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History of the State Historical Society of Colorado

I. THE FIRST TWENTY YEARS

LEROY R. HAFEN

The person who took the initiative in founding¹ the State Historical Society of Colorado was William D. Todd. Born in Philadelphia in 1846, Todd was taken as a small boy to live in Washington, D. C. There at the age of eleven, he was appointed a page in the House of Representatives. Later he became a clerk for Schuyler Colfax and then served as his private secretary while Colfax was Speaker of the House and later Vice President.

Todd first came to Colorado with the Colfax Party on a vacation trip in 1868. He returned in 1873 and settled here, first practicing law and then going into banking.² In 1878 he was elected to the lower House of Colorado legislature. His previous experience in Washington and his pleasing personality made him at once an important figure in the General Assembly.

On January 23, 1879, Mr. Todd introduced "House Bill No. 134, a bill for an act to encourage the formation and establishment of a State historical and natural history society." It moved smoothly through the legislature³ and achieved final passage on February 6. Governor Frederick W. Pitkin signed it seven days later. The law reads as follows:

¹ Dr. J. N. Hall, a pioneer physician and one-time member of the Board of Directors of the State Historical Society, told Caroline Bancroft that her grandfather, Dr. F. J. Bancroft (first President of the Historical Society) said that the idea of a State Historical and Natural History Society of Colorado originated with members of the Sportsman Club of Denver at a meeting in his office in early January, 1879. We have found no documentary evidence on this point. The Sportsman's Club, organized on October 12, 1869, took an active interest, not only in hunting and fishing but in all matters relating to the natural history of the region. During the early years of the State Historical and Natural History Society (the original name of the present State Historical Society of Colorado), a large proportion of the members were more interested in natural history than in history.

² Upon organization of the State Historical Society, Todd was chosen Treasurer, and was to serve in that position for 36 years. Active and public-spirited, he served as an officer of many companies and organizations. He was a prominent Mason and rose to top positions in the order. He married Ella A. Colfield in 1876, and to them were born three daughters. Mr. Todd died at Denver November 24, 1919. For further biographical material see [W. B. Vickers], *History of City of Denver, Arapahoe County and Colorado* (Chicago, 1880), 613; W. N. Byers, *Encyclopedia of Biography of Colorado* (Chicago, 1901), 432; and an obituary in *The Trail*, XIV, no. 6, p. 32.

³ The bill was referred to the Committee on Education January 29. H.P.H. Bromwell, Chairman of this committee, reported the bill back to the House on

AN ACT

TO ENCOURAGE THE FORMATION AND ESTABLISHMENT OF A STATE HISTORICAL AND NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY.

WHEREAS, the history of Colorado, being as yet unwritten, and existing now only in tradition or fragmentary manuscripts of private individuals and of the public press; and

WHEREAS, the natural history of Colorado, as represented by published essays of scientists and by preserved specimens, is set forth only by organizations and museums without the state, in this country and in Europe; and

WHEREAS, the opportunity, now so evident, for making a permanent record of these essential elements of our prosperity, is fast passing away, so that a few years hence, both the men who have been the actors, and the material for collections, will be quite beyond our reach; and

WHEREAS, it is believed that many valuable historical papers, and specimens of our natural history, would be contributed to a properly organized society; therefore, in order to encourage and promote the advancement of these material interests, and to establish a state museum—

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of the State of Colorado:

SECTION 1. That whenever there shall be organized within the state, a state historical and natural history society, composed of members of character and standing in the state, it shall be the duty of the executive officers of the state to permit it to use the supreme court or state library room for its meetings and otherwise, furnished with light and fuel; *Provided*, that such use shall not interfere with the regular purpose for which such room is required.

SEC. 2. That there be and is hereby appropriated out of any money in the state treasury, not otherwise appropriated, the sum of five hundred dollars, to assist the said society to further the ends of its organization, as generally set forth in the preamble hereof; *Provided, however*, that no part of the money hereby appropriated shall be paid as compensation to any officer or member of the society; and the state auditor shall draw his warrant on the state treasurer upon vouchers ordered paid by the society, attested by the signatures of the president and secretary, and approved by the superintendent of public instruction.

February 3 and recommended that it be passed "with amendments herewith transmitted" (the original bill is missing from the files in the state archives, so we were unable to learn what amendments were made by the committee). Mr. George M. Chilcott of Pueblo County moved that the bill be ordered engrossed as amended, "which motion prevailed." The next day the bill was read a third time and voted upon. The yeas were 39; nays, none; absent and not voting, 10 (*House Journal of the General Assembly of the State of Colorado, second session, convened at the City of Denver, January 1, 1879, pages 193, 263, 344, 345, 414*).

The bill went immediately to the Senate, where on the same day it was given a first reading. The next day (February 5) it was read a second time and referred to the Committee on Education. The following day this Committee recommended that the bill "be considered engrossed and placed on file for third reading." On the 6th it was read a third time and passed. The vote was: yeas, 21; nays, 2; absent and not voting, 3.

The Joint Committee on Enrollment presented the bill to the Governor on February 8, the day before adjournment of the legislature (*Senate Journal of the General Assembly of the State of Colorado, etc. (Denver, 1879), pages 324, 327, 345, 354, 371-72, 418*).

SEC. 3. The said society is hereby prohibited from incurring any indebtedness of any kind whatever beyond the funds on hand in its treasury to meet the same.

SEC. 4. None of the provisions of this act shall inure to the benefit of the said society until it shall by irrepealable resolution or order declare that the title to all property acquired by it, either by purchase, gift or otherwise, shall absolutely vest in the State of Colorado; and such property shall thereupon vest in the state.

Approved February 13, 1879.

In the meantime, after the measure had passed the General Assembly but before it had received the Governor's signature, a group of interested citizens met in the office of Joseph C. Shattuck, State Superintendent of Public Instruction, on the afternoon of February 10. "The object of the meeting was stated by the Hon. W. D. Todd to be the temporary organization of a State Historical Society, under the provisions of House Bill No. 134. Dr. Bancroft was then elected chairman pro tem., and Prof. Aaron Gove acted as Secretary. The opinions of the gentlemen present were stated, and as it appeared to be the unanimous wish of all present to become members of such an institution, steps were immediately taken toward organizing. General Pierce offered a motion appointing a committee of four to draft articles of incorporation, which was adopted and a committee appointed. The question was then discussed as to how best to reach the various persons throughout the State, who were interested in the formation of a society. One of the gentlemen proposed to hold a general meeting at Colorado Springs some time hence; another thought it best for the committee on incorporation to issue invitations to such people in different parts of the State, as would be eligible for membership. The matter was finally settled, however, that the press should herald the invitation, and the meeting adjourned to the call of the committee.

"There seemed to be a desire on the part of some of those present to first organize and endeavor to secure good members afterwards; but the idea was combatted by others, who think a State Historical Society should not be closed against anyone entitled to membership on account of qualifications possessed."⁴

In reporting the meeting the *Rocky Mountain News* stated: "After an explanation from W. D. Todd as to the scope and purposes of the society, Messrs. Todd, Gove, Sopris, and Shattuck were appointed a committee on permanent organization, and will submit a draft of articles of incorporation at a future meeting."⁵

⁴ *Denver Daily Tribune*, February 11, 1879.

⁵ *Rocky Mountain News*, February 11, 1879, under the heading "State Historical Society." This newspaper report continues: "It is thought probable that the Alpine Club of Colorado Springs, an historical society of excellent repute, will join its endeavors and add its collections to those of the state association."



DR. F. J. BANCROFT
First President of the Society

This committee published in the Denver press on June 12, 1879, these resolutions:

That a meeting be held at the executive building in Denver, on Friday, July 11, at 7:30 p.m., at which time all persons throughout the State interested in the proposed society are hereby invited to be present and become members and assist in the permanent organization.

That one of our number will endeavor to be present at the meeting of the State Press Association at Colorado Springs, July 8, to secure its valuable cooperation.

That these proceedings be handed to the press of Denver for publication, and that the papers of the State be, and are hereby, requested to copy and to urge those interested in their respective communities to be present at the organization, believing as we do that the society which will be inaugurated under State patronage and countenance will prove a most valuable adjunct to our State's progress.

Richard Sopris
W. D. Todd
Aaron Gove,
Committee.⁸

Articles of Incorporation were prepared by the Committee—most likely by Todd, the member with legal training—for submis-

⁸ The identical notice appeared in the *News* and the *Tribune* on June 12, 1879.

sion to the July 11 meeting. Notices of the meeting were published in the *Daily Rocky Mountain News* of July 9 and 11, and all interested persons were urged to attend.

The meeting of July 11 was held in the Supreme Court Room, with Dr. Bancroft in the chair and Dr. H. K. Steele as acting secretary. Mr. Todd read the call of the Committee for the meeting and also read the proposed Articles of Incorporation. These were accepted and were "signed by those present, who constitute the incorporators of the society."⁷ A Board of Directors—those named in the incorporation papers—were elected for one year. Mr. Todd then administered the oath to the Directors.

A committee consisting of Messrs. Aaron Gove, J. C. Shattuck, A. Stedman, W. N. Byers, and W. B. Vickers was appointed to draft a constitution and by-laws for the Society. On motion of Governor John Evans, the President, Secretary, and Mr. Todd were instructed to file the incorporation papers with the Secretary of State.⁸

This was done the following day. The document reads:

ARTICLES OF INCORPORATION
of
THE STATE HISTORICAL AND NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY
OF COLORADO

The undersigned hereby associate themselves together under the name and style of The State Historical and Natural History Society of Colorado, the organization to be in accordance with and under the provisions of sections 34 to 38, inclusive, of an act entitled "An act to provide for the formation of corporations," approved March 14, 1877, being Chapter XIX of the General Laws of Colorado of 1877.

The objects and purposes of the society are as contemplated by the act of the Legislative Assembly of Colorado, entitled "An act to encourage the foundation and establishment of a State Historical and Natural History Society," approved February 13, 1879, and as generally set forth in the preamble thereof. The principal office and place of business of the society shall be at the capital of the State of Colorado. The board of directors of the society shall consist of nine members, and Richard Sopris, John Evans, William N. Byers, Roger W. Woodbury, F. J. Bancroft, H. K. Steele, Aaron Gove, William D. Todd, William E. Pabor, shall comprise the said board for the first year, and until their successors are duly chosen and qualified.

It is hereby covenanted and agreed, and made a part of the fundamental law of our organization, that the title to all property, of whatever kind or nature, acquired by the society, by purchase, gift or otherwise, shall absolutely vest in the State of Colorado, and when so acquired shall immediately thereupon vest in the said State, and the interest or title of the members shall be usufructuary merely.

It is further covenanted and agreed that the society hereby fully accepts all the terms and conditions of the said last mentioned act as binding on it, and declares it to be a part hereof.

⁷ *Daily Rocky Mountain News*, July 12, 1879, p. 8, c. 4.

⁸ *Denver Daily Times*, July 12, 1879.

Witness our hands and seals, at Denver, Colorado, this eleventh day of July, A. D. 1879.

J. F. Frueauff	[seal]	F. J. Bancroft	[seal]
William Holly	[seal]	Richard Sopris	[seal]
S. T. Armstrong	[seal]	William D. Todd	[seal]
Aaron Gove	[seal]	Roger W. Woodbury	[seal]
William F. Bennecke	[seal]	Fred J. Stanton	[seal]
N. A. Baker	[seal]	John Evans	[seal]
H. K. Steele	[seal]	Fred. Z. Salomon	[seal]
W. B. Vickers	[seal]	R. G. Buckingham	[seal]
A. Stedman	[seal]	H. A. Lemen	[seal]
Edwin J. Carver	[seal]	Wm. N. Byers	[seal]
Jos. C. Shattuck	[seal]	R. E. Whitsitt	[seal]
Edw. A. Stinson	[seal]	Paul H. Hanus	[seal]
B. F. Zalinger	[seal]	Wm. E. Pabor	[seal]
Scott J. Anthony	[seal]	J. Harrison Mills	[seal] ⁹

The next meeting of the Society was held in the Supreme Court Room on the evening of July 31, 1879, with Dr. Bancroft presiding. Chairman Aaron Gove submitted the report of his committee and read the draft of the proposed Constitution and By-Laws for the Society. After discussion of the articles and of amendments proposed, the Constitution and By-Laws were adopted. Additional persons present at the meeting were by vote accepted as members.

Officers of the Society were then chosen: Dr. F. J. Bancroft, President; Professor J. A. Sewell and Mayor Richard Sopris, Vice Presidents; W. B. Vickers, Recording and Corresponding Secretary; W. D. Todd, Treasurer; and H. K. Steele, Aaron Gove, and W. E. Pabor, Curators.¹⁰

A word about the first set of officers.

Dr. Bancroft, first President of the Society, was a prominent pioneer physician of Colorado. Born in Connecticut in 1834 and descended from a long line of Puritan New England stock, he launched his medical career with four years of service as surgeon in the Union Army. In 1866 he came to Denver and immediately became prominent in medical and civic activities. He was surgeon for stage coach lines and then for several railroads. For many years he was city physician, was the first president of the State Board of Health, and was a trustee of various public and private institutions.¹¹

Distinguished men were chosen as Vice Presidents. Professor Sewell was the first President of the University of Colorado; he organized and opened the institution in September, 1877. Richard Sopris had joined the gold rush to Colorado in 1858. The next year he represented the region in the Kansas legislature. He brought his wife and eight children to Denver in 1860, and the next year

⁹ Archives of the State Historical Society.

¹⁰ *Daily Rocky Mountain News*, August 1, 1879, p. 8, c. 3.

¹¹ For a biographical sketch see W. N. Byers, *Encyclopedia of Biography of Colorado* (Chicago, 1901), 208-10.

became a captain in the First Colorado Regiment. He was the first President of the Colorado Agricultural Society (1863), was sheriff of Arapahoe County four years, and was Mayor of Denver 1878-80.¹²

Mr. Vickers, the first Secretary of the Society, was currently Private Secretary to Governor Pitkin. Ill health had driven him to Colorado in 1871 from his home in Indiana. An experienced journalist, he became managing editor of the *Rocky Mountain News* and later held the same position on the *Denver Tribune*.¹³

The career of Mr. Todd, the Treasurer, has been sketched above.

Of the curators, Henry K. Steele, a native of Ohio, had come to Denver in 1871 and continued here the practice of medicine. Aaron Gove, a native of New Hampshire, came to Denver in 1874 to be Superintendent of City Schools. He was to hold the position until 1904. W. E. Pabor was one of the founders of Greeley, a poet, journalist, and prominent promoter of agriculture in Colorado.¹⁴

Mr. Vickers, the Secretary, prepared and had printed the Constitution and By-Laws of the Society, and the announcement reproduced on the reverse of this page. These he distributed widely throughout the state.

The Constitution provides, in Article I, that "This Society shall be called the State Historical and Natural History Society of Colorado." "It shall have for its object the collection and preservation of whatever pertains to the history and the natural history of the State of Colorado" (Article II, section I). The Society is to hold meetings to discuss historical subjects and if practicable publish its transactions. "It shall also establish and maintain a cabinet of objects illustrative of the several departments of natural history, and a library of works relating to the history of the State" (Article II, section 2).

Membership, as defined and regulated in Article III, is restricted. Candidates for membership must be proposed by two existing members and be accepted by a vote of three-fourths of the members present. Members must pay an initiation fee of three dollars, and are subject to tax, by a majority vote, for special purposes.

Officers (Article IV) are President, four Vice Presidents, a Corresponding Secretary and a Recording Secretary (generally

¹² Biography of Sopris is found in [W. B. Vickers], *History of the City of Denver, Arapahoe County, and Colorado* (Chicago, 1880), 572-73.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 620-21.

¹⁴ He died in Denver August 29, 1911. See obituary in *The Trail*, IV, no. 4, p. 27.

combined in practice), a Treasurer and a Board of Curators. Officers are to hold office for one year, or until their successors are elected. The usual duties attach to the respective offices.



DENVER, AUGUST 1, 1879.

DEAR SIR:

I beg to call your attention to the enclosed constitution, by-laws and list of officers of the above society. It is exclusively a State institution, constituted by a special act of the late legislature, and the incorporators of the society have no more interest in the enterprise than any and every other citizen of the State. Not one dollar of the legislative appropriation in aid of the society can be diverted to the use of any individual, and all donations made to the society become immediately and must forever remain the property of the State of Colorado.

It is particularly desired that all citizens of the State, of either sex, who are interested in the grand object had in view, in establishing this State Institution, shall become active members and represent the society in their several localities, no matter how remote from the capital. Indeed the museum is more likely to be enriched by contributions from distant points than by the personal efforts of residents of Denver and its vicinity, but the latter may do good service by receiving and caring for the contributions of other communities.

In a State so rich in natural curiosities, the cabinet of such a society is likely to prove its greatest attraction, but the history of the State itself is rich in interesting facts and incidents, and the purely historical collections of the society, may in the end, prove not less attractive than its museum. To this end contributions of papers and sketches of historical value and interest are requested; particularly from pioneer settlers of the country.

A moderate initiation fee has been established, to provide for the printing and other incidental expenses of the society, in order that the legislative appropriation may be entirely devoted to the collection and preservation of material for the library and museum. It is hoped and confidently believed that a large number of the scientific men and women of the State will not only become members of the society, but will do all in their power to promote its interests.

Applications for membership and all correspondence should be directed to the undersigned at Denver. Specimens forwarded by mail should be similarly addressed, but larger specimens or natural curiosities, sent as freight or by express, should be directed "Natural History Society, Denver," as it is hoped that railway and express companies in the State will make liberal terms with the society for the transportation of such articles. Before making such shipments, however, it would be well to enquire whether the society can and will receive them, and in view of the limited funds in the hands of the curators, no unnecessary expense should be imposed upon the society.

All specimens, manuscripts, etc., belonging to the society, will be stored in the State building, and under certain wise restrictions will be open to the inspection of the public.

W. B. VICKERS,

Recording and Corresponding Secretary.

FIRST ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE SOCIETY

The By-Laws provide (Article I) for appointment of various committees, the most important being the one in charge of the Cabinet (of specimens). Article II relates to the Museum. "No specimen or apparatus contained in the museum of the Society shall be taken from the hall under any pretext whatever, unless by vote of the Society." The keys to the cases are to be kept "by the Curators and members of the respective committees." A catalogue of all articles is to be kept. Visitors are to be admitted to the Museum at hours fixed by the Board of Curators and approved by a vote of the Society. No children under twelve are to be admitted unless accompanied by persons responsible for their good behavior and for any destruction of property they may cause.

Meetings are to be held bi-monthly. The order of business is specified. The By-Laws may be amended at any regular meeting of the Society by a two-thirds vote of members present.

The first of the regular bi-monthly meetings of the Society was held in the Supreme Court Room on September 15, 1879. Dr. Bancroft presided; some new members were admitted; and some gifts to the Society, including a file of the *Greeley Tribune*, given by W. E. Pabor, were received. The address of the evening, upon the history of Denver, was given by Mayor Sopris. His paper has not survived, but we have this interesting report of it in the *Rocky Mountain News* of the next day:

It was a very able address, but too long for the crowded condition of our columns this morning. It began substantially as follows:

Denver's rise and progress are a marvel of modern civilization. Situated on a great desert, beyond the frontier, six hundred miles from civilization, during the dawn of a fierce rebellion, and in the heart of an empire of Indians, who were hostile on every side, Denver has a right to be proud of its present glorious progress. Here, where eighteen years ago there were scarcely thirty white men, we today can boast of a magnificent metropolis, with a population of thirty thousand. The early "pioneers of bravery" sought the junction of Cherry Creek with the South Platte, as "a promised land" of gold . . .

In conclusion, the history of the town was traced from the old territorial time down to the time when the present metropolis of the mountains had been recognized as a place of some considerable pretensions. From that season to the present, our young and beautiful queen of the plains progressed from year to year with improvement and enterprise upon enterprise, schools, churches, business marts, private palaces, city water works, city gas works, city street cars, a gallant fire department, and last but not least, statehood, until now she is empress of all the surveyings from the father of waters to the Golden Gate of the Pacific.

At the second scheduled meeting (November 10), after bills were allowed and new members were elected, Professor Gove gave an address on the "Schools of Denver."¹⁵

¹⁵ More than a column in the *Rocky Mountain News* of November 11, 1879, is devoted to a report of the address.

The first Annual Meeting, as provided by the Society's constitution, was held the second Monday of January, 1880. The officers chosen the previous July were re-elected for one-year terms. New members were admitted; donations of mineral and natural history specimens were acknowledged. The treasurer's report for 1879 showed receipts of \$63 and expenditures of \$21.50.

After the business was attended to, W. E. Pabor read a paper on the "History of Greeley." Having been the first person to call on N. C. Meeker after appearance of the latter's announcement in the *New York Tribune* regarding "A Western Colony," Pabor had been so closely connected with the founding of the Union Colony that he was able to present a vivid and intimate picture of the beginnings of Greeley. The *Daily Rocky Mountain News* printed the full address in three closely set columns (January 13).

Secretary Vickers, pursuant to instructions of the Society, appealed through the press to "miners, mine-owners, and prospectors" to contribute specimens to the Society's "museum."¹⁶

"There was a pleasant meeting of the Colorado Historical Society at the court house last night [June 21, 1880]. Dr. Bancroft presided. Two new members, Mr. G. W. Clayton and Professor Arthur Lakes were admitted." The address of the evening, by Professor Lakes, of the School of Mines, was upon "Fossil Remains of Colorado."¹⁷

Apparently, no meetings were held during the second half of the year 1880. In reporting the meeting of January 10, 1881, the *Daily Rocky Mountain News* said: "The State Historical Society, of which very little has been heard lately, held its annual meeting last night at the supreme court chambers."¹⁸ President Bancroft read an extended report on the founding and activities of the Society. The Treasurer's report showed an unexpended balance of \$450 from the \$500 appropriation of 1879. Fifteen new members, including ex-Governor Gilpin, O. J. Goldrick (Colorado's first school teacher), and Judge Wilbur F. Stone were elected to membership. Officers elected were: F. J. Bancroft, President; J. A. Sewell, Amos Steck, W. F. Stone, and Thomas M. Field, Vice Presidents; Thomas F. Dawson, Recording Secretary; Arthur Lakes, Corresponding Secretary; W. D. Todd, Treasurer; and Aaron Gove, Richard Borchardt, and R. S. Roeschlaub, Curators.

President Bancroft's Report was published in full in both the *News* and the *Denver Tribune* on January 16, 1881. He reviewed the steps in the founding of the Society, listed the four addresses given (as described above), told of the donations of minerals, rodents,

¹⁶ *Daily Rocky Mountain News*, February 8, 1880.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, June 22, 1880.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, January 11, 1881.

birds, newspapers, and books received. The needs of the Society he listed as: 1st, a permanent place suitable for regular meetings and for safe keeping and exhibitions of collections; 2nd, a fireproof safe for keeping valuable papers and other property; 3rd, an appropriation sufficient to pay the salary of a Secretary. He deplored the loss by death of Secretary Vickers (died March 23, 1880) and paid tribute to his ability and service. Fossils, relics of our prehistoric peoples, minerals, and specimens of animals and plants of the region were all, he asserted, deserving of study and preservation.

The third session of the Colorado General Assembly, by an Act approved February 9, 1881, appropriated \$500 for the work of the Society. It was provided, however, that none of the money should be paid to any officer of the organization.

At the meeting of the Society on May 29, 1881, with attendance "larger than on previous occasions of the kind," William H. Jackson, famous pioneer photographer, gave an address on "the ancient cliff-houses and Aztec ruins along the San Juan river and its tributaries."¹⁹ Jackson related his personal experiences while engaged with the Hayden Survey some years previously.

A handsome "cabinet of minerals, coins, and small curiosities," valued at \$2,000, was presented to the Society by Ed. O. Wolcott, W. A. Hamill, and O. H. Rothacker on March 31, 1881.²⁰

During this year the Society was given, for its collections, a room in the rented building that served as state capitol—the Glenarm Hotel, 15th and Glenarm Streets.²¹

In December, 1881, a collection of "Aztec Relics" from southwestern Colorado was brought to the Society by Dr. D. S. Griffith of Durango. These, including grinding stones, a skull, and stone hammers, were "placed in the rooms of the society at the Capitol building." "During the winter," says the newspaper report of

¹⁹ *Denver Tribune*, March 30, 1881, p. 8, c. 1. Jackson, living to the ripe age of 99 years, 86 days, died June 30, 1942, and is buried at Arlington.

²⁰ *Denver Tribune*, April 1, 1881, p. 4, c. 2.

²¹ The building at 412-414 Larimer Street had been the state house earlier in 1880 (*Colorado State Business Directory* . . . 1880, 17), but the offices were moved in November of that year to the Glenarm Hotel, corner of 15th and Glenarm. The *Rocky Mountain News* of November 21, 1880, reported: "The Glenarm has now become the state house of Colorado, but the bar and billiard rooms will be open to the public at all times. Billy, whom everybody knows, will be in attendance." *The State Business Directory of Colorado with Mining and Live Stock Directory Departments*, 1881 (Denver, 1881), 19, lists "State Building, corner of Glenarm and Fifteenth Streets."

In reporting an archaeological gift the *Denver Republican* of December 20, 1881, remarked that "a little band of earnest and thoughtful men and women here in Denver, about two years ago, organized the State Historical Society of Colorado. Steadily, but under many discouragements, this society has worked away on the path of its career. Until recently it had no place of abode. But it made itself of so much importance that the State, a few months since, set apart a room for it in the building which at present answers the purpose of a capitol. Here the society has already collected the rodents and birds of Colorado; intends to make a complete collection of flora, and will gather and preserve all important data concerning the early history of the Rocky Mountain region" (reprinted in the *Gunnison Daily Review*, December 22, 1881, p. 2, c. 2).

Society activities, "a course of lectures embracing all of interest in the early mining and military history will be given, while discourses upon the early explorations and similar topics will also be presented."²²

Another archaeological collection, consisting of pottery, stone axes, part of a basket and a skull that had been found on the Animas River below Durango by Charles Weise and Chas. Meyers, was given to the Society in February, 1882.²³

At the meeting of the Society held in the Supreme Court room on April 8, 1882, W. N. Byers gave a talk on the "Early History of Denver." Some donations to the Society were received and action was taken to secure space for a display at the forth-coming Mining and Industrial Exposition. Officers elected for the ensuing year were: Dr. Bancroft, President; J. Sewall, W. N. Byers, Mr. Danforth (of Pueblo) and Mr. Hudson (of Silverton), Vice Presidents; W. D. Todd, Treasurer; Thomas F. Dawson, Secretary; Robert Roeschlaub, Rudolph [Richard] Borchardt, and Judge Moses Hallet, Curators.²⁴



MINING AND INDUSTRIAL EXPOSITION BUILDING, 1882

The cornerstone of the great National Mining and Industrial Exposition building was laid in Denver on May 2, 1882, and the Exposition opened its doors in grand celebration on August 1st.

Adjoining the Art Gallery was the Historical Society exhibit, displayed in five cases. These contained a large variety of birds, a "few mammals excellently mounted," snakes preserved in alcohol, and a collection of prehistoric artifacts.²⁵

²² *Daily Rocky Mountain News*, December 20, 1881, p. 1, c. 2.

²³ *Ibid.*, February 12, 1882, p. 8, c. 3. Later in the spring Judge Thomas M. Bowen sent a thirty pound gold specimen to the Historical Society from his Little Ida Mine in the San Juan country. Dr. Bancroft had it sawed into slabs and placed in the Society's museum (*Rocky Mountain News*, May 5, 1882, p. 5, c. 1).

²⁴ The *Rocky Mountain News* of April 9, 1882, reported: "The State Historical Society held a meeting last night in the Supreme Court room, or rather half a dozen of its members did. For some unaccountable reason the interest which was at first manifested in this most useful work seems to have flagged with the majority of the members. . . ." The *Gunnison Daily Review* of April 12, 1882, mentioned the meeting and said the Society was wanting specimens of buffalo, mountain lion, mountain sheep, deer, and elk.

²⁵ *Rocky Mountain News*, August 4, 1882, p. 4, c. 3. The exhibit was at first credited to the Horticulture Society, but in the issue of the next day (p. 4, c. 4) the newspaper made the necessary correction.

The Mining and Industrial Exposition was continued in 1883, but it was not a financial success. About to be abandoned, the newly organized Denver Chamber of Commerce came to the rescue in 1884, and with a subscription of about \$40,000 kept the Exposition going another year.²⁶

In the meantime an impressive courthouse for Arapahoe County was built at Denver.²⁷ The County Commissioners made rooms in this building available to the Historical Society for its collections.²⁸

The legislature at its session early in 1883 made an appropriation of \$1250 to the Society for the biennium, 1883-84. However, as reported at the Annual Meeting in 1885, only \$200 of the amount was made available.

In his Presidential Report at this meeting, Dr. Bancroft stated that in the Society's new, fire-proof, steam-heated apartments in the courthouse there was ample room, not only for collections already donated or purchased, but for much more. He added:

We now feel thoroughly satisfied in urging that the Society be made the custodian of specimens of all that pertains to the State's natural history, its material and intellectual progress. . . .

We desire to secure a full collection of the fossils entombed in our mountains, so many of which, both animal and vegetable, now enrich Eastern and foreign museums, exciting wonder and stimulating scientific research. We desire to secure pre-historic relics found among the cliff and cave-dwellings of the southern portion of the State, many of which, as bones, pottery, household utensils, weapons, parts of garments, have already been carried outside our borders. We ought to have specimens from the maps of noted mines, with histories thereof, and the names of those notably enriched by them. We should have well-preserved specimens of all the animals, birds, fishes, reptiles, insects, plants, flowers, cereals, etc., to be found in the State.

We should have on file reports of each state institution, private and public educational institutions, charitable works, the cattle, agricultural, mining and manufacturing industries; also files of the leading newspapers, a copy of each book written in Colorado, maps published at various times, photographs of notable edifices and our wonderful scenery, portraits and biographies of those prominent in the early history of the state, such as Kit Carson, Pike, Long, Fremont, the early Governors, Judges, Bishops, editors, etc.

At this meeting Mr. Borchardt, one of the curators, read a list of the Society's property. It consisted of mounted and preserved specimens of the fauna and flora of the state; collections of minerals, coins, Indian relics, fossils, and skeletons; and historical

²⁶ *Denver Tribune-Republican*, September 20, 1885, p. 1, c. 2.

²⁷ A picture of the new courthouse (between 15th and 16th Streets and Court Place and Tremont) and an account of its building are found in the *Denver Tribune*, January 22, 1883.

²⁸ President Bancroft's report of 1885, in the *Denver Tribune-Republican* and the *Rocky Mountain News* of February 5, 1885.

papers and books. During the preceding year about one hundred birds and some other animals had been added to the collections. The property of the Society was valued at \$5,000.²⁹

The Society asked the legislature in 1885 for an appropriation of \$3,000, but this Fifth General Assembly and one other (that of the Panic year, 1893) are the only ones in the entire life of the Society that have failed to vote an appropriation to carry on the work the Society does as a state agency.

The Denver Chamber of Commerce, created in 1884 as a reformed and revitalized agency to replace the old Board of Trade, launched an aggressive career under the leadership and stimulus of ex-Governor John Evans. After bolstering the Mining and Industrial Exposition through 1884 it turned, among other projects, to the building of a Chamber of Commerce Building. This fine stone structure that rose on the southwest corner of Lawrence and 14th Streets, was dedicated on September 22, 1885. The fourth story of this building was devoted to the Chamber's Mercantile Library (forerunner and originator of the Denver Public Library) and a museum. To this new location the State Historical and Natural History Society moved its collections in the fall of 1886.³⁰

A meeting of the Board of Directors of the Society was held at its new quarters in the Chamber of Commerce Building, January 17, 1887. The only business transacted was the acceptance of the resignation of Secretary Dawson and the election of Charles R. Dudley as his successor.³¹ Dawson went to Washington to serve as private Secretary to Senator Teller.

Dudley was Librarian of the Mercantile Library and was to continue with this library and then become Librarian of the Denver City Library.

The legislature of 1887 made an appropriation to the Historical Society of \$1,500 per year for the ensuing biennium. In making this appropriation, said the *Denver Republican* of April 7, 1887, the legislature "has done that which merits great praise. This Society is one which deserves the assistance of the State, for its purpose is to preserve the material from which may be gathered the history of Colorado. It seeks to prevent the destruction of data which in years to come may be of great value, and without which it might become impossible to ascertain the order and character of the events which cluster about the early settlement of the State. In a similar

²⁹ At this Annual Meeting the officers elected for the ensuing year were: F. J. Bancroft, President; W. N. Byers, J. Alden Smith (of Boulder), David Boyd (of Greeley), and J. A. Porter (of Durango), Vice Presidents; T. F. Dawson, Secretary; W. D. Todd, Treasurer; and Richard Borchardt, Aaron Gove, and R. S. Roeschlaub, Curators.

³⁰ "Minutes State Historical Society, January, 1887 to January, 1899," minutes of meeting June 20, 1895, page 4, in which is given a summary of some past history.

³¹ The minutes of this meeting are the earliest preserved in the archives of the State Historical Society.

way the society seeks to preserve data bearing upon current history . . . All the property of the Society became the property of the State; and the Society is properly therefore, an agent of the State for the investment of funds in a certain direction."

The *Report of the State Historical and Natural History Society of Colorado, with the Articles of Incorporation and a List of its Property, January, 1889*, was published as a small pamphlet in 1889. It lists the officers of the Society,³² prints the legislative Act that caused establishment of the Society, and gives the Articles of Incorporation. In a "Report of Progress" the President states that the display in the Chamber of Commerce Building attracts much attention.

Fifteen hundred dollars of the money appropriated in 1887, he reported, "had been expended mainly in the purchase of natural history specimens and Indian-made utensils and ornaments. Previous to last year no books had been bought by the Society. Recently, however, nearly fifty volumes relating to the early history or the resources of the State have been purchased, and nearly as many more donated, together with a large number of pamphlets." The current need, he asserted, was for money "to prosecute researches among the ruins of the Cliff-dwellers in the southern part of the State, and secure everything now remaining of value." Parties from outside the State were carrying away "numberless valuable specimens and relics which should never have been allowed to leave the State, and which this Society would have preserved if large enough appropriations had been made to enable it to carry on the work of exploration."

The birds, mammals, and books in possession of the Society are listed in detail. Among "Unclassified Curiosities" are Indian pottery, dress, implements, and artifacts; the J. H. Leavenworth saddle, 1000 mineral specimens, 200 fossil specimens, pictures, newspapers, and 800 coins.

The General Assembly in 1889 voted the Society an appropriation of \$1,500 for 1889 and a similar amount for 1890.

After the Wetherill brothers, in December, 1888, stared across the canyon at the impressive ruins of Cliff Palace, they and some of their friends, including Charles McLloyd, gathered relics from within the tumbled walls. In May, 1889, McLloyd brought the

³² These are the same set of officers that were elected in 1885 and which are named above in footnote 29. Mr. Dawson is listed as Secretary, although the Minutes of January 17, 1887, show his resignation and his replacement by Mr. Dudley.

collection to Denver and placed it on exhibition.³³ To prevent its removal from the State the Society purchased the collection, which comprised about 1200 articles.

Only one-half of the purchase price of \$3,000 being available, three members of the Society signed personal notes for the balance (\$1,500).

"It is the largest and most complete collection owned by any institution," says the Society's biennial Report, far out-ranking the one in the National Museum, at Washington, and one that every resident of the State should be proud of."³⁴ Money was raised by subscriptions for purchase of exhibition cases, and the collection was placed in the Society's rooms in the Chamber of Commerce Building.

In their report for 1889-90 the officers of the Society recommended that the General Assembly take such action that the section around Mancos Canyon containing prehistoric ruins be "set apart for a State National Park."

This biennial report of the Society concluded thus: "The members of the Society have taken great interest in its work, requiring much time and thought, and feeling that its future value will amply repay them and the State, whose child it is."³⁵

The 1891 Colorado legislature appropriated \$2,000 for the Historical Society's work during the ensuing biennium.³⁶ The same legislature voted \$100,000 to place an exhibition at the Chicago World's Fair of 1893.³⁷

During the winters of 1889-90 and 1891-92 the Wetherills and C. C. Mason had made a large collection of Mesa Verde relics which they sold in 1892 to H. Jay Smith and C. D. Hazzard of Minneapolis.³⁸ These men took the collection to Chicago, built on the Midway at the Fair a replica of a cliff house and displayed their relics therein. An elaborate illustrated *Catalogue of Cliff Dwellers Exhibit, World's Columbian Exposition* (The H. Jay Smith Explor-

³³"The Story of the Discovery and early Exploration of the Cliff Houses at Mesa Verde. Written by C. C. Mason with the approval of the Wetherill Brothers" (Given to the Society in May, 1918, and now in the Library of the State Historical Society, Ms. IX-24). See also the *Report of the Historical and Natural History Society of the State of Colorado for the Years 1889-90* (Denver, 1890), 3.

³⁴*Report of the Historical and Natural History Society of the State of Colorado for the Years 1889-90* (Denver, 1890), 4.

³⁵*Ibid.*, 5. The officers who signed the Report were: F. J. Bancroft, President; Wm. D. Todd, Treasurer; and Charles M. Dudley, Secretary. Mr. Dudley, graduate of the Yale Law School, had come to Denver in 1882. When the Chamber of Commerce raised money and started the Mercantile Library, Dudley was appointed Librarian. When this library was taken over by the city in 1898, Dudley became City Librarian. He remained as Secretary of the State Historical and Natural History Society to 1916.

³⁶*Laws passed at the Eighth Session of the General Assembly of the State of Colorado . . . 1891*, 340 (Act approved March 30, 1891).

³⁷*Ibid.*, 406-409. Inasmuch as only \$32,054.44 of the amount was available in 1891-92, and since \$30,000 had been spent for a building, a supplementary appropriation of \$100,000 was voted in the law approved February 1, 1893.

³⁸C. C. Mason ms. account, *op. cit.* 3-6.

ing Company, Jackson Park, Illinois, 1893, 24 pages)³⁹ described the cliff dwellings and listed the relics exhibited.

In the meantime, in the summer of 1892, another collection of relics was made in the Mesa Verde region by the Wetherills. It was made under the supervision of A. F. Wilmarth of Denver, and was gathered for, and subsequently used by the State of Colorado for its exhibit at the Chicago Fair.⁴⁰



DENVER CHAMBER OF COMMERCE BUILDING, 1884

Wilmarth tried to procure from the Historical Society the collection which had been gathered in 1888-89 and which the Society had purchased in 1889. He wanted to add it to the material gathered in the summer of 1892 and to place the two collections in Colorado's exhibit at the Fair. But the Society refused to release its collection to him.⁴¹

³⁹This is the cover title. A copy of the catalogue is in the Library of the State Historical Society of Colorado. After the Exposition closed, this collection went to the University of Pennsylvania, where it is still located.

⁴⁰Mason, *op. cit.*, 6. In his "Daily Notes and Jottings" (Ms. in State Historical Society Archives) of January 7, 1897, Will C. Ferril refers to Wilmarth as the artist on the *Denver Republican* and the one "who had charge of the cliff-dweller relics at the World's Fair." Wilmarth, Ferril says, was to give him a copy of the list of relics he had on exhibition at the Fair, and which items subsequently came to the Society.

⁴¹The action is thus reported in the minutes of November 1, 1892: "The Secretary presented a request from Mr. Arthur F. Wilmarth, who had in charge the preparation of an exhibit of Cliff Dwellers' relics from this state for the World's Columbian Exposition, asking that he be allowed to take this Society's collection.

"After due deliberation, it was decided that the officers of this Society had no right to allow the collection to leave the State and the Secretary was instructed to communicate this decision to Mr. Wilmarth."

The General Assembly of 1893 failed to make an appropriation for the Society.

During the years when plans for a State Capitol were being perfected and after the construction was under way, the Society was ever looking forward to the time when it should have a home in the completed building. The ceremonial laying of the cornerstone occurred on July 4, 1890, amidst a sea of umbrellas. The building was far enough advanced to be occupied by the Governor in 1894 and by the legislature the next year. Rooms in the basement were now allotted to the State Historical Society, and the legislature in 1895 voted \$500 to assist the Society in moving its collections from the Chamber of Commerce Building to the state house.⁴² But no appropriation for maintenance and operations was made.

By the middle of June, 1895, the Society's collections had been moved to the state capitol and had been arranged for exhibition. At the meeting of June 20 the Society voted its thanks to the Directors of the Chamber of Commerce for having furnished quarters for the Society's collections during the preceding eight and one-half years.

At this meeting also the Secretary and the Treasurer were instructed to gather and complete data on the history of the Society.⁴³ The Secretary referred to the archaeological collection of some twelve hundred items purchased by the Society, and added: "Recently we have come into possession of the relics that were returned from the World's Fair and these supplement what we had before, making an exhibit of which any institution might be proud, and which is by far the best and most extensive owned by any Society."⁴⁴

"It is nearly sixteen years," he continued, "since this Society came into existence and as yet very little has been done on the most important line for which it was formed, viz.: the collection and preservation of historical data. Few historical societies have been started when the men who organized the state were living; when it was possible to learn from their lips all of the noteworthy and interesting events that took place between the building of the first cabin and the formation of the commonwealth. We have not taken advantage of the opportunity that was offered us."

A new constitution was submitted at the meeting of July 5, 1895, and is copied into the minutes of this date. It was voted upon section by section, at the meeting of December 9, 1896, and was adopted. It elaborates the purposes of the Society.

⁴² Session Laws, 1895, p. 70.

⁴³ The Secretary reported that upon the death of Mr. Vickers, the first Secretary, "no records of the Society could be found," and that a similar blank existed for the term of Mr. Dawson.

⁴⁴ Minutes of June 20, 1895, p. 4.

The objects of the society shall be to collect, embody, arrange, and preserve books, pamphlets, maps, charts, manuscripts, papers, paintings, photographs, statuary, and other materials illustrative of the history of Colorado in particular and of this country in general; to procure from the pioneers narratives of the events relative to the early settlement of Colorado, the Indian occupancy, overland travel and immigration to the territory and the West; to gather all information, specimens, and other material calculated to exhibit faithfully the antiquities, particular attention being paid to those relating to the cave and cliff dwellers, so called, and the past and present resources and progress of Colorado, to take steps to promote the study of its history, by lectures and other means, and to diffuse and publish information relating to the description and history of the state; to secure and preserve natural history specimens, including fossils, and to encourage the study of natural history by means of lectures and publications.

Four classes of membership are defined, and dues fixed: active, \$2.00 annually; associate, \$1.00 annually; life, \$25.00; honorary, no fee. The Board of Directors is to consist of nine members, elected for a two-year term. They are to elect their officers and a curator and may elect assistants and honorary vice-presidents. The annual meeting is to be held on the third Tuesday of January. Special meetings may be called. The officers are to perform the usual duties of their offices. The Board of Directors is to have meetings quarterly, and on call of the President or of three members. The constitution may be amended at any meeting, provided the proposed amendment has been spread on the minutes three months previous to its being voted upon.

It was decided at the meeting of October 5, 1895, that the Society's exhibit rooms be kept open during the Festival of Mountain and Plain.⁴⁵

The first paid official of the Society was Will C. Ferril, who was appointed curator on August 14, 1896. Mr. Ferril, of pioneer stock that migrated from Virginia, through Kentucky and Missouri to Kansas, was born in Lawrence, Kansas, in 1855. He became a teacher, lawyer, and journalist. After coming to Colorado in 1879, he engaged primarily in newspaper work and served in turn as city editor of several Denver papers.⁴⁶

Mr. Ferril, immediately following his appointment, launched an educational program, writing letters to the superintendent and teachers of Denver schools, inviting classes to visit and study the Society's collections. Teachers brought their classes, the curator lectured about the exhibits, while the pupils took notes for the writing of subsequent essays. A careful daily record of visitors

⁴⁵ This was the first of these festivals that for some years were to be held annually and attract national attention.

⁴⁶ W. N. Byers, *Encyclopedia of Biography of Colorado* (Chicago, 1901), 345-46. Mr. Ferril was to remain as curator for the Society until 1910. Thereafter he published the *Rocky Mountain Herald* until his death on August 16, 1939.

was kept. During the remainder of 1896 the average daily attendance at the Society's museum in the capitol basement was 90.⁴⁷ The daily average for 1897 was to reach 174; and for 1898 the total number of visitors would be 68,559, or a daily average of 264.⁴⁸



WILL C. FERRIL
First Curator

Dr. F. J. Bancroft, asserting that increased responsibilities made it impossible for him to continue as head of the Historical Society, tendered his resignation as President at a special meeting of the Board of Directors on December 9, 1896. Wm. N. Byers, the Vice President, was thereupon elected President.

Mr. Byers, who had begun his career as a surveyor in eastern Nebraska, caught the Pikes Peak gold fever, crossed the plains with a newspaper press early in 1859, and printed the first issue of the *Rocky Mountain News* on April 23rd. Closely identified with the development of Colorado, he was by the 1890s recognized as the

⁴⁷ See Ferril's monthly reports of December 1, 1896, and January 1, 1897, mss. in the Historical Society archives. Mr. Ferril kept a daily record of individual school classes and number of students in each; also letters of commendation from the teachers.

⁴⁸ Ferril's monthly and annual reports of 1896-98, mss. in the archives of the State Historical Society. These detail the number of visitors each month and give lists of teachers and classes. Ferril reports that the classes spent most time in examining the cliffdweller relics but also studied the animals and birds.

outstanding pioneer and a prominent builder of the state. He had ever had an eye to the recording and preservation of Colorado's history.⁴⁹

With two such newspaper men as Byers and Ferril at the helm, it is not surprising that they immediately launched a campaign to collect and preserve the contemporary newspapers that record and reflect so well the development of a region. Ferril called on the Denver newspaper publishers and asked that the Society be placed on their lists for two papers—one to bind and one for clipping. He began writing to the newspapers throughout the state for current papers and back files.⁵⁰ Mr. Byers gave a complete bound set of his *Rocky Mountain News* for the years 1859-78—the years of his ownership.

This inauguration of systematic gathering of Colorado newspapers marks the substantial founding of the Society's library. The newspaper files, begun then and maintained ever since and augmented by subsequent curators' gatherings of pioneer papers prior to 1897, constitute the incomparable collection that is the greatest single body of historical source materials of Colorado history.

Not only were newspapers to be gathered. Mr. Ferril wrote an extended appeal for all types of historical materials. This was signed by President Byers, Secretary Dudley, and himself, and was submitted to the Denver newspapers for publication. The *Denver Republican* of January 4, 1897, published it in full (two and one-half columns) and the other papers carried abstracts.

In this article the Historical Society made the following "public statement":

Beginning January 1, 1897, the Colorado Historical and Natural History Society wishes to preserve for binding complete files of all Colorado publications, including all daily newspapers, also the weekly, semi-monthly and monthly editions of newspapers and magazines in this state, the list comprising the political, historical, literary, educational, religious, professional, scientific, art, philosophical, social, labor, theatrical, musical, sporting, mining, stock, and grazing, agricultural, horticultural, forestry, irrigation and farm products, commercial, banking, railroads and manufacturing; also publications representing clubs, associations, orders, lodges, schools and colleges—in fact, all publications representative of Colorado life and industries.

Inasmuch as the Society had no funds for purchases, publishers were asked to donate their publications.

"It is well to bear in mind that the Society holds its property in trust for the state," continues the statement. The Society also

⁴⁹ W. N. Byers, *Encyclopedia of Biography of Colorado* (Chicago, 1901), 187-90.

⁵⁰ Will C. Ferril, "Daily Notes and Jottings," I, manuscript volume in the archives of the State Historical Society of Colorado, dates of January 4-6, 1897. On January 13 he addressed the members of the Colorado Press Association, appealing for papers, and the next day, prepared a statement that was to be included in the "patent" inside of about 150 papers using the "Western News."

asked for books, pamphlets, diaries, maps, photographs, pictures, souvenirs, biographical sketches, family histories, and official reports pertaining to Colorado; for ordinances of Colorado towns; club reports and programs, directories, reports of railroads and industrial corporations, professional publications; material on hospitals, libraries, labor organizations, folklore, legends, nomenclature; and all possible information and reports on mining, agriculture, and manufacturing developments.

Materials began to come in, and Ferril followed up with extensive correspondence. By the end of the year he was able to report that the Society was receiving about one hundred and twenty-five Colorado newspapers, all donated by the publishers.⁵¹

At the Annual Meeting of the Society on January 19, 1897, a Board of Directors of nine members was elected for a two-year term,⁵² and a special committee was appointed to urge the legislature to make an appropriation for the Society. As a result of activity the long appropriation bill, approved April 13, 1897, included \$750 for 1897 and a like amount for 1898, as salary for the Curator of the Society. Certain current expenses also were cared for by the state's incidental and contingent fund.⁵³ T. J. Hart, a member of the legislature from Eagle County, must have been chiefly responsible in the legislature, for the Society later gave him a formal vote of thanks for his service in the matter.⁵⁴

At the Annual Meeting of 1897, a large number of Associate Members were admitted to the Society. These persons, primarily interested in natural history, organized the Department of Natural History of the parent Society. Six Sections—Botany, Zoology, Geology, Microscopy, Meteorology and Physical Science, and Nature Study—each with a Chairman—were organized. Monthly meetings, at which papers on scientific topics were read, were held throughout the year.⁵⁵

To aid this Division, the curator hunted for natural history specimens before and after office hours in the spring and fall of 1897 and added about one hundred bird skins.⁵⁶

Mr. Ferril's "Daily Notes and Jottings" (Ms. book) throughout 1897 give not only an account of daily happenings, but an

⁵¹ Curator Ferril's annual report of 1897 (ms.), p. 7.

⁵² The Directors were: Nathan A. Baker, Wm. N. Byers, Charles R. Dudley, Aaron Gove, Horace G. Lunt, Wm. M. Maguire, Edward B. Morgan, Wm. D. Todd, and Roger W. Woodbury. At a meeting of this Board the same day, the following officers were elected for two-year terms: W. N. Byers, President; Nathan A. Baker and Edward B. Morgan, Vice Presidents; George L. Cannon, Jr., Associate Vice President; Charles R. Dudley, Secretary; W. D. Todd, Treasurer; and William C. Ferril, Curator.—Minutes of the Meeting of January 19, 1897.

⁵³ Laws passed at the Extra Session of the Eleventh General Assembly of the State of Colorado (bound with the regular Session laws), pp. 290, 293.

⁵⁴ Minutes of the Annual Meeting of February 15, 1898.

⁵⁵ *The History, Constitution and By-Laws of the Department of Natural History of the State Historical and Natural History Society* (Denver, 1897).

⁵⁶ Ferril's Annual Report of 1897 (ms.), p. 10.

excellent record of the expansion of the Society's collections, and also include historical information obtained from interviews with pioneer visitors, natural history observations (especially of birds), lists of visiting school classes, and counts of daily visitors.

As new materials were obtained the Board of Capitol Managers provided additional cases for the displays and then made more rooms available to the Society.

In a short historical sketch published at the end of 1897 this summary information is given:

Until about two years ago, the society had no permanent home, and its growth was slow. Since the rooms in the state house were opened to the public, the increase has been very encouraging, and a week never passes without some valuable addition by gift. The collection of relics from the cliff dwellings, in the Mancos and adjacent canons is the most complete and extensive one in existence, and comprises above three thousand articles. The natural history specimens number about 400 birds and animals, and have been of great use to stimulate the study of natural science in the schools.

Some very valuable fossils have been recently presented.

In the department of history a good beginning has been made. Quite a number of books have been secured, a good collection of pamphlets, and some manuscripts. Nearly all of the leading newspapers of the state have been pleased to place the Society on their free list, while a number have presented back files. All of these will be preserved and bound, thus forming the nucleus of a great reference library of Colorado history.⁵⁷

Through the months of early 1898 Mr. Ferril was kept very busy checking and filing the many newspapers and documents for which he had written and which were coming in. One shipment of public documents received on April 11, contained 1496 volumes, filled forty-three mail sacks, and weighed over two tons.⁵⁸ These, he commented, will "make a good showing for the library."

By the end of the year, as stated in his Biennial Report, the curator was receiving about two hundred Colorado publications and several from outside the state. He was collecting the official state documents, including those published in Spanish and German. Records of Colorado's important part in the Spanish American War also were being assembled.

Among the items acquired in 1898 was the machinery of the Clark and Gruber mint which had coined gold at Denver in 1860-61.⁵⁹

A large painting of Colonel John M. Chivington, prominent figure in the Civil War and the Indian Wars, was offered for sale to the Society. The painting, said to be worth \$500, had a lien

⁵⁷ *The History, Constitution and By-Laws of the Department of Natural History of the State Historical and Natural History Society* (Denver, 1897), p. 13. This pamphlet was issued on October 23, 1897, according to Ferril's "Notes and Jottings" (ms.).

⁵⁸ Ferril, "Daily Notes and Jottings," Ms. Book D.

⁵⁹ Biennial Report, 1896-98 (ms. in archives of the Society), p. 14.

against it for \$53, and the holder offered the painting to the Society for the amount of the lien. Mr. Ferril wrote to a Colorado mining magnate asking for the amount needed for the purchase, but received no response. He thereupon set about to raise the money, and the meager responses, August 24 to October 1, 1899, are noted in his daily journal. Mrs. W. H. ("Billy") Adams of Alamosa, a granddaughter of Colonel Chivington, gave \$3; and T. M. Chivington, the Colonel's son, gave \$5. All other contributions were \$1 each. Finally, when the option expired on October 1, Ferril advanced from his own pocket the balance of \$12 required to make the \$53, and so received the painting. (Later he was re-imbursed from Society funds.) Once before he had raised \$27.50 by personal solicitation to purchase some books for the Society.

During the Mountain and Plain Festival in the fall of 1898 attendance at the Society's exhibits reached 3429 in a single day. Four of the famous Lawrence Party of gold prospectors of 1858—John Easter, John D. Miller, Frank M. Cobb and T. C. Dickson—were among these visitors.

The Natural History Division of the Society continued active throughout the year 1898, with the bird collection reaching about 500. The natural history specimens and the Cliffdweller collection (of some 3,000 pieces) were the principal objects of study by the many visiting classes of school children.

At the Annual Meeting of the Society on January 17, 1899, a Board of Directors was elected and the officers of the Society were re-elected.⁶⁰

During the legislative session this year Mr. Ferril kept in close touch with the legislators, following persistently the two bills that would provide aid for the Society. He conferred with legislators, attended the sessions, extending until after midnight, and although sick, would not give up. "Have been on the alert all the time," he writes. On March 20 he records in his Journal: "Am keeping up today on quinine, rye whisky, and two plasters on my chest and side. I am worn out and should be at home." But he kept at his task and piloted the two bills through the General Assembly. They provided \$600 annually for an assistant, \$750 for binding newspapers and \$1000 for publications. But his work went unrewarded. When the bills reached the Governor they were vetoed by him. However, the long appropriation bill, which did become law, provided an annual salary of \$1000 for the curator and \$600 annually for expenses.⁶¹

The curator kept up his elaborate plans for gathering the newspapers of the country. He wrote to publishers in all the states

⁶⁰ Minutes of the meeting. All Board members were reelected, except Horace G. Lunt, whose place was filled by Granville Malcolm.

⁶¹ Session Laws, 1899, p. 74

of the Union, concentrating especially on the neighboring states. For example, he wrote to forty-two newspapers in New Mexico and forty-nine in Utah, asking for free subscriptions.⁶² Much of his time was absorbed in checking and arranging the files and in writing for missing numbers and for new subscriptions.

In the curator's annual report at the end of 1899, the year's visitors at the museum were listed at 115,643—a daily average of 379. Acquisitions reported for the year included 356 books, 1591 pamphlets, 45 manuscripts, 96 relics, 93 photographs and pictures, 530 botany specimens, 76 birds—to a total of 3,219 items.

The Board of Capitol Managers, at a cost of \$600, had fitted up a room in the capitol basement for the Society's library, which now contained about 7000 volumes.

In his report the curator urged again the need for a stenographer and clerical help, and recommended the preparation of a catalogue of the collections.

"With the rapid growth of our library, museum, and historical and scientific collections," he continued, "this society should begin to devise ways and means to erect a building of its own." To achieve this and support the Society he proposed that the state's Senators and Representatives in Congress secure enactment of a federal law granting to Colorado in trust for this Society 1,000,000 acres of land for sale or leasing.

No state has done more [he continues] for the rapid settlement and development of the West than Colorado. . . . No society or organization is so linked with the state that it can make so just a demand as this society for the purpose named.

These plans realized would give us a large and handsome building—a monument to the pioneers of our heroic period—with its great museum, splendid library, and magnificent art gallery, its large lecture hall, and rooms for special historic and scientific research, thus affording opportunities for original work and discovery, that would give to Colorado that position in the literary and scientific world, that it deserves. Not only the prehistoric and historic tribes; not only the flora and fauna; but more than all, collect and save the history of the pioneers, founders, and developers of this new state.

If the suggestion somewhat roughly outlined—for the more specific details may be arranged later—should meet with your approval, and success should crown your efforts, as I believe it would, then as its founders intended, this society will become a source for a broad and liberal culture, and the Colorado pioneers in history, science, and civilization, will more fully realize that their work has not been in vain and the many who come after them will reap a rich heritage thereby.

Vast are our material resources, but we have still a greater wealth, a wealth that is the true foundation of all our greatness—the culture of our people.⁶³

(To be continued)

⁶² See Secretary Ferril's "Daily Journal," II, under dates January 16, 17, 20, 21, 1899, for the list of New Mexico and Utah letters.

⁶³ Curator's Annual Report (ms.). Also in Letter Press Book I, 193-202.

Dode Wykert and the Great Horse Race

DEAN F. KRAKEL*

One of the most colorful events linked with the history of northern Colorado, was the winning of the 523-mile endurance horse race by Frank Theodore ("Dode") Wykert of Ault. The race was sponsored by the Denver Post Publishing Company in June, 1908. The winner of the event was to receive \$500.00.¹

The race, no doubt, had its beginnings in the old argument between horsemen as to which horse had greater qualities of endurance and speed, the western bronco or the eastern thoroughbred. The over 500 mile race from Evanston, Wyoming, to Denver should settle the controversy.

The month preceding the race saw the *Post* launch a vigorous advertising campaign in search of entries.²

The Wykert brothers, Dode and Ben, were at this time operating a livery barn in Severance, Colorado; both had gained the reputation of being good horsemen. The much discussed coming event was a challenge to the adventurous brothers. Their plans to enter the race materialized with the purchasing of "Sam" from the Carleton family west of Ault. They paid one hundred dollars for the little blue roan horse.³

It was agreed that Dode⁴ would ride "Sam" in the race. The horse and rider worked out almost daily for over a month. "Sam" was put on a small hay and heavy oats diet, and by race time was hard as nails.⁵

The training routine was also being repeated by entries throughout the Rocky Mountain region. D. H. Vance was another entry from northern Colorado. There were two entries from Brighton, and another from Erie. Denver had two representatives. Pre-race publicity favored the Cody, Wyoming, horse "Teddy," to be ridden by Charles Workman. It has been said that "Teddy" was the horse supported by Charles Irwin of Cheyenne, Buffalo Bill Cody, and several other comparatively wealthy race horse enthusiasts.⁶ Apparently all northern Wyoming supported the Cody rider.⁷

An article published in *The Wyoming Tribune* stated that certain Cody people had commissioned a Mr. F. H. Barrow to go

* Mr. Krakel, of Ault, is now Archivist at the University of Wyoming library.

—Ed.

¹ *The Denver Post*, May, 1908.

² *Ibid.*

³ Recorded interview, Mr. and Mrs. B. H. Wykert, Ault, Colorado.

⁴ Dode had won a great deal of recognition as a rider before this time. An interesting event, displaying his ability as a horseman, was the occasion when he hazed a big elk (cow) from the Black Hollow district south to Lees Lake, where he drove her into the water and roped her. The Wykert boys created a great deal of excitement whenever they tried to hitch the big elk to a buggy. Finally the animal was sold to the Denver City zoo.

⁵ Interview with B. H. Wykert.

⁶ *The Wyoming Tribune*, Cheyenne, Wyoming, June 3, 1908.

⁷ *Ibid.*

to Denver, giving him \$3,000 to wager, at the best odds he could get, that the Cody horse would win. Later in an interview published in the *Denver Post* Mr. Barrow said:

"Workman has been riding his horse fifty miles a day for two months and the hopes of the people of Cody and northern Wyoming are centered in him, and they feel confident that 'Teddy' will carry off the honors."

Workman rode his horse from Cody to Evanston, a distance of about 500 miles, as an additional means of conditioning himself as well as the big Wyoming horse.⁸

There was a total of twenty-five entries in the big contest. Colorado had sixteen entries; Wyoming, five; Nebraska, one; Utah, two; and New Mexico, one. Thirteen of the horses were either full or part thoroughbred; the remaining twelve were the so-called western broncs. The largest horse, "Rose," a Pueblo entry, weighed 1073 lbs.; while the smallest was "Sultan of Sulu," ridden by Doling of Trinidad. The heaviest rider was R. H. Failing of Littleton, weighing 223 lbs., his horse was "Tom Campbell," a chestnut weighing 900 pounds; the lightest rider was leading contender, C. E. Workman, of Cody,⁹ riding "Teddy." This rider weighed 160 pounds, while his horse weighed in at 1025.

Originally it was planned to start the race from Ogden, Utah, but the Governor of that state would not permit it, thus the starting point was moved to Evanston, in Wyoming.¹⁰

All the West anticipated the outcome. A pre-race fever gripped the entire Rocky Mountain region. Bets were hot and heavy; predictions, speeches and toasts were made wherever horsemen gathered—the competitive spirit of the Old West had been revived!

A *Denver Post* special train transported many of the Evanston bound contestants and their horses to the starting point. The Union Pacific placed watering stations all along the route to be traveled by the riders. The most difficult stretch was through the Red Desert between Rock Springs and Rawlins. According to contest rules, riders had to register, rest and feed their horses every fifty miles.¹¹

As the big day drew near, the Southwestern Wyoming town was "packed"; a big celebration commemorated the event. The entries were treated royally—in true western fashion.

All turned out early Saturday morning, May 30th, for the send off. Governor Marshall Hadsell, of Wyoming, presided over the ceremonies; the rules of the race were again read. Thus the riders departed with shouts and shots ringing in their ears. Both

⁸ Laramie, Wyoming, *Semi-Weekly Boomerang*, June 1, 1908.

⁹ *The Wyoming Tribune*, Cheyenne, Wyoming, June 2, 1908.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ Laramie, Wyoming, *Semi-Weekly Boomerang*, May 28, 1908.

horsemen and horses were nervous. It was feared "Teddy" would pitch Workman as he went on three separate bucking sprees during the first few miles out.¹²

The Ault rider held "Sam" down and gained confidence as he saw how his horse easily surpassed those he accompanied. Workman, who was said to have been a quirt user, forced his horse over fifty miles of ground the first day, leaving his closest competition many miles behind. The only result was that the gallant "Teddy" had lost much of his strength by the terrific pace he had been forced to run.¹³

After the first one hundred miles, many riders were in trouble; some of the horses began to scour. Two contestants dropped out at Rawlins; Vance of Greeley quit at Wamsutter. George Bryan was out at Granger. Other riders that dropped out were: J. W. Doling, R. H. Failing, N. J. Hinton, Bud McDonald, J. T. Richards, and D. Turpin.¹⁴

Workman went more than twenty miles out of his way near Medicine Bow, as he strayed off the well-traveled road;¹⁵ however, he led into Laramie. Many of the riders rested at the Elkhorn barn while in Laramie.¹⁶

When Dode pulled into Laramie the leaders were in the Tie Siding vicinity. It was at this point that an Ault representative was said to have foiled a plot to load one of the horses, and take him on to Cheyenne by rail.¹⁷

Between Laramie and Cheyenne "Sam" displayed his real power and the rider his endurance. Dode, knowing full well the psychological advantage in beating Workman on "Teddy" into his "Big Town," Cheyenne (also the town of Irwin), poured it on, and easily led the way to the anger of his opponents. Over a hundred riders, including Governor Hadsell, escorted the leader in. Cheyenne streets were lined; however not all sentiments were with Dode and the well conditioned "Sam." The Severance man received \$125.00 from a supporter for leading at this point.¹⁸

Headlines in *The Wyoming Tribune*, June 4, 1908, thus described the turn of events:

"Sam leads into Cheyenne." It added:

"The sensation of the day was the wonderful ride made by Wykert on Sam, a Colorado brone, who at last reports was fifteen or twenty miles behind the leaders when they arrived in Laramie last evening.

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ Interview, *op. cit.*

¹⁴ *The Laramie, Wyoming, Semi-Weekly Boomerang*, June 4, 1908.

¹⁵ *The Wyoming Tribune*, Cheyenne, Wyoming, June 2, 1908.

¹⁶ *loc. cit.*

¹⁷ Interview, *op. cit.*

¹⁸ *The Wyoming Tribune*, June 4, 1908.

"Wykert and his horse must have slept out on the prairie last night, for this morning he arrived in Laramie and after registering pulled out for Cheyenne."

In Cheyenne all horses were given a thorough checkup; the field had narrowed down to five, and four of these were brones.¹⁹ The big battle was definitely between Dode and Workman. The latter was in trouble, as his horse was weakening.²⁰ All riders agreed



DOKE WYKERT ON "SAM" AT STATE CAPITOL

to bed down in Cheyenne for the night and start out the following morning, together. Workman was given consent by the riders and judges to take his horse to the stables of a backer for the night.²¹

It was late that night before peace and quiet settled down over the frontier town. Four of the riders and their horses were bedded down in a well known Cheyenne livery barn. Ivan Wilson, Sr., and Bob Wykert, Sr., stood guard over sleeping Dode and tired "Sam."²²

Shortly after midnight Workman apparently violated his verbal agreement with the other riders and slipped out of Cheyenne. Flour had been sprinkled along the route to guide the rider in the dark. In the meantime the slumbering Dode was aroused by two

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ Interview, *op. cit.*

²¹ *The Wyoming Tribune*, June 4, 1908.

²² Interview, *op. cit.*

newsboys, who had seen the Cody rider leaving town; sensing the situation they ran to the barn and gave the alarm. Within minutes the leathery Wykert was in hot pursuit.²³

In two hours four riders were at Carr Station. Workman realized his scheme had been foiled—so rested. The northern Colorado supporters of Dode, not to be outdone, pulled one out of their sleeves. Knowing full well how the twenty-three year old Workman feared Dode taking the lead, acted accordingly: While Workman dozed, Dode and “Sam” moved out of sight. At the same time a “Wykert size” rider took out of Carr at a terrific pace, the night air resounding to the thundering hooves of his horse. Simultaneously someone shouted into the dozing Workman, “Wykert’s left! Get the h--- outa here!” The excited kid did not ask any questions. Leaping to his feet he was soon on his way. Departing he exclaimed, “They won’t catch me napping! I’ll give them the race of their lives!” Soon the Cody rider was engulfed in darkness. The pursuer and the pursued sped on. Evidently there wasn’t a doubt in Workman’s mind but that he was trailing Dode on “Sam.”²⁴

The pace became faster as the gap was closed between the two. At last “Teddy’s” nose was at the tail of “Sam.” The Cody rider shouted, “Thought you’d fool me, did you?” “What are you talking about?” came a sharp reply, “Who in the h--- would I be trying to fool?” Workman knew he had been tricked. He had made a terrific ride, and his horse was spent.²⁵

Apparently the same men did not take to this event, and vowed revenge. Thus the race entered its final and most furious stage.

Dode was soon within sight of the weary “Teddy”; he could have passed him at will, but was saving his horse for the final drive to the finish line. “Jaybird,” ridden by Rolo Means, and “Clipper” were still very much in the race. “Dex,” ridden by Kern, brought up the rear.

The race had been followed throughout northern Colorado from the start; periodical reports had been given out via the telegraph offices. The riders were expected to pass through the “big potato” town of Ault Saturday morning; many had stayed up all night awaiting them. Thus as the racers entered town from the west (following the old Section road) a big bonfire greeted them. First to arrive was Workman, again paced by an automobile. The time of their arrival was 3:45 a.m. “Jaybird” was a close second. Dode jogged in at 4:00 o’clock. He was given a grand reception, coffee and sandwiches, and urged to get into the lead.

²³ *The Wyoming Tribune*, June 3, 1908.

²⁴ *The Wyoming Tribune*, Cheyenne, Wyoming, June 3, 1908. Interview with Mr. B. H. Wykert.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

At Eaton Dode was easily up with the two leaders. The Severance rider was again given a big reception; while the men in the automobile were coolly received.²⁶

It has been said that between Eaton and Greeley the “Teddy” supporters tried another ill-conceived trick on Dode and “Sam.” An auto pulled in front of the two, and began stirring up a large cloud of dust—making it almost impossible for Dode to make any progress, and the goggled driver would not let Dode pass. A few minutes of this was enough for the tough cowboy. Riding up close to the car he threatened to shoot. The city-bred occupants wasted little time in pulling the car over to the side and the dust trick was not tried again.²⁷

In Greeley all three horses were examined, and “Jaybird” was ordered out of the race by the veterinarians.²⁸ Thus “Sam” and “Teddy” were the surviving contestants for the big prize. It is said that the latter was so weak that he was given an escort, horses were ridden close on each side to support him. One witness said that he (“Teddy”) was given a “pep-up” shot every few miles. The tired Dode and “Sam” knew victory was only a matter of time and a little more endurance.²⁹

At Fort Lupton the Cody horse was given a stimulant of whiskey and quinine—with the approval of the Humane Officers and before a crowd of near 500. The Wykert supporters protested, but were still confident of victory.

In the Brighton-Henderson vicinity the big blow came—the officials³⁰ declared the race, *A DRAW AND ALL BETS OFF!* The two riders were ordered to walk their horses, now declared unfit for further race competition, the rest of the way and cross the finish line together.³¹ It was said this was the only action that could save the bets of the “big money” boys. Evidently the huge crowd protested the decision, oaths were uttered, and accusations shouted at the officials. Brother of the tired Dode, Ben, ably represented the Wykert interests and bitterly challenged the decision. The officials, however, turned a deaf ear to the protestations and had the ruling enforced.³²

The pair walked their horses into Denver, led by an '08 automobile. Thousands lined the roadside to get a look at the men and their amazing horses. As the procession turned on Champa, and moved down this street to the finish line in front of the *Denver Post* building,³³ Dode on “Sam” attempted to pass the car. The driver,

²⁶ *Ault Advertiser*, Ault, Colorado, June 5, 1908.

²⁷ Interview, *op. cit.*

²⁸ *The Greeley Tribune*, June 4, 1908.

²⁹ Interview, *op. cit.*

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ *Denver Post*, June 6, 1908.

³² Interview, *op. cit.*

³³ *The Denver Post*, June 6, 1908.

it is said, was successful in preventing the first of such efforts, however as they neared the finish line, 25,000 watched Dode fake "Sam" to the left and then shoot around the right side of the ear, to cross the finish line first!³⁴ After having traveled a distance of 523 miles in less than seven days, "Clipper" (Belmont and brone) came in second (Dode and Workman tied for first), "Dex" (brone) third, and "Bluebell" (Hambletonian and brone) fourth.³⁵

Despite Dode's crossing the line first the race remained a draw. Their reception was tremendous as the crowd swept down upon the two riders—Dode was officially declared Colorado's Greatest Horseman. The first place prize money was divided between the two. "Sam" was easily in the best condition, so the Wykerts received the \$300.00 "best condition" award. Their horse having lost less than fifty pounds; while "Teddy" was said to have lost over 200 pounds—in 523 miles. Awards given Dode included a \$500.00 silver trimmed saddle, two pairs of boots, a lady's riding outfit, an expensive plumed lady's hat (which was given to Mrs. Ben Wykert, presently of Ault) and many other gifts.³⁶

The riders were immediately ordered to rest. Young Workman, exhausted, was taken to the Wykerts' room, treated and put to bed. "Sam" and "Teddy" were bedded down in the Capitol stables, but got little rest as crowds milled in and out of the barn all night long, to get a look at the now famous horses. The next morning "Sam" was given the rare privilege of grazing on the State Capitol lawn while being photographed. "Teddy" was said to have been unable to move for almost three days.³⁷ The victory for Dode was a great one. It proved his ability as a horseman—and as a man. The race made "Sam" one of the most famous horses in Colorado. The great little brone proved to the world that the merits of the western horses surpassed those of the thoroughbred.

Following the big event many charges and accusations were made. Many said the race had been "fixed," with Workman on "Teddy" the to-be winner. Despite accusations no evidence was ever submitted that led to an arrest.³⁸

The final decision was not favorably received throughout northern Colorado. The outcome of the race was protested most bitterly in Ault. Within a short time after the race, feeling mounted and a rally was held there; Dode was proclaimed the winner. The local band further stirred the crowd, all of which, according to *The Ault Advertiser*, culminated in the burning of all copies of a Denver newspaper available in a large bonfire on main street.

³⁴ Interview, *op. cit.*

³⁵ *The Denver Post*, June 6, 1908.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ Interview, *op. cit.*

³⁸ *The Laramie Semi-Weekly Boomerang*, June 18, 1908, Laramie, Wyoming; article, "Did Laramie Men Fake Post Race?"

As tempers reached a new high, a boycott against all Denver products was declared in effect. However, with the passing of time, normal work and trade were resumed. The affair was not forgotten for many years.³⁹

The little town of Ault received much publicity from the big event, as Dode and "Sam" made Ault their permanent home.

A few months after the race the rider was invited to join a leading Wild West Show, and tour Europe with his famous horse. But Dode Wykert was not a showman; he was a top cowboy of the old school, and so modestly declined the offer.⁴⁰

Colorado Festivals

III. "THE EARTH AND THE FULLNESS THEREOF"

THERESE S. WESTERMEIER*

The fruit man wears a peachy smile, 'twould fit a millionaire,
For Colorado has the lead on every bill of fare.

* * *

And this is why the fruit man smiles a dozen months a year,
The dollars that his crops will bring are ample cause for cheer.

* * *

The farmer is a cheerful man, as Colorado's soil
Brings forth abundant harvests to reward him for his toil.¹

In the late eighties and early nineties of the past century various Colorado communities inaugurated those fabulous free-food festivals, at which attendance far outnumbered the multitudes who partook of the biblical loaves and fishes. These festivals were as contagious as the common cold, and, before the new century was ten years old, they marched in a long alphabetical procession—from A for Apple to W for Watermelon—over highway and byway, across the state, calling one and all to come, "eat, drink and be merry." This epidemic of extolling the earth's produce caused one editor to sum up the situation by observing that "the state comes pretty near being a festival for three hundred and sixty-five days in the calendar year,"² and, as a result of this "daze of days," on which some local product—the luscious apple, the lowly potato, or the mouth-watering melon—reigned as "queen for a day," Colorado attracted nationwide attention as the Festival State. A writer for *Harper's Weekly*, in a glowing account of Greeley's Potato Day, remarked that "it has become the custom of the towns of Colorado to set apart one day in the year for the celebration of whatever product gives them prominence."³

³⁰ *The Ault Advertiser*, June 12, Ault, Colorado, article: "So the People May Know."

⁴⁰ Interview, *op. cit.*

* The first two parts of Mrs. Westermeier's story of Colorado Festivals appeared in our issues of July, 1951, and July, 1952.—Ed.

¹ Fred A. Shaffer, "That Sun of Better Times," *Denver Times*, June 5, 1898.

² "A Festival State," *ibid.*, June 12, 1898.

³ Andrew M. Willoughby, "Potato Day at Greeley," *Harper's Weekly*, October 15, 1895.

It was a good advertising scheme—for the railroads, with special excursion rates and extra trains; for the merchants, who with their employees competed for the largest attendance; for the farmer, a good excuse to “lay off” hard work for a day, hitch up old Dobbin, and take the whole family so mother wouldn’t have to stand over the hot stove to cook a meal; for the tourists, a fine way to cut food expenses if they didn’t mind having the bill of fare in reverse and beginning with dessert on Strawberry Day in June and ending up with flapjacks for breakfast on Labor Day! Newspaper editors and roving reporters gave such saliva-stirring accounts of the preparations for these gastronomical features of the day that everybody, from the governor down to the street sweeper, laid aside gavel and broom and followed the crowds—many thousand strong—to the free-for-all ambrosial feasts.

The newspapers lauded these festivals as occasions that “advertise the peculiar products of the various sections, bring the people together for enjoyment, conduce to the increase of friendliness and good feeling,”⁴ and inform “merchants and manufacturers in regard to the growth and development of the country.”⁵ The promoters of the events in the various communities had a more serious aim—they became engaged in a campaign to prove “that agriculture is a practicable and profitable industry in Colorado”⁶ and “to battle with the opinion prevalent in the East that agriculture here hardly deserves to be called an industry.”⁷

The man who marked down the first red-letter day on this food calendar was George Washington Swink, originator of Watermelon Day at Rocky Ford in 1878. The origin of this “Day of Days” is as follows:

It was just two years after the admission of Colorado as a state that G. W. Swink, a pioneer of the Arkansas valley, had such a good crop of melons on his ranch that he thought it wouldn’t be a bad thing to give his less fortunate neighbors a taste of them. So he hauled a couple of dozen melons to the nearest rendezvous, the railway station, and he cut them up for his waiting guests upon the dismantled door of an old freight car.⁸

In succeeding years Mr. Swink invited people to an informal watermelon feed and basket lunch, at which, as chief slicer and server, he wielded his skillful knife. Each year the number of participants increased until, in 1888, the first official Watermelon Day was celebrated:

This is the first occasion of these festivities and with ardor well becoming such a feast the people of that country went in and made for their guests a royal feast. Large tables were built in the public square, on which were piled hundreds of specimens

⁴ “Festivals,” *Colorado Sun*, September 21, 1891.

⁵ “Merchants’ Excursions,” *Denver Republican*, September 1, 1903.

⁶ “Melon Day,” *ibid.*, September 4, 1891.

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ “Rocky Ford Melon Day,” *ibid.*, September 4, 1896.

of the crisp and juicy fruit. The guests were also provided with a free dinner, composed of the numerous other products of the Arkansas Valley. . . . The Santa Fe Company ran out several large excursion trains.”

By 1891, with 8,000 visitors and 10,000 melons, the feast had reached such proportions that it took place in a large cottonwood grove on the edge of town. Mayor Swink now was assisted by several capable aides, “but it was interesting to see him size up a visitor and then strike his knife into the heart of a melon.”¹⁰ He had carved melons for himself and hundreds of others long before Melon Day was thought of and he knew what he was doing:

If it was a pretty girl from the city with a dainty mouth and store teeth he could cut a long, thin slice, that she could get at without taking any of the rouge off her cheeks. If it was a city Arab who had come down from Denver or Pueblo with his boot-blackening kit to get his fill of watermelon and turn an honest nickel from the crowd, George W. would just hand out a whole melon, one of the largest on the pile, and tell the boy to cut it himself.¹¹

Everybody got in swing to Swink’s adept carving and sang, “Oh gimme, oh gimme, Oh, how I wish you would gimme, some watermelon growing on the vine,”¹² and the echo of the song carried so far that in 1895 the grounds for the melon pile had to be enlarged—some forty wagon teams hauled 20,000 melons and 60,000 cantaloupes to feed the multitudes, who came by prairie schooners, bicycles and in seventy-five coaches on the Santa Fe Railroad.¹³

At the turn of the century Rocky Ford melons were attracting national attention, and a New York newspaper heralded the approaching shipment of 10,000,000 melons:

A man who has not tasted Rocky Ford melons has just one advantage—he does not know what he has missed . . . No matter from what state they [melons] came, they were flat, stale and unprofitable . . . So poor, indeed have cantaloupes been this summer that many reputable dealers would not handle them . . . All this will be changed, however, by September first, for about that time the first consignment of Rocky Ford melons will reach this city, and then New Yorkers will begin a genuine feast of melons which will last for a month.¹⁴

In 1900 a cowboy tournament was added as a special feature to entertain the guests who attacked the huge melon pile with such vigor that the morning after “it looked as though Roosevelt’s Rough Riders had made a charge on Melon Hill as melon rinds was all that was left to tell the tale.”¹⁵

⁹ “Watermelon Day,” *ibid.*, September 15, 1888.

¹⁰ “Rocky Ford’s Big Day,” *ibid.*, September 4, 1891.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² “Watermelon Day,” *ibid.*, September 9, 1892.

¹³ “Rocky Ford Melon Day,” *ibid.*, August 28, 1895.

¹⁴ “Colorado Melons Appeal to New York Says New York Press,” *ibid.*, August 27, 1899.

¹⁵ “Melon Day,” *ibid.*, September 7, 1900.

Through the years the crowds increased, "coming from far and near to push their faces into the fruit that made Rocky Ford famous,"¹⁶ and by 1913, a crowd of 25,000 consumed 20,000 watermelons.¹⁷

Mayor Swink insured the annual celebration of Watermelon Day when he donated eighty acres of his timber land claim to the Otero County Fair Association with the provision that Melon Day be observed each year with a free distribution of melons on the first Thursday in September.¹⁸

At the present time, Watermelon Day is still going strong. The national popularity of the juicy feast is attested by a feature article in *The Saturday Evening Post*,¹⁹ and, come Watermelon time, the sixty-year old jingle still holds true:

The tempting watermelon now
Is on its annual frolic,
And reckless youth it will soon
Make watermeloncholic.²⁰

Over in Monument, north of Colorado Springs and not too far from Rocky Ford, townspeople and loyal farmers had evidently succumbed to the motto, "I came, I saw, I conquered," for just one year after the first official Watermelon Day of 1888, they whetted Western appetites with the announcement of a grand potato bake and barbecue to be held on November second, and proclaimed that "instead of one roasted ox there will be three, a bear, and black-tailed deer, a small drove of pigs and a bunch of sheep."²¹ However, this initial attempt and another in the following year "were conspicuous for being failures, as the elements forbade gatherings outdoors."²² Colorado's "unusual" early blizzards covered potatoes and people with drifting snow; the passenger trains bearing hungry visitors, were blockaded outside the town, and the proverbial fatted calf waited in vain to be consumed.

In 1891 the Potato Bake promoters decided not to combat with nature, but rather they cast out a new bait by announcing an earlier date (September 22) for the feast and extolled the virtues of their prized product in a biblical paraphrase:

Watermelons fade away like a dream with the first frosts of autumn. The peach is transitory and becomes only a memory when the snows of winter whiten the ground. But the potato we have always with us. It is never out of season. In January and July it is found on the tables of rich and poor alike. If bread is the staff of life, the potato is next to it. It is a necessity, compared to which the melon and the peaches are luxuries.²³

¹⁶ "Melon Day," *ibid.*, September 4, 1903.

¹⁷ "Melon Day," *ibid.*, September 4, 1913.

¹⁸ "Rocky Ford Melons," *Colorado Magazine*, XIX (September 1942), 28.

¹⁹ Orin Arnold, "Watermelon Bust at Rocky Ford," *Saturday Evening Post*, August 24, 1946.

²⁰ *The Cattleman's Advertiser*, September 17, 1885.

²¹ "Potato Bake," *Denver Republican*, October 25, 1889.

²² "It Was A Success," *Rocky Mountain News*, September 23, 1891.

²³ "Potato Is King," *Rocky Mountain News*, September 16, 1891.

Tempting "teasers"—1,000 special cards and 10,000 bulletins—proclaimed the Bake in advance throughout Colorado and neighboring states.²⁴ The town made gala preparations, not only a twenty-foot potato monument, but also heaps of other vegetables and fruits welcomed the visitors who came, three thousand strong, and in less than two hours three oxen, eight hogs, six sheep, one and a half tons of potatoes and twelve washboilers of coffee "disappeared like dry grass before a prairie fire."²⁵

Monument staged another Potato Bake in 1892; in 1895 the town of Elbert assumed the honors of host and chief potato baker as a tribute to Judge Elbert, who had given his name to town and county and who addressed the well-fed crowd, "recounting the steady progress of the Great Divide. . . ."²⁶

Over on the Western Slope the pioneers of the peach industry paid little heed to "wise men from the East and critics who said we could grow cottonwoods but not peaches"²⁷ and went right on pampering their saplings and "built castles in the air in which the palaces were made of peaches. . . ."²⁸

In 1891 their day of triumph dawned. Their trees had brought forth abundant fruit, and a celebration was in order. Peach Day was proclaimed for September sixteenth, and, to accommodate the anticipated crowds, Peach Hall was erected three miles north of Grand Junction, from which a steam railroad made possible half hourly trips to and fro. The preparations were elaborate:

The ceiling of the building was decorated with a sweet smelling cedar with a fringe of wild asparagus. The walls were hung with the colors of King Peach, golden yellow and rosy pink, relieved by a field of light blue. "The Western Slope" was the text which greeted the visitors' eyes upon entrance in the building. "Mesa County" appeared in raised letters over the entrance. To the right were the arms of the state of Colorado and to the left a picture of Grand Junction. Peaches were everywhere. On the long tables were grouped 1,000 plates of peaches, each relieved with a bunch of purple grapes. At one end was a star neatly executed in peaches, at the other the new moon in the luscious golden fruit.²⁹

In the morning, guests were shown about the city and made aware of "the splendid opportunities afforded for homes to those seeking a fertile soil and mild climate."³⁰ The program planned for the afternoon consisted of talks on agriculture, the presentation of "artistically engraved silver souvenir peaches to members of the press and distinguished invited guests,"³¹ followed by races and a firemen's tournament.

²⁴ "Potato Bake," *Denver Republican*, September 16, 1891.

²⁵ "Potato Was King," *ibid.*, September 23, 1891.

²⁶ "Elbert's First Potato Bake," *ibid.*, September 28, 1895.

²⁷ "Peach Day," *Colorado Sun*, September 16, 1891.

²⁸ "Peach Day," *Denver Republican*, September 16, 1891.

²⁹ "Peach Day," *ibid.*, September 16, 1891.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ "Peach Day," *Rocky Mountain News*, September 16, 1891.

At high noon the signal to attack was given in the words of the chairman, "We ask you to eat, and eat, and eat, and may the Lord preserve you from cholera morbus!"³²

New features were added in subsequent years—parades, cowboy tournaments, bicycle races, and Indian dances. One of the principal events, and a very popular one, was the night carnival of fire, which "sounds innocent but if a New Yorker heard it coming he would think he was in the middle of Custer's last charge."³³ It was described as follows:

The requirements necessary to be in on the carnival of fire deal are a horse, a six-shooter, a good voice and the ability to ride . . . The marauders line up silently at the further end of the street and arrange their route, which includes all the populous portions of the city.

Then when all is prepared they dash at full speed toward the town and burst upon it with the discharge of 100 guns and a furious yelling and other startling things which suggest themselves to the mind of a man on horseback, who is bent on having some fun . . . Some meet this calmly and unwaveringly, but others with less of a mind for decorum make their horses buck or take down their ropes and remove objectionable signs or other things which come in their way.³⁴

Grand Junction peaches had competition—those first few twigs had multiplied and spread over the land. In 1908 a rival neighboring town, Palisade, didn't ask people to come for free peaches, but introduced an annual distribution of the coveted fruit in Denver. This event, conducted by the Railroad Company and the Fruit Growers, was prominently advertised:

WANTED—5,000 people to receive the gift of 5,000 peaches—the very best on earth—at the offices of the Colorado Midland railway, at Seventeenth and California streets, Wednesday.³⁵

Naturally, Denverites flocked to the station hours ahead of the appointed hour and stood in line to obtain a free sample. Some actually bribed the distributors to hand over an extra one or two for a sick friend or for a relative who couldn't come, and "one small lad demanded three, one for himself and the others for his two bosses."³⁶

In 1893 Lamar could boast of only one outstanding product—jackrabbits! And they were prolific! However, the community boosters did not proclaim a Rabbit Roast or a Bunny Barbecue, but invited Colorado sportsmen to a Jackrabbit Hunt. A few days before Christmas some fifty enthusiastic nimrods, heeding the call of Parson Tom Uzzell for help in feeding the poor, brought 3,000 cartridges and reduced Lamar's rabbit population by 2,000 "jacks," which were shipped to Pueblo and Denver for the poor man's

³² "Peach Day," *Denver Republican*, September 16, 1891.

³³ "Peach Day," *ibid.*, September 6, 1903.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ "Peaches for Thousands of Denver People," *ibid.*, September 15, 1908.

³⁶ "Palisade Peach Day," *ibid.*, September 17, 1908.

Christmas dinner.³⁷ Parson Uzzell, who played a prominent part in Denver's welfare for the poor, was overjoyed and in subsequent years betook himself to the hunt.

So good were the reports of this adventure and also of the fine food served by the ladies of Lamar and so numerous were the rabbits, that an official Rabbit Day was planned for the following year—"a big thing that shall become as important in the state as Peach Day or Watermelon Day."³⁸

Parson Uzzell was elated with the results:

It is the greatest slaughter on record, over 5,000 having already been brought to town and fresh wagons loaded full of them arriving every few minutes. A fair estimate of the number killed will be about 10,000 . . . The railing strung all around the public square for the purpose of hanging up the rabbits is filled until it is overflowing, and presents a wonderful sight.³⁹

The following year a fourteen-inch snow did not daunt 125 hunters from the Denver area who had heard nothing of a telegram sent from Lamar to the Santa Fe Railroad Office, stating that the Roundup was called off. Consequently, when the train stopped some miles outside the town in a spot where the game was good, the hunters found themselves knee deep in snow, no welcome committee, and no food! So, while Lamar hosts sat cozily by warm stoves, the gallant gunmen bagged a couple of thousand Christmas dinners for the parson's poor.⁴⁰

During the next few years the numbers on Colorado's poor list increased, and obligingly so did the rabbits, wholly unaware as to their future fate. Newspaper reporters had a gay time, and cartoons were very clever:

If only the poor rabbits knew
What Parson Uzzell means to do,
They would certainly keep out of view
And also out of a stew.⁴¹

[Cartoon, showing rabbit following parson]

Hey! bunny! bunny! come to be killed,
For you must be cooked and my poor people filled.⁴²

[Cartoon, showing father jackrabbit pointing at
"Rabbit Hunt" sign]

Now how can we be expected to maintain a proper holiday spirit
under such conditions?⁴³

There was always a popular demand for the left forefoot. This fuzzy good luck emblem was usually retained by hunters or officials for superstitious friends, Parson Uzzell mailed a dozen of them to Simon Guggenheim!⁴⁴

³⁷ "Rabbit Hunt," *Denver Republican*, December 23, 1893.

³⁸ "Another Rabbit Day," *ibid.*, October 3, 1894.

³⁹ "Ten Thousand Rabbits," *ibid.*, December 20, 1894.

⁴⁰ "Hunters Back from Lamar," *ibid.*, December 22, 1895.

⁴¹ "Rabbit Day," *ibid.*, December 17, 1896.

⁴² *Ibid.*, December 16, 1898.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, December 19, 1899.

⁴⁴ "Annual Rabbit Hunt," *ibid.*, December 20, 1900.

When the new century dawned, "the people of Lamar were too busy making money to take part in the hunt. The fall season has been one of prosperity and plenty for them. Heavy crops, and several thousand dollars for sugar beets, besides high prices for stock, have engaged their attention so that the hunters did not find the usual committee waiting for them."⁴⁵ This may have been one reason for the fall of Rabbit Day, and perhaps the lot of the poor improved along with that of the Lamarites. However, another incident occurred which may have contributed to the fact that the Hunt was permanently off. Some of the hunters must have turned from the worthy purpose of rounding up rabbits for the parson and turned into racketeers, for, in 1900, the game wardens were searching conspirators who had secretly shipped a wagon load of out-of-season quail to a Kansas Commission firm.⁴⁶

Cultural Colorado Springs, ever conscious of its prize Peak and whose population was predominant with alumni of the Ivy League, was the first large city in Colorado that succumbed to the festival fever. The, as yet, unborn festival which the city contemplated was to be something new and different; no prosaic potato would be enshrined, neither a tasty peach nor a juicy melon would reign as king, but something "typical of the beauty of the city and the taste of the people who preside in the metropolis of the county which possesses the greatest gold camp on earth."⁴⁷

Early in September, 1893, the *Gazette* announced a new attractive feature in the life of Colorado Springs: "A very interesting and unusual spectacle will be seen on the streets next Saturday afternoon in the form of a sunflower parade. It is often seen in the East, but this will be the first time in Colorado."⁴⁸ The event consisted of a street parade of various types of flower-decked floats—buggies, burros, bicycles and a few bipeds. In addition, to add a bit of the West to an idea borrowed from the East, there were a couple of cowboys and an Indian chief. The citizenry evidenced a gala spirit and complete cooperation, and, according to the paper, "Colorado Springs adopted its new holiday with an enthusiasm that extended to all classes. Delicate and cultured ladies risked their complexions in the rays of the afternoon sun."⁴⁹

In 1894 and 1895 the event became "bigger and better":

The flower carnival of 1894 is a thing of the past and was pronounced by the judges to be the largest, fairest and most beautiful fete ever held in the West . . . The procession was fully a mile long. There were pretentious four-in-hands fancifully and vividly decorated with all sorts of flowers and with fair women gracing the seats and from these a long line of vehicles graduated

⁴⁵ "Annual Rabbit Hunt," *ibid.*, December 20, 1900.

⁴⁶ "Rabbit Hunt," *ibid.*, December 21, 1900.

⁴⁷ "A Festival State," *Denver Times*, June 12, 1898.

⁴⁸ "Sunflower Day," *Colorado Springs Gazette*, September 6, 1893.

⁴⁹ "Flower Carnival," *ibid.*, September 10, 1893.

to the little goat-cart, much less attractive, but nevertheless showing the same public spirit which so actuated nearly everyone in town in preparing for this great carnival.

A novel feature in this year's parade was a band of twenty-six Ute Indians . . . Then there was a band of twenty cowboys to help enliven things.⁵⁰

The pageant was witnessed by fully 10,000 people, and the various exhibits were all heartily applauded . . . The parade was fully two miles long . . . The colleges represented were Yale, Harvard and Princeton . . . The Harvard trap consisted of a pair of black horses, the harness covered with crimson bunting, decorated with red hollyhocks and dahlias. A crimson shield bore the Harvard motto, "Veritas."⁵¹

In 1896 the flowers and fair women were eclipsed by the Wild West show, staged by "Arizona Charley," who "claimed to be straight from the bush and a grand specimen of the real cowboy."⁵² This notorious character had had much publicity, especially at the hands of the Humane Society for undue cruelty to animals. But the show was a huge success; "the crowd held their breath while Arizona Charley broke three glass balls placed on the head of a lady, with rifle bullets, at about 25 yards distance."⁵³

Up to the end of the century the Flower Carnival continued on a grand scale. New attractions were added, among them a horse-show, the famous Cowboy Band from Pueblo, and novelty badges, "made of a medal, the size of a silver dollar, showing the old and new way to reach the top of Pike's Peak—the burro and the cog-wheel road."⁵⁴ The most elaborate feature in the later years was the floral ball at the Broadmoor Hotel, at which "all women who attend are to wear something that shall have a floral significance, and many of the prettiest women of the city are having costumes made that will be dreams of loveliness, the entire gown representing some flower."⁵⁵

Canon City, which with its annual spring Blossom Festival is still on Colorado's red-letter-day calendar, jumped on the festival bandwagon in 1894 with the innovation of an annual Fruit Day. Almost 10,000 people, bent on keeping the doctor away with an apple a day, flocked to this southern town and ate their quota for several days:

Canon City was a misnomer today. It was not Canon City. It was Appletown, Peartown, Plumtown, Grapetown, Peachtown, and other fruital precincts. It was the kingdom of fruitdom in which the fruit cult of Fremont County was king . . . The metamorphosis was complete, so much indeed, that visitors to the apple capital of the state hardly knew it as the town which has given a more or less national reputation to Colorado as the premier fruit growing state of the Union.

⁵⁰ "Sunflower Carnival," *Denver Republican*, August 17, 1894.

⁵¹ "Say It With Flowers," *ibid.*, August 23, 1895.

⁵² *Stock Grower and Farmer* (Las Vegas, New Mexico), August 1, 1891, p. 5.

⁵³ "Colorado Springs Revelry," *Denver Republican*, August 6, 1896.

⁵⁴ "Carnival of Flowers," *ibid.*, August 11, 1897.

⁵⁵ "Flower Carnival," *ibid.*, September 10, 1899.

Bunting in wealth, hospitality in abundance, and the freest exercise of all the privileges of freedom of cordial reciprocity which the people of Appletown held for their hosts of visitors . . .⁵⁶

A year later, with one hundred thousand pounds of the choicest fruit to be catered to an anticipated crowd of 20,000, the hosts went overboard in hospitality, and in addition to their fill of fruit, the visitors were entertained with a day full of horse races, the state gun shoot, visits to the penitentiary, carriage drives through the orchards, a firemen's tournament, and bicycle races.⁵⁷

The next few years brought the latest crazes—balloon ascensions, parachute leaps, cowboy tournaments, and, as fruit bearers to the mobs, the town's beauties who smilingly bestowed tons of fruit on the visitors.⁵⁸

For a time, "Fruit Day" was replaced by the "Canon City Fair," but after a while, some one longed for the good old days and efforts were made to bring the fruit back into the festival fold.⁵⁹ However, Canon City now had a rival in its claim to the title of Colorado's Champion Fruit Grower, for Grand Valley, on the Western Slope, inaugurated a Fruit Day in 1908,⁶⁰ which continued for only a few years.

About this time, the potato, not satisfied with celebrations of "my day" in the form of barbecue-bakes at Monument and Elbert, had spread northward to the fertile irrigated soil around Greeley, which was as far west as some young men went. Here they "went forth to sow, and the seed brought forth" such a manifold supply that in 1894 they were ready to make known the rewards of their toil and prepared for Greeley's first Potato Day. According to an Eastern writer, "the celebration took on all the features of the Eastern harvest homes,"⁶¹ but, had he been present at this premier display of the fertility of the earth, he would have found himself in Pandemonium.

The officials had modestly estimated a crowd of a thousand or two "but they had never dreamed a throng of nearly ten thousand sight-seers which should descend upon the city and dissipate in a moment all their grand plans for entertainment. . ."⁶² Only a miracle could have saved the day. But alas! Greeley was far removed from Galilee, and no such manifestation was forthcoming to convert two roast oxen and tons of potatoes into a number sufficient to satisfy the hungry horde. In despair "the mayor threw up his

⁵⁶ "Apple Day," *ibid.*, September 21, 1894.

⁵⁷ "Canon City Fruit Day," *ibid.*, September 18-22, 1895.

⁵⁸ "Fruit Day," *ibid.*, September 16, 1896; 1898.

⁵⁹ "Fruit Day is Revived," *ibid.*, August 17, 1903.

⁶⁰ "Grand Valley Has First Fruit Day," *ibid.*, September 16, 1908.

⁶¹ Andrew M. Willoughby, "Potato Day at Greeley, Colorado," *Harper's Weekly*, October 15, 1895, p. 1047.

⁶² "Greeley Was In It," *Denver Republican*, October 11, 1894.

hands. The visitors had captured the town and could do with it as they pleased. And they did, as long as it lasted."⁶³

An eye-witness reporter, who had managed to escape the pitch forks which hoisted the quartered oxen from the roasting pits to the table, and the butcher knives which the colored chef from Denver brandished in the air, miraculously lived through it all, from start to finish, and got his story to the press:

A ravenous mob surrounded the great square inside of which a hundred men struggled with roast oxen, tons of baked potatoes, mountains of bread and cauldrons of coffee in a vain attempt to satisfy the universal appetite. Another mob, which could not get within reaching distance . . . made such a descent on the hotels and restaurants that within an hour the doors of every place which made the smallest pretense of provender-dispensing were closed and locked against the onslaught. A third portion of the crowd barred from both barbecue and eating house stood outside and indulged in what a facetious Denverite termed a "photographic lunch," until the pangs of hunger grew beyond endurance and they were driven to deviled ham and dried apples as a last resort. The grocery stores saved the lives of the excursionists and the fair name of "the world's greatest potato belt."⁶⁴

The next year Greeley was ready for the throng and everything went off without a hitch. For several days previous to the event, the town officers watched with a sharp eye on every street corner and incoming trains for "vagrants and similar characters who haunt such a celebration."⁶⁵ Such persons, uninvited to the feast, were driven out of town or lodged in jail; whereas, the legitimate guests, who had come in their festival garments, ate their fill.

Greeley Potato Day was not a continuous affair but it did enjoy prominence while it lasted. As late as 1910, when it was celebrated in conjunction with the Fair, it attracted over 10,000 people. Railroads ran special trains, and "from all parts of the country came the happy throng, the vehicles of the farmer and the stockman lining the roads leading to Greeley."⁶⁶ But the delicious odor of roasting ox no longer drifted through the air; by this time the modern method of 'quick lunch' had replaced the all-night watch at the barbecue pits, and "a hayrack loaded with sandwiches was hauled into the grounds and batches of potatoes were ready and spread on the sand warming bed."⁶⁷

But "time marches on," and Potato Day marched with it—into oblivion, as far as an actual bake is concerned. The prominence of the potato, however, is not forgotten by the good people of Greeley; they have immortalized the food product that made their town famous in the title of their now annual celebration, The Spud Rodeo, which was introduced in the early 1920s.

⁶³ *Ibid.*

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

⁶⁵ "Greeley Has Had Her Day," *ibid.*, October 16, 1895.

⁶⁶ "Potato Day at Greeley Fair," *ibid.*, September 30, 1910.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

Also in the northern part of the state, up Loveland way, the people had been staging, since 1892, a lively old-world street fair, "the like of which for novelty has never been known before in Colorado."⁶⁸ In 1895 the magnetic craze to join the March of Days struck the town, and after a long argument, as to whether the raspberry or roasting ears should be served on the festival platter, corn, which by this time was as tall as, or even taller, than that grown in "Ioway," was the winner. The Union Pacific Railroad was offering attractive one-day "Round-the-Horn" excursions for the ridiculously small sum of one dollar fifty, with stop-overs in the various towns where the happy travelers were welcomed with open arms and feasted royally. In the ninety minutes allotted to Loveland, the rooters of the corn roast promised a rousing good time.⁶⁹

Near the depot, in the shade of long rows of cottonwoods, bountiful tables heaped with sandwiches and fruit were waiting to be attacked by five hundred crunchers of the cob. Nearby, also ready for the onslaught, were wash boilers filled with steaming coffee, tubs of butter, dairy wagons with milk and buttermilk, and deep pits of roasting corn—estimated at a dozen ears per person. The liberal Lovelanders were most generous, and "the professional carver, whose proud boast it is that he can cover an acre of ground with a ham, had no part or parcel in preparing those sandwiches."⁷⁰ The guests were almost as much impressed with this method of feeding a multitude as with the bill of fare—"it was a sight of a lifetime to see an able-bodied man get into the pit with a four-tine pitchfork and begin hoisting the roasted ears."⁷¹

The success of Loveland's entrance into the datebook of days spread far and wide and the following year 2,500 epicureans of the ear were treated to "free roasted corn, free silver oratory, the freedom of the town and a whole lot of other good things that cost nothing."⁷² Actual figures on the food consumed are: 5,000 ears of corn, 5,000 ham sandwiches, 40 bushels of apples, 600 pounds of plums, 60 pounds of butter, one barrel of sugar, 200 gallons of coffee, 250 gallons of buttermilk.⁷³

The corn continued to be good and also more abundant, and the time allowed by the railroad evidently was not long enough to lick the platter clean. In any case, in 1897, some of the avaricious excursionists, who probably had read the fable of the greedy wolf in the farmer's cellar, "tarried too long at the feast" and missed the train. But they were not dismayed, to them it was just a

⁶⁸ "Loveland Street Fair," *Colorado Sun*, September 18, 1892.

⁶⁹ "The Corn Roast at Loveland," *Denver Republican*, September 1, 1895.

⁷⁰ "The Corn Roast," *ibid.*, September 9, 1895.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*

⁷² "Corn on the Ear," *ibid.*, September 8, 1896.

⁷³ *Ibid.*

good excuse to make a day—and a night—of it, so they rekindled the dying embers and threw a few more ears on the fire.⁷⁴ However, "among those left was a woman who did not feel sure her husband would believe her story of being left, and who also found the railway company would not accept her return ticket in the morning."⁷⁵ The newspaper assures the reader that the ladies of Loveland rescued the damsel in distress and assured her that they would account for every single minute of her time; also, that the railroad honored her ticket the following morning. Unfortunately, the reporter did not follow up her arrival home and her reception by her husband, but no doubt, the sisters in Loveland, who had so loyally stood by, received the information.

Nothing ever stopped the Corn Roast while it lasted. If it rained, the tables were moved indoors; if it was too cold, people huddled closer to the fires, but come they did, and the corn disappeared. The usual popular attractions were offered—parades, races, souvenirs, ball games, log rolling, et cetera. In 1899 a badger and dog fight was advertised without the consent of the management:

. . . In order that the sporting element that came all the way from Denver to see the fight might not be disappointed, the supposed fight was pulled off within a tight board enclosure. No women were admitted, and when the badger was pulled out of the box, it was discovered to be of the hairless variety, and the bulldog refused to fight. The fake worked well, and a bloodless battle satisfied the crowd of spectators.⁷⁶

By 1910 definite progress was evident, and the roasting pits were a thing of the past. Preparations for feeding a six thousand-strong mob of pursuers of the cob were facilitated in that "10,000 ears of corn were cooked to the queen's taste in a huge steam cooker at the Empson cannery."⁷⁷

In 1898, two towns, Boulder and Glenwood Springs, inaugurated a day of tribute to the queen of berryland—the strawberry—and prepared to serve strawberries and cream not only to Mother Goose's Curlylocks, but to thousands of lovers of this delectable dish. Both towns claimed to have the biggest, best and most abundant berries, so berries and baths vied with boulders and berries, for the strawberry is no common fruit. Pagan folklore hails it as sacred to Frigga, the queen mother in Norse mythology; Christian legend honors it on the Virgin Mary's list and as the food that kept John the Baptist on his feet in the desert.⁷⁸ The *Longmont Ledger*

⁷⁴ "They Tarried Too Long," *ibid.*, September 9, 1897.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

⁷⁶ "Corn Roast," *ibid.*, September 5, 1899.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, August 25, 1910.

⁷⁸ Maria Leach, *Dictionary of Folklore, Mythology and Legend*, II (New York 1950), p. 1084.

summed it all up in this simple statement: "Doubtless," says good old Isaak Walton, "God could have made a better berry, but doubtless God never did."⁷⁹

Glenwood was indignant because she had the idea first, since her publicity for Strawberry Day on June 18 had appeared prior to Boulder's for June 24. Glenwood standard bearers for the strawberry called together the citizens and adopted a resolution, expressing their sentiments:

Garfield County Strawberry Day, June 18, has been advertised for several weeks, a large amount of money has been expended in providing for the entertainment of guests, and, therefore, the people of this section protest against the competition inaugurated in behalf of Boulder County.⁸⁰

To boost Glenwood's priority on the fruit in question, the *Denver Times* printed a jolly rhyme, which is quoted in part only:

I'm a-goin' out ter Glenwood, whar the dimpled berries laugh,
I'm a-goin' ter take the kids along, an' that ol' better half,
Fer that town'll be a-shinin' with the joy from everywhere,
An' the berries disappearin' like a reg'lar trottin' mare.
Thar's a lot of folks at Glenwood an' they never have the blues,
They air allus kissed by sunshine an' the early mornin' dews;
Got a climate thar, by ginger, that 'ud make an ol' maid smile,
An' they're peert on entertainin' in the Colerader style.
That's a country thar fer people that air lookin' fer the best,
She is Colerader's parlor an' the pantry o' the West.
An' her people have a fashion—'bout a dozen months a year—
Fer ter keep theirselves a'swimmin' in the gladdest kind o' cheer.⁸¹

Strawberry rooters in Glenwood were well satisfied with their first "queen for a day" program, in spite of the fact that a week later she would reign under similar laurels in Boulder:

That it was a success and highly appreciated by the visitors is attested by the fact that over 2,000 people came in over the railroads and nearly 2,600 were fed to repletion with strawberries, cake and cream, and the surplus was equal to accommodate as many more.⁸²

Besides an after-dinner dip into her already renowned mammoth pool, Glenwood displayed for her visitors an artistic exhibit of berries and flowers. The largest strawberry measured four and one half inches in circumference; the prize bouquet of wild flowers, entered by a lad of fourteen, had sixty-three varieties.⁸³

During the years other attractions were offered; whatever fads were in season elsewhere, made their way to Glenwood Springs—parades, a masker's ball, firemen's tournament, cowboy sports, and in more recent years, by all means, a queen—not a strawberry, though perhaps a strawberry blonde. In 1900 tables were arranged to seat five hundred at a time, and the eager berry beavers consumed 7,200 quarts of berries and 100 gallons of cream;⁸⁴ in 1913 ten

⁷⁹ "Strawberries," *Longmont Ledger*, June 20, 1900.

⁸⁰ "As To Strawberry Days," *Denver Republican*, June 4, 1898.

⁸¹ "Glenwood's Strawberry Day," *Denver Times*, June 16, 1898.

⁸² "Strawberry Day at Glenwood," *Denver Republican*, June 19, 1898.

⁸³ *Ibid.*

⁸⁴ "Strawberry Day at Glenwood Springs," *Ibid.*, June 16, 1900.

thousand people flocked thither to the feast.⁸⁵ This annual celebration is still a "must" on Colorado's food-day calendar, and, come June every year, all roads lead to Glenwood.

Boulder's Strawberry Day, which continued for three years, was in the nature of a strawberry social. For the first one, "farmers from the surrounding country have agreed to donate enough strawberries to feed 3,000 visitors and other citizens will provide ice cream and cake."⁸⁶ It was held in a "large handsome grove near the depot"⁸⁷ and was also a great success:

. . . About a hundred people came down from the mountains, and 260 came down on the train from the north, and between 1,600 and 1,800 people came up from Denver . . . A large number of tables were spread, and strawberries, cream, cake, etc., were served. There was a great abundance of eatables, so that the visitors had more than they wanted. Many Boulder people were treated after the guests had been supplied.⁸⁸

The following year the strawberry shared the honors of the day with the opening of the electric street car system, from the town "up the hill" to the Chautauqua, and, fittingly, the strawberry spread was served on the Chautauqua grounds.⁸⁹

At the turn of the century Steamboat Springs was considered "the heart of the big game region."⁹⁰ The native lovers of the hunt had felt for some time that fruit and flowers were receiving too much attention and that a lot of good game and fine fish were being neglected. To prove that there was game "in them thar hills," the town boosters in 1899, blew the whistle for the first Game and Fish Day. Three thousand—greenhorns and naturals—answered the call, "never before perhaps, certainly not since the days when the Indians held full sway in this section, has there been such an array of game-slayers. . . . Visitors range in character from Eastern dude, with his numerous and mostly ornamental trappings to the plain everyday grizzly bear hunter."⁹¹ The results of the kill and the subsequent devouring of twenty-three deer, seven antelope, two bear, and two elk are summed up in the following rhyme:

The Steamboat Springs game day was
All that fancy painted it,
It was lovely, grandly grand,
And the way the natives eat wild meat
Would beat a German band.
They stuffed themselves with antelope,
Elk, mountain sheep and bear,
Then went to bed and wrestled with
Another beast—nightmare.⁹²

⁸⁵ "10,000 Enjoy Strawberry Fest," *ibid.*, June 22, 1913.

⁸⁶ "Strawberry Day," *ibid.*, June 15, 1898.

⁸⁷ "Boulder's Strawberry Day," *ibid.*, June 24, 1898.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

⁸⁹ "Boulder's Berry Festival," *ibid.*, June 25, 1899.

⁹⁰ "Game and Fish Day," *ibid.*, July 28, 1900.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, September 10, 1899.

⁹² "Glances Over Colorado," *Denver Post*, September 14, 1899.

Game and Fish Day had its spot on the food calendar for only a few years. In addition to the barbecue, cowboy tournaments were held and also exhibits of the regional mineral and agricultural products as a means "to attract the attention of home seekers and investors."⁹³

For several years Longmont had watched happy feasters pass through its town area in the direction of beckoning odors of baked potato and roasted corn. In 1899 she too joined the parade of products and proclaimed Pumpkin Pie Day, for her pumpkins "have a flavor that makes the finest Eastern pumpkins taste like a green squash in comparison."⁹⁴ The origin of this day, that was destined to make men's mouths water for pie "like mother used to make," grew out of a conversation between F. M. Shaw, passenger agent of the Colorado and Southern Railway, and G. E. Halderman, Longmont attorney:

... Mr. Shaw asked, "Why don't you get up some sort of day, like Loveland and Greeley, and other towns making big hits?"

Mr. Halderman answered, "I don't know what kind of day we could get up. About the only thing we raise outside of the regular crops is pumpkins."

Mr. Shaw exclaimed, "Why, that's just the thing! Give a pumpkin pie day. It's a new idea and it's bound to be a big thing."⁹⁵

The citizens were determined to make this the queen of all queens' days. Houses, street posts, and stores were draped in green and gold, the festival colors; pumpkins of every size were everywhere—inside the pies and out—and the enthusiastic people now recited the days of the week, Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Pumpkin Pie Day! A huge parade, headed by the Longmont band, appropriately dressed as country bumpkins in overalls and straw hats, met the train and led the long procession to the heap of plenty in the park, where "all of Colorado was invited to come and fill up on pie, sandwiches and sweet cider without money and without price."⁹⁶

A crowd of three thousand did just that! In no time at all "five thousand pumpkin discs slid down the throats of the hungry multitudes . . . in a feast that would bring tears of joy to any patent medicine man with remedies for indigestion for sale."⁹⁷ Every preference in taste was gratified—there were light pies, and dark pies, sweet ones and spicy ones—and the visiting ladies begged for recipes. The cider, too, made a big hit, and "the way the crowd went after it was something remarkable for a prohibition town like Longmont. Half a dozen barrels disappeared in a wonderful short time."⁹⁸

⁹³ "Game and Fish Day," *Denver Republican*, July 28, 1900.

⁹⁴ "Longmont's Pie Day," *ibid.*, September 23, 1899.

⁹⁵ "Pumpkin Pie Day," *ibid.*, October 6, 1899.

⁹⁶ "First Pumpkin Pie Day," *Longmont Call*, September 25, 1899.

⁹⁷ "Pumpkin Pie Day," *Denver Republican*, October 6, 1899.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

For amusement after the feast, there were food exhibits, a baby show, a dance in the evening, and a horse race for which a man sold "Paris mutuals," to those who were inclined to speculate.⁹⁹

Each year demanded, not better, but certainly bigger or more pies. In 1901 coffee replaced cider, but no one seemed to mind, and one young lady, remarked "that if she got it in-sid-'er, it was just the same."¹⁰⁰ In 1909 the disbursement of 10,000 pies evoked a laudatory editorial in the *Kansas City Times*, which called for hats off to Longmont where "the wise folk have an eye for advertising that makes all the rest of them [festivals] look like a smooth dime with a hole in it."¹⁰¹ In the parade in 1910 "Richard Beasley showed what could be raised on a farm, having on his float his eleven children, a cow, pig, ducks, goats, chickens, sheep and all the products in the way of grasses and grains."¹⁰²

Pumpkin Pie Day passed off the festival calendar around 1913; in 1926 efforts were made to revive it at the Boulder County Fair.¹⁰³

Fort Lupton, "the center of the tomato belt of northern Colorado,"¹⁰⁴ developed a festival flair in 1908 in honor of the ripe red tomato which was its chief claim to fame. As a special attraction, after a big, free barbecue with all the trimmings and tons of tomatoes, four hundred Japanese put on an exhibition of athletic feats, consisting of "jiu jitsu, acrobatics, fencing, wrestling, a lantern race, and a sword dance."¹⁰⁵ Three thousand people paid homage to *la belle* tomato, ate heartily, visited the canning factory and felt fine over this latest addition to the free-food bag.

A few years later the tomato was so plentiful that Fort Lupton folks had some to throw away and offered a unique feature, a tomato fight, in which "young men clad in white suits will pelt each other with ripe tomatoes and emerge covered from head to foot with red juice."¹⁰⁶

The tomato is still with us. Like the watermelon and the strawberry, it has held its ground through the years of wars and depression, and once a year it still holds sway over Fort Lupton way.

Again, in 1909, two towns chalked up new festivals on the same day. But they were far apart and were feting two different foods—apple pie and roast lamb—so no rivalry ensued, and both were

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁰ "The Day We Celebrate," *Longmont Ledger*, September 27, 1901.

¹⁰¹ "Longmont and Its Pie Festival," *Denver Republican*, September 1, 1909.

¹⁰² "Pumpkin Pie Day," *ibid.*, September 2, 1910.

¹⁰³ "Pumpkin Pie Day," *Rocky Mountain News*, August 29, 1926.

¹⁰⁴ "Tomato Day," *Longmont Ledger*, September 18, 1908.

¹⁰⁵ "Thousands at First Tomato Day," *Denver Republican*, September 13, 1908.

¹⁰⁶ "Tomato Day," *ibid.*, September 3, 1910.

happy with their prize product and their crowds of visitors, although it must have been terrible for food fans to decide between the two tasty dishes!

Rifle, a real "Saturday night" town on the Western Slope, was not willing to let Cinderella's pumpkin shove Eve's apple out of first place on the list of American desserts. Rifle town boosters practically became rabid in their boasts. They swore they would have 10,000 pies fit to set before a king; maybe they did, but only 6,000 were devoured by 7,000 people. Also, they chose an "apple pie girl," who in all probability would have been sent to Atlantic City, had the event occurred a few years later. Later, full of pie, they gave their guests a good demonstration of Rifle's ruggedness by staging a tug of war.¹⁰⁷

Apple Pie Day outlasted Pumpkin Pie Day at Longmont; in 1920 it was still going strong.¹⁰⁸ So it may reasonably be assumed, that since in those early years Duncan Hines was not yet touring the country and tasting this and that, apple pie was tops among desserts.

While apple pie was winning the devouring applause of six thousand on that initial day in Rifle, Fort Collins had banners hoisted for savory lamb to entice even the governor. Every lamb "in the biggest feeding district in the world"¹⁰⁹—including Mary's little one—was needed to feed a 'chop-licking' crowd of 15,000 who "came from all parts of Colorado and surrounding states, as far east as Chicago and west to the Pacific, and ate to their hearts' content of lamb, white and tender, a dainty morsel such as could never be purchased over any butcher's stand."¹¹⁰ For this feast the Fort Collins caterers had led 8,550 pounds of savory lamb to the slaughter and offered it, along with 500 pounds of beef, 3,200 loaves of bread, 100 gallons of coffee and 2 barrels of pickles, on the altar of appalling appetites.

A colorful parade was a special attraction on this day of lamb for the mob. It included bands, students, decorated automobiles, and primarily "sheep feeders, who marched with pitchforks and feeding pails, leading pet lambs."¹¹¹

The lamb had its day for about seven years. In 1910 twenty thousand lusty 'ba-ba' lovers braved rain and hail to devour three hundred lambs.¹¹² Three years later it was a four-day affair, and the committee warranted that Lamb Days of the past "will pale into insignificance compared to this year's celebration with enough lamb to last visitors a year."¹¹³ Reports stated that the chairman

¹⁰⁷ "Apple Pie Day," *ibid.*, September 30, 1909.

¹⁰⁸ "Apple Pie Day," *Rocky Mountain News*, July 2, 1920.

¹⁰⁹ "Lamb Day," *Denver Republican*, September 30, 1909.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹¹² *Ibid.*, September 23, 1910.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, August 31, 1913.

"is seizing every possible mint bed in Larimer county to get mint enough to make ten gallons of mint sauce, and the 'trimmings' that go with the lamb will be no small feature."¹¹⁴ The stupendous scale of this show of shows, which also advertised cowboy sports, automobile races, and aeroplane flights, called for a more imposing title than the mere name of the meek little creature that gave it birth; accordingly, after due deliberation, it was hailed as "Roundup and Colorado Stampede."¹¹⁵

In 1911, in Platteville, the pickle patch of the state, Peter Piper and all the other pickers were so pleased with their many pecks that they outdid Heinz in varieties at a free barbecue for 1,500 guests at the inauguration of Pickle Day. Cowboy sports were featured, at which another Platteville product, the champion bronco buster of the United States, was unable to compete because of a sprained ankle.¹¹⁶ The hardy pickle prospered for many years and attracted thousands. World War I had no 'pickle-less' days, and even the depression made no dent in the festival which "represents a sincere tribute to an industry which has made life a trifle brighter and the communities a bit more thriving."¹¹⁷

In the same year (1911) the little town of Erie woke up and came to the front with the announcement of Biscuit Day to be held in October.¹¹⁸ Since it had agreed to supply the basic ingredient (from Erie wheat), the Boulder Milling and Elevator Company got busy with a pencil to figure out how many sacks of flour would be required to make 10,000 biscuits.¹¹⁹ Erie maids baked a batch of 15,000 which would have put Betty Crocker and Bisquick in the shade, for in no time 5,000 people devoured the light golden circles with butter and honey, along with apple sauce, coffee and pickles. To prove that her young ladies were famed for beauty as well as baking, Erie also featured a beauty contest which won big applause from the biscuit-filled visitors.¹²⁰

The sugar beet was introduced from Germany in 1899. Within a few years the industry grew in such proportions that, although practically still a newcomer to Colorado soil, it called for a celebration. Greeley honored it with a Sugar Day in 1902, at which time visitors learned all there was to know about the entire beet-growing process and left with small souvenir sacks of the finished product.¹²¹ In the southeastern part of the state, Sugar City did likewise and threw in a few races and a baseball game as extras.¹²²

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁶ "Pickle Day at Platteville," *Denver Republican*, September 3, 1911.

¹¹⁷ "Pickle Day Set," *Rocky Mountain News*, August 21, 1932.

¹¹⁸ "Erie Invites Counties to Biscuit Day," *Denver Republican*, August 23, 1911.

¹¹⁹ "Biscuit Day," *ibid.*, August 27, 1911.

¹²⁰ "Erie Biscuits Draw Throngs to Little City," *ibid.*, October 11, 1911; *Rocky Mountain News*, October 11, 1911.

¹²¹ "Sugar Day at Greeley," *Longmont Ledger*, October 17, 1902.

¹²² "Sugar City Sugar Festival," *Denver Republican*, October 11, 1902.

However, in 1920, Wiley, farther to the east, "fixed" the festival and made an annual celebration of it which continued for some time. Visitors were treated to the traditional free barbecue, saw the sugar beet crowned as king, and then took in all sorts of races—even a goat race.¹²³ In 1930 everything was free—food, air-plane rides, motion pictures, and contests;¹²⁴ in 1941, Sugar Beet Day was still on the calendar of the now rapidly disappearing food days.¹²⁵

Buena Vista also had a bouncing good industry which within a few years grew into a several million dollar business. This time it was head lettuce, and *buenos* people put their heads together and proclaimed Head Lettuce Day. The romantic tale of the origin (1920) belongs with all the other "get-rich-quick" anecdotes in Colorado:

. . . In 1919 Denny Isabel sought to rent a plot of ground in the vicinity of Buena Vista upon which he wished to experiment in growing head lettuce. He was laughed at by ranchmen as a visionary, but finally he obtained ten acres . . .

In August, 1919, Isabel shipped the first carload of high grown head lettuce and the final returns disclosed that he had cleared \$10,000 on his ten acres.¹²⁶

Needless to say, stockmen in the vicinity gave up beef on the hoof for lettuce in the head. In later years lettuce let the people down, but Lettuce Day was still the title of the annual fair and rodeo. Just recently, the title of the event was changed completely and thereby lettuce was consigned to the "has-beens."¹²⁷

Harvest Festivals began early in the state's history and were numerous. At first they were strictly community affairs and there was no calling of one and all to the feast. At the turn of the century, however, the gathering of the sheaves at Walden turned into a free-for-all with all the gusto of food, frolic and fun.¹²⁸ The rewards of plowing, sowing, and mowing were also celebrated at Fort Collins, where 10,000 people were entertained at "another free feast day on Colorado's long list" (1903);¹²⁹ at Greeley in 1905;¹³⁰ at Ault and Wellington in 1907.¹³¹

Arvada has the honor of holding on to the Harvest Day hoe-down. This festival dates back to 1925 and is now a gala two-day affair. The first year, harvest maids and men bedecked in gingham aprons, overalls, and straw hats, distributed homemade pumpkin

¹²³ "Fourth Annual Sugar Beet Day," *Lamar Daily News*, August 22, 1923.

¹²⁴ "Wiley Holds Annual Sugar Beet Fete," *Rocky Mountain News*, August 29, 1930.

¹²⁵ *Colorado: A Guide To The Highest State*, American Guide Series (New York, 1941), p. xxvii.

¹²⁶ "Lettuce Day," *Rocky Mountain News*, April 29, 1926.

¹²⁷ Information obtained upon research trip, July, 1951.

¹²⁸ "North Park Harvest Festival," *Denver Republican*, September 8, 1903.

¹²⁹ "Fort Collins Harvest Festival," *Denver Republican*, October 2, 1903.

¹³⁰ "Harvest Day at Greeley," *ibid.*, August 27, 1905.

¹³¹ "Ault Fall Festival," *ibid.*, September 30, 1908; "First Harvest Jubilee," *ibid.*, September 18, 1908.

pies.¹³² Evidently, the proportion of pies to people or people to pies, did not come out even, for the pies came out short. To avoid embarrassment, the following year a count-proof stunt was created, whereby army planes buzzed through the skies above and dropped tickets which entitled the lucky finder to one slice of pie.¹³³ Now, all Arvada is agog at the harvest time festival and offers every kind of festive fanfare to amuse the thousands who participate. Entertainment ranges from parades, horse shows, variety shows, and dancing to the four "F's" exhibit—farm products, flowers, fancy work, and food.¹³⁴

The little town of Louisville, north of Arvada, has been staging a Fall Festival since 1933 when the Methodist ladies arranged a little home town get-together with games, cards, and refreshments. Now it is sponsored by the American Legion and attracts thousands on Labor Day—the day of the tug of war between miners and farmers. This becomes so "hot" at times that the boosters of both on the sidelines lend a hand in the tugging.¹³⁵

Also in the midtwenties, the town of Milliken came up with a magic formula for producing the life-sustaining bean, which, according to Josh Billings, American humorist, is "at least as old as Esau . . . and a quart of them 'biled' for two hours come out a gallon and a half."¹³⁶ So the Milliken advocates of the bean boom introduced a new festival of the Bean which had little in common with the ancient rites of the Hopi Indians. For several years Queen Bean basked in festival glory for one whole day when the people from miles around packed a little lunch in a basket and betook themselves to Milliken where free baked beans and coffee were abounding.¹³⁷

If Bean Day were still in existence now, Milliken might be competing with Michigan in supplying the basic product of the favorite senatorial soup in Washington!¹³⁸ However, in those days of an impending depression, congress had other things to worry about besides the number of beans in a bowl of soup.

The finale of food festivals in Colorado, the latest but by no means a letdown, is Flapjack Day at Berthoud. It is surprising that, until a few years ago (1949), this lowly food that blazed the trail westward across the country was so long neglected. In the covered wagons, in the gold rush, in mining camps, and in cowboy chuck it was frontier food. As early as 1879, ten years before the first

¹³² "Arvada Harvest Festival," *Rocky Mountain News*, September 12, 1925.

¹³³ "Harvest Festival," *ibid.*, September 19, 1926.

¹³⁴ "Parade Opens Arvada Free Harvest Festival," *Denver Post*, September 8, 1950.

¹³⁵ Personal observation 1949-1950.

¹³⁶ Maria Leach, *Standard Dictionary of Folklore*, v. I (New York 1949), p. 123.

¹³⁷ "Milliken To Celebrate Annual Bean Day," *Rocky Mountain News*, August 12, 1930.

¹³⁸ "Soup Lovers Given Ton of Beans," *Baltimore Sun*, January 12, 1952.

melon feed, it so tickled the palate of an ardent admirer that he "waxed poetic" and poured forth praise in "Oad [sic] to the Pancake," beginning:

Oh! pancake! Tis of thee
Thou that's beloved by me,
Of thee I sing:¹³⁹

Now, on Labor Day, when fall is in the air and tired tourists are heading homeward, Berthoud bids one and all to a breakfast. The town's fair Aunt Jemimas beat up their batter, grease their griddles and fight it out for the title of Queen Flapjack Flipper.¹⁴⁰ The success of the event brought forth a tribute "Hail to Flapjacks!" written by an ardent fan to the editor of the *Rocky Mountain News*:

The puny queens of blood and birth are the cheap and useless
whimsies
Of crafty men, in the basking ease of false and glittering flimsies;
While the Flapjack Queen, strong and serene, is no freak of human
scheming,
Her work is solid and secure and surpasses all our dreaming;
With grease and flour and frying pan and brains and perspiration,
She builds for man the flapjacks sweet that secure the frontiers
of our nation.¹⁴¹

In this Colorado craze for celebratin' days there were, and are, others which have not been discussed—enough of them to start the alphabet backwards! Some of these were of short duration; others were, or are, community affairs. Accounts concerning them appear in the local newspapers and also in the *Denver Republican*, the *Rocky Mountain News*, and the *Denver Post*. Among such celebrations, and the probable year of their origin, are: Vegetable Day at Elizabeth (1891); Peach Day at Delta (1892); Flower Day at Leadville (1899); Honey Day at Longmont (1892), which featured the song, "Beekeepers' Reunion"; Venison Day at Kremmling (1907); Market Day at Boulder (1910), at which prizes were given for the best butter and eggs; Trout Day (1911), on which 100,000 penny post cards were mailed to prospective anglers, inviting them to come "where fishing's good"; Sheepmen's Day at Silverton (1925); Cherry Pie Day at Loveland (1933); Cherry Day at Paonia (1947).

It is obvious that two world wars and the long years of depression and drouth contributed greatly to the disappearance of these food feasts which Colorado spread so bountifully. Also, many of the "Days" gave way to the county fairs; a few, such as Watermelon Day, have become a part of these annual events. And, as Colorado became older, many communities inaugurated celebrations

¹³⁹ James A. Cherry, "Oad to the Pancake," *Denver Daily Times*, March 3, 1879.

¹⁴⁰ "Berthoud Selects Flapjack Queen," *Denver Post*, September 4, 1950.

¹⁴¹ John G. Abbott in "Letters From The People," *Rocky Mountain News*, September 5, 1950.

honoring the days of the past, such as Gold Rush Days, Pow Wow Days, Spanish Trails Fiesta, et cetera. Invariably, these rootin', tootin', two- and three-day celebrations are pepped up with that good old western sport of the range—the rodeo.

Colorado took everything in her stride. As the old events passed, new ones appeared in their place; the "Paris Mutuals," sold undereover at the first Pumpkin Pie Day, are now legalized; aeroplanes are no longer a curiosity, but transport the celebrators from one event to another.

Gone are the days of fabulous feasts
Of potato, tomato, pumpkin, and bean,
Gone the devouring of barbecued beasts—
The ox and the bear and elk, fat and lean.
'Tis "the old order changeth," so singeth the bard,
And alas! gone now, too, is the penny post card!

Laurels for the Ladies—the Poets Laureate of Colorado

ANN HAFEN*

Colorado apparently was the first state in the nation to have an official Poet Laureate. To date, three women have held this honored position in the Centennial State. Mrs. Alice Polk Hill received the governor's appointment in 1919, Mrs. Nellie Burget Miller in 1923, and Mrs. Clyde Robertson in 1952.

In a recent national survey forty-four governors responded to the questions: "Has your state a poet laureate? If so, when was the first official appointment?" The sixteen states reporting that they *have* a laureate poet, appointed by the governor or designated by the legislature, with dates of appointment, are as follows: Colorado, 1919; Nebraska, 1921; Oregon, 1923; West Virginia, 1927; Alabama, 1931; Texas, 1933; South Carolina, 1934; Virginia, 1936; South Dakota, 1937; Oklahoma, 1939; Louisiana, 1942; Georgia, 1944; Delaware, 1947; North Carolina, 1948; Arkansas, 1953; and Kentucky (with date not given). California reported a law for a poet laureate being considered, but not yet enacted (June, 1953).

How did the laureate idea emerge at this particular time, in a world absorbed in war, sports, commercialism, and international demands? Is it a symptom of the "spiritual awakening" desired to replace the emphasis on religious differences of the past century? Its rise in Colorado deserves examination.

Though laurels crowned the poets as well as the athletes in ancient Greece and Rome, and a poet laureate for centuries has

* Mrs. Hafen, writer and student of poetry and of Colorado history, is the wife of our State Historian.—Ed.

been a part of the King's Household in Great Britain, still poets and poetry in America had scant official recognition.

As most inventions are conceived in an individual brain, so it seems that the idea of having a State Poet Laureate was born in the mind of a Colorado woman, Mrs. Alice Polk Hill. This dreamer was no ordinary housewife, nor was she a young upstart poet with



MRS. ALICE POLK HILL

life and freedom beating in her veins. She was a mellowed lady of queenly bearing whose life was largely behind her.

Alice Polk Hill, born March 22, 1854, was a native of Kentucky. After marriage to William C. Hill she left the Blue Grass state as a bride of nineteen and moved to Colorado in 1873. Through nearly half a century she promoted the fine arts in her adopted state.

Along with music teaching, newspaper reporting, and mothering her one son, she published, when she was about thirty, an anecdotal history, *Tales of the Pioneers of Colorado* (1884). An active leader in organizing new clubs for women, she founded the Round Table Club in 1889, helped organize the Woman's Club in 1894, and had a hand in starting the Denver Woman's Press Club in 1898. The first publication of *Evenings with Colorado Poets* (1894) included Mrs. Hill among the active writers of Colorado, presenting a short biography, a photograph, and several of her poems. She was also pictured in the *Representative Women of Colorado*, published in 1914.

At the age of fifty, a rare distinction came her way. She was the only woman among twenty-one delegates sent to the convention to draft a Charter for the City and County of Denver, when the city was given Home Rule in 1904.

After her husband and son died she gave up her home and lived with a sister, but never ceased writing verses and serving in club circles. She reworked her book on Colorado, adding many pictures and new information, before it was published under the new title, *Pioneers in Picture and Story* (1915). Another special honor was accorded Mrs. Hill when she was elected the first woman member of the State Historical Society of Colorado. She was active also in the Daughters of the Revolution and Daughters of the Confederacy.

When the first World War was over and the hearts of people were filled with gratitude and altruism there seemed to be an awakened interest in poetry. At that auspicious time Mrs. Hill approached the governor of Colorado, suggesting that the state should enrich its cultural life by having an official Poet Laureate. In the State Archives we find these communications:

Mrs. Alice Polk Hill
82 West Bayaud Street
Denver, Colorado

August 7, 1919

My dear Mrs. Hill:

I am in receipt of your favor of recent date in which you request the appointment of Poet Laureate for the State of Colorado. I find no statute on the books authorizing the making of such appointment and for that reason, I am unable to gratify your desire in the matter. I am returning copies of poems so kindly sent with your letter.

Yours truly,
O. H. Shoup, Governor

Probably the state club women set to work to urge action on the subject, for on September 10, 1919, this executive order came through:

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:

Recognizing the merit and value of her contributions to poetic literature, I hereby designate Mrs. Alice Polk Hill, of Denver, Colorado, one of the poet laureates of the State of Colorado.

OLIVER H. SHOUP, Governor

Upon this announcement a contemporary journalist remarked: "There are some who think the dawn of a literary renaissance in Colorado is at hand. The value of poetry was given some recognition among us when the talented literary woman, Alice Polk Hill, was crowned poet laureate of Colorado at the meeting of the Federation of Women's Clubs in Denver, October 9, 1919" (*The Trail*, XII, No. 10, p. 10).

Undoubtedly Mrs. Hill was warmed with the sincere attentions of these club women whom she had led toward literary appreciation. A few weeks before the formal presentation of the laurel wreath, the *Rocky Mountain News* featured Mrs. Hill's picture beneath the bold heading: "MRS. ALICE POLK HILL NAMED POET LAUREATE — Gov. Shoup Officially Honors Denver Writer." (Sept. 14, 1919, p. 10).

Thus was the pattern of the poet laureateship launched in the United States of America.

But Mrs. Hill had less than two years to enjoy the distinction of serving Colorado as Poet Laureate. She died in August, 1921, at the age of 67 years, widely praised for her "eminent services to the Centennial State." Funeral arrangements were made by the Round Table Club and her body lay in state in the Capitol rotunda. Her Christmas hymn, which was set to music and was widely sung, represents her creative work.

O LIGHT DIVINE

The angel voices of the sky
Which on that holy night
Sang, "Glory be to God on High"—
Still sing of joy and light.

That light, whose clear and shining beam
Illum'ed the shepherd boy
And led to Him whose love supreme
Supplants all fear with joy.

O, light divine, be ever near;
Let not thy rays grow dim,
Till we, like shepherds, without fear,
Through faith are led to Him.

Four months before the death of Mrs. Hill the *Poetry Society of Colorado* held its first meeting. Alice Polk Hill was made an honorary member. The society has functioned continuously since that date and today (1953) lists 156 writing members, nine-tenths of whom are women. Mrs. Hill's name heads the "In Memoriam" list.

After the death of Mrs. Hill, the Club Women took note of the active poets in their ranks to see who should fittingly succeed Colorado's first Poet Laureate. An able woman, Nellie B. Miller, was serving as State President of the Colorado Federation of Women's Clubs at the time of Mrs. Hill's death. She was immediately recognized as a worthy successor to Alice Polk Hill.

When a decent time had elapsed after the burial of Colorado's first wearer of the Laurels, a new governor made a new appointment.

"Executive Order

Poet Laureate.—It gives me very great pleasure in recognition of the unusual literary attainments and merit of the poetic works of Mrs. Nellie Burget Miller, of Colorado Springs, to bestow upon her the unique distinction and honor of Poet Laureate of Colorado.

Given under my hand and the Executive Seal, this twenty-fourth day of January, A. D. 1923.

WILLIAM E. SWEET, Governor



MRS. NELLIE BURGET MILLER

A letter from the governor was dispatched to the new appointee:

January 23, 1923

My dear Mrs. Miller: In response to a letter from Mrs. McHarg, President of the Colorado Federation of Women's Clubs, and a committee of which Mrs. J. F. Brown of Denver, Colorado, is chairman, I am very glad indeed to enclose you a copy of the Executive Order appointing you Poet Laureate of Colorado.

Very truly yours,

WILLIAM E. SWEET, Governor

Humbly Nellie Burget Miller accepted this honor, hardly anticipating the thorny barbs among the fragrant flowers of the laureate crown. For nearly thirty years she was to carry the *responsibility* of the Poet Laureate of Colorado, as well as the "doubtful honor."

Born June 6, 1875, in Iowa, Nellie Miller was forty-six years old, mother of three children, and wife of a practicing physician, when she was selected for the position. As a child she had lived on an Iowa farm and had walked a mile and a half to a country school. Always a precocious student, this girl with the midnight eyes went

through high school and completed a college course at Upper Iowa University, winning her degree in 1894 with highest honors in the class. She married a country physician when she was nineteen years old, and went with him to Colorado Springs in 1908. While rearing her son and two daughters she wrote poetry and captured many prizes in the art. Says a biographer: "Here was a woman of intellectuality, herself greater than her poetical achievement."

Her message to the world expressed courage, hopefulness, good cheer. She had the virtue of patience and the will toward prodigious industry. "I have never written a line except in service, hoping that it may help somewhere, sometime," she confided. She received her greatest satisfactions when readers reported to her: "Your lines helped me, and I cut them out and saved them to read again and again."

It was through the recommendation of club officials who represented 22,000 women of the state that Mrs. Miller received her appointment. But when the announcement came in the press, there was an outburst of dissatisfaction on the part of those who favored other candidates. Having a sensitive nature, at first she was crushed. Gradually through the pain and the darkness she saw her duty. She must turn her new office into one of service. The humiliation gave her suppleness of intellect. She worked as she never had before. She gave talks to schools, read papers to literary clubs, delivered addresses to gatherings of club women. She served as judge in poetry contests. Every mail brought poems from unknown writers asking for her criticisms. Generously she shared herself with the needs of the people. At the end of her first year in office, her report to the Governor stated that she had written 210 letters in her line of duty during the twelve-month.

"I have had verses from mining camps, from lonely forest rangers, from sodhouses on the plains. . . . I have been called upon not only by young writers of my own state but practically every state in the union," she reported.

When occasion arose, she created poems for special events. It was suggested that she should write a poem to greet President Harding on his arrival in the state in 1923, but political figures brushed aside the hospitable gesture. Strangely, one of her first poems published as poet laureate, was a tribute to President Harding after he had died on his western tour of the United States. It was entitled "Passing By" and was published in the *Colorado Springs Gazette*.

Though 1923 was absorbed by her official duties, with small time for her own creations, the year 1924 produced her biggest harvest. She had the satisfaction of seeing three published books

bearing her name: *The Flame of God*, a devotional treatment; *The Living Drama*, a prose study; and *In Earthen Bowls*, her first volume of poetry. Earlier (in 1916) she had compiled *The Garden Year Book*, a less pretentious publication.

Later books of poetry which have come from her hand include: *Pictures from the Plains* (1936), *The Sun Drops Red* (1947), and a folk play *In the Tents of the Shepherd Prince* (1950). She edited an anthology, *Verses for Victory* (1944), for free distribution to the service men of the second World War.

In her advanced years she organized the Colorado Springs Poetry Fellowship, branch of a state organization which had been functioning since 1933 to promote appreciation of poetry. She served as president from 1943 to '47. In recognition of her services to poetry she received honorary degrees from the University of Colorado in 1925 and from her alma mater, the Upper Iowa University, in 1945. *Who's Who in America* has carried her achievements for many years.

A beautiful woman with snow white hair and round black eyes, she read her poetry for appreciative friends and the literary audiences of the state almost to the time of her death in June, 1952. Though she was a resident of Colorado Springs, her passing came in Denver, where two of her children were making their homes.

Mrs. Miller's first book of verse, decorated with a design of the local Van Briggle pottery, is introduced with the theme:

IN EARTHEN BOWLS

So here we have our treasure in an earthen bowl,
Distorted, marred, and set to common use:
And some will never see beyond the form of clay,
And some will stoop and peer within and softly say
"There is a wondrous radiance prisoned there
And I heard the stir of an angel's wing."

Her last book has the theme poem:

THE SUN DROPS RED

The sun drops red through a curtain of dust,
White scars sear the alkali plain,
No sound or motion—save over there
A tumbleweed starts on its endless quest
For God knows what—or where.
The brown grass clings to the fields like rust,
But deep in my heart is the sound of rain—
The stealthy moccasined feet of the rain,
Pat, pat on the sun-baked crust;
Like dear remembered dreams of love
In sleepless nights of pain.
The sun drops red through a curtain of dust.

Here is Mrs. Miller's last poem, written shortly before her death and left untitled:

Something of spring's glad beauty
I will clutch and hide—
Lest greedy death take all:
 A swatch of violets,
 An iris petal of empurpled sheen
 And heart of royal gold—
 Fit symbol for a queen . . .
 Faint breath of wild plum distilled
Lest when the rolling waves of darkness come
Or on some other sphere
I shall forget the things of earth
That once I held so dear.

After the death of Mrs. Miller, petitions were sent by various writers' clubs to Governor Dan Thornton requesting the appointment of Clyde Robertson to fill the vacancy in the poet laureateship of Colorado. Mrs. Robertson's four books of creditable poetry, innumerable magazine publications, and national and international prizes justified the request. In the words of the citation by the Governor, Mrs. Robertson "best expressed the spirit of Colorado in her writings."

Clyde Robertson of Boulder was born in Indiana in 1870. She received a high school education in Kansas, and later studied at Hunter College in New York. She had a well-trained voice and for several years followed a career in light opera. She sang many roles in the Columbia Opera Company of New York and in the American Opera Company. Her travels took her from coast to coast in America and also abroad.

In the meantime she had married and become mother of a daughter who became a skilled artist. She came to Colorado Springs about 1892, where she married William E. Robertson, assistant general manager of the Colorado Power Company. With him she lived in several of the mining towns of the state, where she found the color for her famous mining ballads. After 1910 she gave up her musical career to take up writing.

She reports: "I have never had a responsible position in my life in national, state, or municipal government. I have sweat blood in positions of responsibility in the literary life of Colorado and elsewhere." With frankness she confides: "I would rather cook over a campfire than on a cookstove. . . . Enthusiasm of living is my life objective." In listing her hobbies she says she has always been attracted by the out-of-doors, nature, flowers, animals, and Colorado ghost towns.

She was a charter member of the Poetry Society of Colorado and assisted in its early offices. She has also been president of the

local League of American Pen Women and has represented the group at the biennials in Washington, D. C. She has been a distinguished member of the Colorado Authors League and of the Denver Press Women. Her poems have appeared in twenty-four anthologies, including *Evenings with Colorado Poets* (1926).



MRS. CLYDE ROBERTSON

Out of her western experiences she evolved four distinctive books of poetry: *They Rise Accusing* (1930), *Fool's Gold* (1934), *Fifty Famous Women* (1936), and *The Yellow Witch* (1940).

The designation of Poet Laureate of Colorado came to her as a happy surprise. Humbly she accepted with the reservation that she would have to "go on past accomplishment" as she is now beyond the creating age, having reached her eighty-third year. Age, however, does not interfere with her lusty recitation of her poems of mountain camps and the raw west. With that dramatic flair which has been her gift through life she wears the laurels grandly.

Space permits presentation of only one of her ballads, so we have chosen her realistic picture of the last days of the famous Baby Doe Tabor:

MISTRESS OF THE MATCHLESS MINE

A blinding spot burned on the snow
Where no spot was; an undertow,
Where no sea ran, tugged at her feet—
A tom-tom drummed a maddening beat
Into her ears, though not a sound
Fretted the air or the frozen ground.

Once, she turned with a last farewell
 To the Camp below: "The years will tell
 Who were the great and who the small!
 He was greater than you all:
 The ore runs rich and the veins run wide
 In the golden hills on the Great Divide:
 Wide and rich as the gold veins run,
 He left his trail in the Western sun."
 The spot on the snow grew red as blood
 And she seemed to wade through a freezing flood.
 She would reach the shack! She would bar the door
 On the jeering world as she'd done before.
 She clutched the coin in her withered hand
 With fingers stiff as a steely band.
 When she was dead, and they found her there,
 They would find she still had gold to spare.
 Burned in her brain were the words he said,
 He, greater than all, now long since dead:
 "Swear by the saints you always will
 Stay with the lode on Fryer Hill.
 Stick like the roots of an old jack pine,
Never give up the Matchless Mine."
 It had come to mean, as the years grew old,
 Something more than a hill of gold;
 It was not a mountain, it was a man!
 Glorified in a granite span.
 It was not a mine, but flesh and blood
 Caught in the swirl of a golden flood!
 Her fumbling fingers forced the latch
 And coaxed a spark from a sodden match.
 Cold as the icy clutch of doom,
 The black damp filtered through the room.
 But the red spot followed and burned the wall
 Till the bare room blazed like a banquet hall;
 And there, in the golden circle, shone
 The glamorous scenes she once had known.
 The tattered quilt, in her dark death sweat,
 Became a satin coverlet.
 She was again the courted queen
 And he a man of kingly mein.
 A wildcat wailed on Fryer Hill,
 A woman sighed, then all was still.
 The last coin of her golden store
 Fell from her hand; across the floor
 A pilfering pack rat slyly stole
 And dragged it off to his robber hole.
 Still the faithful fingers cling
 To a rosary—a knotted string—
 A knotted string where a prayer still lingers,
 Clasped in the quiet, calloused fingers.
 A gutted candle, black in the socket,
 A man's face, in a tarnished locket,
 A lean rat, making ready to leap,
 A woman, open-eyed, asleep.
 She who could write with a scholar's pen,
 She who could speak with the best of men,
 She who had shone like a jeweled plaque—
 Dead with her dreams in a mountain shack.
*Holy Mother, grant her peace,
 Grant an uncontested lease
 Beyond the Great Divide's dark line
 To the Mistress of the Matchless Mine.*

Recollections of Grand Junction's First Newspaper Editor *

EDWIN PRICE

Owing to the serious illness of my brother-in-law, the Doctor decreed that he must go to Colorado, where he could live in a dry climate. And further it was agreed in family council, that it would not be wise for my sister to go alone with an invalid husband, into that far Western state, strangers in a strange land. So it was decided that I and my younger brother should go with them.

I arrived in Denver in the fall of 1876, and was for a time employed in the office of the *Denver Daily Democrat*. Denver, at that time, boasted of a population of 25,000. There were two other daily papers, *The Tribune* and the *Rocky Mountain News*.

After a few months' residence there we purchased a job printing office and were located at the corner of 15th and Blake Streets, over Wolf Londoner's wholesale and retail grocery store. Londoner sold liquors also, but not at retail. He was a Jew and a great humorist and a wag, who loved to crack jokes and entertain the newspaper fraternity and was a prime favorite with them. . . .

My training had been in a religious home and the Methodist Church and Sunday School. My grandfather, Hope H. Walker, and his brother, Rev. Simeon Walker, were among the early pioneers of southern Illinois, and walked all the way from Alabama to get away from the slavery question.

Very soon after my arrival in Denver I joined the old Lawrence Street Methodist Church, located at 14th and Lawrence. Afterwards, under the leadership of Rev. Henry A. Buehtel, they built the beautiful Trinity Church on Broadway and 18th Street. It was in this old historic church I heard Bishop Simpson deliver one of his most powerful, soul-stirring sermons, at an annual session of the Colorado Conference. As he began to portray the beauties and grandeur of the Celestial Kingdom his face took on a glow and radiance as if reflected from the glory of the vision he was painting. He held his audience as in a trance, so vivid and real had his wand painting appeared.

In his church I also met Ex-Governor John Evans, the founder of Northwestern University and Evanston. He had been appointed Governor of the Territory of Colorado by President Lincoln, and under his administration had done much constructive work. Always an ardent Methodist he began as he did with Northwestern to lay his plans for a great Methodist University in Colorado, in the shadows of the Rocky Mountains.

* This paper was prepared and read by Mr. Price in 1927. A copy of it was given me some years ago by Mr. Price's grandson, one of my history students at the University of Denver.—Ed.

With the coming of the Rev. Earl Cranston as pastor of the Lawrence Street Church, for 1877 and '78, Gov. Evans found in him a man who entered heartily into his plans for the promotion of the University. Rev. Cranston was elected Presiding Elder, as they were then called, of the Colorado Conference, which comprised the whole state at that time. Through his influence the Rev. David H. Moore, then Chancellor of the Wesleyan University at Cincinnati, Ohio, and a college classmate, was called as pastor of Lawrence Street Church, and also as the Chancellor of the new University. Through the efforts of Rev. Cranston the whole church of Colorado was put behind this great enterprise. . . .

It was at the old Lawrence Street Church I first met my wife. She was a sister of Mrs. Cranston and lived at their home. Revs. Cranston and Moore officiated at our marriage on the 13th day of October, 1881.

It was mid-winter of 1878 and '79 that the strike of carbonates of silver at Leadville became known. The excitement was intense. In spite of the cold weather, men began outfitting with all sorts of vehicles and pack animals, and filled the mountain trails on the way to the new camp. At once there was strife for possession of the right-of-way through the Royal Gorge, between the Denver and Rio Grande and the Santa Fe Railroad companies. For a time it was feared there would be blood-shed. Both companies had armed forces on each side of the Arkansas River and active grading camps were hard at work.

The race between the rival railroads to reach the new mining camp first was most interesting. Here again, Ex-Governor Evans showed a master hand in obtaining a right-of-way for a road up the South Platte River Canyon and at once began construction work. It was called the Denver, South Park and Leadville [Pacific] Railroad.

After reaching Leadville, the plans of the Rio Grande broadened, and it was decided that the road should be extended through to Salt Lake City. Over in Gunnison County, there were great beds of anthracite coal at Crested Butte, and nearby were some veins of iron ore in which some rich New York capitalists were interested. A branch line was built over Marshall Pass to Gunnison, starting from Salida. In 1880, Congress voted to open for settlement the Ute Indian Reservation, a vast territory embracing the Gunnison and Grand River valleys, containing more than 1,000,000 acres of fertile farm and grazing lands, to say nothing of its coal and mineral resources.

In the meantime the news of Colorado's rich gold and silver deposits and farm lands had spread throughout the land and the

rush to her borders began. The City of Denver began to grow and towns were started over night, all over the state.

A young lawyer friend joined the crowd that went to Gunnison, which for a time was one of the most promising young cities of the state. A new process smelter was erected and the very flattering prospects of the town attracted some of the most talented men of the state. The owner and editor of the *Spirit of the Times*, New York's famous sporting paper, started a daily paper to boom the town. He was one of the owners of the new smelter. A large five-story hotel was erected, and thousands of prospectors and investors crowded the streets of Gunnison.

As the construction of the Rio Grande progressed, men and prospectors went ahead and also followed in its wake. At Gunnison a company was formed for the location of townsites at the junction of the Gunnison and Uncompahgre rivers, to be known as Delta, and at the junction of the Grand and Gunnison rivers, to be known as Grand Junction, the name to signify the junction of the two largest rivers of the state. The river from Grand Junction to Green River was then known as the Grand River, and from the Green River junction it was known as the Colorado. About five years ago the Colorado legislature changed the name to Colorado, and from its source in the mountains of Colorado it is now known by that name.

My young lawyer friend, James M. Bucklin, was a member of this Town Company, and as the railroad construction work brought the railroad within fifty miles of Grand Junction, they sought some one to start a newspaper in the town. The president of the Town Company was Governor George A. Crawford, formerly of Kansas. He and my friend Bucklin called at my office in Denver, and after a very flattering proposal, I agreed to sell my interests in Denver, and start a paper at Grand Junction. I found a buyer for the job printing business, and within two weeks' time I was on my way west with a complete printing office outfit.

We arrived at Gunnison in time to participate in a Republican County Convention held the following day. I was made a delegate and sat in the convention that nominated county and legislative candidates. We spent two days there and met a number of men who afterwards became prominent and influential in Colorado, both in civil and political life.

We left Gunnison on the morning of October 11th and after an all day's tedious ride, we arrived at Montrose, the first town in the late Ute Indian Reservation. It consisted of a few shacks of rough timber buildings and a lot of tents. The Editor of the *Messenger*, the first newspaper published in the reservation, was at the train to meet us, looking for news items. The trains had no

regular scheduled time and discharged freight and passengers at most any point the passengers would designate along its line. The road had been completed to Delta, situated at the junction of the Gunnison and Uncompahgre rivers, about twenty-five miles distant from Montrose, but we did not reach this place until after midnight. The wind was blowing and the air was filled with fine dust; rain was threatening. My brother and I waited for the second bus load to take us over to the town a half mile distant.

We had met a man on the train who said he had a restaurant there, and could take care of us for the night. The restaurant was in a tent, and after serving us with ham and eggs, he took us out behind his tent to another small tent, where he had gathered sagebrush boughs and scattered them on the ground and spread a blanket over them. We laid down with our clothes on and put our blankets over us. Along about 3:00 we were awakened by shots and loud talking in a tent saloon nearby. A quarrel was in progress and we lay still, not knowing what moment a stray bullet might come in our direction. Between four and five o'clock the wind began to blow, and after a while our tent was loosened from its moorings and sped away. After breakfast, we spent some time getting acquainted, securing quite a list of subscribers for our paper, yet un-named.

At nine o'clock our stage driver announced that he was ready to start for Grand Junction. The "stage" was a two-seated open "buck-board," the lightest traveling vehicle made for mountain travel. They also carried the mail for Grand Junction. Mr. Bucklin, my brother, myself, and the driver were all that could be accommodated. As I thought then, and look back over the forty-five years that have intervened, I believe that was the roughest and most uncomfortable journey I have ever made. Over the dry, barren, adobe and rocky foothills, was the rockiest road imaginable. It was the dreariest landscape I had ever seen. I told my friend that I was ready to sell out for thirty cents.

About three o'clock we crossed Kahnah Creek and then White-water Creek, where a few settlers had built log cabins, and then we began to climb the mesa that bordered the Grand River, and then the promised land!

Once on top, the scene was changed. The mesa on which we stood was a beautiful, rolling stretch of land, three to four miles wide and ten to twelve miles long, lying fifty feet above the steep and abrupt banks of the Grand River. This was named Orchard Mesa. Looking north and east and west we caught a vision of the wonderful Grand Valley—the land of promise. On the north it was bounded by the Book Cliff Mountains, with Mount Garfield standing as a sentinel overlooking all. On the east, by the Grand

Mesa, a table mountain with an elevation of 9000 feet, seventy-five miles long and twenty to forty miles wide. . . . Now looking to the west we saw the silvery tape of the Grand River winding in and about the valley, affording a landscape of miraculous beauty and grandeur, as far as the eye could reach. So clear was the atmosphere we could see, 150 miles in the distance, the great Wasatch Range of mountains overtopping all. That was a wonderful panorama stretched out before me.

To the southwest was a range of mountains known as Pinon Mesa, rising a mile or two back of the river's edge. A few miles west of the town is No Thoroughfare Canyon and Monument Canyon, filled with rocky formations that even surpass those of the "Garden of the Gods" near Manitou, Colorado. Several years later I drew up a petition to Congress describing this territory by Townships and right angles, covering several thousands of acres, and asked that it be set aside as a National Park, which was done. It is now the home of mountain sheep, elk, deer, and buffalo. The dreary barren ride of the day was forgotten as we feasted our eyes on this magnificent vision. My misgivings gave way to joy and hope. A few miles down the valley we saw the walls of new buildings in the course of construction and evidences of civilization. My courage came back, and as we crossed the river on the ferry-boat, landing us on the Grand Valley soil, I became reconciled. We arrived at the Post Office at five o'clock, October 13, 1882, and I remembered that it was our first wedding anniversary.

The next week was spent in getting subscribers and gathering news material for the first issue of the *Grand Junction News*. There were several log cabins on the town site, which had been laid out with streets and alleys marked with stakes by the surveyors. One or two rough board one-story buildings, and the walls of two hotel buildings being built with sun-dried adobe bricks. A saw mill had just been brought in by Innis and Hobbs, and was set up on the south side of the river, on Pinon Mesa. This mesa had an altitude of 7,000 feet, while the valley was 4,500 feet above sea level. It was fifteen miles to the top, where the mill was located in the midst of tall pines.

One morning I went down to breakfast at the Grand Junction Hotel, located in a log cabin at 1st Street and Colorado Avenue. There was no floor, just nature's soil. The table was made by driving four posts in the ground and nailing across pieces on which planks were laid, and an oilcloth top as covering. The benches or seats were planks resting on boxes. In one corner of the room I noticed a narrow space had been curtained off with burlap, or gunny sacks split open and hung as a screen, behind which was a sleeping bunk built on the side of the wall. As I entered the room

I noticed the curtains parted and the face of a white-haired old lady peeking out as she came forward. I was somewhat surprised to note that the lady was a Mrs. Conley, whom I had met in Denver a week or ten days previous in company with Governor and Mrs. Frederick Pitkin at a Methodist Church Social.

She was in search of her son, a young law student who had run away from home. He had written her from the railroad grading camp out on the borderline of Colorado and Utah. She was the wife of Judge William Conley of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. She had dared to take this long, hazardous trip out on the frontier because of her mother love for this son. I introduced her to Governor Crawford, and he at once sent a messenger with a rig out to the grading camp and brought the young man in to town. While she remained the son was taken ill with typhoid fever, and she remained to nurse him. On his recovery the son refused to go home with her. In the meantime, she had become quite well acquainted with a number of the new arrivals who were of a fine class of educated people. Governor Crawford had given up his comfortable quarters in the Town Company office for her accommodation. She had written to her husband and friends about the new town and its prospects, and in return they had sent her more than \$10,000 for investment in town lots.

Newcomers were arriving daily. Our printing press and material arrived, and fortunately, along with the new arrivals, came a tramp printer. Our first paper, *The News*, was issued on October 27, 1882, it being my twenty-fifth birthday, and the first copy sold for \$25.00 at auction.

On the 21st day of November the first train crossed Grand River on a temporary bridge. My wife was on that train and I well remember the occasion as one of great rejoicing for myself and the town generally.¹ A freight car was used for a station depot.

Those were busy days for us and we made the most of our surroundings, forgetting the discomforts. It was interesting to note each new building or improvement, and to meet new arrivals and make their acquaintance.

Early in January, 1883, a young man came into my office and asked for a job. He said he had held a position in the Brinker Institute in Denver, and was a graduate of the Vermont State University. I needed someone to do the editorial work, and hired him. I saw at once that he was the man for the place. He was a worker, and at once grasped the needs and requirements. He secured government statistics, studied the resources of the surrounding

¹ On a visit to Grand Junction in 1935, I interviewed Mrs. Price, then a gracious, grey-haired lady. She told of that ride on the first train into Grand Junction.—Ed.

territory, and wrote many articles that attracted state-wide attention. He had a strong personality, and became a favorite with the young and old alike. He was unafraid, and said what he thought and believed was right, and denounced those things that were wrong. In a new community on the frontier there was much that was lawless and required handling without gloves. He was in danger of personal attack on many occasions, but he was fair and fearless. He was a fine public speaker.

The second year he was married to an estimable young lady from his state of Vermont, and also a graduate of the same university. It seemed as if some good fortune had played a part in bringing them together at Grand Junction.

In 1886 he was nominated and elected state auditor. The auditor was also the Insurance Commissioner for the state, and in this capacity he attracted the attention of all old line life insurance companies by shutting out one or two shady concerns from doing business in the state. On the expiration of his term of office he had offers from several of the large life companies. He finally accepted the offer of the New York Life, made by Mr. George W. Perkins, who was then in charge of their offices at Denver. He went with Mr. Perkins to Boston, where they remained for five years. During his residence there his wife died, leaving him with a young son. They were called to the Home Office of the company at a time when the *New York Times* attacked the validity of the securities held by them for loans they had made. After a thorough going over of the millions of securities held in their vaults, Darwin P. Kingsley—my friend, whose career I am sketching—wrote a reply to the charges made by *The Times*, to which Mr. Beers, the president of the company, put his signature. The *Times* made due apology, and the damage done to the credit of the company was overcome.

This episode, however, caused considerable dissatisfaction among the official family of the New York Life, and in the shifting scenes, brought about the retirement of President Beers and the election of John A. McCall in his place. George W. Perkins was elected 3rd Vice President, and my former business pursuer was made manager of agencies at the home office. All went along well for a few years, and in the meantime Mr. Kingsley won the heart and hand of President McCall's daughter, whom he married.

Then came the scandal brought about by young Hyde, who had been elected to fill the presidency of the New York Equitable Life, a stock company that had made millions for its stockholders at the expense of the policy holders. The shameful display of wealth and profligacy at a banquet given by him aroused the State of New York, and Governor Hughes, it will be remembered, appointed his famous investigation committee that brought out many unlawful

doings by the big companies. The New York Life was conspicuous because, through William McCall and Mr. Perkins, it had contributed \$50,000 to the Republican campaign fund in 1896, in order to defeat Mr. Bryan and the free coinage of silver which he proposed. Messrs. McCall and Perkins defended their action on ground that it was to the interest of the policy holders. They argued that if free coinage of silver was adopted it would depreciate the value of their securities to the extent of millions of dollars. Mr. Kingsley has told me since that Mr. McCall was sincere in this belief, and when he discovered that he had done an unlawful act he made restitution to the company by turning over his fine country home on the Hudson River. He resigned from the presidency, and soon after died of a broken heart. He had worked his way up to the top from an office boy, and was justly proud of his success.

In his place Mr. Alexander Orr was elected, but being an old man, he soon resigned, and he used his influence to elect Darwin P. Kingsley to the presidency, which he now has held for about nineteen years.

As you will see, I have hurriedly gone over a period of thirty-odd years and mentioned some of the outstanding incidents. There is much that could be said about the growth and development of that territory that would rival Harold Bell Wright's strong "Winning of the West."

In conclusion, I would like to say a word about the religious growth of this community. The first Sunday after my arrival, about a dozen young men, together with an aged pioneer preacher of the Methodist Church South, gathered in the Town Company's office and organized the first union Sunday School. The venerable Rev. Whicher was a fine character and went about the town taking cheer and comfort where it was needed. I was elected superintendent, and as our population increased we soon had a large attendance. As was the case in all new towns in those early days, the saloon was the gathering place, or club house, of the town. The saloon owners, to a large extent, were in the business because it afforded the only easy way of earning a living. Many times Rev. Whicher was given the privilege of holding services in these places, and some of these men were among his most liberal supporters.

I remember our first Christmas Tree in 1882 was richly laden with gifts for the poor, made possible by liberal donations from these men, who in a large way gathered into their coffers all the loose change floating around the community, and that was a considerable amount.

Through the efforts of Rev. Whicher the M. E. Church South had the first church organization and built the first church build-

ing. Then came the Baptist, and then the North Methodist. We had hesitated about introducing another Methodist Church, but the old prejudice could not be overcome. My wife and I entered heartily into the work with other earnest Christian people to hold up the moral and Christian standards of the new community, which now ranks with the best in the state.