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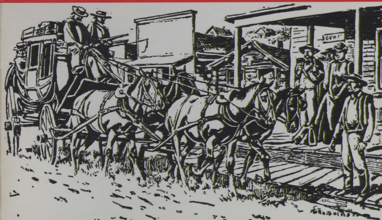
DENVER'S LIVELY PAST



from
A Wild and Woolly Camp
to
Queen City of the Plains

By CAROLINE BANCROFT

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DENVER'S LIVELY PAST

Introducing the Author

Caroline Bancroft has Colorado history in her bones. Her pioneer grandfather, Dr. F. J. Bancroft, for whom Mt. Bancroft is named, was a founder and first president of the Colorado Historical Society. Her father, George J. Bancroft, a mining engineer, wrote extensively on Colorado mining and reclamation affairs for both eastern and western publications.

Miss Bancroft herself is the author of eleven historically accurate and intensely interesting booklets about Colorado, *Silver Queen: The Fabulous Story of Baby Doe Tabor, Historic Central City, Famous Aspen, The Melodrama of Wolhurst, The Matchless Mine, Glenwood's Early Glamor, Augusta Tabor, The Brown Palace, The Unsinkable Mrs. Brown, Colorful Colorado,* and *Mile High Denver,* a forerunner of the present booklet.*

For five years Caroline Bancroft edited the book page and wrote a literary column for *The Denver Post.* She free-lanced her way around the globe, interviewing famous people from London to Calcutta.

Many years after her graduation from Smith College, she obtained a Master's degree from the University of Denver, with a thesis written about Central City. Her full-size *Gulch of Gold* is the definitive history of that well-known area. She is an acknowledged authority on mining folklore, as well as many other aspects of Colorado history. Caroline Bancroft is an ideal person to write about the colorful capital of Colorful Colorado.

W. F. NICHOLSON
Mayor, 1955-1959
City and County of Denver

*Today, some of these titles are rare collectors' items, and the list of booklets is much longer.

DENVER'S LIVELY PAST

From a Wild and Woolly Camp
to
Queen City of the Plains

by

Caroline Bancroft

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The Denver Public Library,
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and
the author's collection

JOHNSON PUBLISHING COMPANY
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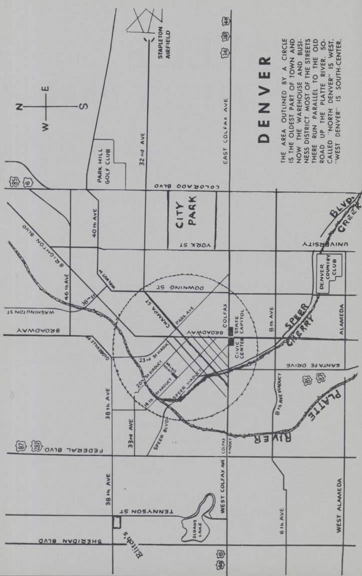


WAY STATION

Denver was founded on a jumped claim.

It happened in November, 1858, just over a hundred years ago. The scene was the prairie wilderness ten miles east of the rampart of the snowy Rockies. Here the expanse was broken by a charming cottonwood grove. Through the trees straggled a wide sandy creek bed, moistened by criss-cross streamlets. The creek was headed northwest and about a quarter of a mile beyond the grove, it joined a larger stream which swirled treacherously. Men and mules had already drowned trying to ford its deceptive waters.

These streams were Cherry Creek and the Platte River. Their banks formed the setting for the violent beginnings of Denver, beginnings that were like a melodrama except that right did not triumph. That melodrama stamped the town with a special character which has been tamed somewhat, yet has never changed. She still loves a smart business deal, and she's famed for her feuds.

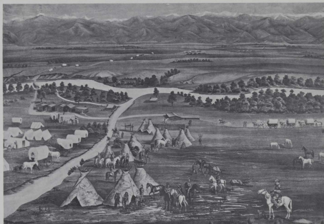
But to go back—

It was the 17th of November in 1858 when a lone man, splitting "shooks," or slats, for roofing in the cottonwood grove on the northeast side of Cherry Creek, was astounded to see a group of nine strange men suddenly appear. They began to drive stakes and Charles Nichols stopped splitting shooks.

"You can't jump this townsite! It's been surveyed and staked out for over a month. We have a prior right. This cabin proves it."

"Old Charley" spoke up sharply, his voice hallooing out in the Indian summer sunshine. He planted his feet with a defiant stance on the prairie bank where the city of Denver was to grow.

The spot was just about at the approach of today's Blake Street bridge as it starts across the creek to the foot of the Fourteenth Street viaduct, sometimes called Speer viaduct (see map on page 26). Now, it gives no idea of having been once in a remote corner of Kansas Territory. The cabin that Charlie was boasting of, was not much to see—built of rude cottonwood logs with an unfinished slat roof. Yet it represented the vision that seven men who arrived at the grove in September from Lawrence, Kansas, saw for the future of the new gold discoveries.



WHERE CHERRY CREEK JOINS THE PLATTE

In the autumn of 1858, after William Green Russell found gold close by, the little settlement of Auraria, now West Denver, sprang up as a row of log cabins. On the north side of Cherry Creek where the Indians liked to camp, Denver City was soon platted. Shown is Colorado's first successful commercial enterprise, the ferry across the Platte, as it busily aided a line of covered wagons on their way to "them thar hills."

"You can't hold an entire townsite alone," General William Larimer, Jr., replied as he strode forward from the group of strangers.

His particular company was later to become known to history as "the Leavenworth Party" because the starting point for their trip to investigate the rumors of fresh gold fields was Leavenworth, Kansas. They had arrived the night before at the little settlement of Auraria with a four-yoke ox team hitched to a wagon and saddle ponies enough for all.

Auraria was on the southwest side of Cherry Creek. It consisted of five or six crude log cabins, just completed, with a few more in the process of being built, and an assortment of tents and covered wagons that served as temporary living quarters.

"I'm not alone," Old Charley answered. "We have a company—the St. Charles Town Association. We drew up our constitution the last of September and William Hartley did the surveying in October. He ran

the lines for a few streets and our secretary, Dickson, drove that stake over there claiming a square mile."

"A square mile?"

"You can read for yourself the penciling on it. Now he and our president—he's Adnah French—have gone back to Kansas. They'll get a bill before the legislature to incorporate our town. It's named 'St. Charles'."

The Larimer group moved over to the grove, belligerently scuffing their boots in the dust of the prairie land they claimed was theirs.

"There ain't a stake here," they declared. And they were right. Both the tall penciled sapling and the auxiliary stakes were gone—perhaps judiciously spirited away the night before by one of their own members.

Charley Nichols stared incredulously and then swore.

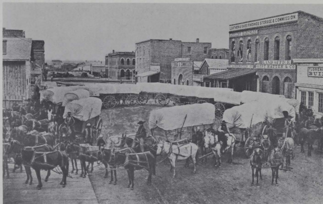
"I'll go get the squaw men, John Smith and William McGaa. We got our title through them and their Indian relatives."

"So did we—our title gives us *all* the land on this side of the Creek —not just a square mile."

Charley rushed off over the creek bed to find the Indian traders who had double-crossed him. Also to get further corroboration from the responsible men of the Auraria City Town Company. Dr. Levi Russell, secretary of Auraria, knew the whole situation although, actually, no one had a right to the land. It was Indian Territory. The shrewd trader Smith and the worthless McGaa, destined to die some years later in the Denver jail as a derelict drunk, had misrepresented their ability to give title. All three town companies—the Auraria, the St. Charles and the Denver—were just squatters.

The newcomers, the Leavenworth Party, had been sold the same fraud as the other two but they included three friends of James W. Denver, then governor of Kansas Territory. Before setting off across the plains in the direction of the gold fields, these three men entreated Denver to appoint them probate judge, county supervisor, and sheriff of Arapahoe County; and the governor, misled by the ballooning reports of mining activities on the South Platte, had given an official stamp to their real estate junket. In return, the group decided to give the new town the governor's name—Denver City.

Charles Nichols pled his cause all morning to the traders and Aurarians, but no one cared. Everyone said Auraria was to be the only important town, anyway. Samuel Curtis, who had helped him build the landmark cabin in return for shares in the St. Charles Company, did substantiate his story—but he was the only man who would. Curtis (after whom Curtis Street is named) stated the truth firmly to the newcomers but they paid no attention. General Larimer was already settling his belongings in Nichols' cabin. The promoter had summarily appropriated



PROTECTION FROM THE INDIANS IN THE '60s

During the long dangerous haul across the plains, the circle formation was used each night by muleteers when they pulled up their covered wagons to camp. Their valuable freight was thus turned into a fortress and helped insure its reaching the destination of Denver. The fifteen-unit train shown on Market Street between 15th and 16th (then Holladay between F and G) provided six mules and a driver for each wagon pulled.

it while making plans to build a cabin of his own and to organize his Denver Company. He had already announced a meeting to be held that night in McGaa's Auraria cabin and no one of the Leavenworth Party would listen to either Curtis or Nichols.

That evening, Samuel Curtis was indignantly ejected from the Auraria Town Company for having allied himself with Old Charley Nichols (who was thirty-six which was considered venerable in the young pioneer settlement) and the beginnings of a feud between Auraria and Denver were laid.

Charley knocked at the McGaa cabin to protest once more against the injustice of the Larimer "steal."

The Denver City promoters greeted him with a peremptory: "Now, you get out of here—and stay out—or the next time you try to make trouble, we'll use a rope and noose on you."

Old Charley slunk back to his tent and they went on with their meeting. Five days later, on November 22, forty-one members adopted

a constitution, elected officers and arranged for Samuel Curtis and J. S. Lowry to survey, plat and stake three hundred and twenty acres. As a sop to the St. Charles men, they cut in Old Charley and his six departed associates as shareholders of the Denver City Company and hastily dispatched E. W. Wynkoop back to Kansas to obtain a charter of incorporation for the new town.

The ironic denouement came in February, 1859, when the legislature granted a charter to the St. Charles men and not to the Denver group. But when the St. Charles incorporators returned in the spring, they were unable to oust the Denverites. By then the usurpers had built some forty cabins, fanning out from the first four built at each corner of Fifteenth and Larimer Streets. Possession proved to be ten-tenths of the law.

So Denver was founded on a jumped claim. Underlying this shady theatrical performance was a repeating historical pattern—that of man's lust for gold and of man's different ways for obtaining it. First, there were the brave explorers who wanted to dig it out of the ground; then the traders who liked to finagle for it, and finally the promoters who expected to sell real estate. Each played a part at the birth of the Mile-High City. But it was gold that brought all three to the junction of Cherry Creek with the Platte.

The gold seekers had arrived the preceding June, led by William Green Russell, a Georgian miner who was discouraged with the lessening deposits in his home state. Russell organized a company of over a hundred men, including his two brothers, to journey to what is now Colorado by following up the Arkansas River. They passed the present site of Pueblo and moved northward to camp beside the waters of the Platte in the vicinity of present Denver. Most of them became discouraged when they found only a backbreaking existence in the wilderness and no gold, and straggled back across the plains. The little band of thirteen who remained finally found the gold they sought. Their discovery was about where Englewood is now, just south of Denver's limits. It wasn't a lot of gold—about enough for each man to pan ten dollars' worth a day—but it was enough to start a lot of rumors.

America was restless in those days. The first gold rush in 1849 to California had accustomed people to looking at far horizons. When Horace Greeley, influential editor of the New York *Tribune,* wrote an 1850 editorial, entitled "Go West, Young Man, Go West," he was not coining a phrase but expressing the thinking of the people. This feeling continued to prevail all during the '50s, and when the news broke of another gold supply in the region of Pikes Peak, they set out.

Would-be miners began converging from all directions, not in great numbers at first, but steadily. Russell knew that the source of the gold

lay somewhere in the mountains. So he left some of the men working their second placer, called Montana Diggings, and, with the rest, spent the summer resolutely tramping the hills. But to no avail.

When he got back to camp and conferred with his brothers and the entire company, they decided that what was needed was more men and supplies. Green and Oliver Russell were selected to return to the "States" while Levi and a few others would remain to winter on the Platte. Since the gold deposits at Montana Diggings had largely petered out, they decided to move their camp a few miles downstream to the junction with Cherry Creek, where there were shade trees.

This spot was a famous camping ground for Indians and traders and such notable explorers as Fremont and Long also had stopped here. The men found tents pitched in the grove, those of William McGaa and John Simpson Smith. These two squaw men offered to give a deed to the land, saying that it really belonged to their Indian wives. An agreement was drawn up and, in no time at all, a new town was born, named after the Russells' home in Georgia, Auraria.

The first cabin built was a double one, crudely constructed to house Green Russell and William McGaa. After this residence was finished, thus establishing Russell's rights, the Georgian left for the East, leading those of the party who planned to return in the spring. The men who remained, platted their town and began to fell trees for other cabins. Before winter set in, they planned to have a real "city."

Today, this section is a desolate part of west Denver, mostly dump-strewn vacant lots and railroad yards, down underneath the Fourteenth Street viaduct in the general vicinity of Twelfth and Wewatta Streets. But in 1858 the spot was very pretty, a suitable setting for beginning one's castle in El Dorado and dreaming large dreams, with a view across the foothills to the mysterious Shining Mountains.

The Aurarians were an industrious lot and welcomed each set of newcomers whole-heartedly until they found that some were plotting to set up a rival town company. That made them angry. But even though the second town did materialize, their Auraria was twice as important. It was only after the feud was healed in 1860 by the far-seeing elements in both towns that Denver City forged ahead.

From the very first, colorful characters abounded in the new settlement. "Uncle Dick" Wootton (Richings L.) arrived in Auraria on Christmas morning, bringing two wagons full of merchandise from New Mexico. He set up his tents and began a thriving business. Part of his goods comprised two barrels of raw whiskey, known as Taos Lightning. He knocked in the head of one of these barrels, laid out a supply of tin cups, and invited the populace to dip in.

All Auraria soon called and the news spread across to Denver City

like racing tumbleweeds. The flowing contents of that barrel acted as a dove of peace. It submerged the last vestige of rancorous rivalry between the two "cities"; and also a number of worthy citizens.

By spring, the newcomers had turned into a swarm and by summer, into a melee. In the middle of June, Auraria had two hundred and fifty cabins and Denver City, slightly more than half that many. But most of these were vacant. Everyone was away in the hills looking for gold. The "Pikes Peak or Bust" rush was at its height.

Denver was just a point of departure. People were always leaving it. The miners left to surge into the mountains; the traders left to seek supplies or equipment in the East, and the tenderfeet left to return home, there to curse it loudly. Denver was just a way station.

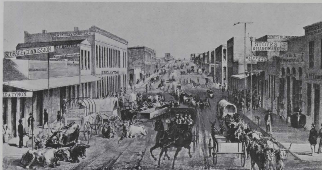
But curiously enough, without much reason for its existence, it continued to grow. Despite its being only a way station, the settlement developed a tough independent quality that began to be known. As this special flavor became more established, the town attracted men of spectacular fiber.

A few of these men were fine, like William Gilpin, Colorado's first territorial governor who had been an explorer and had written a book, "The Central Gold Region." Shrewd, civic-minded John Evans, the second territorial governor, who already had founded Northwestern University and for whom Evanston, Illinois, was named, was another of this group. In Colorado, he founded Denver University, and the dominant peak of the Front Range was called Evans.

Still another was intrepid William N. Byers who hauled a press across the prairie and started *The Rocky Mountain News* in the second floor of Uncle Dick Wootton's log cabin store, which served as Denver's first business building. Byers was forced to defend his editorial opinions with gunfire and to outwit kidnappers as well; but he lived to a serene old age. David Moffat, who began as a clerk in a bookstore and built a banking and investment fortune, only to squander every penny in trying to realize his dream of a transcontinental railroad through Colorado, was one more outstanding early-comer.

Sometimes these first arrivals were delightfully, or boldly, eccentric —like the Frenchman, Count Henri Murat, who claimed to be a nephew of Bonaparte's King of Naples and who shaved men's beards for the sum of one dollar, a sum he referred to as "paltry." Horace Greeley who arrived in June on an early stagecoach to write up John Gregory's discovery of lode gold in the gulch that cradled Central City, was one of his customers. The noted editor referred to the "paltry" price with heavy sarcasm.

Owen J. Goldrick drove an ox-drawn covered wagon into town, attired for his bull-whacking job in a frock coat, silk hat, white cravat and



AN A. E. MATHEWS PRINT OF 1866 DENVER

A British artist arrived in Denver in the autumn of 1865 and spent the next nine years sketching Western scenes for lithographs. He died near Estes Park at the age of forty-three, and his work has since become a collector's item because of its sensitivity and fidelity. This view portrays 15th Street, as it stretched away toward Capitol Hill, with ox-drawn wagons, mule-drawn carts and Estabrook Stable's prancing black team.

lemon-colored gloves, and proceeded to address the populace in faultless Latin. He became the town's first teacher and school principal. Then there was that military fanatic, Major John M. Chivington, who acted the hero of the battle of Glorieta Pass in 1862 and metamorphosed into the villain of the Sand Creek Massacre in 1864, when he slaughtered defenseless squaws and their papooses.

But most of the first citizens were just plain bad. They included gamblers like tall, twenty-two-year-old Ed Chase who outlasted all comers and nearly every wave of reform. He perched on a high stool, a shotgun in the crook of his arms; but he never had to use it. The steel in his eyes was enough. And Ed Chase, despite a series of sensational amours and successive wives, was a respectable citizen alongside most of his associates.

The most notorious resident was Charley Harrison, gambler and proprietor of the Criterion Saloon, which was the hangout of a mob of cut-throats. Harrison was outwardly a charming Southerner; but he committed one murder after another, and through his henchmen, terrorized the new community with murders and other violences. A Vigilante Committee was powerless. When finally he was brought to trial

for one of his murders, the proceedings turned out to be nothing but a two-day farce. The twelve good men and true had already been softened up with $5,000 distributed by Ada Lamont, a woman of the streets, and the jury could not agree. The prisoner was released. So extraordinary was Harrison's life story that R. D. Andrews incorporated it in a novel, "Great Day in the Morning," later a movie.

Ada Lamont, Harrison's friend, who found the reckless atmosphere of Denver to her liking, was another typical character of the times. Despite being arrested twice in 1866, during one of Denver's waves of reform, she prospered and used her profits to become a madam. For a while she operated a house in Georgetown, but in the early '70s moved back to Denver where her bordello was the scene of a sordid murder, only one of many committed along "The Line." By then, she was elegantly calling herself Mme. La Monte.

As more wealth was produced in the mountains, the bad 'uns included desperadoes like the Reynolds Gang. They stole horses and held up stagecoaches that were returning from the mines with gold dust and retorts bound for the mint. When caught in 1864, Jim Reynolds and most of the gang were later deliberately lined up and shot. But John Reynolds escaped to New Mexico and some years later, desperately wounded from another robbery, he passed on to a friend a penciled map. The sketch showed where the gang had buried some stolen Colorado treasure in Elk Creek, about forty miles from Denver. Campers are still looking for it.

A strange assortment—these early Denver citizens; yet taken all together they made the town an extraordinary settlement, where, according to Horace Greeley, there were "more brawls, more pistol shots with criminal intent . . . than in any community with equal numbers on earth" and where, in the words of Wootton, murders were "almost every day occurrences." Uncle Dick went on to say that "stealing was the only occupation of a considerable portion of the population, who would take anything from a pet calf, or a counterfeit gold dollar, up to a saw mill."

But the better citizens persevered, fighting violence with lynchings, and dodging Indians on the warpath. In their several and sometimes peculiar ways, these Denver citizens gave their town a loyalty that caused it to surge out ahead. Within a few years, Denver dominated the whole of a new territory created in 1861, named Colorado, and achieved the status both of capital and principal city. As the Indians were pushed back, its influence was felt throughout all of the Rocky Mountain West.

Its first spectacular triumph came in 1862 when the Civil War was gripping the nation. The Southerners had conceived a brilliant tactical move, namely to send a force from Texas up the valley of the Rio Grande, that would capture New Mexico and Colorado, shutting off the

North's gold supply from California and from the new mines near Denver. If this were successful, the Confederates would then march east through Kansas and surprise Grant in the rear.

The Texans were amazingly successful and everything was going according to plan. The Rio Grande valley, Albuquerque and Santa Fe fell to them on schedule and the Southerners were headed north. Then the Coloradans made a forced march from Denver, covering, at the last, a tramp of ninety-two miles in thirty-six hours. Heroically they met the enemy at Apache Canyon, New Mexico, in a fierce and apparently losing battle but, through a clever circling maneuver by Chivington and his men at Glorieta Pass, the Confederates' supply train was cut off. The battle was won, and the Texans were forced back to El Paso. The indomitable spirit of Denver had preserved the North's cause and the battle was proudly called "the Gettysburg of the West."

Denver was presented with other prickly problems—a disastrous fire in 1863, and an obliterating flood in 1864 and, after the Civil War was over, it was faced with an economic threat worse than any military crisis. She had always thought of her mountains as an asset but now they portended death. Although the view from the State Capitol is magnificent, the casual observer, as he oh's and ah's, seldom analyzes what he sees. The mountains are beautiful, yes, but they are also a barrier. In the whole of the United States, excluding Alaska, there are only sixty-eight peaks over fourteen thousand feet; yet fifty-three of them rear up in the western half of Colorado. Not a very good location for a town that wished to be a way station when a transcontinental route was impossible!

Even in an era of flagrant land grabs and get-rich subsidies, no railroad was willing to attempt to cross the continent by way of these insurmountable fifty-three peaks. The Union Pacific built north through Wyoming and the Santa Fe planned a route through New Mexico. Denver was left shunned and isolated. Property values fell and the town appeared to be doomed. Scores of families left and moved up to Cheyenne which, they believed, would be the coming metropolis.

But the less than four thousand citizens of Denver, although dismayed, did not despair. Again they valiantly met the emergency. They organized a Board of Trade to create their own railroad and, in one week in the autumn of 1867, raised $280,000 (which was later augmented to $640,000 by Arapahoe County bonds since Denver was the county seat). With this money they organized the Denver Pacific Railroad and started grading a roadbed for a spur to meet the main line of the Union Pacific in Cheyenne. The road was completed in June, 1870. With jubilant ceremony and oratory, the last spike was driven—a solid silver

one from the mines at Georgetown to symbolize that once more Denver had conquered.

She really had. The day the spike was driven, her population numbered 4,759, a total that was less than the population of the Central City gulch towns. But with the advent of her railroad, soon followed by the Kansas Pacific coming straight west across the prairie, the days of caroming stagecoaches, of breathless riders for the pony express and Indians on the warpath, were over. In the next decade her population soared to 35,629 and she began to preen herself as the Queen City of the Plains.

Although she was growing very rapidly and her streets were no longer lined by log cabins and wooden structures with false fronts, her character remained the same. The business buildings might be turning into brick structures, but the sidewalks were still board and the water ran along the gutters in open ditches. The surface might be more presentable but if it were scratched, the blatant rawness of the frontier showed through. In 1872, when Dr. Frederick J. Bancroft, the city physician, made his report to the council, he used a large portion of his message to inveigh against the "evils and iniquities" of the houses of ill fame, and to demand stricter laws. Bancroft had been a doctor in the community for six years and it was his verdict that "probably every third man who reaches the age of twenty-five, has acquired in these places constitutional syphillis."

But the good doctor's plea was in vain. The local authorities ignored him except to make a superficial gesture, from time to time, which consisted mostly in paying a personal call on Byers so that the *News* would run an item to the effect that the "soiled doves" were leaving Denver for a more healthy clime and "the public here are rejoiced." This was mere pretense and the red-light district continued to flourish scandalously.

Its locale was along the street originally known as McGaa, named in honor of the family whose baby son, William Denver McGaa, was the first child born in Denver—in a wigwam at Fourteenth and Lawrence. The street's name was later changed to Holladay to compliment Ben Holladay, operator of the overland stagecoach lines.

During the '70s and '80s, "The Row" consisted of three city blocks, lined with cribs and parlor houses on both sides of the street. This section developed such a bad name for its wildness and wickedness that successful madams from the mining camps and dressy madams from the East began moving in to open up and add to the notoriety. The most sensational arrivals were probably pretty, blonde Mattie Silks, who always had a canny eye for business and who came down from Georgetown in 1876, and beautiful, brown-haired Jennie Rogers, who swept

THE NOTORIOUS MADAMS

Mattie Silks was queen of the red light district until 1880. Then her supremacy was challenged by a younger rival who came from the East by way of St. Louis. Mattie was short and plump, with a doll-like face and curly hair, quite blond when young. She had a shrewd head for business except in regard to her lover, Cort Thompson, a gambler and foot racer, and in bets on horses from her own racing stable. Although she made a great deal of money, at the time of her death, aged 83, she had only four thousand dollars remaining.

into town in 1880 from Pittsburgh and bought her first Holladay street house from Mattie Silks, plunking out $4,600 with her usual dash.

The career of this bawdy street was long-lived and apparently unassailable. It ran wide open (although once again under a new name, Market) until 1915 when at long last the respectable forces of the community made themselves felt. But for half a century, the attitude of the town was so patent that in August, 1880, both the *Republican* and the *Rocky Mountain News* reported that the city council had failed to transact any business on the 19th because a quorum was not present. They pointed out that the absentees preferred to attend "the opening of a new and fashionable den of prostitution on Holladay St." The *News* added, "A mob may take that council in hand yet." But no such thing ever occurred.

The town was also still a way station. Boomers were always rushing

MADE A CONTRAST

Jennie Rogers was a dashing tall brunet who always set off her animated beauty by wearing emerald earrings. She lived even more dangerously than her rival and died in 1909, twenty years earlier than Mattie. Both women were the center of numerous scandals. Jennie built a fabulous house, later owned by Mattie, described in Parkhill's "The Wildest of the West." It had a ballroom completely lined in mirrors and carved stone faces on the exterior. When Jennie shot one husband, she said she did it "because I loved him."

off to a new strike and then returning to the town, either flat broke or to blow in their new wealth. In the '70s, Central City, Idaho Springs, Georgetown, South Park and Breckenridge were superseded by the San Juans, Deadwood, Leadville and Aspen as successive spots for hectic rushes. The cry now was for silver more than for gold, and the most dizzying jumps to riches were based on silver-and-lead carbonates rather than on gold pyrites. The most talked-of vault was that of Horace Tabor who in a single year ran a seventeen-dollar grub stake of groceries, that he gave to two prospectors, into a twenty-million-dollar company.

The stay-at-home citizens of Denver profited directly and indirectly by the good fortune that was enveloping the state. They sometimes made direct investments in the mining activities that absorbed the mountain areas, and, in any case, it was their business to supply the necessary merchandise and equipment to keep the mining towns going. Also, there

THE WINDSOR HOTEL RULED THE '80s

Except for the porte-cocheres the Windsor remained physically much the same until 1958 as when it opened in June, 1880, and became the social center of Colorado. Built by an English company, the building flew the American flag on its main tower and the Windsor and English flags from two lesser towers. Largest shareholder was H. A. W. Tabor, richest man in Colorado, who lived there at various times and died there, destitute.

was the cattle industry on the plains to the east, equally prosperous; and along the Platte and Arkansas valleys, despite two years of grasshopper plagues, agricultural communities were beginning to grow. In the center was Denver, so located as to partake in the honey of each money-making venture that blossomed.

The more sober civic minds turned their attention to founding schools, colleges, hospitals, to organizing legislation and writing a constitution preparatory to obtaining statehood. On the Fourth of July in 1876, the adoption of the constitution was celebrated with a joyous parade, a patriotic program and a picnic in the cottonwood grove on the banks of the Platte. Floats were elaborate and colorful; the last one to

pass carried thirty-seven girls, each representing a state of the Union, while the thirty-eighth, Miss Colorado, had the place of honor. She was a native-born girl chosen for her prettiness. Seventy-five years later in 1951, as Mrs. Mary Butler Brown, she was still alive to take part in several commemorative celebrations, especially on August 1, Colorado Day, the date President Grant created the state.

During the '70s, Denverites also turned their attention to railroad building and this decade saw the beginnings of narrow gauge track so laid that it became an engineering and scenic wonder to the whole world. The little steel rails twisted snakelike through tortuous canyons and surmounted ten- and eleven-thousand-foot passes. These feats only emphasized anew the toughness of the small town on the edge of the plains. Obstacles were like mustangs to bronco-busting cowboys—something to saddle and break.

The '80s were even more bountiful than expected. The long burro and mule pack-trains, trudging their perilous way along stony mountain trails, began to return with treasure. As people made money in the mountains, some families returned East, but most chose Denver as a permanent residence. Nathaniel P. Hill, who made a fortune treating ores in Black Hawk from 1869 to 1878, decided to move his smelter down to Argo, just outside Denver, and his action started a migration.

Each new family from the mining towns began breaking ground for a mansion. Generally, they chose a pretentious style built of large sandstone blocks, replete with turrets, bays, and leaded windows, surrounded by heavy copings with either white marble lions at the entrance or cast-iron deer on the lawn. The houses were as fancified and as protuberant as the ladies' bustles. The older citizens gave up their more modest frame or brick houses, in what is now the downtown section, and moved to Capitol Hill to compete with the new millionaires from Central City and Leadville. Fashion dictated a scale of living as lavish as the language in the latest journalistic innovation—the society column.

Downtown Denver began to change materially. The person who made the greatest single dent in its new facade was Tabor with his fortune from Leadville silver mines. In February of 1879 he bought the Henry C. Brown house, on almost a block of ground, running between Broadway and Lincoln Streets at Seventeenth Avenue (this land is now occupied by the Mile High Center and the Denver U.S. National Bank). Then he erected the Tabor Block, helped to complete the Windsor Hotel, built the Tabor Grand Opera House and sold land worth $90,000 for $65,000 to the United States government for a post office site at Sixteenth and Arapahoe Streets, on which was soon built a dignified structure (now, in 1959, a recruiting station).

These buildings were of a magnificence new to the frontier town.

The Tabor Block (now the Nassau Building) on the northeast corner of Sixteenth and Larimer Streets cost $200,000 and was of stone quarried in Ohio. In 1880, when the Windsor was opened at Eighteenth and Larimer, it was the last word in elegance. The elite drank at a sixty-foot mahogany bar, danced in a ballroom with elaborate crystal chandeliers and floor of parquetry, and walked through a lobby furnished in thick red carpet and diamond-dust-backed mirrors.

But it was nothing compared to the grandeur of the five-storied Tabor Opera House.

For this, Tabor spared no expense. The building is of red pressed brick trimmed with white stone, now dirtied to a dull grey. The interior of the theatre seated fifteen hundred people on fashionable red plush and was finished in cherry wood, imported from Japan. Unfortunately, although the building stands, the theatre has been completely altered to the needs of a movie house, and its grandiose panelling and plush are gone. The sombre, prophetic curtain, painted by Robert Hopkin of Detroit, and described in every book in which the Tabors appear, is still in the stage-loft. It was lowered a number of times in September, 1951, as an exhibit for the theatre's seventieth anniversary.

A gala opening was held in the Opera House in September 1881, with Emma Abbot singing "Lucia" on the stage and another drama being enacted in the audience. Box A, reserved for the Tabor family, was conspicuous by the absence of Mrs. Tabor. The gossips buzzed and craned their necks, trying to see a heavily-veiled, beautiful little blonde, seated toward the rear, who was known as "that infamous Baby Doe."

All through the '80s Denver continued to build and expand. In general, the direction was east, toward the plains, although there was a brief vogue for the Highlands, now north Denver. A number of elaborate houses still anachronistically bear testimony to this period. The elite brownstone Denver Club at Seventeenth and Glenarm Streets, characteristic of the architecture in favor, was built during this decade and became known, because of the immoral gaiety of some of its members, as "the home for fallen men." This sobriquet no doubt carried the acrimony of those who had been snobbishly excluded, but is now forgotten since the original building has been replaced by a skyscraper.

Such was the success of Denver during this period that its population tripled, rising from 35,629 to 106,713. But its main business was still as a supply depot and merchandise mart for the activities that most interested its citizens—the mines in the mountains. It was still, in a very real sense, a way station.

The '90s dawned rosy and clear and promised more of the same. The new bonanza camp of Creede was discovered and, while its roaring life was of short duration, it has achieved immortality in Cy Warman's

BABY DOE TABOR AND HER WEDDING DRESS

The Tabor exhibit in the Colorado State Museum at 14th and Sherman Streets draws more tourists than any other spot. This perennial popularity proves that no other Colorado legend has such appeal. In the case are the $7,000 bridal gown and a photograph of the diamond necklace, once Queen Isabella's, that Baby Doe Tabor, the Silver King's second wife, wore March 1, 1883. Her life is told in "Silver Queen."

lines, "Here the meek and mild-eyed burros on mineral mountains feed. It's day all day in the daytime and there is no night in Creede." Denver financiers who had invested heavily in these new silver mines were delightedly licking their chops at the soaring profits.

At home, these prosperous investors were still erecting buildings. Frank C. Young, who had made a tidy pile in Central City, built the exquisite Broadway Theatre, now gone, which stood next to the present Cosmopolitan Hotel in the 1700 block of Broadway. Its gilt boxes resembled miniature mosques and were at each side of an Oriental scene, "A Glimpse of India," painted on the stage curtain. These dainty boxes were filled to capacity on its opening night in August, 1890, when a society crowd, swathed in glistening satins, gathered to hear "Carmen."

BONANZA KING'S

During the nineteenth century, fortunes, newly made in the mountains, were used in building many Denver residences like this one. 1300 Logan Street was finished in 1892 by Horace W. Bennett who made his wealth in Cripple Creek. Later as Chappell House, a Denver Art Museum separate unit, it showed native arts and crafts.

The famed Brown Palace Hotel and the imposing Equitable Building (at Seventeenth and Stout Streets) opened their doors in August, 1892, with all the fanfare that the town could muster.

But the most grandiloquent gesture accompanied the laying of the cornerstone for the State Capitol, a building of Corinthian architecture designed with a ground plan in the form of a Greek cross. Solid grey granite, quarried near Gunnison, Colorado, was chosen for the walls and the vaulting dome was later covered with two hundred ounces of genuine gold-leaf, bringing the final cost of the building, completed in 1908, to $3,000,000. Speeches were delivered, a band played and a Masonic choir of one thousand voices sang the national anthem for that gay day in 1891, when its walls first started to rise.

Then, abruptly, in 1893 prosperity and enthusiasm came to a dead stop. Since the price of silver was largely dependent on the practice of bi-metallism to back paper money, for several years the hand-writing on the wall had been discernible to a few. President Grover Cleveland was a man committed irrevocably to Wall Street and its insistence on a gold standard. When he returned to office, his first move was to suggest the repeal of the Sherman Silver Purchasing Act. His stand intensified a dropping market. The price of silver went steadily down until, in one four-day period of June, it catapulted twenty-one cents to a paltry sixty-two cents an ounce. Mines and smelters started to shut down. unable to operate at a profit.

The blow fell in mid-July when panic seized the people. They swarmed the streets and stormed the banks. Within three days ten Denver banks failed. Although the crisis was strangling the whole nation and spreading throughout the world, no state was affected as much as Colorado and no city to compare with Denver. In the face of this panic, in August Cleveland called a special session of Congress. Senators Henry M. Teller and Edward O. Wolcott from Denver fought hour after hour through the sticky humid heat of a Washington summer, but failed to sway the Congress. The nation declared for gold alone and Colorado lost her only good silver customer—the government.

Both senators' gloom was intense. They were personally involved in the disaster as well as politically—each had begun his career in the mountains. Teller had first hung out his law shingle in Central City in 1861, and Wolcott, in Georgetown in 1871. They had built up their large legal practises, both there and in Denver, on a knowledge of mining and railroad law. In return, both attorneys had often accepted payment of fees in mining or narrow gauge railway stock—a practise that had made Teller well-to-do, and Wolcott enormously wealthy. In fact, it was this same maligned silver, dug from the Little Annie mine at Aspen and the Last Chance at Creede, that had recently made it possible for the junior senator to complete his country show place, "Wolhurst." The return of the two men to Denver was as mournful as a funeral march.

The state and its capital were submerged by depression. Everywhere miners were out of work and descended on Denver for relief. There was none in town—businesses were failing, mortgages were being foreclosed and real estate values were hitting new lows. Hunger and idleness hung like a pall and thousands of unemployed soon produced robberies, violence and murders. For over a year Denver was really down.

In this atmosphere of hopelessness and desperation, her character as a way station still persisted. Some of the unemployed wanted to join "Coxey's Army" which was marching across the nation to petition for relief at the national capital. They built shallow boats and tried to sail down the Platte, but the river's erratic currents and sand-bars proved too formidable. The attempt was a failure.

Those joiners of Coxey's Army who succeeded in leaving town, stole rides on the railroad. But Denver did not notice either their departure or their failure to pay for a ticket—she was too preoccupied with her own problems. She was thirty-five years old and had spent her whole life as a way station—a successful way station—until now, when she was flat and busted.

What should Denver do?

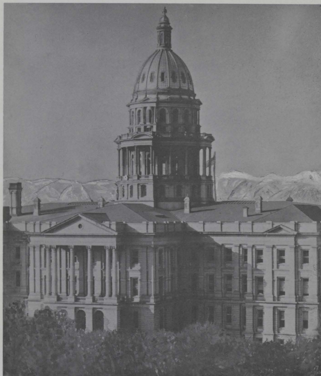
* * *

MILE HIGH CITY IN MID 1930's

Denver's fine location was seen in this dramatic air view of the business section. The highest snow peak is Mt. Evans. The most gashed foothill mountain is Morrison, seat of the Red Rocks Amphitheatre. The streets run true to the points of the compass outside the oldest part, where they cut diagonally.

City Hall
Greek Theatre
The Capitol
Catholic Cathedral

Civic Center
Water Board
Republic Bldg.
The Brown Palace
Colfax Viaduct
Continental Oil Bldg
Public Service Bldg.
Post Office
Federal Bldg.
Daniels and Fisher Tower
The Windsor



REAL GOLD LEAF COVERED THE DOME

When the capitol was first built, only slate and copper roofed the dome. But F. E. Edbrooke, who became advisory architect in 1898 (eight years after the cornerstone was laid), had the idea of gilding the dome with real gold leaf in 1901, and it was subsequently carried out in 1908. At the time this photo was taken, the gold was not in place. The gold leaf was renewed in 1950 by gifts from many at a cost of $19,000.

TOURIST TOWN

Prostrate from the Silver Panic, Denver suffered. Her former pluck was struggling to assert itself, but the going was as hard as dynamiting through granite. Then, astonishingly, she was saved by luck—the fabulous luck of another gold strike! Gold had made Denver; now gold saved her.

This time, the gold poured in from Cripple Creek, a new camp back of Pikes Peak, where the discovery was made by a hopeful, untutored cowboy working for the Bennett and Myers ranch. Bob Womack made a habit of picking up stray rocks. Despite thirty-odd years of ceaseless searching in every gulch and cranny of Colorado by seasoned prospectors, none had ever suspected the grassy meadow where Womack took his sample. But the cowboy's fluke uncovered the biggest bonanza of the state's history and the richest gold camp in the United States.

In 1894, the camp produced two million dollars in gold and in the next year trebled this sum. The annual amount climbed to seven, to ten, to thirteen, and finally, to eighteen million dollars by 1900. During the next ten years after that, the district's average production annually was $15,000,000. No one had ever seen anything like it and Denver immediately profited.

A fresh wave of millionaires descended; among them, Horace Bennett and Verner Z. Reed. The most fantastic overnight moneybags was W. S. Stratton, "Midas of the Rockies" as he is called by his biographer, Frank Waters. Stratton lived in Colorado Springs but he made frequent trips to Denver to carouse, to shop for his current light-of-love, or to make investments, especially in Denver real estate.

According to an apocryphal story, it was on one of these trips that he bought the Brown Palace Hotel in order to fire a night clerk who displeased him. It seems to be true that he was once enraged when rebuked for some episode involving drink, noise, or a girl in his rooms. But he did not buy the Brown Palace until his old friend, Henry C. Brown, the formerly wealthy builder and owner of the hotel, who had been caught short by the Silver Panic, was about to be ejected from his suite by demanding creditors. Stratton bought the mortgage in order to

BROWN PALACE

No hotel in America has a more bizarre history than Denver's best. Built in 1892, it was named for the man who donated land to build the Capitol—Henry C. Brown. Often the scene of strange goings-on, from prize bulls in the lobby to murders in the bar, it was once bought by W. C. Stratton, the "Midas of the Rockies," so that he could prevent creditors from ejecting the owner, his old friend, H. C. Brown.

save this very elderly gentleman, hard pressed and cornered, whose case appealed to his pity.

Stratton's philanthropic feeling was proverbial. Only he, of all Colorado, came to Tabor's assistance when the crash of '93 ruined the one-time Silver King and completely swept away the state's most colossal fortune. Stratton loaned Tabor $15,000 and later tore up the note. Perhaps the most characteristic story of Stratton's generosity occurred shortly after his Independence Mine at Cripple Creek began pouring forth gold. The new millionaire saw a laundry woman, her back bent and her feet dragging, while she tried to carry home a large bundle of laundry. He promptly ordered a bicycle, equipped with a handle-bar basket, for every laundry woman in Colorado Springs.

The Cripple Creek gold rolled in simultaneously with a bumper farm crop following several years of drought. The light-hearted gaiety that accompanied the new wealth from both mountains and plains completely rejuvenated Denver. The city began to be thankful, and as her thankfulness mounted, she wanted to show her gratitude publicly.

The outcome of this feeling was the "Festival of Mountain and

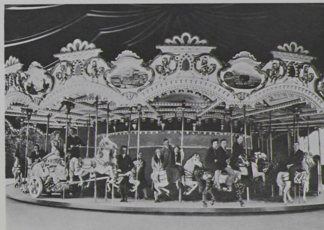
Plain." It ran for four days in October, 1895, and was repeated annually, sometimes running as long as a week, through the rest of the century. It was revived thrice thereafter, in 1901, in 1902 and in 1912; and the possibility of holding another one is suggested every now and then. But its huge success probably was dependent on the lavish spirit of the Golden Nineties.

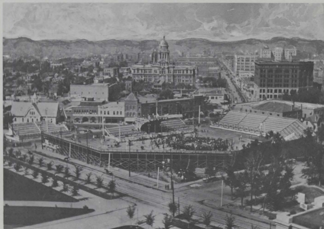
Every day there was a parade. The last one took place at eight o'clock at night, a "Grand Allegorical parade by the Slaves of the Silver Serpent; a gorgeous pageant that will rival the ideal Mardi Gras," in the words of the Official Program. In truth, some of the floats had been shipped from New Orleans and were as copiously decorated as any in the world. The leading float bore an enormous shining Silver Serpent, symbol of Colorado's power and nemesis.

The King of the Slaves of the Silver Serpent followed next. Queen Thalia, a young woman chosen for her beauty, and a bevy of ladies-in-waiting, who ruled over the whole Festival, had the place of honor in the

ELITCH'S THEATRE BEGAN IN THE GAY '90s

Denver has the oldest summer stock theatre in the U.S.A. It began in 1891 as an added feature of Elitch's Gardens and Amusement Park, and the plays presented annually constitute one of Denver's most renowned tourist attractions. Shown below, on the charming merry-go-round in the Park, are the members of the 1928 cast which included among other famous names, the leads, Frederic March, Sylvia Sidney (in chariot).





MOUNTAIN AND PLAIN FESTIVAL SITE

The northeast corner of Colfax and Broadway, running east as far as Lincoln Street, held an arena and grandstand used for the Festival. The reviewing stand for the parades was across Broadway, snuggled against the old Broadway Hose House. Both of these were torn down in order to erect the Pioneer Memorial Fountain, which now stands on the same triangle. To the rear is the old Court House (1882-1933).

parade. The Queen's court costume was of white and yellow satin, the carnival colors; the sleeves were ornamented in pearls and the skirt had a train five yards long.

An eerie, twisting block-long serpent, that writhed from one side of the street to the other, was made of phosphorescent silver cloth and carried on the heads of hundreds of marchers. The serpent "laid an iridescent radiance upon the city," in the words of an Eastern reporter from *Harper's Weekly*, who was agog at the doings in 1897.

Following the last night parade there was a society ball, presided over by the King and Queen and the Slaves of the Silver Serpent, staged at the Brown Palace Hotel where a new Queen Thalia was chosen for the coming year.

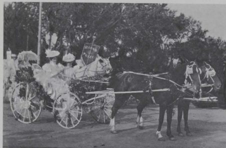
The very first parade of the opening Festival threw a fright into the committee and, very briefly, some whispered that it was an unpropitious

THE SILVER SERPENT WAS A SENSATION

The first year that the Silver Serpent appeared in the parades for the Mountain and Plain Festival, it was billed as a Chinese Dragon. But in successive years it was given a local flavor and adapted to Colorado's mining emphasis. After this drawing was made for Harper's Weekly, it was no longer pulled by Chinese coolies, but was propelled from within, although the skin was still carried on the backs of many marchers.

omen. The team of horses hitched to the first float, balked in terror at all the strange contraptions. But a new team was substituted and when they proved more philosophical, the line got in motion successfully. Its floats displayed exhibits of Colorado mining, agriculture, horticulture, live stock, manufacturing, civic societies and schools. A hundred thousand people witnessed their passage and stayed for the succeeding events.

That first year, the program included an illuminated trolley musicale, cyclist exhibitions, Pueblo and Ute Indian dances, miners' rock drill contests, cavalry and infantry drills, and band contests. To these were added, in following years, a stagecoach shot at by "twelve good Indians" (who could be trusted not to injure the passengers), a balloon ascension and parachute jump, a mock emergency night call of the Fire Department ("a soul-thrilling dash, lit with a thousand torches," according to the Official Program), a masked ball with dancing in the streets



SECOND PRIZE

The gaily garlanded carriage and attractive young ladies look pretty enough to have won a first prize in their Festival harness class.

climaxed by a Grand Prize Cake Walk, fireworks at City Park, a horse show, a street fair, and a rodeo. And each year, the pageantry surrounding Queen Thalia, her attendants and Slaves grew more vivid and complicated.

According to the *Rocky Mountain News*, the second year was attended by a hundred thousand from Denver and fifty thousand tourists. Some of the latter included the "high officials of Ak-Sar-Ben of Omaha getting pointers regarding festival shows." For the third year, the Festival crowds included "thousands from Cripple Creek" (present population 853). By the turn of the century, Denver and its Festival of Mountain and Plain were definitely established as a tourist attraction.

Although this annual festival was abandoned, its success did create a number of customs which have taken firm root in the town and state. Its street fair developed into the annual State Fair at Pueblo, and its horse show and rodeo were the forerunners of the National Western Stock Show, held each January in Denver since 1907. Its offer at the 1901 rodeo of a "Championship Rough Riders' Belt of the World" was the first of its kind. Despite the fact that public rodeos had been taking place throughout the West since the late '80s, and Denver had held its first rodeo in 1887, ten years before the commencement of Cheyenne's "Frontier Days," this was the first attempt to create a champion. It established Denver as a preeminent contest spot for the cowboys.

Other contemporary factors were helping to change Denver's character and to make her less single-tracked in pursuit of ore bodies. After the painful singeing that "Seventeenth Street," Denver's financial district, took in the Silver Panic, venture capital was more and more difficult to obtain for developing mines. The investors were turning to less speculative outlets—to reclamation projects, to experiments with agricultural specialties such as Rocky Ford cantaloups and Pascal celery, to

EXOTIC FLOAT

The 1897 program described this Sun Flower float as "typical of high born destiny and the earthly image of the God of Day." Whee!

horticultural splendors such as the Colorado carnation, to the incipient sugar beet industry, to real estate development, and to tourist attractions. When the mining camps asked for money, Denver increasingly shrugged an answer that meant "once burned—twice shy."

Except for the Colorado carnations, Denver played no unique part in the "green thumb" experimentation, other than to loan money. But that hardy, fragrant flower, which is now publicized in national magazine color lay-outs, was born within the city limits. In a greenhouse near Berkeley Lake the first attempt was made in 1891 to grow carnations under glass. From that first tender stem has grown an industry that ships Colorado carnations all over the world. The coronation of George VI, in 1937, provided the largest single over-seas order; but, currently, the flowers are sent by plane and train out of Denver in large quantities every day. They have been successfully shipped ever since 1906, when a Colorado Springs florist established the feasibility. Also, it is due to the Colorado carnation that in 1909 a couple of Denver florists first thought of the idea of delivering flowers by telegraph.

Diversification of interests brought to town people who saw Denver as an opportunity, not just as a way station. They planned new projects based within the city limits, not with their eyes on mines in the mountains. The two liveliest and most picturesque of this type were Frederick G. Bonfils and Harry H. Tammen, an odd pair—flamboyant, noisy, belligerent, emotional, but shrewd and avaricious for power. In 1895, they bought an anemic newspaper property, *The Denver Post;* leased a new office on Sixteenth Street opposite the Tabor Theatre, and set out to put the paper, themselves and the town of Denver on the map of the Rocky Mountain West.

Jovial, pudgy Harry Tammen had been in Denver since 1880. He had worked his way up from busboy, through bartender, to owning and

LARGEST FLAG

Daniels and Fisher ordered this flag, biggest in the world, in 1905. It was first displayed in July in honor of a number of tourist conventions. It was 115 feet by 55 feet and was too heavy to hang from any pole. Note the open-and-closed type of street car and the old-style drinking fountain with lower bowl for dogs, 16th & Lawrence.

operating two enterprises—a curio shop that specialized in colorful mineral specimens and Indian arrowheads, and the publication of a magazine, *The Great Divide*, devoted to western lore.

He used to crack a joke about himself and his way with money. When he was a bartender behind the sixty-foot mahogany grandeur of the Windsor bar, many influential nabobs used to gather there to lean and transact big deals, while convivially "treating." Often drinks were paid for with five-dollar gold pieces.

"I'd pick up those coins," went Tammen's story, "and throw them up to the ceiling. Those that stuck belonged to the management. Those that came down were mine."

Apparently not enough of them had come down, for in 1895 when Tammen heard that the *Post* was for sale, and wanted to buy it, he had neither gold nor silver—only brass. A mutual friend told him of a dashing thirty-four-year-old buccaneer, F. G. Bonfils, who was looking for a

D. & F. TOWER

When the Denver Post began just this side of the alley (right), the famous tower was not yet erected. But the Tabor Grand Opera House (left **corner)** *was twelve years old. D. & F. opened the tower on November 6, 1911, for tours to the top of its 375 feet, where a sightseeing balcony was extremely popular till July, 1958.*

new investment and Harry Tammen, then thirty-nine, went to Chicago to meet him. Tammen outlined his idea—

"Newspapers are the coming thing. You've got money and I've got brains. Let's buy it."

Handsome, dapper "F. G." was captivated by the stranger who had no gold "but all the brass in the world," as he later described the meeting, and he agreed to the plan. Together, they bought *The Denver Post* for $12,500, and in November, 1895, announced the new management to a meager six thousand subscribers. It was a staid announcement, in keeping with the type and style the newspaper had been using. But that was the last time the *Post* was ever staid. Denver was in for a jolt.

"We want all Denver to talk about the *Post*," Bonfils said.

"Make this paper like a vaudeville show," were Tammen's orders. "Play up every sort of stunt. Make the readers cry, laugh, gasp or shudder, but see that they *feel* something."

They began running headlines on the front page in red ink. The startling color and the flashy composition astounded the public. First, people bought the paper out of curiosity. Soon they were buying it because the columns contained more local items than its competitors, and the news was better written. Every extra cent that "Bon and Tam" could lay their hands on went to hire the best newspaper talent available and thus make up deficiencies in their own journalistic knowledge. The combined production was a seven-day wonder.

The vested interests did not like the rampaging new team nor their lambasting editorials, printed under the caption: "So the People May Know." David Moffat, one of the banking and mining powers on Seventeenth Street, who also owned *The Denver Times*, instigated a boycott of the *Post* by the advertisers.

Denver's answer was soon plain. The town's preference showed up in the circulation figures, which mounted in two years from 6,000 subscribers to 24,599. Soon the advertisers could not afford to ignore the *Post*. If they wanted to reach the great middle class, "The Best Newspaper in the U. S. A." was the only practical medium. The public loved the attacks, the crusades and the stunts and bought the paper to see what Bon and Tam were up to next. Every evening the small home-owner lounged back in his reading chair with a metaphorical "Sic 'em, Fido!" Denver had been born in a feud, and was still partial to a scrap.

As the *Post* prospered, it grew cockier and cockier and took on all comers. It made enemies, but it succeeded. Its financial position grew more solid; for, as Lawrence Martin has shown in his excellently written paper-bound history of the *Post*, "So the People May Know," the partners plowed back all their profits for thirteen years. They were trying to entrench the newspaper as an indisputable leader in the community.

On one count, it did have a profound influence. "The Paper With a Heart and a Soul" made Denver conscious of its economic opportunities as the center of a whole section of the country. It showed that the people of this region were supported by many diverse occupations, not just one or two. It also made Denver aware of its position as the gateway to a thousand views of breath-taking scenery. Here was a chance to play host to a nation—with both climate and natural beauty as lures to the visitor.

Even more influential in turning the Mile High City into a tourist town was Mayor Robert W. Speer, first elected to that four-year office in 1904. To win the election, he put on a rip-snorting campaign in which he bought up every billboard in town. All the newspapers were opposed to him and this was the only way he had to give the rebuttal to their vilification. His official biographer, Edgar C. McMechen, specifically names Thomas M. Patterson, owner of the *Rocky Mountain News* and *The Denver Times*, as among Speer's political foes. But the author main-

MAYOR SPEER

In 1911 Mayor Speer left Denver to spend six weeks in Europe and study the most noted places and civic centers for ideas of beautification. It was during this European trip that the photo at the right was taken at an unidentified spot. He returned home and began pushing through his ambitious plan. In 1912 the city bought thirteen acres adjacent to the capitol lawns. By 1918 these were cleared of their ramshackle buildings. The structures and statuary of Denver's present artistic civic center were entirely due to Robert W. Speer.

tains a discreet silence in regard to the Bonfils-Tammen attacks on Speer in *The Denver Post*.

Actually, it was a three-way dog fight. Both Patterson and Bonfils hated Speer, but they hated each other so much that it was a joke to find them on the same side of the fence. The mud-slinging in the columns of their papers reached a final pitch in December, 1907, when Patterson called Bonfils a "blackmailer." The day after Christmas, Bonfils saw Patterson strolling down from his Capitol Hill mansion to his newspaper office. Bon attacked the elderly, near-sighted editor with his fists, breaking Patterson's upper plate and bloodying his nose and cheeks. In retaliation, Patterson had Bonfils arraigned in court and the testimony with regard to the *Post's* methods for obtaining advertisers gave the town some juicy tidbits.

But in 1904, both newspaper factions had stood together against Speer. The blond, distinguished-featured candidate for mayor had come to Colorado in 1878, as a twenty-three-year-old, hemorrhaging with tuberculosis. When he recovered sufficiently to take a job, he went to work for Daniels & Fisher Stores as a carpet salesman at $8 a week. The

THE BEGINNING

The Pioneer Monument was the first move in June, 1911, toward a civic center. Kit Carson tops the fountain and is flanked by a miner, a hunter and a pioneer woman with child. Colorado products flow from a horn of plenty. The pillar holds buffalo skulls.

flying lint from the rugs irritated his lungs and he transferred to office work, first in private business and then in politics.

He was elected City Clerk in 1884, appointed Postmaster in 1885, and four years later, when the Republicans regained power, returned to the real estate business. Later, he served as City Police Commissioner, Fire Commissioner and President of the Board of Public Works. It was on his record in these three offices that the people of Denver, ignoring the blasts from the *News*, the *Times*, and the *Post*, gave him the mayoralty.

He was re-elected in 1908 and again in 1916, dying in office in 1918, at the age of sixty-two. No other single man stamped his imprint on the city as did this courageous, far-seeing man. And Speer, who never ceased to cherish a vision of a new and different Denver had to fight for his ideal in the face of constant and vindictive warfare.

The same election that first put Speer in power also gave the town a new charter and divorced Denver from Arapahoe County. The new mayor received autocratic powers which he began to use vigorously. The town that he ruled had a population of some one hundred-fifty thousand citizens; but it looked like an over-grown cow town—dusty, barren, and ugly. Speer wanted to make it beautiful.

He dreamed of parks, boulevards, fountains, statues, a civic auditorium and a civic center—all this external and visible—but, more importantly, he wanted the city sanitary and safe. To insure sanitation, two

CIVIC CENTER

The Voorhies Memorial with its sea lions, fountain and pool is on the north side of the Civic Center. It has murals by Allen True, sculpture by Robert Garrison; and cost a hundred and forty thousand dollars; left by the J. H. P. Voorhieses. It dates from 1922.

hundred and sixty-two miles of sewers were laid at a cost of close to three million dollars. Two hundred and thirteen miles of streets were graded and half that mileage, surfaced; sidewalks and curbings were extended on all sides. For the first time in its existence, Denver began to look tidy.

In his campaign for safety, he made war on the railroad magnates to force them to build the Twentieth Street viaduct. He threatened them with a city ordinance that would require each train to come to a full stop until signalled to proceed by a city watchman. The railroads were in the habit of buying troublesome city councils—they just smiled smugly and laughed off the upstart mayor.

Then, the railroads found they couldn't manipulate this council—a majority were Speer adherents. The council passed the ordinance, and the presidents of the railroads hurried around to a special session in the mayor's office. Angrily they demanded:

"You don't think the people of Denver will let you tie up through train service, do you?"

"The people of Denver probably think citizens' lives are more important. Actually, no one knows how the public will react, but I'm betting my way. The ordinance will be enforced."

Mayor Speer had a characteristic gesture of clenching his fist and banging it on the table to enforce a point, accompanied by a pet phrase. He used it now:

"There you have it, plunk!"

The railroads built the Twentieth Street viaduct at a cost of more than $600,000, of which the city's share was $66,000, a little over ten per cent. This episode illustrated Speer's forcefulness and his dedication to the people. The Colfax-Larimer viaduct was built in the 1912-1916 period, when he was out of office. It cost close to a million dollars and the city's share was around $850,000 in cash and city lots or eighty-five per cent. That other mayor had neither Speer's courage nor his sagacity.

On the score of beauty, the city of Denver remains a perpetual monument to Robert W. Speer. He began with Cherry Creek. In the very early days, it had one claim to prettiness—the cottonwood grove. But these trees were long since gone. The creek was a meandering mass of dried mud, rubbish and tin cans—a convenient city dump. Speer enclosed the wayward creek in concrete retaining walls and, on each side, built a boulevard which is now known by his name.

Other achievements followed. It was Frederick MacMonnies, sculptor of the Pioneer Monument at Colfax and Broadway, who first conceived the idea of a civic center. But Speer put it through. At that time, those blocks were a tangled assortment of apartment houses, residences and gimcrack business buildings. Speer started condemnation proceedings to get rid of them and to build the present sightly core of the town.

Today, nearly every park, statue, fountain and recreational development within the city, and, in addition, the Denver Mountain Parks system (one of the first systems of city-owned scenic and picnic acreage outside the city limits) and the Mt. Evans Drive are due to Speer. His love for Denver is manifest.

Perhaps his greatest contribution to Denver was a simple thing. The town lies on prairie land, land that is natively a waste of coarse buffalo grasses, prairie dog hills, cactus and tumbleweed.

"No town can be beautiful without trees," said Mayor Speer.

He inaugurated an annual tree day in April, 1905. Saplings were given away free to the citizens, who were requested to plant them along the parkings. That first year nearly five thousand tiny trees, their roots enclosed in gunny sacking, were donated to the people. The custom was continued until April, 1912, when on the last tree day eighteen thousand diminutive elms and maples were given away to become in time the stalwarts that now shade Denver streets.

Mayor Speer also loved green lawns and he ordered that every "Keep Off the Grass" sign, owned by the Parks Department, should be dumped in the ash can. To this day, Denver parks are open to the public's care-free enjoyment. One often sees entire families and their belongings spread out for a Sunday picnic, lovers strolling hand-in-hand, and children reveling in the turf. Denver's trees and lawns are a source

SPEER'S DREAM WAS FINALLY COMPLETED

In 1933 the records were moved into a five-million-dollar City and County Building whose bronze doors are the largest in the world and usurped the record formerly held by St. Peter's in Rome. The clock and ten peal chimes in the tower are a memorial to Robert Speer from his wife. The bells weigh from 400 to 4200 pounds and cost $55,000. Imported from Troy, N. Y., they ring out each quarter-hour due praise.

of both pride and care. Each home owner has had to drag about heavy hoses and reset nozzles frequently to get the present effect of abundant greensward.

Most visitors to the arid West take water for granted. They comment pleasantly about the emerald color of Denver's lawns and think no more about it. But to Denver, water is the line between life and death. So important is this story that it has been recorded in the rotunda of the State Capitol in a series of eight murals, painted by Allen True and captioned by Thomas Hornsby Ferril with poetic couplets.

It was plain that if Denver was to grow, she must have water. The *Post* contributed one step in the solution of this problem by a crusade against the privately owned corporation, The Denver Water Company. Their crusade forced the city to buy out the company. Speer contributed another step when he reorganized the physical plant to conserve and efficiently use the Denver water supply.

But that supply was limited. The rainfall on the eastern slope of the Rockies and every acre-foot of water it produced had long since been allocated to irrigation of lands along the Platte and Arkansas and to reservoirs of towns situated near the base of the mountains—Loveland,

FALLEN MEN

The Denver Club was a landmark from 1888 to 1953. It was described by one wit as a "home for fallen men" and by another as being of "Cherry Creek Romanesque" architecture. Nonetheless it had a unique style.

Boulder, Golden, Colorado Springs and Pueblo. Every drop of water was tagged long before it fell from a passing cloud. Denver's growth seemed doomed.

At the turn of the century, David Moffat was working on his transcontinental railroad dream. He wanted to build directly west from Denver to Salt Lake City and, in his preliminary plans, he visualized a two-and-a-half-mile tunnel through the Continental Divide. In 1899, he employed a young civil and mining engineer, George J. Bancroft, familiar with the James Peak terrain, to make auxiliary surveys and to give additional advice on the exact location of the bore. It was then that it occurred to Bancroft that a tunnel could carry something more than tracks through the mountains—namely, water.

In 1900, Bancroft and James Steele took mountain-wise ponies and a pack mule to investigate this possibility. They travelled the crest of the Continental Divide southwest from James Peak to Hoosier Pass to check on the feasibility of diverting Western Slope water to the eastern side of the range. As a result of this trip, filings were made on the Moffat Tunnel project, Berthoud Pass diversion, Vasquez Pass, Williams Fork project, and on the Blue River.

At the end of the trip, Bancroft suggested to Moffat the idea of using the "Pioneer Tunnel" for diverting water. The great Coloradan liked the idea and put up the money to finance Bancroft's filings and preliminary work. Moffat used his own money, since the water project was not an essential part of the railroad plan. Eventually, the Moffat Tunnel filings, together with all of Bancroft's other diversion filings, were transferred to the Denver Water Commission. The town's water problem was solved for years to come.

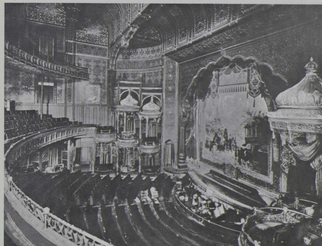
Denver heaved a sigh of relief and expanded as result. From 1900 to 1910 her population rose from 133,859 to 213,381, and in the next decade it reached 256,369. Mayor Speer and Water had made her look fresh and clean. Determined to be a clean city in every sense, in 1915 she shut up the sporting houses on Market Street. Then she settled back like a pleasantly satisfied matron—fair, fat and flourishing—to entertain her visiting friends and relatives.

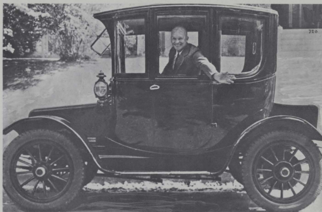
This she continued to do. By 1940, her population had mounted to 332,412. She had a delightful climate, magnificent scenery, and all the requirements to become the center of a national playground. Gratefully, she accepted her role as a tourist town.

Only occasionally did a nostalgia for those rambunctious other days overcome her. In the '30s, the price of gold climbed to $35 an ounce and a renaissance of mining swept over the mountain camps. A few Denver-

THE BROADWAY THEATRE WAS GOLD FILIGREED

One of the most charming buildings ever built in the West was the Broadway Theatre, housed on Broadway between 17th and 18th across from the Brown Palace Hotel. It was entirely of gold with red plush seats and gold-and-red drapes. Its familiar curtain is now a wall-hanging in the El Jebel Temple and some of its woodwork is preserved in decorations of the Cosmopolitan Hotel. But its glamor is destroyed.





JUST AN UNIMPORTANT FAMILY PHOTO

When a sixteen-year-old boy, John Eisenhower, took a picture of his father, Dwight Eisenhower, out in front of his grandmother's home at 750 Lafayette Street in Denver in 1938, no one presumed it would ever be of any importance. The boy's grandmother, Mrs. John Sheldon Dowd, was very fond of her 1912 Rauch-Lang electric and kept it running long after most others had disappeared; now preserved in a museum.

ites entered into the excitement but mostly the city remained complacent. Denver concentrated on ideas for the tourists—on renovating the Central City Opera House and starting a Pioneer Revival Festival there and on completing the Red Rocks Amphitheatre, whose setting had been hewn by nature from stupendous, rose red sandstone slabs.

There were occasional poignant reminders of her more romantic past—such as of Joe Potvin, known to all Denver as the "blind violet man." He was white-haired and always wore a broad-brimmed miner's Stetson while he tended a flower-vending stand on Curtis Street. As the theatre-goers hurried along Denver's former Gay White Way, he pled for purchasers with a monotonous "Roses and violets, roses and violets."

Nearly everyone who passed him knew that he had left his home in upstate New York to join in the Leadville rush; that he had staked out a claim in the Copper King mine and started development. There one night, as he was thawing some frozen dynamite on a stove in his

cabin, it had exploded and blinded him. But the accident did not sour Potvin on mining. While he sold flowers night after night, he dreamed of the riches his mine would some day yield.

During the depression, Potvin looked more and more frail, and his plea sounded strained. In 1932, he was seventy-five years old and during the last few days he worked, he paid $1.50 for flowers that sold only 75c worth. Then suddenly his dream *did* come true. High grade ore was discovered in his mine and Potvin retired to "Easy Street." Occasionally, he sold flowers for something to do. In 1936 when he was nearly eighty years old, he went East and died on the trip.

TOURISTS WERE GRACIOUSLY GREETED

The handsome bronze and steel welcome arch (which stood in front of the depot from 1906 until it was junked in 1931) was designed by the Denver Art Association. Its $25,000 cost was provided by popular subscription. It was 86 feet high and 65 wide and was lit by 2000 "incandescent lights." The reverse side said, "Mizpah," Hebrew for "The Lord watch between us when we are absent from each other."

AMPHITHEATRE

The Red Rocks open-air concerts are an unequalled experience for the sightseer. The natural Wagnerian setting is justly world-famed. The construction was begun in the 1930's by WPA workers housed in a CCC camp nearby.

Denver's last familiar link with her glamorous history was gone. The city honestly shed tears, not so much for Potvin as for the passing of the symbol, the violet vendor had presented nightly, of the unconquerable pioneer spirit—the kind of spirit that had originally made Denver.

But the nostalgic mood faded. After all, this was the twentieth century, mining was a thing of the past and Denver really had nothing to complain about. Perhaps her new role was not so dramatic, but the show in which she was playing promised to be a long-time run.

She settled back and smiled. Denver saw her name on the marquee as a great tourist town.

* * *

As the next quarter of a century was rolling by, the character of Denver changed again. World War II brought air bases, arms plants and a type of industry to the region that were an innovation. After the formal hostilities ceased and the cold war began, this innovation metamorphosed, rather than stopped. A steady western emigration across the continent in the late 1940s and early 1950s was added to a native burgeoning population, and Denver became a true metropolis.

Tourism grew at the same pace as other long-time businesses. But manufacturing pulled far out in front. Mining and reclamation (which had occupied the attention of Denver financiers in the nineteenth century) were largely forgotten except when they related to urban necessi-

SKI COUNTRY

Two hours from Denver is the Continental Divide and some of the best skiing in America. Development of tows began in pre-World War II years and now includes five fine areas close to Berthoud and Loveland Passes.

ties. Denver's concerns were mainly with construction and expansion on a large scale, and this led to an entirely altered sky line and very much enlarged city limits. (The old city is shown at the center of this booklet.)

If no longer primarily a tourist town (as it had been at the time our story closes), visitors still flocked in and were eager to recapture the romance of the past. Until 1958 the Windsor Hotel offered tours to fulfill this desire and many other historic spots catered to the travelers' taste for the historic.

But today museums have taken over from the living. The best way for the tourist to actually see some of the remnants and re-creations of the old Denver is to visit the State Museum at 14th and Sherman Streets, opposite the Capitol. Pictorial dioramas tell the history of the territory as no words can, and costumes and furniture spell the tale of nineteenth-century mansions.

In the West Hall on the first floor is "The Model of Denver," an exact replica of the town in 1860, eleven by twelve feet in size. The men on the board sidewalks are less than half an inch high, and the diminutive oxen and horses on the streets were made exact by being cast in lead from carved wood originals. Indian Row with the Russell-McGaa double cabin, Uncle Dick Wootton's two-storied building, and all the familiar landmarks are there, exactly as they appeared to those who arrived in the second year of the Gold Rush.

Gazing down on the tiny town, it seems incredible that it was roughly but a hundred years ago that Denver looked like this. Yet along those streets walked Kit Carson, the most fearless and trusted of early scouts. He probably marveled as much at what he saw then as we do, looking at the model. He could remember this same spot as a faraway

lonely grove in the wilderness through which, not too many years before, he had led the explorer, "Pathfinder" John C. Fremont.

Still another scout, more publicized than performing, knew the town when it was not much bigger than depicted in the model. He was Buffalo Bill (William F. Cody), who in later years was part of the Sells-Floto Circus, owned by Harry Tammen of *The Denver Post*. Buffalo Bill's "Wild West Show" toured the world and made Denver known to Europe more successfully than any other single factor. Today, Buffalo Bill lies in a grave on a foothill above the town that made him famous. A museum, close by, tells his story.

It is astounding to think that our grandfathers needed men like Kit Carson and Buffalo Bill to show them Denver and to protect them, at the same time, from many dangers. So fast did the century go that all we need is the impulse to see the sights. Everything else has been made fast and easy in their sense, but complicated and confusing in our more modern-world sense.

Problems of urban renewal, airport obsolescence, air and water pollution, and a battle between those who wanted to preserve some of historic Denver against those who wanted to build more and more high-rises concerned the city fathers after the town turned a century old in 1958. The problems multiplied and increased each year thereafter.

But it is still a nice tourist town. Developments such as Larimer Square (a whole renovated and rebuilt section exactly where the Larimer group first perpetrated their claim jumping) and tours of the Governor's Mansion have helped preserve the old flavor. History and its remnants live on, although subdued.

And, of course, there is always the State Museum.

So, at its model of Denver in 1860, we bid you adieu. In some ways, it is exactly the same feuding, individualistic town as it was then, and, in your sight-seeing, we leave you to find out just how and where.

Acknowledgments

(Reprinted from the first edition)

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Addendum:

(Reprinted from the second edition, 1959)

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Cover:

Nick Eggenhoffer kindly gave me one of his sketches which I adapted for cover use.