its collieries because lignite was not used for coking.²¹

The other mineral removed from the region's hills in large quantities in the years 1870 to 1895 was building stone. Concrete was not yet popular and contemporary technology limited builders seeking permanence to the use of brick or stone. As Denver, and other cities in northeastern Colorado grew, demands for building materials increased. To serve this need quarries operated near Lyons, Loveland and Fort Collins. Further south, near Morrison, miners undertook removal of granite, sandstone, limestone and grindstone. These companies all remained in business for years. Near Fort Collins and Loveland the towns of Stout and Arkins, respectively, were founded to house stone quarry workers. Reddish sandstones from northeastern Colorado found their way into buildings and as paving stones in Denver, Boulder, Fort Collins and other cities. Stout rock was used in some parts of the Chicago Worlds Fair of 1893.²²

At about this same time quarry businesses lost customers as concrete became increasingly popular. Limestone and other native minerals of this region proved valuable for the manufacture of cement. This, in turn, led to the development of concrete plants near Fort Collins and at Lyons during the early 1890s. However, cement did not become an important part of the area's mining industry until early in the twentieth century. These non-precious mining activities added to the region's business and economic growth during this time. As with gold and silver, operators of coal and stone mines, in order to increase their volume, had to find both investors and new markets. Being less "romantic" than precious metal mining companies, the non-metallic group had to work harder to find capital; but they were less troubled with stock fraud and manipulation. Labor, machinery costs, and operating problems still faced both industries.²³

One of the biggest concerns for mine owners in northeast Colorado between 1860 and 1895 was to secure an adequate labor supply. During the 1860s, as mining changed from placer to hardrock, workers were scarce and could demand, and receive, wages as high as \$5 a day. The labor shortage continued until after the Civil War because those who moved West or came to try their hand at prospecting did not do so to toil for others. Realizing this situation, operators attempted to meet as many workers' needs possible. However, by 1864 as more demands were made and when unions started to organize in Clear Creek and Gilpin Counties, owners found themselves unable to comply any further and a strike ensued. It ended in a few days at most mines, but antagonism between owners and workers developed and it continued to grow for the remainder of the century. Occasionally this breach broadened into violence.²⁴ Unionism slowed from the end of the Civil War until 1873 because numerous new workers were available and mine owners no longer had to

consider union demands. The "romance" of gold and silver mining, plus high wages attracted Civil War veterans to northeast Colorado. They took any job in the mines. Often these newcomers brought their families and previously riotous camps became peaceful and "civilized" places. The movement away from labor organizations and the expansion of Colorado's labor force continued until 1873. Financial depression in that year caused operators to look for ways to save money. One of the first was to cut wages and lay off workers. Both these actions led to angry protests from miners. But fearful for their jobs, few joined unions or did more than grumble about conditions.²⁵ Once the Panic of 1873 passed, hardrock miners began thinking about unionizing. Owners checked these efforts by threatening to fire and black list all known organizers. Because most workers had families, and other responsibilities, they were reluctant to participate in activities that threatened their livelihood. While sympathetic to unions, many miners did little more than pay lip service to union organizers. Only small numbers were willing to join. This continued well into the 1880s as conditions became totally unbearable.²⁶

Those who relocated to northeast Colorado to toil underground came from all parts of this nation as well as most foreign countries. Cornish and Welsh miners were foremost among foreign-born groups. However, French, Germans, Scandinavians and Irish all eagerly sought jobs in the mines. A very few Chinese came to Central City, Georgetown and other mountain camps. Both native born and foreign workers all suffered the same hardships in the tunnels.²⁷ During the late nineteenth century miners and their safety were not at all considered by management. Twelve to sixteen hour days were common as were six or seven day workweeks. The mines were unsafe, partially because of lack of technology, and from disregard by owners of even the most minimal safety equipment. These conditions existed because management made every attempt to maximize profit. One easy way was to cut costs to the barest essentials, like few or no support timbers. These cost savings led to tragedies in the region's mines. Cave-ins were common occurrences, usually killing or crippling workers. Explosions or fires caused by gasses such as methane made underground work dangerous. So too did the possibility of unignited powder charges going off. At any moment a pick or drill could tap a water pocket, flooding the passageway and quickly drowning its occupants. As technology for removing ores evolved and as new machines were put to use, chances of equipment failure or being mangled by moving parts increased. If a miner survived these hazards he was still in danger from other unseen killers. Mines were damp, muddy and dusty places that lacked adequate ventilation. Constant exposure to a dirty environment led to risk of pulmonary and respiratory diseases that snuffed out young lives. If a miner was only crippled by an accident or illness, his future held no hope, for employers were not responsible for any type of compensation to the worker or his family. If he suffered a mishap there was precious little chance that he could ever again find work to support his family. This led to child and female labor and other social problems. High costs and ever-decreasing wages in the years after 1870 forced children and women into the work force.²⁸ Such hardships led to the growth of unions and a demand for labor reform. The union movement that had lost momentum earlier, was revitalized during the late 1880s. Occasional strikes proved only marginally successful. Usually organizing activities

accomplished little and organizers found themselves unemployed. Nevertheless, the idea of unions was popularized, and during the early 1890s the movement spread throughout most mining camps.

The decade before, workers frustrated by mine owners, vented their hostility in other ways.²⁹ Foremost, was a dramatic increase in nativistic sentiment with strong racial overtones. Chinese became the target of attacks. Orientals were banned from mining camps and occasionally violent acts were perpetrated against them. In 1880, Denver erupted into riots aimed at Chinese residents with a few Chinese immigrants killed, many injured and numerous businesses destroyed. This nativism and concurrent union organizing efforts were a direct reply by labor to the evolution of mining from pioneer into big business by 1880.³⁰ That change also led to the development of ancillary enterprises in northeast Colorado. One of the most important for regional economic growth was smelting. This industry was a direct outgrowth of the "process mania" of the 1860s. Nathaniel P. Hill's success with his refinery at Black Hawk led others to copy parts of his technique and as they did furnaces sprang up in the camps. However, because of Hill's secret process and his ability to undercut competitors' prices, Hill's Boston and Colorado Company totally dominated the mining industry by the early 1870s. He had a virtual monopoly over Clear Creek and Gilpin County gold refining. Silver discoveries led Hill, and others, to develop techniques to smelt these new ores. In the early years smelters were located in or near the mountains in order to be close to mines and wood fuel supplies.³¹ The later 1870s led to a change in this pattern as Hill and his competitors relocated their operations to Denver. The "Queen City" offered certain advantages including space, transportation connections and access to coking coal from southern Colorado. Once railroads spread into local mining districts and out to coal fields on the plains, plant relocation became feasible, especially considering exhausted supplies of wood and land in the high country. Hill became the first to recognize Denver's potential and in 1879 moved his works from Black Hawk to Denver. He was soon followed by James B. Grant and by 1881 the near north side of Denver had become an industrial area. This part of the city was known as Globeville because of the Globe smelter and the fact that the little community was made up of ethnic groups from around the world. Denver, by the mid-1880s, developed into the center of a Rocky Mountain smelting industry.³² Colorado City, an industrial suburb of Colorado Springs, was another smelting center in northeast Colorado. It served mines for the region and also processed Leadville and Aspen ores brought in on the Colorado Midland Railroad. The plants received even more business in the early 1890s as mines at Cripple Creek and Victor came into production. Colorado City also was the scene of the first labor unrest aimed at the refining business.³³

Workers in the smelters faced some of the same problems as hardrock miners. Unsafe working conditions like explosions and machinery failures took their toll of smeltermen. Workers labored twelve hours for a dollar or two a day unless they held one of the few higher paying skilled jobs in the plant. Unions offered solutions for these men. As with the mines, smelter management discouraged unions in every way possible.³⁴



Georgetown, Colorado in 1873 was a booming silver town.
W.S. Jackson Photo, Courtesy USGS.



The wagon road up Boulder Canyon was typical of the poor roads in early Colorado. This 1873 W.H. Jackson photo shows why railroads were so important. Photo Courtesy USGS.

Smelting was the largest support industry to develop for mining in northeast Colorado, but others grew too. The towns along the front range became supply centers for mountain camps. This trend continued and then expanded as railroads, built during the 1870s and 1880s, connected plains with high country. Four cities, in particular, benefited from their proximity to local mines; Boulder, Golden, Colorado Springs and Denver. Each of these places developed businesses for meeting needs of the mineral industry. They supplied food, machinery, tools, dry goods and offered recreational facilities. In Denver the Mine and Smelter Supply Company not only sold specialized machinery but also manufactured custom equipment for the state's mines. This corporation grew rapidly and soon marketed its products across the Rocky Mountain West and had a branch office in Mexico City to serve Latin American operators. These businesses added to the region's economic growth between 1870 and 1900.³⁵

Another industry that developed in response to miners' demands was lumbering. Underground works required wood for bracing, timbering, shafts, headframes and other uses. Timber was needed for building, for heating homes, and for the refining process. It was found that charcoal provided more heat and soon charcoal kilns appeared on the hills around mining camps in order to convert trees into that fuel. Charcoal and other demands, led to gross denuding of hillsides around the mines. As mineral activities grew, lumbering operations spread out from the camps.³⁶ The northern mountains of Colorado caught the timbermen's attention by 1870. This was due to two reasons; first to supply local mines and secondly to provide ties and other wood products for use in railroad construction during the late 1860s on into the 1870s. Lumber camps arose along the Cache la Poudre, Big Thompson and other rivers in the region, and near the Red Feather Lakes. These operations came as close as anything to a "true" lumbering industry in Colorado. Sawmills, log ponds and roads were built to facilitate logging. Companies went into business thanks to the low costs involved in setting up a sawmill and using free timber lands. Streams were used during spring runoff to float the previous winter's cut down from the foothills onto the plains. Lumbermen expanded their activities to serve new settlers who moved into the area. This allowed those who could afford it to build homes and businesses from wood, lessening dependence on sod and stone. Some lumber companies remained in business until the early 1890s when Federal Timber Reserves (National Forests) were established.³⁷

Mining was the impetus behind logging and other industries in northeast Colorado during the later nineteenth century. As mineral mining prospered so did general business. Gold, and especially silver, mining continued to enjoy good times from 1875 until 1893. While booms elsewhere in Colorado caused the region's fiscal position to erode, the mine industry remained an important part of this area's economy. By the late 1880s silver prices began a new era. Owners sought to expand their holdings, maximize production, yet limit amounts spent on development. Silver profits continued upward until 1893 when the market collapsed, resulting in the closures of mines and smelters, abandonment of claims and the creation of ghost towns. The Panic of 1893 ended the last major mining boom of the nineteenth century. During the remainder of that decade activity decreased without

significant revivals, except in Boulder County where tellurium was discovered near Ward.³⁸

Despite the mineral industry's problems, by 1900 it had made considerable contributions, not only to northeastern Colorado, but the entire state. Money from local gold and silver was re-invested in ventures throughout the state by Colorado's "bonanza kings".³⁹ The area's seeming prosperity encouraged outsiders to put capital into Colorado projects, a process that continued into the twentieth century. Auxillary industries, like smelting, developed and also helped economic growth. Extraction of non-precious minerals, especially coal and stone, broadened the region's mining base and certain town aided settlement by providing fuel and building materials to the plains and in the cities. The existence of mines also stimulated expansion of northeast Colorado's transportation system. Business from the foothills made freighters and railroaders feel that the high cost of construction in the mountains could be offset by lucrative trade.⁴⁰

NOTES Chapter VI

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Chapter VII THE TRANSPORTATION FRONTIER IN NORTHEASTERN COLORADO

Northeast Colorado's natural wealth of minerals and land drew thousands into the area between 1858 and 1890. But, the region's riches could not be fully developed until ways to get products to market became available. Cheap, reliable transportation was one of the most crucial factors in northeastern Colorado's development. Conversely, resources awaiting exploitation, and subsequent business from them, provided a reason for investing great sums of time and money to build railroads. As the mining, farming and cattle frontiers spread, so did overland transportation.

Northeast Colorado was not blessed with navigable waterways. The South Platte River was the only stream that was actually used to move goods or people. During the 1840s, fur men from local trading posts attempted to float rafts and flatboats downstream to St. Louis, Missouri. While some pelts were eventually delivered this way, low water and sandbars proved considerable obstacles necessitating portages and on occasion, boats ran aground. By the time gold seekers started arriving, the idea of using the South Platte as an inland waterway was forgotten. Early residents relied on overland travel to get to and from the gold fields. Because of the distance between northeastern Colorado and the East, early Coloradans were quite isolated. This situation remained unchanged for ten years. Costs of bringing goods to and from the gold fields were extremely high. In 1861 freight charges were \$15 a hundredweight from New York City to Leavenworth, Kansas while tariffs to move these same goods to Denver ran up to \$100 per 100 pounds. This led to complaints about the high cost of living from early residents. The same matter also spurred local boosters to plead for improved freight and stage service and/or railroads. The cries came to naught because most operators could not cut costs further, and still make a profit. They often could not find drivers willing to risk the trip as natives raided the plains. Attacks on freight wagons and stages were common and transport lines were among favorite targets. During the spring and summer months depredations were particularly heavy and in both 1864 and 1865 the gold fields often found themselves out of contact with the rest of the nation as teamsters refused to cross the plains. The Army also stopped travel through the war zone. Times like these made early residents even more aware of northeastern Colorado's isolation.²

Promoters found conveyance one of the most serious problems they faced in their attempts to encourage growth. Booster mentality of the age equated a good transportation network with progress. Early Coloradans saw towns rise or fall depending on whether or not they were well connected to other population centers. This became especially acute as rail lines spread across the prairies of Illinois, Iowa and other states. It was not unusual for whole villages to pick up and move to the railroad if the iron horse bypassed the town's original site. With this psychological dependence upon transportation and commitments to growth for Colorado, it is easy to understand the fixation most of the area's early leaders had with securing a railroad.³ The one obstacle that faced boosters was something they could do little about. The topography of the Rocky Mountains could not be changed. By 1860 natural travel routes were already established. They were to the north and south

of the region. The Central Rockies offered no low elevation passes and because of the closeness of the Continental Divide to the front range; the ascent from plains to the crest of the mountains involved steep grades. While promoters of northeast Colorado devoted much time to encouraging stage companies, freight lines and railroads to build through their region (and directly west into Utah) little came of these efforts. All the boosting simply could not erase the barrier these mountains presented. To counteract this, however, aspiring entrepreneurs did point to the vast amount of business generated by the mines. Those operations needed heavy machinery and other supplies, most of which were brought into northeastern Colorado from the East or Midwest during the 1860s. Minerals and smelters provided a good source of cargo for return trips to the Missouri River, allowing profitable travel in both directions. Gold and silver eventually proved the convincing factor for those who financed transportation companies into northeastern Colorado between 1860 and 1880.⁴

Trails used by the Fifty-niners became the first commercial pathways into the region. The Smoky Hill and South Platte roads quickly developed as heavily used routes for both freighters and stage coaches. This happened for two reasons. First was accustomed usage of the routes. They were well established during earlier migrations and stopovers were already in business. Secondly, these paths followed natural routes, to a great extent, along which water and forage could be found.⁵ The mountains of northeastern Colorado interested roadbuilders only after gold discoveries and birth of the mining camps. Rugged terrain in that region presented serious problems to these businessmen. While the plains offered good natural paths, the hills had only a few areas that could be used by wagons without expensive road work. Most roads were built with considerable blasting and rock work. To cover their costs, and to make a profit, early trails were operated as toll roads. Not only was this a way to get them built but it also kept local government from having to generate tax revenues, a near impossibility during the 1860s. Usually, entrepreneurs went to governing bodies and requested charters to build and operate a road and the government would then not allow others to use the same routes. This led to occasional citizen outcries about rates and poor conditions on the roads, but little came from these protests. The practice of toll road construction continued in northeastern Colorado throughout the late nineteenth century.⁶

Journeys over these pathways was often an adventure for travellers. Most trips were made by wagon or stage coach. The first recorded stage trip into the region was made in 1858 by a Ft. Laramie, Wyoming driver who took newcomers from the Overland Trail southward to the Colorado gold fields that fall. The excitement caused by mineral discoveries led others to think of the possibilities of operating a coach service to Colorado from the Missouri River. Foremost among such companies was the firm of Russell, Majors and Waddell a long-time western transportation company. During the winter of 1858-1859 preparations were made to commence service with the coming of spring. They chartered the Leavenworth and Pike's Peak Express Company (L&PPEC). This line followed a route near the Smoky Hill Trail until it reached northeast Colorado. Once in the region it proceeded west along the Republican River and then overland to the South Platte Trail and

on into Denver.⁷ The stage line rapidly encountered financial trouble and operating problems. These caused reorganization and the new corporation was called the Central Overland California and Pike's Peak Express. The COC&PP used a new route, along the Overland Trail across Nebraska from Nebraska City, the home of Russell, Majors and Waddell's freight operations. Once in northeastern Colorado, this new line followed the South Platte Trail to Latham, a stage stop near present day Greeley. Here coaches either continued south into Denver or moved west to Camp Collins and Virginia Dale before rejoining the Overland Trail in Wyoming. The revised route worked better. However, high costs of outfitting the stages, stations and other facilities along with smaller than expected revenues, forced the company into receivership. Further financial troubles beset Russell, Majors and Waddell and eventually they were forced out of business. Ben Holladay bought the bankrupt operation and operated staging and freighting throughout much of the West in 1860. In 1862 John A. Butterfield purchased Holladay's business and continued to operate it for a few years. By 1870 Butterfield had lost control of his company after Wells, Fargo and Company bought most of its stock. Wells Fargo had a virtual monopoly over long distance stage transportation at that point.⁸

As northeast Colorado filled with settlers, independent operators established passenger and freight services for local markets. Occasionally, they were subsidiaries of toll road companies while at other times individuals simply took advantage of the new roads by working out deals with toll companies or they used public highways. These entrepreneurs first appeared on the scene in 1859 and remained in existence well into the early twentieth century. They carried people to places not served by railroads. Freighters operated in this same manner, working as feeders to rail lines while serving areas bigger transportation systems did not.⁹ Travel by stage coach to Colorado in 1860 was primitive even by that era's standards. A trip from the Missouri River to the Rockies lasted ten to twelve days with a few overnight stops during the journey. Passengers were packed into coaches. They faced days of travel with little protection from the elements, other than the roof over their heads. The dry plains turned to dust clouds under horses' hooves, choking voyagers and filtering into even the tightest sealed luggage. The suspension systems of these vehicles were simple leather straps that allowed the coach body some insulation from the axles. Nevertheless, riders received a vicious pounding along the way. Rest and meal stops were the only respites. Food served to travellers at stage stations normally consisted of beans and salt pork or bacon, along with bread and fresh homebaked pies on occasion. More than one diary indicated boredom with such plain fare and relief felt by buffalo roast or antelope steak appearing on the table. For all this, one was charged between \$75 and \$150 one way.¹⁰ Even with such rates stage companies had trouble making a profit. To lessen deficits, operators sought mail contracts. The U.S. postal service proved the savior of both small and large lines. Competition for mail business was intense and forced operators to make every effort to offer dependable service. This helped the poor traveller. Despite postal contracts most of the companies, especially the long haul outfits, found it difficult to make money.¹¹

Stages were only half of the commercial overland transportation system. Freighters made up the other part of this business. Often stage companies also became owners of heavy wagons to haul goods. Teamsters were less romantic than stage drivers but they were truly vital to the survival of northeastern Colorado's early settlements. The first freighters to come into the region were men who contracted their services on a trip basis. After the initial rush and chaos of 1859 passed, the freight business became organized. Individuals still contracted to haul into the mountains, but more often goods were moved by transportation companies.¹² Once this shift took place, freight wagons crossed the plains on regular schedules. Companies announced departure points and dates in many of the Missouri River towns so shippers could warehouse their cargoes. After being readied for the trail, wagons left as a train. These "trains" were led by a wagonmaster, tended by "bull wackers" or "mule skinnners" (team drivers), cooks and other personnel. Each of these people had a specific function in the military-like organization of the train. On the plains, such a caravan could cover six to ten miles a day, which meant every trip to the Rockies took more than a month.¹³

Not all freighters operated on such a large scale, especially within this region. Locally they served, as did small stage lines, as feeders to and from major trade centers and then to railroads. Drivers, and their ability in negotiating narrow mountain roads, were critical to development of early mining camps because teamsters were the towns' only connection to the outside world. Also, the mineral industry was dependent upon them to haul in heavy machinery, supplies, and to remove ore and refined minerals.¹⁴ The hazards of trail travel to freighters was as great, if not greater, than that faced by stage passengers. Lack of bridges across creeks, washes and rivers meant that fords had to be found. Shifts in riverbeds and varying water levels made it highly risky for heavily laden vehicles. Pockets of quicksand could swallow a whole team or wagon. Sudden storms often destroyed or damaged valuable cargoes and stampeded the animals. Long distances exhausted both mules and oxen, particularly if adequate forage could not be found or if waterholes went dry. During the early 1860s natives also posed an obstacle to successful journeys. Their raids usually caused a loss of goods and sometimes death to wagon drivers. Such occurrences were fairly common on the plains.¹⁵

American ingenuity was applied to these problems by plains freighters. Some solutions were practical, others were not so usable. Difficulties caused by "animal power" had to be overcome. Some felt that livestock should be replaced by other locomotion. Inventors tried to adapt steam to plains travel by building "prairie tractors". These devices were adaptations of earlier French ideas. The tractors were impractical due to lack of water and fuel on the high plains. Another concept was to use the wind to move wagons. Transplanted New Englanders in eastern Kansas drew on their sailing experience and built a giant experimental "windwagon" designed to glide across the sea of grass. It resembled a sailing ship atop four large wheels. The "windwagon" ran aground on its maiden voyage when unpredictable winds and rough terrain tore it apart.¹⁶

Not all efforts to conquer the distances of the Great Plains were this unusual. One method that gave every appearance of success was the Pony Express. It was conceived by Russell, Majors and Wadell in 1859 as a speedy mail service from the Midwest to California by way of Colorado. The express used riders who were often young orphans with small physical builds. The service had swift horses, that followed the Overland Trail through Old Julesburg on their way to the Pacific coast. As Colorado settlements grew, mail was also handled to Denver by 1860. Expenses were high and even with rates up to \$1.25 a letter to California, the Pony Express was forced to cease operation after only a few years.¹⁷

Construction of a transcontinental telegraph line was another factor in the early demise of the Pony Express. The wires were in service through Old Julesburg, (along the Overland Trail), by the end of 1861. If a consumer wanted his message delivered as quickly as possible he turned to the telegraph not the Pony Express, even though telegraph rates were higher. Messages for Colorado were forwarded from the telegraph station at Old Julesburg to Denver by stage. Denver's Western Union agent, David H. Moffat, ran a book, stationery and dry goods shop and handled telegrams as just one more service. Moffat, and other prominent Coloradans, considered the "talking wires" a necessity for their city. In 1862 they undertook a campaign to raise funds and build a telegraph from Julesburg to Denver. By 1863 these efforts succeeded and the "Queen City" was able to enjoy instant communications over the wires.¹⁸ From its initial penetration of northeastern Colorado and subsequent connection with Denver, telegraphs spread throughout the region. Central City, Georgetown, Boulder and other mining towns sought these new communications systems. The camps raised money, and in other ways, tried to aid telegraphic expansion.¹⁹ Private funds and local support remained primary methods of financing until the early 1870s. By then railroads entered northeastern Colorado and their need for rapid communication caused railway companies to build their own telegraph systems or to contract with companies like Western Union to provide wire service. Railroad messages occupied the wires little of the time, so to better utilize existing facilities owners, through Western Union or another company, offered public use of their wires. The development and spread of both telegraphs and roads did much to break the isolation experienced by early area residents.²⁰

Northeastern Colorado was forced to await until the arrival of the iron horse before the last semblances of this disconnection passed. In the late nineteenth century railroads were the fastest and most dependable ground transportation known to man. Americans, even before the Civil War, sought to take advantage of that speed and span the great distances of the United States. These efforts were bolstered by gold discoveries in California during 1849. Once that Pacific coast territory achieved statehood, in 1850, numerous Congressmen called for construction of a Pacific Railroad to link the nation. In 1853 public pressure led the Federal legislature to order and fund a War Department survey of the West to determine practical routes for such a railway. The explorers by-passed northeastern Colorado, and as sectional tension between North and South grew, the Pacific Railroad dream fell from the public's eye.²¹

The gold rush of 1859 and subsequent rapid settlement of Colorado, gave popularizers of the transcontinental project new material for their campaign. They argued that a railroad from the Missouri River to the Pacific would not only provide new connections but it would also serve American citizens strung across the West in Colorado, Utah, California and Oregon. Such thinking was not lost upon members of the newly formed Republican Party. When that party won the election of 1860 and Abraham Lincoln became President, numerous southern states left the Union. Their secession cleared away much opposition to a Pacific Railroad and in 1862 Congress passed the first law to support such a massive effort by offering land grants using alternating sections.²²

When Colorado residents heard of the events in Washington they were overjoyed at the possibility that Denver, and the region, might be along the new railroad's route. William N. Byers of the *Rocky Mountain News*, Governor John Evans, also a Pacific Railroad Commissioner, and other Denver businessmen immediately set about to publicize a Denver route. If such a line was chosen it would most likely bisect northeastern Colorado and help regional growth and development. They hired Francis M. Case, an engineer familiar with the 1853 War Department surveys, to visit the area and survey a rail route via Clear Creek Canyon and the newly discovered Berthoud Pass. Boosters hoped such a project would gather positive data for their cause and this would be used when Union Pacific (the eastern segment of the project) officials began to finalize their route across the Plains. Case's findings were a disappointment for Colorado. He said a railroad over Berthoud Pass was not economically feasible because of 5% to 6% grades, heavy rock work, extensive tunnelling and severe winters. This was a considerable blow to Denver's hopes for the transcontinental.²³

Little construction was done on the Union Pacific until the Civil War ended. This was due to labor shortages, problems in raising capital and a lack of supplies since most available iron and steel was put into the war effort. In 1865 rails finally were laid westward from Omaha, Nebraska. The next year, as construction crews were busy on the Nebraska plains, final routing determinations were made and Denver was not included on the mainline. However plans did call for the rails to dip into Colorado at its extreme northeastern corner near Old Julesburg. By late 1867 Union Pacific track gangs had passed that place on their way west to meet the Central Pacific in Utah. Colorado had its "first" railroad and was sort of on the transcontinental.²⁴ The effects of this new transportation link were felt almost immediately. The railroad increased access to the entire region even though it only touched the area's northeasternmost corner. Settlers, cattlemen and business people found it easier to get to Denver; usually by taking the train to Cheyenne, Wyoming and then a stage south.²⁵

The second, and more profound, change was the stimulation the new Union Pacific gave to rail projects within northeastern Colorado. Area residents, after losing their bid for inclusion on the transcontinental route, turned their attention to other ideas. First of these was the Kansas Pacific. This road was chartered by Congress to run west from near Kansas

City to a point in Kansas directly south of Kearny, Nebraska and then turn northward to join the Union Pacific. Promoters of the company, including such Coloradans as John Evans and Jerome B. Chaffee, lobbied Congress to amend the line's routing, permitting it to extend west to Denver before turning north to join the U.P. In 1866 Washington, D.C. agreed to this modification. During 1869 and 1870 construction moved ahead as surveyors staked a grade along the Smoky Hill River and Big Sandy Creek; route of the Smoky Hill Road. During the summer of 1870 track layers moved closer to Denver. By August the "Queen City" had an outlet to the East.²⁶

The Kansas Pacific was not Denver's first railroad. That honor belonged to the Denver Pacific, which reached town during June of 1870. The D.P. was Denver's reply to the Union Pacific and its missing the city. In November, 1867 local boosters decided to build their own railroad from Cheyenne to Denver. Mass meetings and rallies were held, stock was subscribed and the Denver Pacific Railway and Telegraph Company was founded. Bela M. Hughes, John Evans and David H. Moffat were the leaders of this undertaking. They immediately set out to find help and an agreement was made with the Union Pacific that included the U.P. supplying construction materials if Colorado raised the necessary funds. Initially, this pleased both sides, but as 1868 dawned, Denverites became restive when the U.P. failed to live up to its end of the bargain. This was because U.P. officials used every available piece of material in the race with the eastbound Central Pacific to reach Utah. Whatever the reasons, Coloradans perceived the lack of aid as an affront by the U.P. and they turned to the Kansas Pacific for help. The K.P.'s management agreed to assist the D.P. in exchange for loans and stock in the Denver company. An agreement was reached and the Kansas line made good on its promises. During 1869 and 1870 track crews were busy on the new railroad working south from Cheyenne and north from the "Queen City". In June 1870, rails were in place and on the 23rd day of that month the first train chugged into Denver behind a locomotive named the *David H. Moffat*.²⁷

These events marked the beginning of a railroad era in northeastern Colorado. The business generated by these early companies led others to see the potential of building rail lines into the region. Foremost were General William Jackson Palmer and William A. H. Loveland. Palmer came to Colorado as one of the construction chiefs on the Kansas Pacific. He visited Denver in 1869 and toyed with building his own line south from that city along the front range. The next year he resigned his job with the K.P. to work on this project full-time. Palmer made contact with locals interested in railroading, including Irving Howbert. Howbert was sent south from Denver to buy lands for Palmer's new road while Palmer undertook formal organization of the Denver and Rio Grande Railway. Palmer contacted friends in Pennsylvania and English financiers like William Blackmore and William A. Bell. These men were enthusiastic about the Denver and Rio Grande and by fall of 1870, Palmer had started construction work. His plans called for a line from Denver south to the southern transcontinental (Santa Fe) and then on to Mexico City. Palmer's road was built as a "narrow gauge" line, with only three feet between the rails whereas most other railroads, such as the D.P., were constructed using a "standard gauge" of 4 feet 8½ inches. Palmer

chose narrow gauge because he felt it would be adequate for his needs while at the same time being cheaper to build and operate. By the summer of 1871, Palmer's railroad was well on its way to the newly founded town of Colorado Springs, created by the D&RG. These events caused considerable excitement. Denver boosters felt that the narrow gauge would be of untold benefit to their city. In addition, farmers, ranchers and others in northeast Colorado saw new southern markets opened. The D&RG proceeded south into Pueblo before Palmer and his investors found themselves unable to continue construction. Also, competition from the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railroad south of Pueblo and that line's capture of Raton Pass forced the D&RG to drop its plans to reach Old Mexico. Instead, Palmer turned his attention west, into the mountains and to the rich mining camps of the San Juans and Central Rockies.²⁸

William A. H. Loveland was also an advocate of railroads into mining areas, especially those of Clear Creek. He, along with Henry Moore Teller of Central City, made plans in 1865 and 1866 to build lines up Clear Creek Canyon to Idaho Springs, Georgetown and Black Hawk, centering their network in Golden. While this idea was attractive, they found few who would support the project. Widening his search for capital, Loveland approached the Union Pacific about aid. The U.P. was interested in serving northeastern Colorado, especially after the deal with the Denver Pacific collapsed. The "transcontinental" offered money and materials for the Clear Creek project, by then called the Colorado Central Railway. The C.C. began its grading in 1866. Soon pressure grew on Loveland to build a branch onto Denver. The U.P. also wanted a line from its mainline at Julesburg southwest to Golden. All this activity made it seem the Colorado Central was about to become the territory's rail leader. After the U.P. finished its mainline to Utah in 1869, money and material became available for the Clear Creek project. By the early 1870s narrow gauge lines to Clear Creek's mining camps were completed and the Julesburg-Golden connection was started. Rails to Julesburg reached Longmont by 1873 and the branchline from Denver to Golden was in place.²⁹

Not to be outdone by either Loveland or Palmer, backers of the Denver Pacific, particularly Evans and Moffat, launched their own project to capture mountain trade during the late 1860s. Clear Creek drew their attention but after Loveland surveyed that route, the Denverites began planning to enter Georgetown via a different path. They looked at a route along Bear Creek and up the south side of the foothills into this silver camp. The project became known as the Denver, Georgetown and Utah, later renamed the Denver, Central and Georgetown. Little happened until 1870 as all efforts were used to finish the Denver Pacific. However, once the D.P. was well on its way to completion, Evans began work on the Denver, Central and Georgetown which ran south from Denver to Littleton and then west toward Bear Creek. In the foothills, Morrison was founded and stone quarries were opened once the trains arrived. As the survey engineers moved westward they found that no practical grade could be built to Georgetown. As these discoveries were made, investors had to re-evaluate their plans. The Denver, Central and Georgetown died and was re-organized as the Denver, South Park and Pacific. This new company was to build up South Platte Canyon, over Kenosha Pass, into South Park and on to the San Juans. The new company's

charter mentioned plans for a line to the Pacific coast. The railway eventually reached as far west as Gunnison. The DSP&P kept the line to Morrison as a branch.³⁰

Expansion of the DSP&P, CC and D&RG halted in 1874. The Panic of 1873 dried up capital and led to financial difficulties for all of northeast Colorado's new railroads. The first effect was stoppage of construction and equipment purchases. The companies made every effort to minimize expenses so they could repay their debts. Despite cutbacks, railroads found it impossible to avoid bankruptcy or forced reorganization sales. During this period of upheaval Jay Gould, a New York railroad tycoon, entered the Colorado rail scene and bought into the Kansas Pacific, Union Pacific and other major lines. Gould was not interested in the Colorado situation to help, but rather, his was an attempt to gain control of as many western railroads as he could. Eventually he, and later his son, George Jay, controlled most of the region's lines. Gould's struggle to control Colorado traffic led to detrimental effects to Colorado lines as he refused to fund repairs or other improvements.³¹

Financial problems were just one obstacle that faced Palmer, Evans and other rail builders in the West during the later nineteenth century. Lack of adequate capital hampered both operations and expansion. This became particularly acute during periodic depressions like the Panic of 1873. Labor shortages, especially of skilled workers such as locomotive engineers, acted as impediments to the rail industry's growth. However, by the late 1880s as more men made careers with rail transport companies, this situation was alleviated. But in the same industry lack of managerial talent, was a serious problem. This was solved during the 1880s as experts from established eastern roads moved west. Great distances and difficult terrain were two obstacles that man could do little about except to make accommodations such as tunnels. Western railroads were designed to cover long distances but the plains, aside from being endless had almost no population until the late 1880s and early 1890s. Without people, carriers had no business thus making such lines totally dependent on through cargoes for profits. To lessen this some rail companies set up immigration services to entice settlers on to vacant lands along their routes. Natural hazards like weather, buffalo herds, and natives (before 1870) were difficulties pioneer railroads suffered. Native Americans and buffalo were eventually removed from northeast Colorado but severe weather such as blizzards still plague Colorado's railroads.³²

During the late 1870s, transportation investors entered a new era of optimism about railroads in northeastern Colorado. Those years saw plans for the expansion of the Denver and Rio Grande, the Colorado Central, the Denver, South Park and Pacific, and some new companies. The D&RG built up the Royal Gorge into Leadville and extended its line over Marshall Pass west to Gunnison and then onto Grand Junction. The South Park (DSP&P) built branch lines to several cities, including Leadville and Gunnison. The Colorado Central, by then part of the Union Pacific system, finished its line from near Longmont north to Cheyenne and also between LaSalle and Julesburg, along the South Platte River. It also built the famous Georgetown Loop as tracks were laid west to Graymont. These activities enhanced the region's transportation network and encouraged further economic growth.³³

Encouraged by traffic possibilities in northeast Colorado, other rail builders began projects during the early 1880s. One was James J. Hagerman, a Milwaukee ironmaster who moved to Colorado Springs for reasons of health. He joined the Colorado Midland, in 1885, after Colorado Springs financiers were unable to raise enough capital to get started. The Midland proposed to build west from Colorado Springs over Ute Pass, across South Park to Leadville and then into Aspen. From here, plans called for a line west to Grand Junction and then on into Utah. While the Midland never got further than Grand Junction, Hagerman found British investors interested in his project. By June 1887, the C.M. was operating trains to Buena Vista, Colorado.

Part of the reason Colorado Springs sought an outlet to the west during the late 1880s was that the Chicago, Rock Island and Pacific (CRIP) planned to reach town from the east. The Rock Island, as it was known, built from Kansas City late in the seventies and proceeded westward toward Limon, Colorado during 1880 and 1881. Once there, a line was built northwest toward Denver and another southwest to Colorado Springs reaching both places by 1888. Limon, as junction at the two forks, became a major shop and terminal facility for the road. In addition, three years later, one of the most unique railways in the area, the Pike's Peak Cog Railway, opened to carry tourists imported by the Rocky Island to the mountain's summit.³⁴

At the same time another railroad built into northeastern Colorado; the Burlington and Missouri River, also known as the Burlington Route. It entered the state from McCook, Nebraska and followed a line nearly straight west to Fort Morgan, turning southwest to Denver. The Burlington reached the "Queen City" in May, 1882 after crews worked all winter thanks to mild weather. The line was built because its management felt Denver was a valuable market and to break the hold of Gould's Union Pacific on eastbound cargo from Colorado.³⁵

Two other companies also recognized the value of Denver's traffic and began construction to tap the area during these boom years. They were the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe, (Santa Fe) and the Denver and New Orleans. The Santa Fe built north from Pueblo and then was forced to enter into trackage agreements with the Rio Grande in order to gain access to Colorado's capital. The other project was started by Governor John Evans after he was forced to sell the DSP&P to Jay Gould. Evans conceived a plan to build a line south, (about 15 miles east of the D&RG), to Colorado Springs, then to Trinidad and from some point in southeastern Colorado or northeast New Mexico turn eastward to connect with a company building north from Fort Worth, Texas. Evans named his road the Denver and New Orleans Railway. Eventually connections were made and the Texas heartland was directly available to the Central Rockies.³⁶

By the late 1880s Denver was well connected with railroads to three of the four compass points. Missing was a line directly west of the city, over the Continental Divide; an outlet to the Pacific Coast. David H. Moffat became a spokesman for this route by the 1880s. In 1880 he chartered the Denver, Utah and Pacific to construct a line from Denver

to Salt Lake City and beyond. His proposal called for a route over Rollins Pass, west of Boulder, and a branch into Boulder's coal fields. Nine and one-half miles of track were laid and some grading and tunneling was done near Rollins Pass. The company soon went out of business but Moffat refused to give up on the idea of a new route. During the late 1880s, as president of the D&RG, he again tried to build only to be thwarted by the Board of Directors. It was not until the early 1900s that this railroad became reality.³⁷

While Moffat was busy with his project to put Denver on a new railroad, other entrepreneurs were involved with less dramatic, although equally important projects. One was the Greeley, Salt Lake and Pacific, another narrow gauge, that was built west from Boulder, up Boulder Canyon toward county mining camps. Another local road was the Gilpin Tramway, used to carry ores from mines to smelters and to other connecting railroads for shipment. Because of the confined spaces available between Central City and Black Hawk, the Gilpin Tram was built as a narrow gauge with only two feet between the rails. The Greeley, Salt Lake and Pacific, and other companies set up in that region, were conceived to tap the mineral belt and offer competing routes westward across the Continental Divide. These efforts were only a few of the hundreds of "railroads" that never got beyond the planning stages in northeastern Colorado during the later nineteenth century. The corporations had grandiose visions of rail empires stretching to the Pacific Coast but were unable to find financing to build into the next little town. Despite the many failures, a spirit of optimism followed Colorado railroading during the 1880s.³⁸ The northeast part of the state added to this rosy feeling because of rapid growth in the area during the 1870s and 1880s. The spread of farming and ranching, the development of mining and smelting and the evolution of the region into the economic and political center of the state all caused railroaders to consider the future assured. State laws that did not heavily tax or regulate the companies, and rules that prevented labor from becoming a potent force enhanced Colorado's attractiveness to financiers. Fears that one company might find a market some other had missed led to much duplicative building and waste. This did not bother investors until late in the 1880s when competition became fierce. To avoid price cutting and losses on operations, railroaders formed pools to divide traffic and set rates. This solution proved only a stop-gap measure. The pools were informal and often one member or another violated the agreement and it fell apart bringing the return of cutthroat competition. Nevertheless, railroads did survive and continued their expansion into the 1890s as the "boom" continued.³⁹

That led to many area railroads being heavily in debt by 1893 and dependent on a continually expanding economic base. When the Panic of 1893 began, transportation companies found themselves hard-pressed to meet obligations. Within two years nearly every railroad found itself either in receivership or abandoned. Those that went into court control did not successfully reorganize until 1898 or 1899; ready to face a new century.⁴⁰ Despite these difficulties railroads were the backbone of northeast Colorado's transportation system by 1890.

NOTES Chapter VII

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² Ibid., p. 31., and Harry F. Kelsey, Jr., *Frontier Capitalist, The Life of John Evans*, (Denver: State Historical Society of Colorado, 1969), pp. 144-147., hereafter cited: Kelsey, *Evans*., and Carla E. Neuhaus, "Transportation to Colorado, 1858-1869," (M. A. Thesis, University of Colorado, 1928), pp. 42, 58-59., hereafter cited: Neuhaus, "Transportation."

³ Robert G. Athearn, *Union Pacific Country*, (Chicago: Rand McNally, 1971), pp. 44-45., hereafter cited: Athearn, *UP*.; Lyle Dorsett, *The Queen City, A History of Denver*, (Boulder: Pruett, 1977), pp. 21-23., hereafter cited: Dorsett, *Queen*., and Richard C. Overton, *Gulf to Rockies; The Heritage of the Fort Worth and Denver-Colorado and Southern Railways, 1861-1898*, (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1953), pp. 41-44., hereafter cited: Overton, *Gulf*.

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⁵ Margaret Long, *The Smoky Hill Trall*, (Denver: W. H. Kistler, 1943), pp. 1-3., hereafter cited: Long, *Smoky*., and Propst, *Forgotten*, pp. 60-62.

⁶ Nore V. Winter, James S. Kane, Ellen Beasley, Kathy London and Liston E. Leyendecker, "Level I Historic Cultural Resources Survey of the Arapaho and Roosevelt National Forests and Pawnee National Grassland," (Lakewood, CO.: United States Forest Service, n.d. (n.p., hereafter cited: USFS, "Level I."; Robert G. Athearn, *The Coloradans*, (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1976), pp. 70-71., hereafter cited: Athearn, *Coloradans*.; Overton, *Gulf*., pp. 14-16.; C.C. Skinner interview, Civilian Works Administration Interview, Volume 353, State Historical Society of Colorado., hereafter cited: CWA, CSHS.

⁷ Neuhaus, "Transportation." pp. 39-44.; Propst, *Forgotten*, pp. 33-36., and Long, *Smoky*, pp. 50-52.

⁸ Propst, *Forgotten*, pp. 27-38., Long, *Smoky*, pp. 41-44., and Neuhaus, "Transportation." pp. 39-44.

⁹ Long, *Smoky*, pp. 40-41.; Propst, *Forgotten*, p. 146.; Albert M. Bair interview, vol. 358, CWA, CSHS., and William Alexander Lawson interview, vol. 355, CWA, CSHS.

¹⁰ Long, *Smoky*, pp. 40-47, 52.; George W. Lechner "Diary", vol. 358, CWA, CSHS., and Hattie L. Hedges Trout interview, vol. 345, CWA, CSHS.

¹¹ Long, *Smoky*, p. 1., and Propst, *Forgotten*, pp. 36-38.

- ¹² Dorsett, *Queen*, pp. 34-35., and Neuhaus, "Transportation," pp. 42, 58-65.
- ¹³ Neuhaus, "Transportation," pp. 4-7., and Tobia Mattox interview, vol. 343, CWA, CSHS.
- ¹⁴ Hauck, *Narrow*, pp. 10-17., and "The City of Golden," vol. 354, CWA, CSHS.
- ¹⁵ Jay Monaghan, *The Overland Trall*, (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1947), p. 247., hereafter cited: Monaghan, *Overland.*; Propst, *Forgotten*, pp. 30-36, 58., and Mattox, CWA, CSHS.
- ¹⁶ Neuhaus, "Transportation," pp. 31-37.
- ¹⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 53-56., and Propst, *Forgotten*, pp. 29, 35-36 and 39., and "Golden," CWA, CSHS.
- ¹⁸ Blanche V. Adams, "Colorado in the Civil War," (M. A. Thesis, University of Colorado, 1930), pp. 114, 128., hereafter cited: Adams, "Civil War." and Propst, *Forgotten*, p. 42.
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- ²⁰ Litch, CWA., and see: Thomas J. Noel, "All Hail the Denver Pacific: Denver's First Railroad," *The Colorado Magazine* 50 (Spring 1973), 91-116., hereafter cited: Noel, "DP."
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- ²² Athearn, *UP*, pp. 18-22., and Reigel, *Western RR*, pp. 82-94.
- ²³ Overton, *Gulf*, pp. 12, 43-45.; Dorsett, *Queen*, pp. 20-23., and Kelsey, *Evans*, pp. 169-179.
- ²⁴ Athearn, *UP*, pp. 52-54, 65, 136., and Mr. and Mrs. H. R. Neuman interview, vol. 351, CWA, CSHS.
- ²⁵ Athearn, *UP*, pp. 132-134., and A. A. Woodbury interview, vol. 343, CWA, CSHS., and Neuman, CWA, CSHS.
- ²⁶ Athearn, *UP*, pp. 133-134.; Dorsett, *Queen*, pp. 22-24., and Long, *Smoky*, p. 40.
- ²⁷ Overton, *Gulf*, pp. 12-17., and Noel, "DP," pp. 91-115.

²⁸Robert G. Athearn, *Rebel of the Rockies, A History of the Denver and Rio Grande Western Railroad*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1962), pp. 2-20, 26-27., hereafter cited: Athearn, *Rebel*.; "Colorado Springs Founding," vol 345, CWA, CSHS., and Frank Hamp interview, vol. 345, CWA, CSHS.

²⁹Old Burlington interview, vol. 353, CWA, CSHS.; Hauck, *Narrow*, pp. 10-17, 61., and Athearn, *UP*, pp. 213-230.

³⁰Charles Pike interview, vol. 354, CWA, CSHS., and Overton, *Gulf*, pp. 41-47., and see: M.C. Poor, *Denver, South Park and Pacific*, (Denver: Rocky Mountain Railroad Club, 1976).

³¹Old Burlington, CWA, CSHS., and Overton, *Gulf*, p. 16.

³²Riegel, *Western RR*; John G. Abbot interview, vol 352, CWA, CSHS.; A. K. Clarke interview, vol. 351, CWA, CSHS.; George A. Colbert interview, vol. 343, CWA, CSHS., and E. L. Ketley interview, vol. 343, CWA, CSHS.

³³Winfield Morris interview, vol 341, CWA, CSHS.; S. S. Worley interview, vol. 341, CWA, CSHS.; Athearn, *UP*, p. 224., and Overton, *Gulf*, p. 17.

³⁴Marshall Sprague, *One Hundred Plus, A Centennial Story of Colorado Springs*, (Colorado Springs: Colorado Springs Centennial, Inc., 1971), pp. 4-9., and see: Morris Cafky, *Colorado Midland*, (Denver: Rocky Mountain Railroad Club, 1965).

³⁵Richard C. Overton, *Burlington Route: A History of the Burlington Lines*, (New York: Knopf, 1965), pp. 163-173., hereafter cited: Overton, *Burlington*., and Morris, CWA, CSHS.

³⁶Overton, *Gulf*, pp. 40, 50-56, 83-97, 150 and 166-168.

³⁷Old Burlington, CWA, CSHS.; Hauck, *Narrow*, pp. 36-37., and Athearn, *Rebel*, pp. 170-175.

³⁸USFS, "Level I," n.p., and Ketley, CWA, CSHS.

³⁹Overton, *Gulf*, pp. 84-88, 152 and 163.

⁴⁰Hauck, *Narrow*, pp. 4, 103.; Overton, *Gulf*, pp. 18-19., and Athearn, *Rebel*, pp. 181-185.

CHAPTER VIII THE URBAN FRONTIER

Individual pioneers who braved mountains and plains of northeast Colorado during the late nineteenth century were important to the land's development, but equally crucial were the townspeople of the time. They faced many of the same hardships with some problems peculiar to urban environments. Towns served as centers of political and commercial activity. Settlements came to exist for various reasons. Some grew because of boosters, while others were founded as part of larger projects such as agricultural colonies. Some places thrived due to locations near mining areas or on transportation corridors.¹ All these "cities" rose and fell depending upon whether they were centers of commercial activity. Trade volume varied, but each town that survived did so because it developed a hinterland exchange network. Mining towns were among the first to use such connections. Shopkeepers who moved to these communities realized the transitory nature of mining and how their livelihoods could be wiped out overnight if the lodes played out. Businessmen sought to establish a wider economic base. One way was to build on existing trade relationships and broaden them through connections in other camps. Merchants also supported projects to improve transportation and communication. As the mining frontier spread outside northeastern Colorado, mercantilists in the older towns worked to establish themselves as outfitters for new mining districts. These efforts often paid handsomely but only if local mineral business continued to prosper. If the mines closed for lack of ore or other reasons nearby "cities" melted into ghost towns. The process could only be reversed was if new strikes were made or replacement industries like ranching or lumbering could be established.² Throughout their lives, these mountain communities were dependent upon cities along the front range to funnel goods and services into the mining areas. Four northeastern Colorado towns, in particular, developed this role by the late nineteenth century. They were Fort Collins, Boulder, Denver and Colorado Springs. Of these Denver and Boulder began as supply centers. Others grew thanks to their locations near the mountains or their good transportation connections. All four cities experienced changes identified with major metropolitan areas of the period. They were not only centers of commerce but also of politics, communications, culture and finance. Their place as financial centers, especially Denver, became significant after 1870 when Colorado's industries attracted investors from around the world. The city's banking houses acted as funnels for new dollars as they came into the state. The same institutions served as information disseminators and boosters of local enterprise.³

These four cities realized that if they were to fulfill their roles they had to encourage farming on the plains and attract farmers to urban markets. Initially, agricultural exchanges were simple affairs that allowed farmers to deal on a personal basis with merchants. After purchasing crops from growers, middlemen sold and shipped goods to mountain consumers. As transportation became readily available, this pattern changed. First was specialization of labor that led to the creation of facilities like grain exchanges and stockyards. This trend was furthered after railroads reached northeastern Colorado which was then connected to national markets.⁴

The major front range towns soon became dependant upon communities out on the plains as a connection with producers. This was due, in large part, to rapid growth in the area. As more farmers and ranchers settled, it became impractical for each one to deal on an individual basis with brokers and dealers at trade centers. Instead, bargains were struck with buyers in smaller towns who then shipped to larger towns. Farmers also had needs like supplies and clothing, and communities sprang up across northeastern Colorado to meet these demands. Some places grew into medium-sized cities that became quite permanent. Other villages founded during the dryland farming boom of the late 1880s, turned into ghost towns by the late 1890s when drought and low prices ended local expansion of agriculture.⁵

All the cities in northeastern Colorado served functions other than simply economic. They became centers of activity for those living near them. One facet was to serve as a focal point for varieties of social events, ranging from square dances to weddings to horse races. Celebration of national holidays like the Fourth of July and local festivals like Founder's Day all drew local crowds. When families went to town for these holidays not only did they participate in the "jubilee" but they also shopped and did other business. During the late nineteenth century most transactions occurred because of personal contacts, not advertising. Merchants therefore found it important to maintain such relationships and to do so they often co-sponsored local celebrations.⁶ Smaller towns scattered around the region served as social centers too. They offered retreats like saloons and pool halls where the men gathered to relax, chat and exchange ideas. Women usually had no equivalent "clubs". However, the men's organizations were strong supporters of ladies church groups and choirs. Churches were normally located in towns as were schools, especially those for the higher grades. Religious and educational events drew residents to urban areas from their farms and ranches. Larger towns could often support opera houses and the theaters to entertain residents. In smaller villages those seeking this diversion either traveled to bigger communities or depended on troupes of traveling actors, orators or musicians. Such arrivals were sometimes "the" social event of the year.⁷

Another function northeastern Colorado cities performed was to act as spokesmen for themselves. Businessmen founded Chambers of Commerce, Boards of Trade, Boards of Immigration, and town companies, to encourage commercial activity and to attract new settlers to Colorado. These organizations assisted other "boosters" like the state, or railroad companies, that also worked to entice farmers and ranchers to the land. Occasionally, they set up locator services and arranged credit through local banks to help newcomer arrivals. The boards, at times, also found temporary housing. During times of famine and in dry years they operated as a local welfare service, soliciting aid and distributing contributions in cooperation with church groups and charitable institutions. Despite periodic bad times, promoters always painted a picture of unlimited opportunity and easy wealth for those bold enough to make the move to Colorado. Each proclaimed their town to be the "Athens of the West", the "new Denver" or the "Center of Western Civilization".⁸

The towns of northeast Colorado supported another booster that, in many ways, was almost as unique to the American West as cowboys--the frontier editor. Newspapers of the

time were not only methods to relate events of the day but also served as promoters of the local economy. William N. Byers' *Rocky Mountain News* set the tone for these publications when it printed its the first issue in April, 1859. Byers proclaimed Colorado as the home of all things good and a land of unbounded wealth. This style was copied by local newsmen across the region well into the twentieth century. When editors penned their lines, they hoped that papers elsewhere in the country would pick up stories about their region. A spirit of optimism permeated most of the area's journals. In addition to boosting their particular towns, the scribes also used their editorial pulpits to preach to residents on the virtues of various civic undertakings from a new railroad to closing saloons on Sundays. The local paper was a point of great civic pride for citizens in their communities.⁹

All this booster activity was aimed at one goal. Each town sought to grow and duplicate earlier eastern lifestyles. During the late nineteenth century no one dared question the desirability of growth. A city that did not increase in size was considered "dead" and awaiting burial. To encourage expansion, as well as to ease the shock of relocation, builders attempted to recreate midwestern agricultural towns wherever they could. That is why today's physical remains in Colorado's small plains towns greatly resemble their counterparts throughout the United States. The brick schoolhouse and bank, the white frame church, the railroad hotel and the false-fronted main street could easily be moved from northeast Colorado to Iowa or Illinois and not look at all out of place.¹⁰ Often the fight for growth slipped from boosting settlement into criticism of neighboring towns. Usually, these rivalries involved the location of a railroad or highway businesses, the county seat or some state facility like a college. When plums like county offices were available each town not only put its best foot forward but did what it could to cast doubt on its neighbor's worthiness for such an honor by questioning its moral climate, vitality or progress. Battles like these raged across northeast Colorado throughout the late nineteenth century, often becoming quite heated, with threats of violence exchanged. Competition continued into the twentieth century as the "booster spirit" remained strong.¹¹ Promoters and salesmen began their work as soon as cities were founded. There were nearly as many reasons for towns to spring up as there were why people moved to northeastern Colorado. The first settlements developed at the sites of gold and silver strikes.¹² Agricultural cities were founded for different reasons, such as colonies. A few places like Evans or Green City started as speculative ventures for the enrichment of their founders through the sale of land and lots. In this same manner, some towns were set up by town companies that gambled on future growth in the area. Denver and Boulder were in this category. Yuma and Wray were examples of towns that developed because people in the area needed a place to trade. Both Fort Collins and Fort Morgan got their starts when settlers took up land near military posts to exploit local markets the Army offered. The beef trade of the later nineteenth century led to the development of "service centers" for cattlemen and cowboys. Karval was an outstanding example of such a community. However, northeast Colorado never had cities that survived being founded as "cattle towns", rather they were like Karval in that they evolved into this role from different beginnings or they grew up near the headquarters of major ranches.¹³

The spread of railroads, and other transportation, across northeast Colorado served as the impetus for some cities to begin life. Colorado Springs for example, was founded as a subsidiary venture of the D&RG railway. Other places grew because of rail service facilities locations. Junctions, division points, engine houses and coaling stations all tended to increase a town's potential for expansion. One example of a new town at an important rail facility was Julesburg. It was built where the Union Pacific's cut-off for Denver joined the main transcontinental route. In fact, it was first called Denver Junction. Two towns that also found their growth stimulated by railroads were Sterling and Limon. Rail companies were well aware of the effect their choice of facilities had on the area and did what they could to encourage good will between themselves and local residents.¹⁴

The cumulative effect of town building and promotion was rapidly felt in northeast Colorado. Between 1870 and 1875 towns doubled their population as the region became urbanized. These growth trends continued throughout the late nineteenth century and into the twentieth. The presence of towns had major impacts on the region's history during this period of intense use.¹⁵ Life in northeastern Colorado cities and villages during the years 1860 to 1890 was similar to most such areas of the United States while at the same time having a certain commonality with the rest of Colorado. Townspeople needed certain services that could best be supplied by local government or through volunteerism. Most important were police and fire protection. Nearly every community in this area went through a lawless period. For some it was short as local administration quickly established itself. Elsewhere, residents were not so lucky and had to live in fear of crime. Many factors contributed to lawlessness or lack thereof. The "boom" atmosphere and get-rich-quick mentality of mining camps was quite different from the more sedate Greeley or Fort Collins. This came not only from differences in organization but also from the settlers themselves. Miners were somewhat more accustomed to violence and had little regard for the future of their towns, while farmers sought to create utopia in Colorado. When severe infractions occurred miners took care of matters directly in their "miners courts", having little desire to pay for jailhouses. When crime could not be controlled by these rump courts, "vigilance committees" formed and took more permanent steps in problem solving. After the boom years passed in the high country, a territorial government was formed (1861) and the problem of law enforcement was turned over to counties or towns. In farm villages, generally founded after territorial (or state) status was conferred on Colorado, residents tried to avoid lawlessness by appointing a town marshal and setting up a local court system as part of the charter process. If taxes could not be raised to pay salaries for law enforcement agents, volunteers served as watchmen. All Colorado towns passed through these stages as they developed. However, it was only the larger cities, like Denver, that turned to a paid police force to replace marshalls and to control crime.¹⁶

Protection from violence was only one service citizens sought from local government. Second on their list of needs was fire suppression. Most buildings were made of wood, or contained considerable lumber, that dried to tinder in the arid west. The slightest spark could ignite a fire capable of turning an entire town into smoldering ashes. To combat these events, the citizenry turned out and formed bucket brigades to stop the flames. This volunteer spirit was organized into fire companies. These groups not only

raised money to buy equipment and build houses to store it, but also proved social outlets for the members. Firehouses turned into club rooms and the companies became fraternities, of sorts. Some of the larger towns were served by more than one such company and competition developed. Each sought to beat the other to a fire, to be the most efficient at extinguishing it, and to gain "glory" for the company. Contests were held between volunteer firemen during town festivals. However, at times rivalry was carried into action at fires when fist fights broke out between companies. More than one resident recalled watching as his or her home burn to the ground while firemen ignored the flames and wrestled with each other instead. To control freewheeling fire companies, communities put local government in charge of volunteer fire protection. As with police services, only a few major cities could afford fulltime paid fire departments.¹⁷

One area that nearly every northeastern Colorado community left to private enterprise, between 1860 and 1900, was public utilities. Providing water or gas proved lucrative in the larger communities. Colonel James Archer and his Denver Gas Company and Denver Water Company were prototypes for others in Colorado. He originally came to the area with the Kansas Pacific railroad during the late 1860s. Once he saw the Queen City, Archer was convinced that this town would become the business and political center of Colorado, and possibly the Rocky Mountain West. Archer likewise felt this city was an excellent place to promote water and gas operations and to supply these necessities to the population. With help from local boosters, especially real estate magnate Walter S. Cheesman, Archer was able to get his companies started. By the early 1870s, less than fifteen years after it was founded, Colorado's capitol city had running water and gas for illumination. In places large enough to support similar systems, they were built, either by private individuals or by stock companies. In only a few cases did local government take care of securing these services. For those places too small for such luxuries, people used private wells for water and kerosene or coal oil for lighting.¹⁸

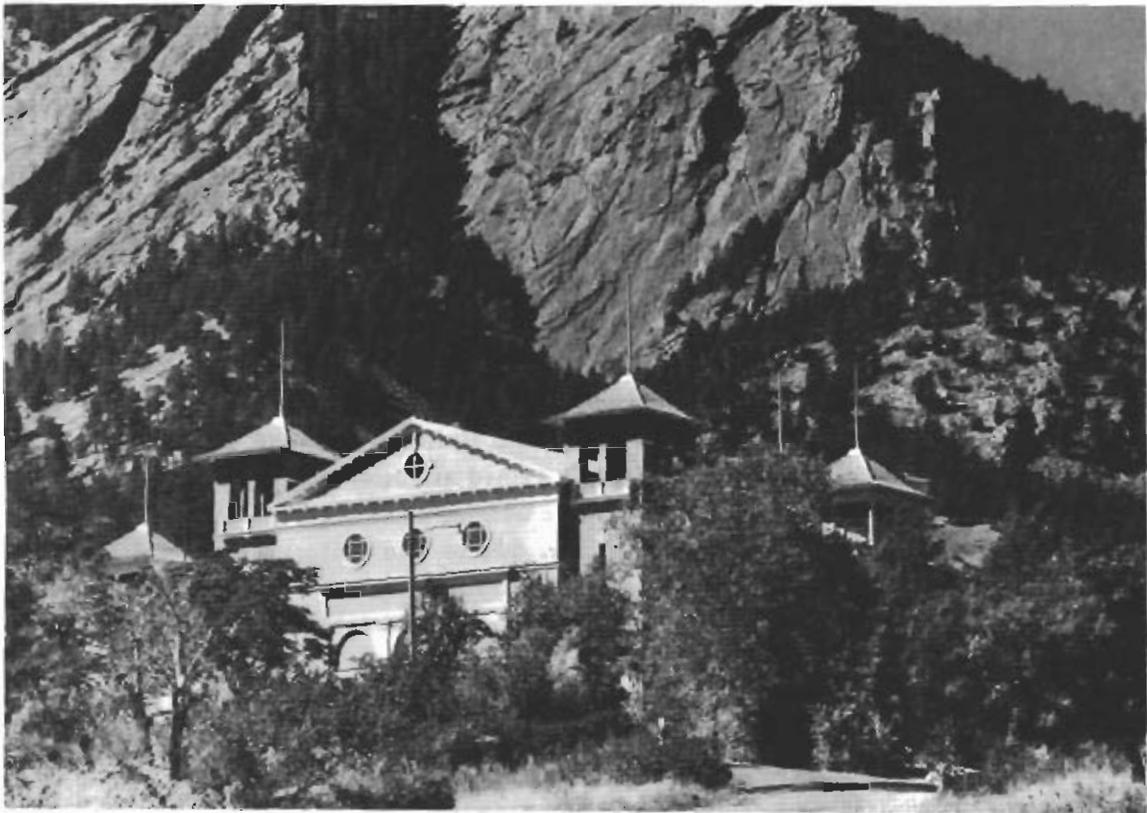
The sense of civil accomplishment was further enhanced if a town was able to support its own urban transit system. Again, Denver took the lead in this development. During the seventies the most reliable forms of mass transit were horsecars and cable cars. Horsecars were small wagons pulled by animal power along pathways, whereas cable cars moved by long cables set between the wheels. They were in continuous motion and the vehicles hooked on to them and then released when stops were made. Both types of cars ran along rails laid in the streets. Neither method was particularly efficient and both were limited in the distances they could cover. Therefore they were not well suited to larger, dispersed cities. However by the 1890s, horsecars were popular in smaller towns where only short hauls were involved. The 1880s saw improvements in intraurban transportation technology when the use of electrical power was introduced. Eastern cities were first to take advantage of the changes. But, once systems were proven, Denver developers William G. Evans, David H. Moffat and Walter Cheesman, who owned the cable car company, investigated the possibilities of electrifying their operations. They founded the Denver Tramway Company to serve the city. The tramway served Denver with trolley cars

powered from overhead wires by 1881. During the 1890, and into the 1900s, Fort Collins, Colorado Springs and others followed the capitol city's example and converted their horsecars to electric streetcars. These towns proclaimed themselves as thoroughly modern as any city back East.¹⁹

Support of public education was yet another way residents demonstrated their commitment to civic betterment. Debates on how best to provide "learning" for area children began as soon as the gold rush was well established. In 1859 Professor Oscar J. Goldrick, teacher and journalist, moved to Denver and by the end of that summer he had found enough students to open a subscription school. In this institution the teacher's salary and expenses were paid by fees from parents of the students, not by taxes. Goldrick's example was duplicated in other early settlements, especially mining camps that did not have strong local governments during the early years. As more settlers filled northeastern Colorado after the Civil War, consideration was given to the creation further public schools. In areas where they were set up, educational facilities came under the control of elected boards of education, organized by city or rural area. This region's early residents placed a high value on education and by the 1890s nearly every child in northeast Colorado had available at least a primary education. Brick, stone woodframe schoolhouses were present in nearly every community and dotted many rural places.²⁰

The high literacy rate of residents and a need for information led to creation of libraries throughout northeast Colorado. The first appeared in the early 1860s as reading clubs and subscription facilities where those who wished to borrow books either paid membership fees or contributed volumes to the organization. Private libraries became popular by the 1890s. The benefits of a well informed public were not lost on town councils and other governmental groups. In towns where population and tax revenues warranted, a movement took place to create publically supported libraries. The trend developed slowly and not until the early twentieth century did public libraries become a major form of book circulation in northeast Colorado.²¹ Another way that northeastern Coloradans kept in touch with current events was by attending lectures put on by travelling orators. Topics ranged from debates on social problems to literary figures offering interpretive readings. Such cultural shows were very popular with residents during the late nineteenth century. These road shows offered information and social exchange not otherwise available. Eventually national popularity of these events led to the creation of a nationwide Chautauqua Society and subsequent development of a Chautauqua lecture circuit throughout northeast Colorado. These organizations were outgrowths of a summer adult education program started in 1874 at Chautauqua, New York.²²

As an outgrowth of early evolution, at least a few of the of the region's cities developed "unique" images as seen by outsiders. Once boosters realized this asset they did what they could to enhance such preceptions. One place with quite individualistic characteristics was Colorado Springs. The town was founded by William J. Palmer as a perfect place for America's genteel and European tourist society to have their own hideaway. Because of close ties that many of Palmer's associates maintained with England



The Boulder Chautauqua Hall symbolised the Populist Era. William Jennings Bryan delivered his famous "Cross of Gold" speech here in 1896. Photo by S. F. Mehls.

the new community took on a marked resemblance to a British country town during the 1870s. Outsiders soon referred to Colorado Springs as "Little London" During the late 1870s the city lost some of its "Englishness" yet it remained "genteel". Residents actively supported the performing arts and other aspects of culture. For more than one travelling troupe, Colorado Springs was their only Colorado stop and shows that were hits elsewhere in the state often were closed in the Springs because of poor quality. The Springs became a favorite summer resort for eastern society. To further its elitist image, town fathers discouraged industrial growth that could harm the city's pristine appearance. Instead, a renewed Colorado City became an industrial suburb of Colorado Springs with smelters, rail yards and factories located there.²³

If Colorado Springs was the region's cultural center Denver, seventy miles to the north, evolved into the most cosmopolitan of northeast Colorado's cities by 1890. Because civic leaders placed heavy emphasis on growth and made no attempt to restrict most types of business, the community developed a heterogeneous population. In its attempt to become the commercial center of the Rocky Mountain West Denver was home to some of the West's major stockyards and grain depots. Railroads, smelters and heavy industry were all welcomed with open arms. So too were banking houses and businesses that facilitated economic dealings, like fine hotels. Due to intense industrial activity, nearly every ethnic group was represented in the population. Entertainment and dining facilities of all ethnic types could be found in the Queen City. These factors and the leadership role the community played in Colorado plus development of public utilities and services gave the city a good reputation that was known across the United States and western Europe.²⁴ Two other cities in northeastern Colorado also gained attention that they used to promote themselves between 1870 and 1890. They were Greeley and Fort Collins; both best known as centers of farm activity. Their image was due to two factors. First was the early successes settlers in those two places enjoyed. Prosperity made for good advertising. Secondly, town fathers in each community sought to enhance their public images by supporting farmers' markets, stockyards and other ancillary facilities. In the case of Fort Collins, this extended to winning the state agricultural college. Fort Collins and Greeley were leaders in agri-business.²⁵

Each northeastern Colorado city sought growth and then when it occurred, was forced to deal with attendant problems. One of the first was sanitation. Typical practices of the era left refuse disposal to individuals. Human waste was disposed in privies, while roadsides and alleys were the usual receptacles for general refuse. This led to dirty, germ infested gutters. While towns remained small, occasional clean-ups of the curbs controlled the problem but as the cities grew they found such methods impractical. This matter led to calls for sewers as a way to remove waste. Many communities eventually built systems.²⁵ Growth led to increased crime in urban areas. To prevent robberies and acts of violence, local government either increased police protection or organized citizen self-help groups such as neighborhood patrols. Certain parts of some cities were turned over to thugs and hoodlums and instead of trying to solve crimes police exerted more of an effort to contain the problem. This philosophy was also applied by peace keepers when facing problems such

as prostitution or saloons. Accepting that those vices would continue despite efforts to eliminate them, the law enforcement officials allowed certain parts of their towns to be used for these activities, usually on an informal basis. Because each of the towns had ordinances to control vice, policemen often extorted payments from operators. In Boulder, the town council could brag that all brothels were closed within the city limits, however, they flourished beyond the border. In spite of periodic reform drives, little happened to permanently close the bars and bordellos until early in the twentieth century.²⁷

Despite these problems, early northeastern Colorado cities found themselves popular with vacationers from around the nation and Europe. The primary reason was Colorado's environment. Its scenery attracted visitors as did the chance to see the "Wild West". Also, the dry climate was reportedly good for health and vitality, especially for those with respiratory ailments. People hoping to find cures flocked to the area and they were especially attracted to Colorado Springs because of its genteel atmosphere and the Manitou Hot Springs, allegedly medicinal waters that would cure all manners of ailments from venereal disease to cancer. While the waters and climate were not really capable of miracles, the Colorado Springs area did prove life-giving for some and it became home of the "one-lung army" because of a large number of its residents who suffered from tuberculosis. To serve those who came west to recover, hospitals and sanitoriums were built in both Colorado Springs and Denver in addition to other towns throughout the region.²⁸

Railroads were another reason that tourists visited northeastern Colorado. Transportation companies worked hard between 1870 and 1910 to promote Colorado vacations and these efforts were rewarded by increased numbers of visitors. The mountains became a major lure as described in rail brochures. Not only did these pamphlets talk of fine air, picturesque landscapes and outdoor activities, they also touted excursion rates and special trains to facilitate travellers' needs. In one case the railroad itself became a tourist attraction: the Georgetown Loop between Georgetown and Silver Plume. If the loop was not enough, by the 1890s, passengers could continue on to the end of track and then transfer to the Argentine Central Railway and ride to the top of Mt. McClellan. Natural beauty combined with railroads' promotional work all came together to make tourism an important and lasting segment of the region's economy by 1900.²⁹

In addition to being centers of tourism and business, cities and towns of northeast Colorado were also the places of higher education in this state. Colorado territory's first college was located in Denver. It was established by John Evans to help give a further air of permanence and stability to Denver and to offer a service considered desirable. It was known as the Colorado Seminary but this name was later changed to Denver University. Other educational institutions located in or near the "Queen City" during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries included Loretto Heights College, Regis College, Colorado Women's College, and Westminster College. This latter facility was forced to close soon after its opening in 1915.³⁰ Denver was not the only city in northeastern Colorado to become a center of learning. Boulder beat several other contestants during the

1870s to become the home of the University of Colorado in 1876. Fort Collins boosters, a few years later, convinced the legislature to locate the state's new agricultural college there. This school was much later renamed Colorado State University. Not to be left out when Colorado was establishing these institutions both Greeley and Golden made bids and received the honor of having higher education facilities located in their towns. Greeley got the State Teachers College, later becoming the University of Northern Colorado. Golden became home of the Colorado School of Mines because of its proximity to the mountains and its long involvement with mining. It specialized in training geologists and mining engineers. Unable to get a state school until the mid-twentieth century Colorado Springs nonetheless supported its own place of higher learning; Colorado College. It was begun as a religious school and is privately funded to this day. With most of these colleges in operation by 1890 it was not surprising that the cities in which they were located became the centers of thought on social and political problems faced by Coloradans of the time. However, ferment was not limited to college communities. Rather, most towns became points of political action as both the nineteenth century and northeast Colorado's frontier period drew to a close together.³¹

NOTES Chapter VIII

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⁵Lucas Brandt interview, vol. 353, CWA, CSHS.; J. G. Abbott interview, vol. 352, CWA, CSHS.; Kizzie Gordon Buchanan interview, vol. 341, CWA, CSHS.; L. B. Gifford interview, vol. 353, CWA, CSHS. and "Larimer Towns," CWA, CSHS.

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⁷Mrs. J. Lucas interview, vol. 343, CWA, CSHS., and Boyes, CWA, CSHS.

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¹⁰"Education in Yuma, Colorado," vol. 352, CWA, CSHS., E.R. Johnson, CWA, CSHS., and J. Abbott, CWA, CSHS.

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³¹"The Colorado School of Mines," vol. 354, CWA, CSHS.; James F. Willard, "Early Days at the University of Colorado," *The Trail*, 7 (May 1915): 5-16.; Peterson, *Ft. Collins*, p. 63., and E. C. E., CWA, CSHS.

Chapter IX THE 1890s, A TIME FOR CHANGE

Northeastern Colorado enjoyed a period of continual economic expansion from 1858 until the early 1890s. Yet there were breaks like the Civil War years, and the Panic of 1873. The twenty years after 1873 witnessed changes, from statehood to the closing of the frontier. During the 1890s, into the 1900s, the "boom" ended and residents began a period of evaluation to find ways to cope with the changed situation and to solve problems that were neglected when times were good. In turn, citizens called for reforms. The nineties was the decade of Populists, a plains agrarian movement demanding social change. The Progressives followed, during the 1910s, in hopes of a new order. Their greatest influence came between 1900 and 1917.

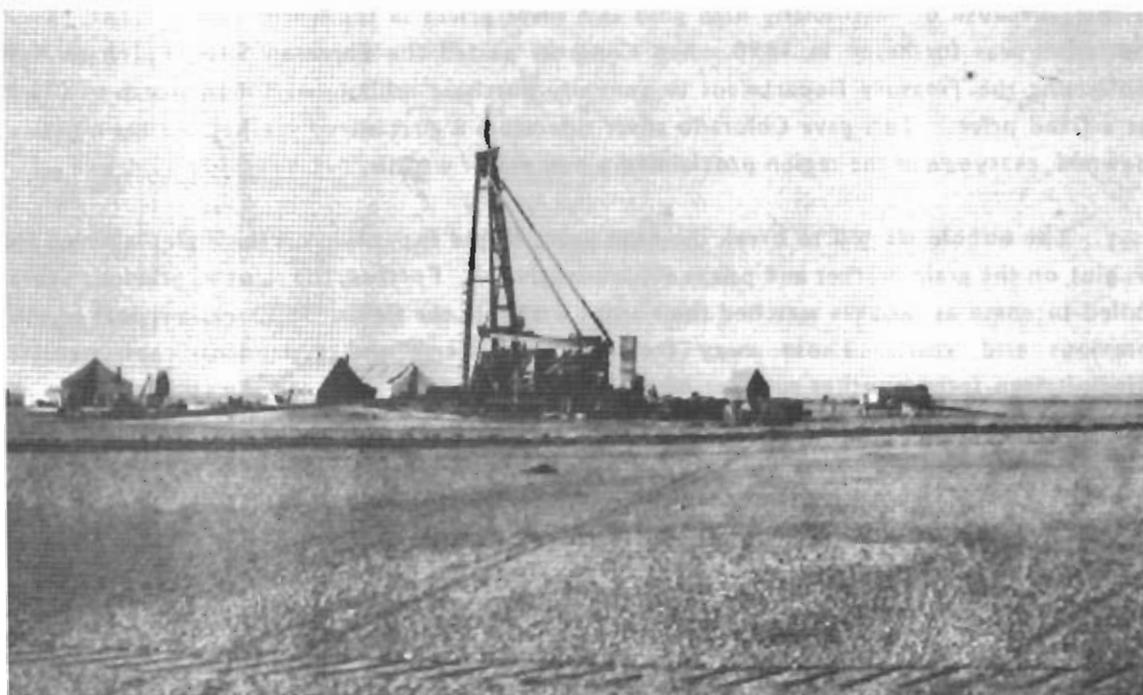
Both groups were parts of larger national movements that profoundly altered America's thinking about the plight of humanity. Each found its acceptance eased by the 1893 economic upheaval.¹ The late 1880s saw northeastern Colorado's business boom. This lasted from 1887 until 1893. During the late 1880s ranchers were recovering from disastrous winters as market prices for cattle stabilized, then rose slightly. The blizzards that crippled ranching on the open range proved the beginning of a series of "wet years" on the plains. Rainy spells convinced settlers that the climate had permanently changed because of plowing the land. This concept was called "pluviculture". Settlers poured into the region and reported the land fertile and water plentiful. This caused even more people to relocate. Hope that prosperity was "here to stay" abounded and thousands developed false expectations for the future. These desires were also shared by both miners and mine owners because of artificially high gold and silver prices in the world also market. This optimism was furthered in 1890 when Congress passed the Sherman Silver Purchase Act obligating the Treasury Department to annually purchase millions of dollars worth of silver at a fixed price. This gave Colorado silver operators a guaranteed market. As the nineties dawned, everyone in the region proclaimed a new era of wealth.²

The bubble started to break the next year. Rapid expansion on the high plains led to a glut on the grain market and prices subsequently fell. Further, the rains of previous years failed to come as farmers watched their crops wither in the fields. 1892 was a repeat of the previous arid year. Those away from water systems and dependent upon natural precipitation faced another summer of trying to get by. Ranchers had the same problem as drought limited forage production while more areas of range were plowed into dryland fields. Beef prices also fell. Difficulties on the plains had little impact on events in the high country. As government continued to buy metals at inflated prices, everything indicated prosperity would remain well into the future.³

The final semblences of prosperity were swept away in 1893. The precipitating causes were a glut on the world silver market and fears by President Grover Cleveland that the United States government's gold reserves were being depleted by silver purchases. He suspended silver buying and in doing so created a panic. Silver mines closed almost immediately. Cleveland's actions led to a rash of bank failures and other financial problems.



This ranch in the foothills near Lyons, Colorado was typical of small ranches and farms throughout northeast Colorado
W. T. Lee Photo, Courtesy USGS.



This 1908 photo of oil drilling in Boulder County foreshadowed a later boom. M. I. Goldman Photo, Courtesy USGS.

In an effort to keep their doors open, lending institutions called in loans to farmers, ranchers and mine owners. This forced producers to dump what inventories they had onto oversupplied markets. Those who could not raise cash to meet their obligations were forced to declare bankruptcy or sell their land. In some cases lands reverted to the Federal government because homesteads taken up during the late 1880s were not patented when the Panic of 1893 began. For ranchers the situation was much the same, but rather than go out of business they took up sheep raising to replace lost cattle revenues. Wool and mutton prices proved more stable than beef at the time. Despite adjustments ranchers still quit and left the region. Years later, when remembering the period, those who stayed said that anyone who could afford to do so moved from farms and ranches in northeast Colorado.⁴

Townfolk fared little better during the Panic of 1893. With farmers, miners and workers either out of work or broke, small businessmen lost customers. Bankers, pressed by depositors worried about their funds, experienced runs on their institutions. Some had to close and this led to a crisis of confidence in banks throughout the region. Runs continued through the summer of 1893 and into 1894. At times the moneychangers resorted to dramatics like pouring bags of coins into their windowsills to "encourage" depositor faith. Behind the scenes less calm prevailed as funds were shifted and new methods were attempted to avert total disaster. Despite these efforts, many northeastern Colorado banks found themselves unable to meet fund demands and they suspended operations. More than one banker sneaked out of town at night to avoid the wrath of his depositors. Among those most affected by monetary problems were shopkeepers of the region's towns.⁵ Often merchants borrowed from banks to stock their stores. When farmers stopped buying and then could not pay their accounts stores, in turn, could not service their debts to the banks. Also, lack of credit made it difficult to re-stock their shelves. This led to increased unemployment, store failures and a huge burden for local charities. Welfare, during the 1890s, was a private matter for church groups not government unless dire emergencies required immediate action. As the Panic struck every segment of the area's economy, private funds disappeared and charities were unable to keep up with growing demand. Since the troubles were nation-wide it was quite impossible to get donations from other parts of the country as earlier, during the drought years. Within a short time, those out of work became drifters looking for a hand-out or a few days of labor. Both in the mountains and on the plains ghost towns came into being as mines closed and farmers abandoned their lands. Homesteaders simply packed up and moved out, deserting what they had built.⁶

Northeastern Colorado's transportation network did not escape the economic catastrophe of 1893. Tight credit and a rapid decrease in traffic put railroads in an especially precarious predicament. To heighten their troubles, most railways were heavily in debt from rapid expansion during the 1880s. As less revenue came in, the companies were unable to service these obligations. Creditors turned to the courts and forced rail companies into receivership. One by one, the Denver and Rio Grande, the Union Pacific, the Colorado Midland, the DSP&P and others were forced, by bankruptcy judges, into the hands of receivers. Expansion projects halted. Workers were laid off or forced to accept pay

reductions. Service was trimmed back. Some of the smaller branchlines were abandoned or sold to larger roads if they could afford the expense. For most of the remainder of the decade judges and receivers formed new organizations. The Union Pacific Railroad and its subsidiaries were sold at public auction to satisfy debts.⁷

It took little time for northeastern Coloradans to realize what a disaster the Panic of 1893 really was. They sought remedies almost as soon as the first shockwaves of depression were felt. This led to an increase in the popularity of the Peoples' Party, also called Populists. The movement was a response to alleged abuses of farmers by "the system." The movement had its beginnings in the 1880s as part of a grassroots organization known as the Farmers' Alliance. These members felt they suffered unduly from high freight rates on the railroads and usurious mortgages at banks. Their primary support during the 1880s came from the eastern Great Plains and the deep South. Coloradans enjoyed good times and had no sympathy for their farm brethren elsewhere.⁸ During the late 1880s and early 1890s farmers voiced their opinions to Colorado's Republican and Democratic parties. Some of their complaints were negated by passage of an anti-royalty law for water companies. Minor concessions did not satisfy farmers who sought more sweeping reforms. It appeared that the major parties were spending time on minor problems or dead issues. The state's Republicans still waved the "bloody shirt" at each election, thereby reminding voters that Democrats had "caused" the Civil War. In reply the opposition accused the G.O.P. of corruption and of being the tool of business. Such arguments did little to satisfy anyone's grievances.⁹

At the same time, farmers experienced hard times and sought change. Many who moved to northeast Colorado during the 1880s, believing promises of rich lands, found reality much harsher. They had high expectations thanks to booster literature, but these hopes were unfulfilled. Thinking that they had done everything humanly possible for success, farmers looked to others as the cause of their woes.¹⁰ Once the bubble burst during the dry years of the early 1890s, northeastern Colorado's agricultural population took a more serious look at reform proposals of the Farmers' Alliance. At the same time Alliance members were in the process of organizing themselves for political action as the Peoples Party. In Colorado they had little trouble in finding targets for their wrath. The Alliance saw railroads and bankers as two of the greatest public enemies not to mention water companies. Populists felt those three evils needed regulation and in some cases punishment by the government. Denver bankers, because of control they had over financial affairs in the state were shown as examples of exploiters of hard working common men. High interest rates and foreclosures led to hatred. Soon after the Panic of 1893 began, as deposits were lost when financial institutions failed, farmers became further frustrated.¹¹ Populist criticism of money interests appealed to settlers in northeastern Colorado because most of these producers were debtors. Those farming irrigated lands borrowed to pay for new water systems and/or expansion and because the price of land was high, their obligations were extensive. Drylanders were the later arrivals who took out loans to get their farms started and then went further in debt during the boom of the late eighties by expanding their farms. As the market fell, loan obligations took more and more of their income. The farmers felt

that a cure was forced inflation and the best way to get that was to drop limitations on the coinage of silver.¹²

But even before the Panic, Populists had made their presence felt in Colorado. In the elections of 1892, as the national Peoples' Party nominated General James B. Weaver for the Presidency, Colorado's groups offered voters a ticket for state offices. Weaver fell to defeat but in this state Populists elected Davis H. Waite, Governor along with several members of the legislature. Waite, of Aspen, was one of the party's local founders and a long-time advocate of labor reform. His victory came from support by miners, laborers, and farmers.¹³ Once in office, Waite tried to put Populist philosophy into action through state law. However, the legislature did not agree, making Waite an ineffective governor. He became embroiled in small matters and lost credibility. One plan was to make Mexican silver dollars legal tender in Colorado. This scheme drew fire from the press and businessmen who called it the "Fandango Dollar" fiasco. In Denver, Waite appeared foolish thanks to the "City Hall War." During the 1890s the "Queen City" did not have home rule and the Governor appointed both the Police and Fire boards. Waite sought to replace the incumbent in these positions with his own men. However, the commissioners refused to vacate their offices. Backed by the police and fire departments, they barricaded themselves in city hall. Waite then called out the state militia to remove the board members by force. For a time it looked as if violence would take place in Colorado's capitol city as each side refused to budge. Finally a compromise was agreed upon and bloodshed was averted. This episode seriously damaged Waite's image as a leader. As the Panic of 1893 worsened during the governor's second year the Populist Party attracted new followers.¹⁴

Farmers remained with the party as did miners. Support increased as prohibitionists in Weld and Larimer Counties saw the new party as the best way to accomplish their goals. After the Panic of 1893 and the collapse of the silver market, the Peoples' Party gained more strength from mineowners, bankers and other businessmen. These groups did not seek labor reform or control of the railroads but rather were attracted by the "free" silver part of Populist philosophy. Free silver meant that the U.S. Treasury should coin silver and put it into circulation without artificial limits as to the amount of specie available to the public. Silver's value was to be set at a fixed ratio of 16 to 1 with gold. Calls for the free and unlimited coinage of silver resounded throughout northeastern Colorado during 1894.¹⁵ That same year Waite faced re-election. Despite increased popularity of the silver issue, Waite found little support as the Republican Party captured the Governor's office running on a promise to save the state from "Populist misrule." No doubt Waite's mishandling of his office led to defeat in November.¹⁶

This setback did nothing to halt growing unease over silver became an issue that united various factions of the Populist party and lead to the creation of "Silver Republicans" and "Silver Democrats," that is, members of the regular parties that sought immediate monetary reform. As preparations were made for the campaign of 1896, silver forces looked about for a leader to defeat "Gold Bug" Democrat Grover Cleveland and

whomever the Republicans nominated. William Jennings Bryan of Nebraska finally emerged as spokesman of a consolidated free silver movement. As a nominal Democrat he stirred that party's convention and some hardline Democrats took up silver as their cause. They also gave Bryan the Democratic nomination. A few weeks later, the Populist meeting gave its approval to the Nebraskan's candidacy as part of a coalition with Democrats. Free Silver became Bryan's only issue and the campaign was bitterly fought until election day. Bryan visited Colorado several times with rousing receptions on each occasion. Despite his considerable popularity in the West, Bryan was on the short end of the tally when the votes were counted in November. After the election, Populism lost most of its supporters in northeast Colorado, but issues raised refused to disappear.¹⁷ Bryan's defeat, combined with a gradual return to prosperity in 1896, led to political change. The frontier era was over and settlers realized moving to different lands for a new start was no longer possible. Instead, they would have to modify where they lived. This led to serious changes throughout the region.

Populism caused people to consider social problems of the times. While "causes" like prohibition or women's suffrage were part of the Peoples' Party platform they became lost in the silver controversy. After 1896, these issues were only partially resolved. That which was accomplished was due to support from urban dwellers not from rural Populists. City folks, after getting women's suffrage in Colorado during 1893, started looking at other problems. In doing so northeastern Colorado's citizens were in step with their counter-parts elsewhere in the United States. However, it was only after 1900 that urban reformers looked beyond their own regions and debated the national situation. At that point the movement became known as Progressivism.¹⁸ Progressives took up issues raised during the Populist era but they saw them in a different light. This was especially true in northeastern Colorado. Populism was basically a "backward looking" philosophy that sought return of an imaginary "yeoman farmer," while Progressivism saw into the future to a day when social problems could be alleviated and mankind would not suffer. They also believed humanity was innately good and that difficulties arose not because of moral defects in mankind but rather from the human environment. Therefore Progressive programs were aimed at improving man's physical surroundings and fostering a spirit of justice. Progressives were confident that this social approach would be successful rather than strict government regulation. Political bodies did, however, need to make rules that would uplift civilization.¹⁹

The first appearance of Progressivism came in the 1890s. Anti-saloon leagues, voting reform proposals and urban clean-up campaigns were among the manifestations. Towns across northeastern Colorado felt the presence of social uplifters as local reform parties carried city elections and worked to close bars or ban gambling. Newly enfranchised female voters supported these efforts. A good example of change was the Sterling, Colorado reform party, working to close local beer gardens. Throughout the 1890s momentum grew as reformers from around the region met and exchanged ideas. By the early twentieth century, northeast Colorado held an unquestioned leadership position in a growing state-

wide movement for drastic social change. This was due, in large part to the role Denver played in Colorado politics.

By the 1890s Colorado's capitol city was as squalid and congested as any metropolitan area in the nation. Smelters and other industries polluted both air and water. Residential segregation, exemplified by the Chinese neighborhood, Hop Alley, led to overcrowding and unhealthy social tensions. City government appeared infested with corruption and without home rule there seemed to be little that could be done. As the depression of 1893 deepened, unemployed workers from across the state filtered into Denver looking for work, but generally depended on charity to survive. This caused even greater problems for local welfare agencies. Children roamed the streets and alleys searching for food or odd jobs. They often broke the law and when caught they were treated as adults. To help families make ends meet youngsters were sent to work. Such problems gave reformers a wide variety of issues. The 1893 depression caused the social situation to be brought to the public's eye.²¹ One of Colorado's foremost reformers came from Denver. He gained a national reputation for his work with juveniles. Judge Ben Lindsay as a magistrate in the city's court system saw and heard the cases of child offenders. He noticed that there were repeat criminals and he questioned a judicial system that failed to rehabilitate youth. Lindsay came to the conclusion that little was gained by putting children in prison with adults where crime was reinforced. The judge began, during the early 1900s to look for alternative forms of punishment that would rehabilitate rather than permanently scar youth offenders. Lindsay publicized his ideas. In 1907, Denver adopted a program to handle juveniles separately from adults. During the next few years similar needs were heard in the state legislature. After extensive debate, the General Assembly passed laws that became the foundation of this state's modern juvenile connections program. Concern for youth spread from the area of crime. Steps were taken, in Colorado, to regulate child labor thanks to efforts by Progressives.

Another segment of government where reformers sought change was the relationship between state government and cities, particularly Denver. Progressives felt that corruption in the capitol city could only be removed if the state gave up control of local affairs. The "City Hall War" of Davis Waite's administration highlighted the problem. Reformers began a campaign for home rule (local control) during the 1890s. They accomplished this in 1902 when the state constitution was amended to allow Denver home rule.²³ During those same years, the city gained its own political "boss"--Robert W. Speer. A Democrat and longtime Denver booster, he worked his way into positions of power with the Police and Fire Board during the 1890s. From there he controlled large numbers of votes and dozens of patronage jobs. His men ruled the town's vice operations and demanded protection pay-offs, part of which were turned over to Democratic party war chests. In 1901 Speer was appointed to the Denver Public Works Board; he controlled slightly more than half of the city's budget. Speer survived the troubled nineties because of his willingness to work with Denver's business sector including the owners of the Tramway, the Denver Union Water Company and those in the public utilities sector. When the city was given home rule in 1902, Speer did not

oppose it *per se*, but rather he feared reformers would create a new city charter thus ending his career as "Boss Speer," Living up to Speer's worst expectations, the new city charter, drawn up by Progressives, had a distinct anti-utility tone. To stop change Speer became a power broker. He sought help from businessmen and vice czar Ed Chase. With these combined forces, along with votes from municipal workers, Speer defeated the charter in 1903. The next year a similar document was put before the voters, but it was not as hard on the utilities and it gave the Mayor considerable power. Under this charter, Speer was elected Denver's Mayor.²⁴

With the new city government in operation, reformers renewed their attacks on utility companies and local vice operators. The publicity these efforts received in local papers and the leadership role that Denver's newspapers had in northeast Colorado meant that events were widely followed. Progressives in other towns worked on the elimination of social evils. Public ownership of utilities became one of their main goals. Denver and Colorado Springs made arrangements for the sale of private utility companies to these cities. Final transfers, however, were not completed until after 1910 in most cases. The sales led to creation of new agencies like the Denver Board of Water Commissioners and a municipal power authority at Colorado Springs.²⁵ Since many towns did not have large utility companies they could only take tentative steps similar to those of larger cities toward municipal ownership and control of public utility corporations. However, all communities joined together in their demand that a general moral uplift was needed. Gambling establishments and houses of ill repute became two of the most obvious targets for local Progressives. Laws concerning vice were usually in place but they were only loosely enforced. Pressures on city councils and local officials led to stricter interpretations of vice laws and this caused closure of most of the illicit houses. In Denver no one escaped the law, from the pleasure palaces of Market (Holladay) Street to filthy Chinese cribs. What to do with the inmates of these facilities became such a problem that concerned citizens began a rehabilitation program for Denver's "soiled doves." By 1916 the morality clean-up was all but complete in northeast Colorado.²⁶

The use and abuse of alcohol was an evil that Progressives closely associated with gambling and prostitution. To stop the local liquor trade, reformers went to the state legislature and used temperance towns like early-day Greeley as examples of moral living. In 1907 Colorado's General Assembly yielded to pressure and passed a law that allowed each town to create local option prohibition ordinances. At first, this new legislation pleased Progressives, however, it soon became apparent that saloon owners used every means to see that local elections went favorably. Equally if voters chose to close the bars, thirsty citizens quickly found other ways, like bootlegging, to get around the law. Unhappy with this turn of events, prohibitionists began a new drive to strengthen state law. Members of the Womens' Christian Temperance Union (WCTU) travelled around northeast Colorado lecturing on the evils of "demon rum" in order to encourage support for stronger legislation. Beyond that listeners were urged to give up drink and demand a total ban on liquor sales throughout the state. Celebrities like Carrie Nation, "The little lady with the axe" who went around breaking up saloons toured the region to support the cause. In 1916 their



The Frederick Law Olmstead Park in Boulder, Colorado honors the contributions of a great landscape architect.
Photo by S. F. Mehls.

work bore fruit when on January 1st, all Colorado went dry. Residents of the northeast region again led the way in setting policy for the entire state. This law caused rummers to take up bootlegging or to make their own illegal liquor . After all, the legislature could not stop thrist.²⁸ Colorado's Progressives were pleased with the General Assembly and as a national movement for prohibition grew, they wholeheartedly supported it. In 1919 the United States Constitution was amended to outlaw the manufacture and sale of alcohol. In 1920 the nation went "dry" in accordance with the provisions of the Volstead Act. Northeastern Colorado reformers felt they had played a significant role in this change because of the state's earlier experiments in prohibition. They were equally proud that the national constitution was amended in 1920, to give women the vote, again because the Colorado example was used to convince skeptics that female suffrage was positive. These changes not only affected the way government operated, but they were also seen as bettering mankind.²⁹

Other citizens of this period also interested in civil betterment felt that steps like outlawing liquor sales only one type of environmental improvement and that to fully accomplish progressive goals, something had to be done to alter physical surroundings. This was known as the "City Beautiful" movement and was an outgrowth of a planned city at the 1893 Chicago's Worlds Fair. The most amitious program of this nature in north-eastern Colorado was led by Mayor Speer in Denver. The clean-up and channeling of Cherry Creek, along with construction of Speer Boulevard next to that waterway, were first steps in this direction. The second phase was construction of a civic center and park near the state capitol building to provide open space. In Boulder, the city hired Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr. to design its first parks, while towns throughout this region joined in the craze to create recreation areas to improve urban conditions.³⁰

Reformers felt that improvements in government, society and physical surroundings would be wasted if people were not well educated. This fear, combined with a sense of urgency to "Americanize" foreign immigrants led to creation of adult education programs. Denver, with its large Italian, German and other foreign populations, led the way. Progressives, including Emily Griffith, founded schools to train both adults and immigrants in useable work skills and to gain fundamentals in the "3Rs." Her Opportunity School became a model for other similar operations in the nation. Hand in hand, with new educational facilities, came the spread of public libraries. In numerous northeast Colorado towns, these citadels of learning were aided by grants from the Andrew Carnegie Foundation. That organization gave money to build libraries and also supplied them with books. Many of these structures still stand, either as libraries or for other purposes.³¹

Populist and later Progressive changes affected the future of northeast Colorado. They came about in response to economic troubles of the early 1890s. The Populist movement was the last concerted effort by rural folks to successfully manipulate events in the region. The nineties, further, marked a closing of the frontier in northeast Colorado. From 1900 forward urban areas became dominate forces, both politically and economically. Social and governmental developments were only small parts of a greater change that took place in activity between 1890 and 1920.

NOTES Chapter IX

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³Albert M. Bair interview, vol. 358, CWA, CSHS.; W.C. Grigsby interview, vol. 352, CWA, CSHS.; Henry Wells interview, vol. 352, CWA, CSHS., and White, "1893," pp. 2-6.

⁴Irving L. Barker interview, vol. 352, CWA, CSHS., and Leila S. Walters letters, vol. 350, CWA, CSHS.; White, "1893," pp. 25-33., and Ora B. Peake, *The Colorado Range Cattle Industry*, (Glendale, CA.: The Arthur H. Clark Co., 1937), pp. 275-277., hereafter cited: Peake, *Range*.

⁵John G. Abbott interview, vol. 352, CWA, CSHS.; Lyle W. Dorsett, *The Queen City, A History of Denver*, (Boulder: Pruett, 1977), p. 113., hereafter cited: Dorsett, *Queen.*, and White, "1893," pp. 25-33.

⁶A.K. Clarke interview, vol. 351, CWA, CSHS.; Mrs. Edgar L. Kern interview, vol. 353, CWA, CSHS., and White, "1893," pp. 40-45, 64-67, 83-87.

⁷Morris Cafky, *Colorado Midland*, (Denver: Rocky Mountain Railroad Club, 1965), pp. 77-83. and White, "1893," pp. 50-56.

⁸Wright, *Politics*, pp. 41-43, 252.

⁹*Ibid.*, pp. 53-57, 97-103.

¹⁰*Ibid.*, p. 34.; Abbott, CWA, CSHS., and Pantzer, CWA, CSHS.

¹¹Wright, *Politics*, pp. 34-40., and White, "1893," pp. 90-94.

¹²Slater, "Yuma," CWA, CSHS.; White, "1893," pp. 26-30., and Wright, *Politics*, pp. 130-134.

¹³Wright, *Politics*, pp. 128, 138-144.

¹⁴*Ibid.*, pp. 161-163, 170-176., and White, "1893," pp. 90-98.

¹⁵Wright, *Politics*, pp. 130-133, 202-206.

¹⁶White, "1893," pp. 96-100.

¹⁷Wright, *Politics*, pp. 205-218, 229.

¹⁸*Ibid.*, pp. 130-131, 155-158., and Athearn, *Coloradans*, pp. 218-220.

¹⁹Dorsett, *Queen*, pp. 128-132.

²⁰"Incorporation of Sterling," vol. 341, CWA, CSHS., and Nell Brown Propst, *Forgotten People, A History of the South Platte Trail*, (Boulder: Pruett, 1979), pp. 178-180., hereafter cited: Propst, *Forgotten*.

²¹Athearn, *Coloradans*, pp. 216-220., and White, "1893," pp. 70-74.

²²Dorsett, *Queen*, pp. 131, 152-168., and Athearn, *Coloradans*, pp. 226-228.

²³Wright, *Politics*, pp. 220-222., and Dorsett, *Queen*, pp. 120-123, 130.

²⁴Dorsett, *Queen*, pp. 122, 128-138.

²⁵*Ibid.*, pp. 143-154. and Marshall Sprague, *One Hundred Plus, A Centennial History of Colorado Springs*, (Colorado Springs: Colorado Springs Centennial, Inc., 1971), pp. 19-23.

²⁶Sanford Charles Gladden, *Ladies of the Night*, (Boulder: n.p., 1979), pp. 2-4., and Dorsett, *Queen*, pp. 130, 154-158.

²⁷Fred D. Johnson interview, vol. 352, CWA, CSHS., and "Sterling Incorporation," CWA, CSHS.; Dorsett, *Queen*, pp. 156-157 and Athearn, *Coloradans*, pp. 228-230.

²⁸Evadene A. B. Swanson, *Fort Collins Yesterdays*, (Ft. Collins: Swanson, 1975), p. 70.; F. Johnson, CWA, CSHS.; No Author, "The Progressive Party in 1914," in *A Colorado Reader*, edited by Carl Ubbelohde, (Boulder: Pruett, 1962), pp. 288-290., hereafter cited: No Author, "1914.", and Athearn, *Coloradans*, pp. 228-230.

²⁹Athearn, *Coloradans*, pp. 250-252., and No Author, "1914," p. 287.

³⁰Mr. Stienhauser interview, vol. 354, CWA, CSHS.; see: Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr., *The Improvement of Boulder, Colorado*, (Boulder: n.p., 1910)., and Dorsett, *Queen*, pp. 143-160.

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Chapter X THE EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURY

From the end of the Panic of 1893 until 1920 northeast Colorado experienced a new phase of development and change. Some older industries disappeared, while new ones took their place and earlier projects, came to fruition. Basic economic pursuits, like farming, took new directions as farmers continued trying different crops and techniques. From 1900 to 1920 two new forces played an ever-increasing role in northeastern Colorado's life; cities and the Federal government. The rapidity with which change took place astounded residents. It appeared as if the "frontier boom" repeated itself as activity across the region took on new proportions. Nowhere was this felt more than in northeastern Colorado's cities. From 1900 to 1920 the region's urban population more than doubled. Towns, large and small, saw the crush of this movement. Growth had other impacts, including a return to prosperity. New businesses opened, bank deposits grew and real estate prices rose. As population increased, towns found themselves without traditional leadership. In some cases, particularly Denver and Colorado Springs, old society found itself not only submerged in a flood of newcomers, but its members were aging and slowly dying. Denver's "old inner circle" fell. Original state builders including David H. Moffat, Walter Cheesman, Charles J. Hughes, Jr., Fred Z. Solomon and others died between 1900 and 1920. Even before death they found that their power was eroded by the deluge of "new rich". By 1920 a new elite was formed to mold the city's destiny. Colorado Springs had a like experience when the community's founder, William Jackson Palmer and a number of his associates passed on. These vacuums led to the development of a new society and encouraged a period of town promotion.¹

Between 1900 and 1920 growth caused even more growth for the cities of northeast Colorado. Speculators and promoters flocked into the region to establish themselves locally and then proceeded to scour the nation for new immigrants. Promotions highlighted previous development pointing to intense expansion of agriculture and industry. Booster information fell on receptive ears. Sounding like their counterparts in the nineteenth century, promoters of the 1900s again painted pictures of unlimited opportunity in Colorado, while minimizing the effects of the recent depression. Often literature was in general terms and citizens from all walks of life were encouraged to relocate to northeastern Colorado.² Newcomers responded to this propaganda and as they arrived, the local economy underwent more diversification. Often, new businesses did not last as industries failed to survive and older units dominated. However, this was not the case in all fields. Some, like smelting, languished in the early twentieth century, as did mining, generally, until World War I. To replace minerals plus other industries that were hurt by the 1893 depression, boosters undertook to entice new manufacturing to Denver and Colorado Springs. Among the newcomers were food processing, including meat packing and produce canning. However, some grandiose schemes did not materialize. One was the Pioneer Iron and Steel Company, to be build in Denver. There was talk of the metal works by local interests in 1902 and 1903, but nothing came of this promotion. Despite failures, the regional economy did experience a certain degree of diversification because older industries had been crippled by the Panic of 1893.³

The region's mineral industry was hardest hit by events at the close of the nineteenth century. Without the Sherman Silver Purchase Act, prices stayed low well into the 1900s, when a slight revival occurred. In Gilpin and Clear Creek Counties the upturn was short-lived due to labor disputes. The Western Federation of Miners, (WFM) a union that gained strength during the 1890s, organized workers in the mining camps of northeast Colorado at the turn of the century. Union efforts were lessened by economic problems of the times, especially as mineowners cut wages and laid-off men in an attempt to keep their properties open. By 1903 the WFM felt confident enough that when operators tried to institute new pay reductions, the union called a strike. While the work stoppage was brief, it was enough to cause hardship for owners and forced marginal operations out of business.⁴ Despite setbacks, miners in Boulder, Clear Creek and Gilpin Counties were still optimistic about the area as a continuing source of precious metals. Unwilling to give up, mine operators in Clear Creek and Gilpin counties banded together to support the Argo Tunnel and Mill near Idaho Springs. The tunnel connected mines as far away as Central City with the mill in an effort to reduce transportation costs. Part of this new spirit came from new gold discoveries around Wall Street and at Jamestown in Boulder County. The ores were of a lower quality than previously mined and claimholders decided that a cheaper milling method was needed to make the mines profitable. This led to construction of a large stamp mill and concentrator works at Wall Street, the remains of which can still be seen. Wall Street, Sunshine, Sunset and other communities in the area saw overnight growth. Prosperity tapered off through World War I, but by then the richest deposits were nearly exhausted and processing costs were rising. These two factors made mining unprofitable and companies closed. Silver also enjoyed a brief resurgence during World War I, but this "boomlet" passed by 1920. That year generally marked an end to northeast Colorado's precious metal industry, except for small scale, localized operations.⁵

Semi-precious minerals also gained attention during the early years of the twentieth century. Tungsten caused a mania reminiscent of earlier rushes. It is a metal used in steel alloys to harden the final product. The "black iron," as it was called, was known for many years. However, not until after 1900 did this mineral become commercially valuable. Tungsten had no use when it was first encountered during the early 1870s and in fact was cursed by the miners around Nederland and Caribou because it was interlocked with silver. When the metal was correctly identified, little development happened because the steel industry had its needs met by Pennsylvania and other states near the eastern plants. Boulder County road crews did find a use for tungsten when they put the crushed mineral on roads in place of gravel.⁶ The situation quickly changed, after 1910, when steel companies needed more tungsten than they could get from traditional suppliers. Organizations were created and they sent men to Colorado to find claims and to start mines. In Boulder County some silver mines found waste piles in greater demand than silver or ore itself. Would be miners flocked to camps near tungsten deposits and a boom was underway. The outbreak of World War I in 1914 and the arms race that preceded it, increased production at tungsten mines, caused by a world-wide demand for hardened steel. As orders for armaments flowed in from all sides, American factories paid higher prices and mines were opened to supply the nation's blast furnaces. As the United States entered World War I



This Boulder County tungsten mill, 1917, represented the boom that took place during World War I.
F. L. Hess Photo, Courtesy USGS.

during 1917, mining activity remained high. By mining activity then Boulder county mines produced 80 percent of America's total output. The boom continued into 1918 until an epidemic influenza swept the western United States. Boulder County's tungsten camps were hardest hit of any towns in Colorado. Hundreds died from the flu which some people connected with local tungsten mines. Finding replacement workers was difficult and as the ranks of labor thinned, mines closed. At the same time, events elsewhere caused problems for the region's tungsten industry. On November 11, 1918, an Armistice went into effect and the war was over. Steel demand dropped dramatically and so did need for Colorado's mineral. The final blow came in the early 1920s when new Chinese mines opened and produced a better ore at much lower cost. While it lasted, the "black iron" boom helped foster local economic growth and prolonged the life of a few camps in Boulder County.⁷

Vanadium was another steel oriented mineral extracted from the hills near Nederland, Jamestown and Caribou between 1910 and 1920. This mineral developed as an auxiliary to some tungsten operations since vanadium was part of "black iron's" ore. The primary source of vanadium, a radioactive element, was actually on Colorado's Western Slope. However, pockets found in northeast Colorado were developed commercially. An outgrowth of this mineral was the development of processing plants for both vanadium and radium in Denver. After discovery of the x-ray, demand grew and the "Queen City," being near a source of supply, became home to small companies that converted raw ore into marketable products. As the market for radioactive materials declined after 1918, this cottage industry disappeared, due partly to Belgian Congo pitchblende suppling world needs at lower cost.⁸

The mines that proved most stable from 1900 to 1920 in northeast Colorado were fuel producers. Coal fields in eastern Boulder County, producing since the 1870s, continued to grow during this era. Primary users of local coal were homeowners and small businesses. The low grade of the fuel limited its industrial use. However, as the area's population increased, so did demand for home heating, thereby assuring collieries a secure market. Further southeast, in Elbert, eastern Adams and in Arapahoe counties, coal mines opened to produce lignite for the same consumers. After World War I broke out, demand for this mineral grew even more and prices rose accordingly. Because most area coal was not of industrial quality, production did not skyrocket, but rather grew just enough to keep pace with local need. Even without huge wartime needs coal mines were profitable and, by 1920, remained in expanding production.⁹

Petroleum, a somewhat new energy source, became popular during the early twentieth century. Northeastern Colorado evolved into one of the state's leading oil producers. By 1910, oil slowly replaced coal as the most used fuel in America. At that time geologists suspected that large deposits lay under the plains of northeast Colorado. Test wells were drilled and gushers followed. Overnight towns like Fort Lupton and Hudson were household words as attention focused on these new oil fields. Major petroleum companies and smaller operators all searched eastern Boulder, Larimer, Weld and Adams

counties looking for promising formations. This then extended eastward onto the plains. Oil "mania" spread, and taking advantage, con men offered phony stock in wells or set up bogus drilling companies to separate the investor from his money. This phase passed as serious operators developed local oil resources. The first area was known as the Boulder Field or the Boulder Dome. To the east was the Wattenburg Field. Excitement died down in a few years but wells continued to produce handsomely. By 1920 northeast Colorado lost its reputation as a major oil region due to new fields in Oklahoma and west Texas.¹⁰

Another non-precious mineral that saw increased use during the early twentieth century was limestone, it was widely used in concrete manufacturing. Increased consumption of this building material led to closure of stone quarries near Fort Collins and Loveland. Cement was in demand during the early 1900s, and northeastern Colorado, thanks to Ideal Cement Company of Denver, became one of the West's largest concrete producers. Limestone was also used in sugar beet processing and as that industry grew, demand increased. Mining in the region, as an industry, changed from the "romantic" business of gold and silver to more mundane extraction of coal, oil, stone and other semiprecious minerals.¹¹

Ranching was another part of northeast Colorado's economy that underwent significant modification between 1900 and 1920. Hard times in the 1890s had two effects on stockraising in this area. First, as homesteaders abandoned their claims, range grass slowly reclaimed the plains. In some counties this allowed ranching to regain its dominant position. The other important impact on cattle operators was forcing them to give up open range ranching. This in particular, made cattlemen include feedlots as part of their operations. Stockmen found the job of conversion eased as sugar beets became popular. The processed beet pulp was highly nutritious for cattle and it became readily available. Ranchers who made changes soon found themselves hybrids, half ranchers and half farmers, splitting their time between growing feed and tending herds. Blurred traditional employment lines meant there were few "pure" cattlemen or farmers left in the region. Another trend was an increasing number of ranchers who ran sheep to supplement cattle. This continued until World War I when beef prices rose sharply.¹² Even with new ranching methods, some stockmen in northeast Colorado refused to give up their old ways. As late as 1907, trail drives were still held by area ranchers to move herds into market or to a railroad. After that time this practice was abandoned, except for short distances. The drive changed due to gasoline powered trucks, and because nearly every rancher was close to a rail line as railroads built new branchlines during this period.¹³

Open range grazing on public lands also became a thing of the past, especially after 1900. In 1891 Congress addressed the problem of land fraud that took place under both the Timber Culture and the Desert Land Acts. That body decided the General Land Office (GLO) did not have necessary manpower to enforce land laws properly and that as long as the statutes were in effect these abuses could not be stopped. The only solution was selective repeal, which Congress did in the General Revision Act of 1891. At the same time, Congress empowered the President to withdraw lands from private entry and set them aside

as Timber Reserves. By the early 1900s considerable land along northeastern Colorado's front range was withdrawn. Once reserved, the Timber Service, at first part of the GLO and later transferred to the Department of Agriculture, excluded lumbermen and ranchers from these lands which led to problems, mostly on the West Slope. There were also conflicts in the eastern Rockies because many ranchers and sheep men depended on the high country for summer range. The government also sought to promote range conservation. Land use conflicts continued into the early twentieth century when a system of grazing allotments and fees was established by the new Forest Service. Protests over Federal "intervention" came from northeast Colorado stock and timber interests, but their outcries were mute compared to those heard in Rifle, Glenwood Springs or Craig. This was due, in large part, to their relatively small numbers within the total population of this region and a strong conservation ethic felt by northeastern Coloradans.¹⁴

By far the greatest changes in regional agriculture took place in farming, not ranching. The advent of sugar beet raising and processing was a significant local event. The 1890s saw farmers in irrigated areas, near the front range and along the South Platte Valley, heavily in debt and without cash crops. The orchards and fruits they had previously grown no longer commanded high prices and growers searched for replacements. This led, by the turn of the century, to sugar beets as a popular source of cash.¹⁵

Beet sugar's history started with Napoleon during the first decade of the 1800s. Because of war with England, France was cut off from her suppliers in the West Indies. To make up this deficit, France undertook a program to foster domestic sugar production. From here cultivation of sugar beets spread to much of central Europe. By the Civil War a few in this country were talking of beet sugar as a replacement for cane sugar. During the 1870s, as farmers filled the South Platte Valley, some experimented with beets. They discovered that beets would grow well in Colorado's climate if fields were well irrigated. Throughout the late nineteenth century testing continued, but few farmers took up beet growing because there was no market.¹⁶ Factories to process beets appeared in the West during the 1880s. Plants were constructed in California, Nebraska and Utah, but the return on beets grown in Colorado and then shipped out of state was so low that no one considered beet cultivation feasible for Centennial State growers. During bad times, at the end of the nineteenth century, regional farmers reconsidered their situation and tried to attract money into the South Platte Valley in order to finance a beet factory. Charles Boettcher and John Campion, two Colorado mining magnates recognized this state's potential as a sugar producer. While both men were closely tied to Denver business, they found that the most attractive offers of assistance came from Mesa County on the west slope. In 1899, with aid from the east slope investors, Colorado's first sugar factory was opened at Grand Junction. Trouble with Mesa County farmers soon caused the Denver group to re-evaluate its choice.¹⁷

By 1901 Boettcher's attention was on the South Platte Valley. That year both he and Campion financed construction of a beet sugar plant at Loveland. Farmers quickly



Sugar beets became a major crop in northeastern Colorado during the early 1900s. The Great Western plant at Longmont, Colorado processed thousands of tons of beets yearly.
A. E. Turner Photo, Courtesy USGS.

responded and the factory had more beets than it could process. This interest led others, including groups of farmers, to build beet refining facilities in northeast Colorado. Sugar became the region's watchword during the early 1900s. Towns along the South Platte, such as Fort Collins and Greeley were alive with talk of this new industry and how their cities could be the heart of Colorado's sugar business. The agricultural college at Fort Collins conducted seed studies to help farmers find better strains. An agricultural boom was underway in northeast Colorado by 1905 as "beet mania" spread.¹⁸ Boettcher was pleased with beet sugar's first years in northeastern Colorado. Rapid expansion and large initial profits were soon attracting financiers from outside the region. In 1905 Boettcher and Arthur Havemeyer of the American Sugar Company entered into an agreement resulting in the Great Western Sugar Company. These partners bought five regional plants and, with the Loveland operation, formed the corporation's core. Such interest on the part of venture capitalists encouraged South Platte Valley farmers to expand beet production more. By 1910, as the "boom" leveled off, over 79,000 acres were devoted solely to beet growing. New irrigation systems and reservoirs were also built to cash in on this bonanza. Great Western constructed factories up and down the South Platte and in towns like Longmont and Windsor. The sugar corporation helped finance water projects, factories, and it even built its own railroad, the Great Western Railway, to connect local farmers to company facilities. The one problem that both corporation and growers experienced during the "boom" was a serious labor shortage.¹⁹

Work in beet fields was hard. Thinning and cultivation required hand labor, much of which was spent crawling and squatting. Farmers were unable to do the work themselves even with help from family members. Anglo field hands were few in number and unwilling to do "stoop labor". To meet this shortage, Great Western stepped in by recruiting campaigns on the Great Plains and overseas to find workers.²⁰ One ethnic group particularly receptive to Great Western's offers were the Volga Germans or German Russians. These people were of Germanic origin and had settled on the Russian steppes during the reign of Catherine the Great. They settled in Russia until the late nineteenth century when new restrictions by Czar Alexander II limited their freedoms. At the same time, agents for American land companies sought immigrants to move on to the American Great Plains. German Russians were accepted by other Coloradans; however, the foreigners' habits of self-segregation and the continuation of old customs like the German language led to occasional charges of clannishness.²²

The outbreak of World War I, in 1914, increased tensions with Coloradans of Germanic heritage. Most of this was a spill-over of patriotic feelings, but on occasion flag-waving was used to mask jealousy over the Volga-German success'. The European war caused the German-Russians to seek further ethnocentricity while at the same time they gave up some outward manifestations of their cultural heritage. Even with this period of hostility, acceptance of the new settlers was good in northeast Colorado and since the early twentieth century German-Russians have made significant contributions to this region.²³

Even with the influx of Volga-Germans, beet producers still found themselves short of help. Great Western and other various other growers associations, continued to look for new labor supplies. They found two groups and used them between 1900 and 1920. Japanese-Americans along the Pacific Coast were eager to move to Colorado when they heard of job opportunities. Entire families came east and worked in the beet fields. Like the German-Russians, they saved their earnings and bought land. Some supplemented beet crops with truck gardens and they sold their vegetables to local markets. Of the Japanese-Americans who relocated to the South Platte Valley during the twentieth century, some went other places in Colorado, like the San Luis Valley. Beet hands brought in from Mexico were somewhat different. Large numbers spent the growing season in the region and then they returned home during the winter. Some came with their families while others moved wives and children to Colorado only after the husband had spent a year or two acquiring enough money to bring kin from Mexico. Mexicans were the least accepted newcomers. In some towns they faced both segregation and physical violence.²⁴

As the sugar boom progressed and all available irrigated land was put into beets, new settlers looked to the dry plains as a place to farm. Memories of the disastrous years during the 1890s faded and settlers edged their way onto the prairie. A combination of factors helped this movement. Primary was the introduction of new wheat strains, especially Russian varieties that were far better in an arid environment. The development of hybrids, suited to dryland farming, was given special emphasis by Federal agencies like the U.S. Department of Agriculture and by the state's Agricultural College at Fort Collins. Farmers could minimize wind erosion yet maximize soil water retention so that what rain that did fall would be better utilized. The concepts of field rotation and fallow plots was used for further water conservation.²⁵ The early 1900s also witnessed a new round of land speculation. Denver newspapers, businessmen, land locators, colonizers, the State Board of Immigration and speculators undertook campaigns to "sell" Colorado's dryland farming potential. These activities publicized recent developments, while minimizing earlier failures. Another device promoters used was to lobby Congress to revise homestead legislation, allowing individuals to claim more than 160 acres. They saw this matter as critical to the success of any new attempts at dryland farming because both the Timber Culture Act and Desert Land Act were repealed.²⁶ From 1900 to 1909 there was a groundswell supporting change in land law, to improve homesteading possibilities on the arid plains. While 160 acres was adequate for a family's needs in the humid Midwest, such a tract could not do well in Colorado without major irrigation. Calls for legislative revision came from several Plains states. Congress responded in 1909 with passage of legislation providing for 320 acres homesteads, in certain dry regions. This was called the Enlarged Homestead Act. Promoters felt the new law still did not go far enough. Three years later the Borah Act was passed. It relaxed residency requirements. Instead of five years occupancy, a settler now only had to spend seven months each of the "prove-up" years. During this same time, funds were allocated by both Federal and state governments to conduct field tests on dryland techniques and crops. An experimental agricultural station was located at Cheyenne Wells and another at Akron.²⁷

World War I played a key role in the spread of dryland farming. The United States became food supplier to the warring nations that demanded basics like wheat and corn. Production from existing farms could not possibly fill the need, so more settlers invaded the plains. As they did, the inadequacy of 320 acre farms became quite apparant. New pressure was put on Congress to further modify existing homestead laws. Adding to the clamor were ranchers who sought to increase their range. Cattlemen pointed to the fact that limited forage was available on the plains, and if parceled out in 320 acre blocks, it could not support viable ranch operations. Mounting pressure finally forced Congress to take action. In 1916 the Stock Raising Homestead Act was passed. It allowed an individual to claim up to 640 acres in arid places. These varied modifications of national land policy, up to 1916, led to the settlement and transfer onto private ownership nearly all public domain in northeast Colorado.²⁸ Farmers poured onto the plains between 1910 and 1920 to take advantage of liberal homestead laws. Yuma County became state leader in acres of dryland crops planted. Prosperity seemed easy to anyone who would take up public land and plant crops. These views were reinforced by wartime demand for food. The new bonanza encouraged farmers to buy more land and to expand their production. A series of fortunate wet years during the late teens led to the most marginal of land being put into production.²⁹

One of the more unique promotional schemes of the times was the Dearfield colony, near Fort Morgan. Founded in 1911 by Denverite Oliver T. Jackson, this new community was to be for blacks, a place where they could build their own Utopia. Jackson was also a black and had been in Colorado since 1887. As Jackson tried to popularize the colony in Colorado he found meagre local response. But as news of the town travelled east, settlers moved in. By 1911 farm land was purchased and sixty families moved into Dearfield townsite. From then until the early 1920s this colony and its dryland farmers flourished. By 1921 some 700 people occupied the place and it appeared that Jackson's dream was reality. However, after wartime prosperity passed, residents became dissatisfied and left Dearfield. By the end of that decade, most had given up and the town withered away. Jackson's great experiment became one more of the many agricultural ghost towns in northeast Colorado.³⁰

The Federal government's role in the dryland farm "boom" during the early twentieth century was another example of ever-increasing influence that events in Washington, D.C. had on the history of northeast Colorado. Most of this governmental change came from land policies. The General Revision Act of 1891 began the trend away from disposal of the public domain. Initially, the Timber Reserve system was applauded by northeast Coloradans. Area residents had first hand experience with the scars that man left behind on the forests. The mining and smelting frontier denuded hillsides in the region as had uncontrolled lumbering. Not only was this damage unpleasant to look at but it was also unsafe. Rain and snow eroded soils and polluted watercourses, the lifeblood of area farmers. Rock slides and avalanches caused by devegetation were also dangerous. The 1890s drought finally convinced regional residents of a need for conservation, despite violent protests from other parts of this state.³¹



**Enos Mills, seen here in 1916, was a major promoter for the creation of Rocky Mountain National Park.
W. T. Lee Photo, Courtesy USGS.**



**The Stanley Hotel in Estes Park, Colorado was a popular tourist spot at the turn of the century. This 1916 photo shows the hotel just as Rocky Mountain National Park was about to open.
W. T. Lee Photo, Courtesy USGS.**

Almost as soon as the new law went into effect the government began withdrawing western lands for timber reserves. First was the Pike's Peak Timber Reserve (1892), north and west of Colorado Springs. This was followed, in 1902, by withdrawals that eventually became Roosevelt and Arapaho National Forests. In 1905 control of forest lands passed that created the United States Forest Service. In 1920 the Colorado portion of Medicine Bow National Forest (1905) was separated and renamed Colorado National Forest. Roosevelt National Forest was created in 1932, made of parts from older Forests and Timber Reserves. Setting aside these lands was just one part of the Federal conservation program. Backers of federal forests saw that not only should industry be prevented from destroying these resources but also that the government must take positive steps toward management of its land. Critics claimed natural resources were locked away forever, but soon after creation of the Forest Service they were proved wrong. As early as 1899 reserve administrators undertook the controlled use of resources, primarily in the form of grazing permits limiting use of forest ranges. The main defender of this policy was Gifford Pinchot. At first he was unable to do more than criticize the Timber Service, but after creation of the Forest Service where Pinchot worked, he was made Chief of this new agency. Pinchot's policies of use fees and control of forest lands, supported by President Theodore Roosevelt, led to a new round of protests in Colorado. Most residents of the northeast corner opposed their fellow Coloradans and came out in support of the newly revised rules. By 1910 anger subsided and the Forest Service was accepted in most of Colorado.³²

Another conservation thrust was the establishment of national parks. During the early twentieth century such creations were aimed at preserving national scenic wonders. The park movement gained momentum in the 1900s as the conservation movement blossomed. It was felt, at first, that only the most spectacular areas, like Yellowstone, should become National Parks. Northeastern Colorado had little to offer because most of the scenic areas were already developed. However, the Rockies along the Continental Divide, west of Estes Park, were relatively untrammelled and they already had an established tourist reputation. During the late 1800s, and into the early teens, area boosters lobbied Congress to set aside a National Park. The first formal park proposal was put forward in 1909 by Enos A. Mills, a local conservationist who wanted to preserve the Rockies. Mills wrote several books and lectured on the wonders of the mountains. A need for a National Park to serve as a visitor playground was expressed. Denver and other northeast Colorado businessmen picked up on this idea and furthered the Mills campaign, seeing that increased tourism equalled more profits. In 1915 Mills' work bore fruit when Colorado Congressman Edward T. Taylor introduced a bill for the creation of Rocky Mountain National Park. Once open to the public the park was an overnight success. Because of its proximity to Denver and the ease of access offered to visitors from around the world, this new facility quickly became one of the most popular National Parks in the West.³³

The Federal government's role in northeast Colorado during the early twentieth century was not limited to land and resource management. One lesser effect of federal involvement was the expansion of Denver's commercial area. At the turn of the century,

the U.S. Postal Service introduced Rural Free Delivery (RFD), including parcel post. No longer did farmers have to go into town for their mail; it came to them. It was practical for rural residents to mail order items from Denver's merchants. Some retailers in the Queen City took immediate advantage of this new service by setting up special departments for mail order and by advertising in newspapers. This was the first step in mass marketing. Improvements in communication decreased rural isolation, while spreading the lifestyle of cities to the hinterland. Later, other improvements, like radios and cars increased urbanization of the plains.³⁴ Another mark of this century in northeast Colorado was the growth of military facilities. This started when the United States prepared for an active role in World War I. The Army was interested in building a hospital in Colorado. Towns made offers to the War Department but Denver, with a parcel of land to turn over to the Army, won the competition and Fitzsimmons Army Hospital was built on the east edge of the city.³⁵

These same years marked the end of another era, that of mainline railroad building. By 1902 local promoters attacked a problem that had plagued Denver since the 1860s; lack of a rail route directly west of the city. During the late nineteenth century there was talk of such a route but little was done. One of the foremost proponents of this idea was David H. Moffat. Having seen the northeast region grow for forty years, Moffat was convinced that its commercial position would only be secured after direct standard gauge rail connections were completed westward. Responding to the call, Moffat founded the Denver, Northwestern and Pacific Railway (DNW&P) in 1902. The purpose was to build northwest, up South Boulder Creek, then over Rollins Pass and across Middle Park. From here it would follow the Colorado (Grand) River to a point near McCoy, Colorado before turning north to Steamboat Springs. In northwestern Colorado the rails would stretch on to Salt Lake City by way of Craig and Vernal, Utah. Such a route not only gave Denver a much shorter line to Utah but it also provided the frontier segment of Colorado with rail service.³⁶ As he announced these plans, Moffat got competition. Edward H. Harriman and George J. Gould controlled both the Union Pacific and Denver and Rio Grande railroads. They were well-known rail magnates and both stood to lose business if the Moffat scheme succeeded. Moffat found it impossible to attract capital to his company because of their opposition and he was forced to finance most of the railroad himself. Another problem Moffat encountered was rugged terrain that had to be conquered as rails inched their way up the front range. Nevertheless, by 1904 trains were running to Arrow on the west side of Rollins Pass. Moffat continued promoting the road until his death in 1911. When his estate was settled, it was discovered that he had died penniless; the DNW&P consumed his entire fortune.³⁷ In addition to serious financial problems, another factor plagued the Moffat Road, as the DNW&P was called. That was a costly operation over 11,000 foot Rollins Pass. A tunnel under the Continental Divide was needed. Those who replaced Moffat at company headquarters, especially William Gray Evans, realized this. As rails moved toward



The Moffat Road, along Coal Creek Canyon, was a feat of engineering as this 1909 photo shows.
M. R. Campbell Photo, Courtesy USGS

Craig in 1913 Evans began a campaign to secure financial aid from either the city of Denver or the state. He met with no success. When the Moffat Road was taken over by the United States Railway Administration (USRA) during World War I, the company's officers tried to convince Federal officials to build a tunnel, but to no avail. By 1920 the Denver and Salt Lake, (D&SL) as it was renamed, had built only to Craig and it still lacked a practical route through the Continental Divide.³⁸

The Moffat Road was not the only northeast Colorado rail company to encounter financial problems during the first twenty years of this century. The Denver and Rio Grande, under George Gould, found itself grossly over-extended and in poor operation condition by 1920. This was due, in large part, to Gould's use of the Rio Grande's credit to build the Western Pacific from Salt Lake City to Oakland, California. The Colorado Midland never did recover from the 1893 depression. During the early teens Albert E. Carlton, of Colorado Springs, bought the company but was unable to save it. He presided over abandonment in 1918. The year before, two other companies, the Argentine Central near Silver Plume, and the Gilpin Tram at Central City, were dismantled. The Colorado and Southern, (C&S) a child of the 1890s, was made up of parts of the Denver and New Orleans, the Colorado Central and the Denver, South Park and Pacific, all previously owned by the Union Pacific. In 1908, the C and S was sold to the Chicago, Burlington and Quincy Railroad.³⁹

Not all of northeast Colorado's railroads experienced such hardship during the early years of this century. The Denver, Boulder and Western (DB&W), reorganized from the old Colorado and Northwestern (C&NW), from Boulder to the mining camps of that County, prospered because of increased mineral activity. Its lines were extended to Ward and Eldora. The route was called "the Switzerland Trail of America" because of its twisting rails and spectacular scenery. The DB&W became a favorite of tourists seeking one-day excursions. However, prosperity was short-lived and by 1920 the line was scrapped. Equally prosperous were trolley lines and interurbans in Denver, Colorado Springs and Fort Collins. The Colorado and Southern built and operated the region's only true interurban, the "Kite Route." This system used its parent company's rails from Denver to Boulder and had lines to Marshall, Superior and Eldorado Springs.⁴⁰

A contributing factor to the decline of railways was the rapid spread auto roads in northeast Colorado. From 1900 to 1910 the region was caught up in a craze that swept the country during the late 1890s. The Good Roads Movement was initially supported by bicyclists, but it picked up more followers as automobile use increased. Road users lobbied the state legislature to fund highway construction and improvement. Being ever conscious of the potential for increased tourism, Denver and other front range cities supported this. Taking small steps at first Colorado's General Assembly, later joined by county governments, began projects to construct or pave local roads. Rural residents, seeing these improvements, clamored for work on their farm roads. Between 1910 and 1915 smaller communities benefitted due to the Good Roads Movement. At about the same time (1919)

the Federal government undertook construction of a coast to coast highway. When US 40 was laid out, it crossed east-central Colorado and passed through Denver. This was the first of many such pathways that were built in the 1920s. In 1913 the first automobile made it to the top of Pike's Peak and drivers lost their fear that cars could not be driven in the mountains. Taking the family runabout into the hills for a vacation became a most popular pastime from within and outside of northeast Colorado. World War I increased the use of autos and trucks to haul goods while stimulating new efforts at road building. By 1920, northeastern Colorado was completely involved in the "Auto Age."⁴¹

The years 1900 to 1920 were a period of significant change for northeast Colorado. Possibly no other era, with the exception of gold rush days, had more impact on the region's history. Older lifestyles passed and new began. World War I led to considerable prosperity and indicated that the sweeping changes were good. As the 1920s dawned, nearly every northeast Coloradan felt that this new decade held nothing but prosperity. It did not take long for reality to shatter these illusions.

NOTES Chapter X

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³⁸See: Edward T. Bollinger and Frederick Bauer, *The Moffat Road*, (Chicago: Swallow Press, 1962).

³⁹Morris Cafky, *Colorado Midland*, (Denver: Rocky Mountain Railroad Club, 1965), pp. 158-185.; Robert G. Athearn, *Rebel of the Rockies, A History of the Denver and Rio Grande Western Railroad*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1962), pp. 190-215., and Hauck, *Narrow*, pp 104-109.

⁴⁰Herbert M. Sommers, *My Recollections of a Youngster's Life In Pioneer Colorado Springs*, (Colorado Springs: Dentan & Berkeland, 1966), pp. 20-23.; Hauck, *Narrow*, p. 104.; Peterson, *Ft Collins*, p. 64., and USFS, "Level I," n.p.

⁴¹Mrs. Flusher interview, vol. 354, CWA, CSHS.; J. Oliver Graham interview, vol. 352, CWA, CSHS.; J. Oliver Graham interview, vol. 352, CWA, CSHS.; Sprague, *100+*, pp. 30-32.; Athearn, *Coloradans*, pp. 259-260., and Propst, *Forgotten*, pp. 192-193.

Chapter XI DEPRESSION DECADES, 1920-1940

When the fighting in Europe ended during 1918, few in northeast Colorado could foresee the impact it would have on their region. Basic industries, like farming and mining, experienced production expansion to meet wartime demand. Markets remained firm in the first several years after the war because the conflict had destroyed Europe's economy. The patriotic outpouring attendant to United States' participation and promises of lasting peace in "the war to end all wars," made Americans optimistic about their futures. However, the situation that caused these hopes also contained the seeds of more problems. The crisis was not long in coming to northeastern Colorado.

By 1920 European manufacturers recovered from war and the continent was less dependant upon America. In response, the United States experienced a short but deep depression; the Panic of 1921. Especially hard hit were farmers. Wheat and other commodity prices fell. During the Panic they crashed. While other businesses suffered equal catastrophes in 1921, they recovered. Unfortunately for area farmers, prices stabilized at lower levels than before the Panic. Corn, alfalfa, hay, beets and wheat were considerably affected. Such crops were the primary income for both drylanders and irrigators. As prices fell producers found themselves hard pressed, especially on the plains of northeast Colorado. They had borrowed heavily to expand and cash in on the wartime bonanza. As returns diminished, debts were more difficult to service. Two solutions were used by dryland farmers. First, some increased production to create more income. This included purchasing more land, and putting marginal areas to the plow. Farmers also drilled deep wells to irrigate fields. These choices were open only to those who could raise capital or who had extra land. Another alternative was to stop farming and sell their land or take up ranching, particularly sheep raising. By making adjustments, the dryland farm industry of northeast Colorado survived the early 1920s.² The latter part of that decade saw a revival in the region's agriculture. But it came too late for many, like the settlers of Dearfield. For those who stayed, the slow market upswing was a welcome relief. Farmers also sought help from the Federal government. Proposals for price supports, parity, and government purchases of surpluses to stabilize prices all were proposed by the agricultural industry. The calls mainly came from the Midwest, but northeast Colorado's producers heartily endorsed the idea.³ Drylanders were not the only producers in the region intrigued with Federal aid. Irrigators, especially beet producers, found such proposals interesting. The "boom" psychology of the teens caused great expansion in the irrigation of northeastern Colorado. Debts were accumulated by local farmers. Water shares jumped dramatically in price during the war, but values fell sharply by the end of 1921. Irrigators had fewer options than did farmers on arid lands. Proportionally, loans were much larger and nearly all available farm lands were in production. They could not easily up output and increase incomes. Instead farmers demanded higher prices from sugar companies and changed some crops to raise cash. Fruits and vegetables replaced beets on farms. Produce was sold in local markets in Colorado or else shipped out of the region, as either fresh or processed food. These changes helped weather the turbulent early 1920s.

Later in that decade, as farmers and beet sugar companies lobbied Congress for relief, Washington responded. In 1929 the Republican administration of Herbert Hoover enacted the Smoot-Hawley Tariff. This new import tax put duties at their highest levels in decades for many products, one of which was sugar. Northeast Colorado's beet growers were quite pleased with this turn of events as domestic sugar prices began to climb almost immediately.⁴ Actually, northeastern Colorado agricultural markets had started an advance in 1928 gaining momentum through that year and well into the next. As prices rose talk of a new prosperity was heard around the region. The good times of the past were recalled and projections were made that the next years would be a new "boom." However, it ended almost as soon as it began. On October 23, 1929, the New York stock market crashed and this nation slipped into its worst Depression. As factories closed and workers were laid off, farmers faced both rapidly declining prices and slackened demand.⁵

To compensate these losses, agrarians tried increasing production only causing a glut of farm goods that drove prices down even further. As the Great Depression deepened in 1930, 1931 and 1932 this vicious cycle continued. Northeast Colorado's farmers slid deeper into debt with no way out. Those who were able to hold on during the 1920s by reducing their long-term debts were now unable to service their loans. More than a few found the only choice was foreclosure or having their farms sold for taxes. By 1932 auctioneers were busy throughout the agricultural areas of northeast Colorado as farm after farm went on the block.⁶

Watching as more and more families were dispossessed and wondering how long it would be before the same fate overtook them, surviving farmers sought new solutions to their plight. Those who waited for years, hoping for market recovery or direct government help, finally rose in rebellion. At auctions armed farmers helped their neighbors by offering a bid of one dollar and then they insured that it was the highest. At other times auctioneers or judges were run off at gunpoint. During 1932 Sedgwick and Larimer Counties became centers of hostility and local farmers became threatening. Mobs stormed county courthouses and destroyed land records. At the same time, support for a Farm Holiday Movement spread throughout northeast Colorado. These so-called "Holidayers" supported Iowan Milo Reno who saw the only way to drive up prices was to voluntarily withhold produce from market. For those farmers who did not join, "Holidayers" made it nearly impossible to sell goods. They built road blocks, dumped milk in ditches and stopped trucks on the way to market.⁷ The Farm Holiday Movement was short-lived in Colorado, for as the Depression deepened and prices fell further, farmers simply gave up and fled the land. This led to even more plains ghost towns.⁸

As beet growers cutback production laborers were put out of work. Migrants, and other temporaries, lost their jobs. Hispanics were among the very hardest hit. Meanwhile both farms and irrigation projects were abandoned. From a record high of 6,400 irrigated farms in 1930, numbers declined to 4,300. Ditch companies, themselves already in debt and totally reliant on farmers for income, went broke. Even those operators that did not run

run out of money found themselves without adequate water as a new drought cycle began and junior water rights proved utterly worthless. Early in the 1920s, after these rights were adjudicated, complaints arose from Nebraska farmers also dependent on the South Platte for water. Nebraskans felt that Coloradans diverted too much of the stream's flow. To fairly divide Colorado water, negotiators from both states hammered out the South Platte River Compact. Colorado's team was led by Delph A. Carpenter, a national expert on water law. The agreement was signed in 1925. Division of the South Platte's water worked no undue hardships until the dry years of the early 1930s.⁹ Irrigators with junior rights were not the only ones hurt by drought during the thirties. Drylanders, already under intense pressure from declining prices, found it hard to handle crop failures caused by lack of rain. Some just quit while others tried, year after year, to grow crops without water. As the dry spell lasted, more and more farmers were forced to abandon the area. The next years brought more of the same, but by then the ground was so dry, almost nothing grew. Those who did plow their fields were rewarded by blowing dust. Soils were so deteriorated that it was pulverized into tiny particles, which were carried by hot dry winds. At times the dust was so thick that it appeared as a brown blizzard. Records of the period indicate that dust storms were so bad that the entire region was literally paralyzed.

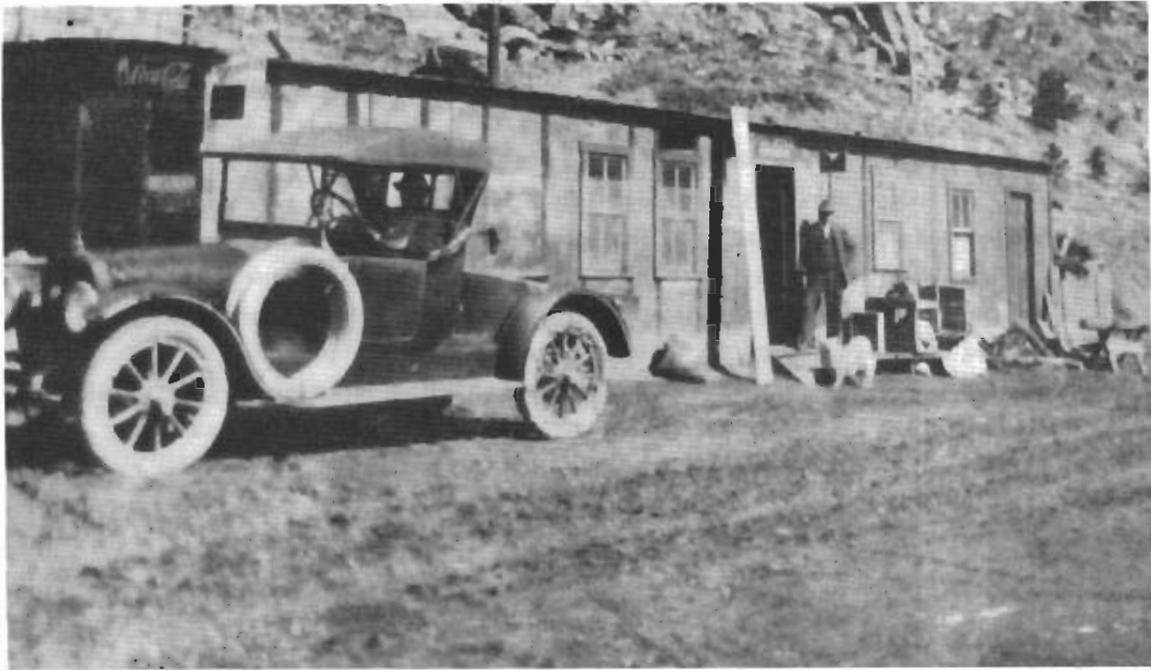
People were unable to breathe, cars and trains stopped, and thousands of souls barricaded their homes only to watch fine dirt sift in under doorframes and through windowsills. On at least one occasion there was so much dust in the air that when rain fell it became mud before hitting the ground. The dust storms, called "dusters," sometimes happened during snowfall and became "snusters." As if this was not enough grasshoppers swarmed across the land and destroyed most of what was left. This area was called the "Dust Bowl" because what happened in northeastern Colorado was common throughout most of the Great Plains. In fact, Colorado was not the hardest hit; that dubious distinction went to Texas, Oklahoma, New Mexico and Kansas.¹⁰ The Dust Bowl was also death for ranchers. Their problems dated from the second dryland farm boom of 1910. As Federal land policies encouraged settlement of arid plains, most uncontrolled range on public lands in eastern Colorado was claimed, plowed and planted. Dwindling natural forage caused stockmen to rely on feed lots. By the 1920s cattlemen, were deeply in debt hoping to accomplish the open range to feed lot changeover and to take advantage of the wartime "boom." During the twenties both beef and mutton markets declined. Those who could afford to, decreased their herds, but most ranchers were under heavy mortgage obligations. Such stockmen had to keep producing in order to meet increasing debts. Throughout the 1920s cattlemen used every means to keep their operations alive. Like farmers, ranchers also called for Federal aid like price supports. At the time of the Great Depression their pleas, were finally heard. As with farmers in northeast Colorado, a number of cattlemen simply gave up by 1933. To many it seemed as if the 1890s were being replayed on the plains of Colorado.¹¹ However, unlike the '90s, the federal government stepped into aid the range industry. In 1934 the Taylor Grazing Act was implemented and for the first time, both grazing allotments and a fee system were placed on the use of public lands. The U.S. Department of the Interior's Grazing Service oversaw this new legislation. Northeast

Colorado's ranchers were not much affected by these changes for most of the plains was already in private hands. States like Utah, Montana, Nevada and, of course, western Colorado were considerably changed by the grazing law.

The region's towns and cities also found history repeating itself. During the early 1900s villages sprang up on the prairies to serve a new wave of drylanders. But when the bubble burst during the 1920s more than a few communities either disappeared or found a new economic base. This trend continued well into the 1930s. Those places fortunate enough to be on main highways had better chances for survival as they turned their attentions to auto travel to augment declining business. Farming during the late 1920 also kept some towns alive. When the Depression and concurrent drought struck early in the 1930s large numbers of these small service centers were abandoned because farming, their reason for existence, no longer supported them. A new series of ghost towns again dotted northeast Colorado.¹²

Older, established urban areas did not escape the 1930s either. The spreading of mass communication and easy travel during the twenties encouraged rural dwellers to visit and shop in the larger cities of northeast Colorado. Autos and good roads made it commonplace for individuals to travel what were once long distances to get better prices or larger selections at stores other than the nearest mercantile. This tough competition forced small, local, shopkeepers out of business. Those already weakened by the twenties, saw the 1930s lead to bankruptcy. This shift in trade patterns also led to creation of localized mini-trade centers, like Sterling, or Akron or Wray or Yuma.¹³

While smaller towns and cities were busy with commercial rivalries, the major cities of northeast Colorado entered the twenties with a spirit of unbounded optimism. They thought prosperity had arrived and that the new decade would bring to fruition all the plans that were earlier laid for growth and wealth. Most projections were based on predictions of increased tourism, caused by a rapidly developing road system, not to mention the area's natural beauty. Boosters saw the vacation industry as ideal. It was a clean business that generated large amounts of cash with minimal capital outlay. Promotion of tourism became a function of local government and Chambers of Commerce or Visitors' Bureaus. Not only did these agencies supply potential vacationers with information, but they also encouraged development of facilities for them. Denver, and other cities, developed systems of mountain parks and campgrounds. Local merchants took advantage of the "boom" by creating special hostelries for motorists--motor hotels, soon called motels. Tourist cabins sprang up along major highways as did new "service stations" and diners. During the twenties, millions vacationed in northeast Colorado and the tourist industry boomed.¹⁴ While the transient segment of urban enterprise flourished, others sectors made less spectacular advances. Population increases slowed over the previous decade, partially from a conscious decision by the local power structure, especially in Denver, not to actively recruit new residents or commercial ventures. Instead it was thought that slower paced growth would offer greater stability. An attempt was made to halt the "boom and bust" cycles



The advent of automobiles forced counties and the state to consider better roads. This 1917 photo demonstrates that cars were not yet totally accepted. F.L.Hess Photo, Courtesy USGS.



The post war years saw more oil and gas development on the plains, as this well in eastern Arapahoe County shows.

that once dominated nearly all this region's cities. Further, leaders considered prosperity assured under the present conditions and no need was seen to change. The hustle and bustle of a boomtown atmosphere was gone and community leaders throughout northeast Colorado were content with their status.¹⁵

On the surface, the early 1920s looked calm. However, there were underlying tensions that occasionally broke through. The first started before the decade had begun. In 1919 various charges were hurled at opponents of the Federal government. One was that Communists had infiltrated positions of power throughout the nation and helped bring about failure of President Woodrow Wilson's peace plan while they sought to further the Russian Revolution of 1917. Mass hysteria soon engulfed some of northeast Colorado's towns. The "Red Scare" took on a distinct anti-Catholic, anti-labor union cast. Simple allegations of Communist affiliations or sympathies were enough to discredit victims and numerous Coloradans fell to accusers. Fortunately, the panic passed, but not before ruining many lives.¹⁶ The "Red Scare" of 1919 - 1920 did have one lasting impact in that it helped set the stage for rapid growth of the Ku Klux Klan. This organization had the appearance of a fraternity, complete with secret codes, uniforms and "official" ceremonies. Scores responded to ads and the Klan spread beyond the Old South.¹⁷ One of the first in Colorado to join the reconstituted KKK was Denver dentist, Dr. John Galen Locke. He realized that if properly molded, the Klan could be a vehicle for political power. The KKK's philosophy was based on white supremacy and racial purity. Insecure working class whites who saw their livelihoods threatened by blacks and Mexican-Americans found KKK preachings attractive. The latter group also happened to be largely Roman Catholic which violated one basic tenet of the Klan; Protestant superiority. The Klan movement in Colorado began in Denver and it spread throughout the northeast corner of the state.¹⁸ In the "Queen City", KKK popularity grew quite strong. The Klan was aimed at those who were not "100% American." From Denver, recruiters fanned out and soon members of the "Invisible Empire" could be found from Colorado Springs to Boulder, Sterling, and all points in between. By 1923 the KKK was a potent force in regional politics. To show their strength, on July 4, 1923 members burned a cross atop Pike's Peak. More importantly when municipal elections were held in Denver that fall, Benjamin F. Stapleton found it politically expedient to seek Klan endorsement. Once in the Mayor's office he appointed Klansmen to numerous city jobs.¹⁹ The next year saw even greater expansion of the "Invisible Empire" in Colorado. The general elections of 1924 sent Klansmen and their sympathizers to the state legislature while one of Locke's associates, Clarence J. Morley, was elected Governor. The "hooded knights" also dominated the Republican Party. But opposition to KKK backed legislative programs, led by State Senate Democrats, and helped by an Internal Revenue Service investigation of Locke's personal finances broke Klan power in Colorado. By 1926 the organization had collapsed, especially after a dismal failure to carry the Colorado Springs municipal election in 1925. The "Invisible Empire" was one of the most striking manifestations of social tensions during the 1920s.²⁰

Prohibition violators were another problem. Liquor flow was flagrant as speakeasies and bars operated as "private clubs" under the noses of local law agents. Bootlegging was

a popular pasttime and citizens took up "running" professionally. There were deaths because of territorial encroachment by one liquor dealer into another's "turf". While this region never had gang wars like those in Chicago or New York City, there was still organized crime in northeast Colorado. Farmers also operated stills, adding to the flow of booze. Few worried about the law because even if arrested, juries tended to be sympathetic to defendants. After only a few years most police found the frustration too much and opted to control illegal liquor traffic, not to stop it.²¹

One factor that contributed to social unrest during the 1920s in northeast Colorado was the unhealthy state of this area's mining industry. From the end of World War I into 1925 precious and semi-precious metal extraction experienced a period of precipitous decline. By 1925 nearly every operation had closed in Boulder, Clear Creek and Gilpin Counties including limited stream dredging. Those mines that were left were "one man" operations. During the Great Depression there was a minor resurgence in activity, as some sought any available income. Nevertheless, hard-rock mining was a dead industry in northeast Colorado by 1940.²² Meanwhile, energy fuel companies prospered from 1920 until 1940. Rocky Mountain Fuels, a coal firm then under the ownership of Josephine Roche, kept its mines open. Despite an overall drop in coal demand she was able to direct the corporation to moderate prosperity. First, urban markets remained fairly strong, despite inroads by natural gas. Secondly, Miss Roche formally recognized the United Mine Workers (UMW) union and managed her workers to make operations more efficient. This enlightened attitude allowed Rocky Mountain Fuels to avoid violent strikes experienced by other northeast Colorado coal operators during the 1920s. Management's refusal to recognize the UMW and then subsequent wage cuts caused these outbreaks. Because Miss Roche worked with organized labor and attempted to find other jobs for her laid-off workers, miners cooperated to keep the mines open. Even as the Depression deepened 1930s this spirit of self-help continued. Nevertheless, demand and production both dropped and most mines were eventually closed.²³ Even before the Great Depression, northeastern Colorado's coal mines found their markets contracting as natural gas, became a more popular form of home and industrial heating. The 1920s saw increased gas well drilling and development of gas in the northeast corner of this state. By the 1930s local supplies were augmented by fuel brought to the region via pipelines from west Texas. In 1936 Colorado Springs was connected to Texas and almost immediately residents converted because of the convenience natural gas offered. The cheap, clean burning gas led residents and industry across the area to abandon coal during the thirties.²⁴ Petroleum also enjoyed a "boom" during the 1920s, due to increased production in older fields in northeast Colorado and the discovery of the Wellington Dome near Fort Collins. The Wellington fields were tapped in 1923 and almost overnight there was a rush to the "new Texas." This stage of development passed and established companies took over both wells and development work. Energy production was the one bright spot in northeastern Colorado's mining from 1920 until 1940.²⁵

Railroading, like mining, experienced a period of contraction throughout northeast Colorado between the World Wars. However, some new and important developments did

take place. Of these, none was more needed than construction of the Moffat Tunnel under the Continental Divide. After David H. Moffat's death in 1911 direction of his rail empire passed to William Gray Evans, who undertook a campaign to secure municipal or state funding for a tunnel under the Main Range eliminating the costly run over Rollins Pass. From 1912 until the early 1920s Evans carried on the fight. Finally, in 1921 the Colorado legislature approved a plan that included creation of the Moffat Tunnel District with power to issue bonds, and raise taxes to construct the bore. Work began in 1924 and four years later the first D&SL train made its way through the tunnel onto the Western Slope, giving Denver a new outlet west.²⁶ Even with the Moffat Tunnel built the Denver and Salt Lake could not take advantage of all that it offered, because D&SL rails went no further than Craig, Colorado. The 1920s renewed talk of extending the line to Salt Lake City. Efforts of the Denver and Rio Grande Western to gain admittance to the tunnel by building a connection from Dotsero, Colorado north along the Colorado River to Bond, meeting the D&SL came to naught. The Great Depression sapped the financial strength of both companies. Through an intricate series of agreements the D&RGW was allowed to build its cut-off in return for access to the tunnel. Part of the pact called for the D&RGW to buy a controlling interest in the D&SL. Funds for the 34 mile cut-off came from the Reconstruction Finance Corporation (RFC) and in 1934 the Dotsero Cut-off was opened. D&RGW trains operated from Denver to Bond on the D&SL, allowing use of the tunnel and giving the "Queen City" rail service directly west, a goal since the 1860s.²⁷ While the rail situation west of the front range moved forward, elsewhere in the region events were less cheerful. Most carriers faced decreased business after World War I, into the 1920s. This did not lead to wholesale abandonments, but rather service cutbacks and severe lack of maintenance. Lightly travelled lines in northeast Colorado fell into disrepair. The backsliding continued until the Great Depression when more than a few lines were finally abandoned. This process continued through the 1930s, often taking years because of Interstate Commerce Commission slowness and public appeals. Lines were given up as more goods moved by automobile, bus and truck. Two of the largest abandonments were by the Colorado and Southern when it tore up the old Denver, South Park and Pacific and also tore out Colorado Central rails west of Idaho Springs, on the Clear Creek line during 1938.²⁸

Mainlines to and from Denver suffered less during the Depression. Management of companies, like the Union Pacific or Burlington quickly give up branchlines while at the same time they used their resources, as well as Federal loans, to upgrade primary routes. Besides improvements to tracks and facilities, the Burlington, Pacific and the Rock Island introduced new service. The most dramatic was a diesel-powered streamliner. The *Denver Zephyr*, Burlington's replacement for its first class steam-powered service from Chicago to Denver was introduced in the early 1930s with considerable fanfare. The train made a record-shattering run from the Rockies to the "Windy City". This inaugural trip brought northeast Colorado into the streamline era and other railroads soon followed the Burlington. One by one they introduced new streamlined service to try and keep their share of the tourist trade and not allow autos to eliminate rail business.²⁹ Rail companies were justified in their fears of automobiles throughout the region. The 1920s and 30s were a period of rapid expansion of

both miles of improved roads and of auto ownership. Denver, Colorado Springs, Boulder, Limon and most other towns lobbied both the state legislature and Washington, D.C., to get government aid in further new highway construction. These efforts accelerated during the Great Depression as county and state highway departments found road building a means of unemployment relief and a way to spend money provided by Washington, D.C. The availability of new and good roads led residents to purchase cars for personal and or business use. New mobility decreased the isolation of small towns further as more residents took to the highways. For those who could not afford an auto, local bus companies offered service to and from almost every little town in the region. At the same time, the use of trucks to haul goods and commodities increased. Internal combustion engines also revolutionized northeast Colorado's farm life. No longer did farmers depend upon animal power. Introduction of trucks and tractors to farming meant that each farm could till more land with less effort. Rapid mechanization of agriculture halted during the Great Depression, as did growth of auto ownership due to a shortage of money.³⁰

New methods of getting around were not the only changes in rural life between 1920 and 1940. The spread of electricity by the Rural Electrification Administration (REA) during the New Deal allowed for rapid local communication. The cities of northeast Colorado were put in instant contact with rural areas by radio. The state's first commercial broadcasting facility opened in 1919 at Colorado Springs. Transmitters soon operated in Denver and other cities throughout the region. By the 1930s most households had crystal sets and the radio became the popular form of entertainment.³¹

Another new form of transport that was widely accepted in northeast Colorado by the late 1920s was the airplane. Flights first started, commercially, in 1920 as airmail service. Local carriers connected Colorado Springs and Denver to Cheyenne, Wyoming, then hub of the main transcontinental route. A few years later a company known as Colorado Airways took over the route from Pueblo to Cheyenne and started passenger service. While there were the curious, few took the airline and most passenger flying during the twenties was of a barnstorming nature as freelance pilots put on one-man air shows around the region. Not everyone in the area felt that air travel was a fad that would pass. Mayor Ben Stapleton was one who boosted the idea of a major airport in Denver to serve the Rocky Mountain West. As an incentive, the city bought 640 acres east of town and in 1929 Municipal Field, (later Stapleton International Airport), opened for business. Air travel continued to gain popularity and by 1937 United Airlines, the first national carrier, started connecting flights from the Mile-High city to Cheyenne's transcontinental service. Cheyenne was used because crossing the Continental Divide in Wyoming was easier and safer in unpressurized aircraft of the day. With the "Queen City" now the region's air center, other towns gained air service between themselves and Denver. By 1940 critics of flying machines, were silent. One factor behind rapid development of airport facilities in northeast Colorado, during the 1930s, was an ever-increasing support Federal authorities provided.³²

These changes did not come about because bureaucrats in Washington, D.C., decided to place more emphasis on northeast Colorado but rather because citizens there, (and across the

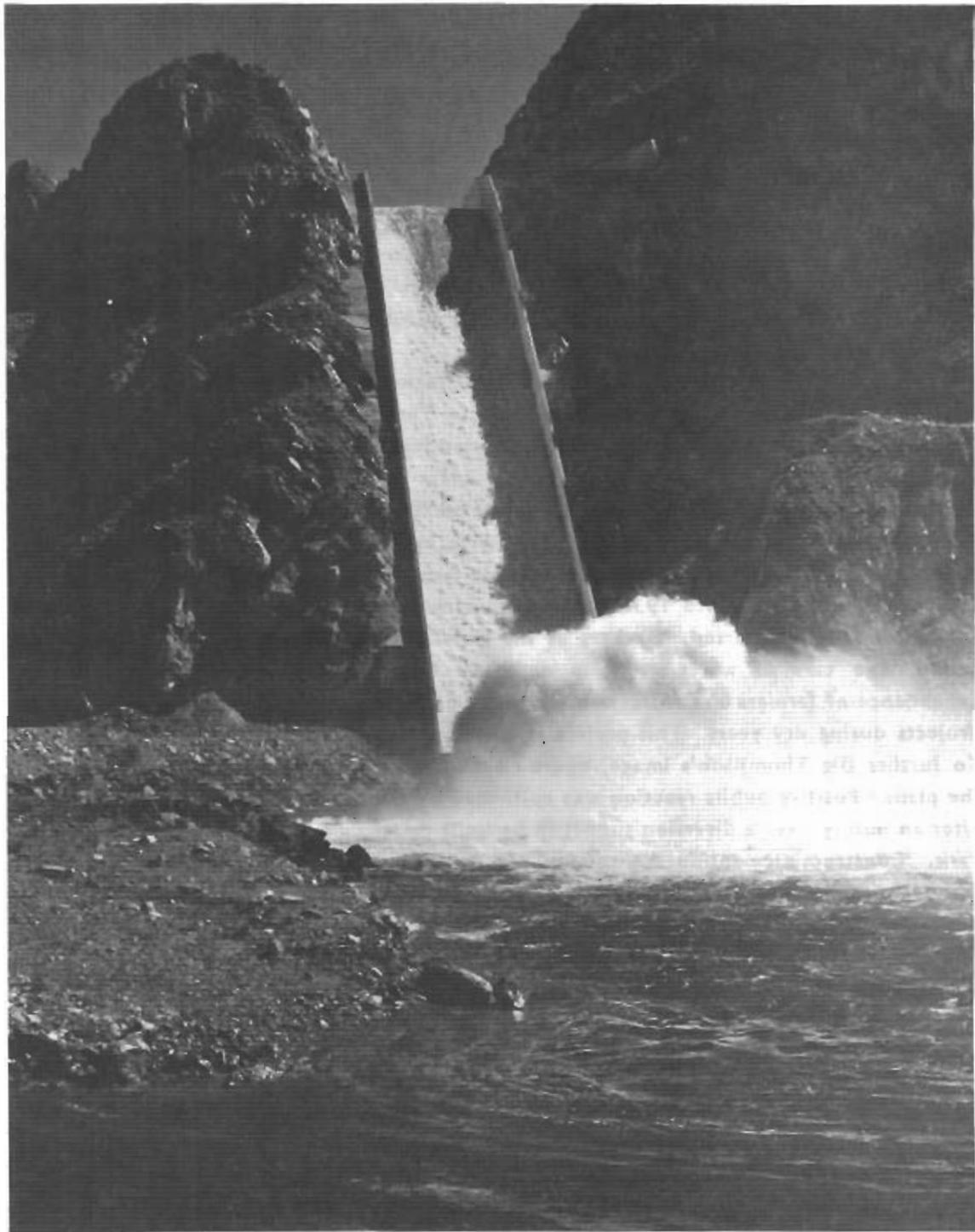
nation), were pleading for help by 1932. The stock market crash of 1929 evolved into the worst depression ever to hit the United States. President Herbert Hoover waited and proclaimed prosperity was "just around the corner." As the election of 1932 approached, Hoover faced Franklin D. Roosevelt, who promised Americans a "New Deal." Not believing Hoover's claims of recovery, voters chose Roosevelt and the New Deal became the by-word of his radical economic recovery programs. Actually, FDR's cure for the nation went beyond simple change. He and his advisers saw they had an opportunity to profoundly alter the foundations of American society. Evaluating the situation, in 1933 the new leadership decided that a three step program was needed. First was the matter of relief. Over the years, from 1930 to 1933, old welfare and charity systems were burdened to the breaking point. Millions were out of work and literally starving. To avoid disaster, FDR took Hoover's puny efforts, like the Reconstruction Finance Corporation (RFC) and the Federal Emergency Relief Administration (FERA) and greatly expanded them. Relief functions were viewed as stop-gap measures to keep the country going while a "second phase" was initiated: recovery. The White House decided that through a partnership of business and government, economic growth could be encouraged. Roosevelt's final step was reform of the Federal system to reduce the likelihood of a future depression. At various times between 1933 and 1940, all three parts of FDR's program were at work in northeast Colorado.³³

Of this region's industries, agriculture received the most assistance from New Deal agencies. Foremost was the Agricultural Adjustment Administration (AAA). The AAA offered farmers relief payments to keep them going while they increased commodity prices through production controls. To make up for lost income, the AAA paid farmers not to produce above certain quotas. It was seen that this would help recovery by reducing market surpluses while driving up prices. Not all crops were controlled. Most of those grown in northeast Colorado were, including wheat, corn and other grains. After protracted debate, sugar beets were finally included. In 1933, as the AAA took effect, just after the growing season had begun, the Federal government found it necessary to plow up crops and slaughter livestock in order to meet that year's quotas. This led to some protests, but AAA administrators went ahead and by early 1934 it appeared as if the program would succeed.³⁴ In 1934 the AAA was ready to undertake other efforts to help northeast Colorado's Farmers. One solution was the repurchase of marginal farmlands by the government so as to permanently remove them from production. This work was carried out under provisions of the Bankhead-Jones Land Utilization Act of 1937. In cooperation with Federal agencies like the Soil Conservation Service (SCS), the Resettlement Administration, and the Farm Securities Administration, (FSA), AAA representatives went into northern Weld County and other stricken places to negotiate sales. Those willing to leave their farms were provided cash or were resettled in other parts of the West, usually near irrigation projects operated by the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation. The purpose of this program was to take marginal lands out of production and return them to original rangeland. Often Federal agents arrived too late because by even 1930, hundreds had abandoned their farms. Later some of the smaller tracts were re-sold to ranchers but the majority of L-U lands remained in Federal hands. Control eventually passed from the Soil

Conservation Service to the Forest Service and two large parcels in Weld County subsequently became the Pawnee National Grasslands.³⁵ Repurchase was not the only land management activity "New Dealers" undertook in northeast Colorado. Other Federal programs were aimed at helping an ailing beef industry. The Forest Service led much of the work. Managers hoped to improve grazing on forest ranges. Experiments with grasses, new plantings and a variety of other projects were designed to accomplish this. Not only were ranchers helped but also improvements required labor and temporary employees, including members of the Civilian Conservation Corps, (CCC) who were hired to do the work. Another program was the creation of the Grazing Service within the Department of the Interior. It also allowed the President to withdraw from homestead entry. Less than 100,000 acres of northeast Colorado fell under this bill, but area ranchers supported it.³⁶

Possibly the greatest engineering work for regional agriculture in the 1930s was the Colorado-Big Thompson water diversion project. The Bureau of Reclamation, established by the Newlands Act in 1902, was long interested in the possibility of moving water from the Colorado River (on the Western Slope), under the Continental Divide and to fields throughout northeastern Colorado. While Reclamation planned such a project during the 1920s nothing happened due to estimated high costs. This problem was solved in the "New Deal" as Federal agencies sought ways to hire workers thereby stimulating economic recovery. From 1934 into 1938 detailed blueprints and studies were made and in 1938 actual construction started. Backers of the Colorado-Big Thompson claimed the project would take care of water needs in northeast Colorado for decades, eliminating the dependence of farmers on natural rainfall while slowing the abandonment of small irrigation projects during dry years. This project affected lands from the Rockies east to Nebraska. To further Big Thompson's image, hydro-electric generating capabilities were included in the plans. Positive public reaction was cultivated by the Bureau of Reclamation, especially after an outcry over a diversion tunnel to be built under part of Rocky Mountain National Park. Construction continued through 1938 into 1942, when shortages of materials like concrete and steel caused, by World War II, led to stoppage of most work. Once the war was over, the project resumed after some local debate. Finally in 1954 the Colorado-Big Thompson Project completed. Not only was it one of the largest reclamation efforts in the United States, but the diversion helped farmers and towns.³⁷

The positive effects of New Deal programs were felt in northeast Colorado long before World War II began. While farmers in the area suffered they were not alone. As the stock-market crashed, the sudden downturn all but wiped out most business overnight. Banks and merchants of all sizes were forced to close their doors. Banks experienced runs like those of 1893. By 1933 depositor panic was so great that President Roosevelt declared a "bank holiday" to allow Federal bank examiners to evaluate each institution before it re-opened. This led to the lack of currency circulation and local governments in northeast Colorado resorted to printing their own "script" to provide a medium of exchange. The Bank Holiday was Roosevelt's first step in putting business on a solid footing and to prevent the Depression from worsening. At the same time, he went to Congress proposing creation



The Granby Dam spillway represented the western slope side of the Colorado-Big Thompson Project, a major water diversion begun in the 1930s.
A. E. Turner Photo, Courtesy U. S. Bureau of Reclamation.

of the National Recovery Administration (NRA). NRA was to operate in partnership with industry to voluntarily control output thus reducing price competition. Representatives of businesses from automobile manufacturing to burlesque were called to Washington, D.C. where codes were enacted. Once the rules were in effect, all companies were encouraged to join NRA. This was accomplished by a massive campaign to sway the public to only do business with members. Those firms that subscribed to NRA codes displayed the "Blue Eagle" and soon these symbols were posted on shop doors and in store windows throughout northeast Colorado. After initial success, enthusiasm for the "Blue Eagle" dwindled despite promotional efforts by Chambers of Commerce and other groups. Eventually this program, and its companion the AAA, were declared unconstitutional by the United States Supreme Court. Nevertheless, both programs did help this region weather the worst of the Great Depression.³⁸

Of all New Deal initiatives, the Federal Emergency Relief Administration (FERA) did the most to help this region's citizens survive economic disaster. Grants from that agency were forthcoming as local charity funds ran out. By 1933 it became impossible to provide further private aid to individuals. With the threat of bread riots, local governments found themselves broke and unable to raise more cash because as the Depression worsened the local tax base contracted. "New Dealers" responded with large amounts of aid to northeast Colorado. Another agency that eased suffering throughout this region was the Reconstruction Finance Corporation (RFC). The RFC provided companies with low interest loans to finance new projects or to improve their physical plants. RFC also lent money to local government for public works. RFC funds helped build the D&RGW Railroad's Dotsero Cut-off and the Remington Arms Plant in Denver, in addition to hundreds of other projects.³⁹ Operating in conjunction with the RFC were the Works Progress Administration (WPA), the Public Works Administration (PWA) and the Civil Works Administration (CWA). These bureaus were involved in projects from collecting interviews from old timers to building new sewer systems, roadways and airports. Structures like city halls, libraries and post offices were built with WPA or PWA labor. These programs also helped the Colorado-Big Thompson Project. Not only were permanent improvements made, but the unemployed were given work and living wages. The Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) was another "New Deal" Program that put citizens to work on jobs to improve northeast Colorado. The CCC was mostly of youths from outside the region. It was seen that they would benefit from experience in the western outdoors while Colorado's young people were sometimes sent elsewhere to broaden their perspectives. CCC camps were organized on para-military lines and overseen by U.S. Army officers. The Colorado state headquarters was located at Fort Logan near Denver. CCCers built roads, hiking trails, picnic areas and other facilities throughout the region's national forests, in Rocky Mountain National Park, and in other public recreation areas.⁴⁰

The "New Deal" had another effect on this region because the program put a greater emphasis on aid to the underprivileged and to minorities. Franklin D. Roosevelt and his advisors determined that blacks, Mexican-Americans and Oriental-Americans were ignored

too long. Since these people were generally on the lower end of the economic ladder before the Depression, they suffered more during it. To force action "New Deal" agencies withheld aid until the states took more positive steps to see that all citizens benefited equally. At first this pressure was resisted by Colorado's political leaders, but as the Depression worsened concessions were made. While northeast Colorado's minorities saw only measured progress toward social equality during the 1930s, the door was opened in World War II. Despite Roosevelt's programs, the northeast corner of Colorado failed to recover from the Great Depression even by 1940. There were various reasons, but mainly the problem revolved around the fact that even with greatly increased Federal spending, the region's economy still had fundamental weaknesses, like a lack of hardrock mining. Failure to achieve recovery by 1939 led northeast Colorado's political and business leaders to decide that without continued Federal help, the area would slip backwards in growth and economic activity. This fear caused locals to attempt to convince the government to locate its new offices, plants and military bases in the region. Such recruitment led to ever-increasing Federal presence during and after World War II.⁴²

NOTES Chapter XI

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³Wickens, "New Deal," pp. 1-2, 209-212., and Bonnifield, *Dust*, pp. 51-53.

⁴Wickens, "New Deal," pp. 236-238., and Athearn, *Coloradans*, pp. 271-273.

⁵Wickens, "New Deal," pp. 235-236., and Athearn, *Coloradans*, pp. 273-275.

⁶Bonnifield, *Dust*, pp. 56-57 and Wickens, "New Deal," pp. 253-256.

⁷Athearn, *Coloradans*, pp. 275-278., and Wickens, "New Deal," pp. 214-216.

⁸W.D. McGinnis interview, vol. 352, CWA, CSHS., and Wickens, "New Deal," pp. 253-255.

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¹⁶Athearn, *Coloradans*, pp. 240-241., and James E. Wright, *The Politics of Populism, Dissent In Colorado*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1974), p. 268., hereafter cited: Wright, *The Politics of Populism, Dissent in Colorado*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1974), p. 268., hereafter cited: Wright. *Politics*.

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¹⁹Marshall Sprague, *One Hundred Plus, A Centennial Story of Colorado Springs*, (Colorado Springs: Colorado Springs Centennial, Inc., 1971), p. 48., hereafter cited: Sprague, *100+*., and Dorsett, *Queen*, pp. 204-206.

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²⁶Robert G. Athearn, *Rebel of the Rockies, A History of the Denver and Rio Grande Western Railroad*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1962), pp. 263-272., hereafter cited: Athearn, *Rebel*.

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³³Bolander, CWA, CSHS.; Propst, *Forgotten*, pp. 208-210., and Wickens, "New Deal," pp. 47-55.

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⁴⁰*Ibid.*, pp. 120-135, 170-206.

⁴¹*Ibid.*, pp. 44-47, 94-100., and Athearn, *Coloradans*, pp. 278-280.

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CHAPTER XII NORTHEAST COLORADO SINCE 1940

Events of the late 1930s that eventually led to World War II were felt in northeast Colorado by 1939. Hitler's armies were ready to march and Germany's desire for territory increased. In September, 1939 a contrived incident with Poland gave Germany an excuse needed to invade its neighbor and war broke out. While the United States did not join the European conflict, Roosevelt's administration moved toward rearmament. As news of an arms build-up reached northeastern Colorado boosters from Colorado Springs to Fort Collins saw new wealth if the Federal government were to build defense facilities in this region. Denver promoters announced that the city would like to become the "second United States capitol." As events of the 1940s proved, these booster efforts were successful for local Federal presence continued to grow. Yet, even as these changes happened many old ways remained the same in this region.

World War II stimulated the area. In 1939 "boosters" set out to lure the military to the front range. Denver was the big winner in that effort. Arguing that Fitzsimmons Hospital was already here and that the metropolitan complex had an abundance of labor and building sites, the Chamber of Commerce sought new facilities. In 1940, as the United States began to rearm itself, planners expanded national military output. To support the war effort, new factories for arms production were built throughout the nation. Coloradans did not want to be left out and Denver offered the Army every assistance if a plant were located near the "Queen City." The Army Ordnance Department chose lands just west of Denver for an ammunition plant, to be operated by the Remington Arms Company. Construction got underway in 1940 and .30 and .50 caliber cartridges were being made at the facility by 1941. Production continued until late in the war when the Kaiser Company took over the factory to make artillery ammunition. The ordinance plant was only the first of new wartime facilities for northeast Colorado.¹ Others near Denver included Lowry Airfield and Buckley Naval Air Station, not to mention the expansion of Fitzsimmons Hospital. Local promoters convinced the War Department that Colorado offered certain advantages, including good transportation systems, a climate that was excellent for flying and a good place for convalescents. These bases and arms plants stimulated the local construction industry and offered new jobs to residents when the facilities opened. To take full advantage in ending regional unemployment, the Army and its contractors used Colorado natives before "outsiders" were imported. The money brought into northeastern Colorado by military projects did more than anything else to end the Great Depression in this region.² Denver was not alone in benefiting; economic good times were enjoyed throughout northeast Colorado. Colorado Springs "boosters," seeing the same opportunities, jumped on the band wagon in 1940. Through gracious displays of hospitality and offers of local assistance, Colorado Springs convinced the U.S. Army to locate a training base near their city. In 1941, after nearly a year of lobbying, construction on Camp Carson began. This site became one of the Army's primary facilities to prepare troops for combat. By war's end the place had produced over 100,000 fighting men. Camp Carson also served as a hospital base and a prisoner-of-war facility. To complement

ground facilities, the Army Air Corps also expanded a local airport and renamed it Peterson Field. Like Denver, Colorado Springs discovered that the influx of Federal money pulled the city out of the Depression.³

In addition to purely military spending in northeast Colorado, other industries also benefited from the war, particularly after America joined the Allies in December, 1941. Purchases of foodstuffs, fuel and minerals from the region increased earlier, but when the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor orders for all sorts of materials were placed in unlimited quantities and at higher prices. Wheat, corn, sugar beets, beef and lamb were all in great demand. Northeastern Colorado's farmers responded by increasing output. In late 1942 the Federal government began price control but farmers were not hurt for their costs also stabilized. The war years were among the most prosperous this region ever had. Also sharing in the new wealth were northeast Colorado's civilian factories and mines. Companies like Western Cutlery of Boulder and various steel fabricators in Denver were awarded contracts and sub-contracts to supply the military. Railroads, trucking companies and airlines had as much business as they could handle. The Federal government loaned money for equipment and facilities to insure the smooth movement of goods and people. Oil producers, some local coal mines, and cement factories were also included in the new "boom." By 1944 the entire region had achieved prosperity, but at the same time worried about what would happen once peace returned.⁴ Japan surrendered in September, 1945 and after the victory celebrations ended, northeast Colorado prepared for a return to the Great Depression. But this never happened. Among those most fearful were farmers. Both ranchers and farmers thought that once their protected markets were no longer available they would have to find new ways to stay in business.

In irrigated areas the need for a dependable cash crop was still present. Sugar beets remained important to growers during post war years, but as new corn sweeteners were developed, sugar beet was far less in demand. In the next decade, as the trend away from sugar beets continued, farmers of the South Platte Valley planted different crops. Potatoes and other vegetables experienced new popularity with the region's farms as the 1970s drew to a close. At the same time Great Western Sugar Company was forced to cut back its operations and to diversify.

Other crops that became popular in northeast Colorado were feed grains and hay. Watered pastures proved profitable. Increased output came about for two reasons. First was an expanded amount of land under irrigation due to completion of the Colorado-Big Thompson Project. Secondly, a vast increase in the number of deep wells were drilled in areas of previous dryland farms. These water supplies led to decreased pressures on farmers to depend upon one crop. As the trend away from open range ranching to feedlot cattle production gained momentum, farmers found ready markets for their produce. Often the same producers who grew fodder also owned the stock. The line between farmer and rancher became blurred as marginal land once under the plow was returned to range for grazing.⁵ Dryland farming that prospered during the war was forced to make adjustments

after World War II. Demand for wheat, corn and other agricultural products helped those who survived the Great Depression by giving them money after the war ended. Often drylanders used their capital to drill deep wells and to make other production improvements. The Dust Bowl experience and federal interest in soil conservation fostered development of new techniques that helped increase output while limiting the impacts of drought. In the post war years eastern Colorado dryland areas continued among the nation's top producers of wheat and barley.

Those lands that proved impractical for farming were returned to range as cattle production boomed between 1945 and the 1970s. Northeastern Colorado's livestock industry underwent significant changes during and after World War II. Consumers demanded higher quality meat. By the 1950s the American people no longer bought meat that was tough and unmarbled. This change of taste forced ranchers to give up finishing cattle on the range and to either sell yearlings to feedlot operators or complete finishing themselves. During the 1950s, and into the early 1960s, northeast Colorado became one of this nation's leading producers of feeder cattle. Animals were sent to feedlots from across the country. Another change in area livestock operations was the introduction of new scientific breeding and better nutritional techniques, both of which were designed to lessen the time between birth and slaughter while still producing satisfactory meat.⁶

From 1945 ranching was modernized and prospered with only occasional interruptions. One was the winter of 1948-49 when blizzards paralyzed northeast Colorado and some herds were nearly wiped out. The death and destruction was reminiscent of the 1880s. These snowstorms led to extensive efforts to protect cows from the elements including the use of helicopters to rescue stranded cattle. Fluctuating prices occasionally disturbed prosperity but not until the seventies did the cattle market become so bad as to make ranchers consider reducing herds. Rustling also became a modern day problem. With the expansion of northeast Colorado's highway system, stock rustlers found theft easy. They used trucks to move cattle from pastures and then would be hundreds of miles away before the crime was discovered. An additional problem that farmers could not overcome was the encroachment of cities and suburbs onto farm land and the subsequent political control urban areas exercised over regional affairs. These shifts led to a urban-rural split that has grown deeper during the mid-twentieth century.⁷

While farmers enjoyed prosperity after the Second World War, mining did not due partially well thanks orders by the War Production Board (WPB) that halted all gold mining. The one exception was the uranium "boom" of the 1950s around Jamestown in Boulder County. American victory was hastened by the use of atomic bombs on Japan. Air raids on Hiroshima and Nagasaki thrust the world into the nuclear age. The secret of the bomb was exclusive until 1949 when the Soviet Union exploded its own. Almost immediately the America became concerned about losing its superiority and a weapons race, the "Cold War," ensued. Because of this competition and a fear that foreign supplies of radioactive materials might be interrupted, the Federal government began a system of reward for the



Uranium prospecting during the 1950s became quite a fad in Boulder County. F. W. Stead Photo, Courtesy USGS.

development of domestic uranium. This led prospectors to scour the West with their geiger counters. Deposits were found near Jamestown and a minor rush ensued. The discoveries were relatively small and only a few souls succeeded in uranium mining. By the early 1960s the excitement had ended.

This decade witnessed new mining activity in Colorado's High Country that occurred when world gold prices skyrocketed. Individuals and small companies reactivated old claims in hope of taking advantage of the new market. Gold's value reached levels to make mining profitable once again, especially after the Federal government removed \$35.00 per ounce restrictions.⁸ Yet, the most stable mining activities in the region from 1945 were oil, natural gas and stone and gravel operations. Heavy wartime demand for petroleum depleted northeast Colorado's reserves. However, production from new regional wells continues to the present. The future looks bright because of present emphasis on domestic energy needs and intensified drilling programs by major oil companies.

Railroads were another industry that suffered declines during the mid-twentieth century. Yet as the war ended few could foresee the problems that rail carriers would face by 1970. High levels of wartime rail use dropped off, but the roads expected this and in the late 1940s planned to prevent further declines. The first major change came in 1947 when the Denver and Salt Lake, under control of the Denver and Rio Grande Western for more than 10 years, was formally merged into the D&RGW eliminating some waste in operation. The enlarged D&RGW, just out of bankruptcy, looked to the future optimistically. At the same time the D&RGW, and all other railroads that served northeast Colorado, were replacing older steam locomotives with diesels for efficiency and lower costs.

Hand in hand came new streamlined, dome-car equipped passenger trains to attract tourist business. The *Rock Island Rocket*, the *City of Denver*, the *Denver Zephyr*, the *California Zephyr*, and the *Colorado Eagle* all served the region into the 1960s. These "rolling palaces" were short-lived, for by the early 1960s railroad companies found themselves losing money. Service was cut back to slow the drain on company revenues. One by one, passenger trains were taken out of service until by 1970 only two or three were left. Responding to this service decline, AMTRAK was established to operate the nation's long distance passenger trains. Because of its regional importance, Denver got a transcontinental from AMTRAK. One rather independent local railroad refused to join this Federal consortium. Until April, 1983, the Denver & Rio Grande Western, opted to maintain its own Denver to Salt Lake City passenger train, the *Rio Grande Zephyr*; the remains of the once grand *California Zephyr*.⁹

Changes in rail service to this region came about in large part because of a rapid expansion and improvement of the highway system. Foremost was an interstate network that began in the 1950s under President Dwight D. Eisenhower. Federal planners decided the nation needed a system of limited access roads used by civilians but available to the

military in times of national emergency. When final routings were announced, three interstates were to cross northeast Colorado with a fourth just a few miles north in Wyoming. They were: I-70, I-25 and I-76 (formerly I-80S), with I-80 in the "Cowboy State". These new roads allowed motorists from back east direct access to this region. The crowning achievement of the Interstate system was construction of the Eisenhower Tunnel through the Continental Divide, under Loveland Pass, allowing quick passage west from Denver.

Even before Interstates were under construction state, federal and private funds were used to upgrade other regional highways. Roads like U.S. 36 (the Boulder-Denver Turnpike) were built. Highways were improved and rebuilt to resemble interstates. In some ways the 50s, 60s and 70s witnessed the culmination of northeast Colorado's "good roads" movement. With fine roads available and the flexibility of trucks, these carriers soon hauled much of the region's commerce. During this same period automobile ownership sky-rocketed the new highways were heavily used both by residents and visitors.

This region's easy access for motorists led to increased tourism. Towns along main highways made efforts to attract vacationers. Some communities like Estes Park became totally dependent on that trade for an economic livelihood. State and local governments, Chambers of Commerce and other boosters exerted much effort to attract visitors to northeast Colorado. In some respects, the Federal government also became indirectly involved. Large numbers of military personnel trained here very often returned after they left the service. Also, programs of the Forest Service and the National Park Service to improve their recreational facilities after World War II encouraged more visitors in this region.¹⁰

For those who did not travel by car, flying emerged as a real alternative after the war. To encourage aviation Denver voters, in 1947, agreed to expand Stapleton Field. This foresight allowed the "Queen City" to become the air center of the Rocky Mountain West. Both United and Continental Airlines located major facilities for training and repair at Denver and in 1950 this city became headquarters for newly formed Frontier Airlines. Since World War II commercial air travel has boomed in northeast Colorado. During 1970s annual passenger flow through Stapleton was measured in the millions.¹¹

Since World War II one of the most significant segments of this region's history has been ever expanding presence of the Federal government. When the war ended, the government was in a quandry about disposal of facilities throughout the nation, like the Remington Arms Plant near Denver. Local organizations went to the War Assets Board and convinced them that the government should retain its buildings and convert them to offices. From this project came the Denver Federal Center. It grew slowly at first, but under President Dwight D. Eisenhower the place became regional headquarters for numerous agencies. Ike was fond of northeast Colorado, having both vacationed and recuperated from a heart attack here. Denver was not alone in lobbying to get Federal dollars. Colorado Springs, after its success with Camp Carson, feared the post would be closed after the war. However, the Army decided to expand the site. When the Korean War broke out in 1950,

Carson again actively trained troops. In 1954, a year after the Korean cease-fire was signed, Camp Carson became Fort Carson. 1965 saw the post doubled in size as it became one of the Army's primary training bases. In that same year, a six year campaign by local boosters bore fruit when the United States Air Force announced it would accept Colorado Springs' land offer and locate the new Air Force Academy at the foot of Pike's Peak. The city's role as major center of early warning defense activity was assured during that same decade when the Cheyenne Mountain Early Detection and Response facility was activated in 1951. Originally known as the Continental Air Defense Command (CONAD) the organization was renamed the North American Air Defense Command (NORAD) in 1957 when Canada became a partner. These military activities added hundreds of millions of dollars to the local economy each year.¹³

Another city in northeast Colorado that benefited from Federal spending after the second World War was Boulder. This town had not gotten any wartime facilities, but during the 50s and 60s the situation changed. One of the first plants to be located near the city was the Rocky Flats nuclear weapons facility, south of Boulder. Operated by various agencies and private companies over the years, this highly scientific site started a science trend. Soon other high technology agencies looked to that city as a good place for headquarters. Soon the Boulder was home to NCAR, NSTAR, NOAA, NBS and other Federal bureaus with strange names. Because of the technical atmosphere of this community, private companies also chose the Boulder area for their plants. Among these were International Business Machine (IBM), Storage Technology (STC) and Ball Brothers. While Boulder was the regional center for science, other places also participated in the "science boom". Foremost was Littleton where the Martin Marietta Company chose a site in the foothills to build a factory for aero-space related business. Northeast Colorado has always been intimately involved with America's space program. By the 1960s a large part of the metro area was dependant, to a large degree, on governmental activities for its economic base.¹⁴

Federal spending in the region was concentrated in the cities, however, outlying areas also benefited. Federal land management agencies like the Forest Service, National Park Service and Bureau of Land Management have all taken steps to encourage use of their lands. The Forest Service, especially, has spent millions to improve range conditions, to foster controlled timbering and to provide recreation. One major step in that direction took place in 1960 when the Secretary of Agriculture formally transferred control of the Pawnee National Grasslands to the Forest Service. Since then the Forest Service has undertaken new programs, some of which focused on watershed protection, to help meet ever-growing demands by northeast Colorado's burgeoning population.¹⁵

Since the 1940s this region has been one of the fastest growing in the United States. Most increase took place in the cities of northeast Colorado. The nationwide trend toward suburbanization was also felt. As freeways spread, it became easier for people to work in core cities and commute to the suburbs. This trend led, by the 1970s, to urban sprawl and



The Fort St. Vrain Nuclear Power Plant is the first and only nuclear electrical generation plant in Colorado.
A. E. Turner Photo, Courtesy USGS.



Boulder, Colorado in 1982 represented a "state of the art" community based on strict land use controls. This subdivision is typical of the newer areas in Boulder. Photo by F. J. Athearn.

the development of a corridor of heavy settlement along the Front Range from Fort Collins to Pueblo. During the 50s and 60s urban growth was encouraged in Denver and Colorado Springs as a way to ease congestion. By the end of the 1970's officials bemoaned the death of core areas. Revitalization programs in the seventies have helped turn the situation around.¹⁶

Rapid growth in northeastern Colorado's cities also caused other problems. Some matters were limited to the Denver metropolitan area but others were shared by nearby communities. These included the collapse of city bus systems, periodic water shortages and city budgets stretched to the limit as service demands increased. Another matter was the inadequacy of older structures in downtown areas. Denver Urban Renewal Authority (DURA) was created in the 1960s to deal with urban decay and undertook a program of redevelopment and restoration. A few basic problems were solved by the late 1970s, but others, especially water, were left for the future. Water and air pollution were two concerns that impacted the entire region and led to activity to clean up those irreplaceable resources. Often major cities were sources of pollutants, but rural areas suffered. The 1970s witnessed strides at air and water quality improvement, yet Denver remains a city with the worst air in the nation.¹⁷ During the late 60s and into the early 70s large numbers of Americans embraced an "environmental movement". They not only sought to improve local air and water quality but also to protect "virgin" areas of northeast Colorado from further damage at the hands of man. The mountains, in particular, attracted attention because with rapid growth, after 1945, thousands of visitors used the high country for all forms of recreation. Often on summer weekends, it was impossible to find a picnic spot as literally tens of thousands flocked to the hills. During the 1970s, under pressure from environmentalists, government at all levels made new strides at controlling users and upgrading facilities. Only the future will hold the answer as to how effective these efforts to preserve the natural quality of northeast Colorado will be.¹⁸

Another new force that made itself felt throughout the region during the 60s and 70s was the new assertiveness of various minority groups. This was part of a nationwide trend begun before World War II and that accelerated rapidly during the late 1950s and early 1960s. Four specific groups in the region benefited from these new laws, while starting a search for their own separate identities. Blacks, Hispanics, Native Americans and women all participated in the process of their heritage search. During the past two decades strides were made to integrate them into the community. Often programs such as mandatory school busing and bi-lingual education met with opposition from Anglo members of the community. This led to social tensions, but adjustments were made. As with all movements, only future generations' can evaluate how well or poorly these programs accomplished their goals.¹⁹

Northeast Colorado became a "safety valve" for the nation during the 60s and 70s. As the "youth movement" took place, young people sought a place to "drop out". They chose the mountains around Nederland, west of Boulder. Communes and other modern living arrangements were established and Boulder County gained a reputation as "the place

to go.” When the movement ended during the early 1970s, the county continued its reputation as a “hip” place. Now the young were replaced by the slightly older and far more affluent. Boulder, by 1983, developed into a center of “social awareness,” with modernity like the Pearl Street Mall, a city-sponsored semi-nude beach, and Mork’s house. This was far cry from the assortment of cabins, and tents that was Boulder City a hundred and twenty years earlier.²⁰

The history of northeastern Colorado since pre-historic times, and especially in the past century and a quarter, was dictated by nature. The region’s resources acted as a lure, attracting settlers, but without “pushes” from other parts of the United States, few would have ever crossed the plains. From the earliest Spanish explorers, northeast Colorado’s history was dominated by this “push-pull” force. Perhaps the best example was the gold rush of 1859. Gold deposits were well known before 1859, but only by then were enough men feeling a “push,” to risk new settlements in the Rockies. The region’s past was also one of inter-action with forces outside the area. Events in northeast Colorado have always been part of a greater integration with national events. While it often appears as if man has overcome his surroundings, nature still prevails. This was proven again on the night of July 31, 1976, only a few hours before Colorado’s one hundredth birthday, when a flash flood obliterated the works of man and killed over a hundred people in the Big Thompson Canyon.²¹

NOTES Chapter XII

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Steven F. Mehls was born March, 1952 at Omaha, Nebraska. In 1974 he graduated from Drake University in Des Moines, Iowa. That summer, looking for a great adventure in life, he followed the fifty-niners' path and moved to Colorado. In 1975 he received a Masters degree in American History from the University of Colorado, Boulder and a Ph. D. in Western American History in 1982. He has published in numerous professional journals and is a member of many professional societies.