


University of Colorado School of Education
Campus Box 249 Boulder, CO 80309

February 10, 1992

Max Willsey, Principal
Thornton High School
9351 N. Washington St.
Thornton, CO 80229

Dear Mr. Willsey:

I have enclosed the first part of the history of the Adams 12 district, in connection with which you and George Baily were kind enough to grant me an interview last spring. As you can see, the project has taken a bit of time. Since the history is being funded through the Partnership in Education at the University of Colorado, my professors have insisted upon the inclusion of background data tying events in the Adams 12 area to social and political changes elsewhere in the State and the Nation. For this reason I had to take time out from my research in the Adams 12 district to do the requisite background research.

The history enclosed only goes up to the organization of Adams County School District 12. Therefore no interviews with current school district personnel are included. However there is quite a bit of information culled from *The Forgotten History of Adams County*, the series put together by Dick Marcy's "Mountain, Plain & Plateau" class.

This spring I will again be interviewing long-time district personnel as I work on the second half of the Adams 12 history, which I hope to finish by June. Thanks again for your help! If you have any feedback or corrections on the part of the history which is enclosed, I would be grateful for your comments.

Sincerely,



Liane Brouillette

Early History

of the

Adams County School District 12 Area

compiled by

Liane Brouillette

The Earliest Inhabitants

Artifacts found at Dent, 40 miles north of Denver, suggest that hunters occupied that area some 11,250 years ago. Similar evidence from Lamb Spring, 25 miles southeast of Denver, also indicates that the Front Range has attracted people for more than 10,000 years. These sites and other excavations have given archaeologists a glimpse of the region's early residents. From at least as early as 9000 B.C. until shortly after the 1859 gold rush, nomadic bands hunted in eastern Colorado. At first they stalked large beasts--camel, giant bison, and mammoth. As those creatures died out, hunters pursued smaller animals.¹

Knowledge of the earliest residents of the Front Range area is sketchy, based upon accidentally discovered archaeological evidence. For example, in about 1900 a black cowboy named George McJunkin noticed some old bones sticking out of the side of a ditch, nearly twelve feet down. When he got down from his horse to look at the bones more closely he noticed that they were bigger than cattle or buffalo bones. McJunkin dug them up and took them home to show to friends. Many years later an archaeologist named J.D. Figgins heard about the bones and, after examining them, determined that they came from giant bison that had lived more than 10,000 years ago. Digging further, he found that no less than 30 giant bison had died in the area near Folsom, New Mexico, where the original bones were found. While digging up the bones, Figgins also found some stone points that looked like big arrowheads. Back then, no one thought that people had lived in North America so long ago. Yet, these findings raised questions. Could these giant bison have been killed by people? After two summers of careful digging, Figgins found a stone point laying between two bison rib bones. The bison had been killed by a person who had thrown a spear.²

Spear points like those found by Figgins came to be known as "Folsom Points" and the people who had killed the bison were called "Folsom Men." Later on, many Folsom Points were found in Colorado. What Folsom Men looked like is not known. Yet even Folsom Men may not have been the first human residents of Colorado. Other bones and stone points have since been found which appear to be even older. Near Greeley mammoth bones have been discovered in a position which has caused speculation that early people may have chased the mammoths over a cliff, then thrown big rocks and spears to kill them. The spear points found with the mammoth bones are different than those used by Folsom Man and are referred to as "Clovis" points. Scientists speculate that the

¹Leonard, S. J. and Noel, T. J. (1990) *Denver: Mining Camp to Metropolis* (Niwot, CO: University Press of Colorado), p. 14.

²Downy, M.E. and Mercall, F.D. (1976) *Colorado: Crossroads of the West* (Boulder, CO: Pruett Publishing Company), p.4.

mammoths died over 11,000 years ago. Just 200 years later these animals would be extinct and people would have to find other animals to hunt.¹ This leaves a mystery. Were the people who used the Clovis points a different group from those who used the Folsom points? Or did the people who had hunted mammoth with the Clovis points simply adopt a different kind of point, better suited for hunting the smaller bison, after the mammoth died out?

Archaeologists continue to look for more evidence. For those who enjoy a mystery, still another candidate for "earliest Coloradan" has now been found. Some Boy Scouts hiking in the Sandia Mountains of New Mexico found a cave with some broken pottery on the floor. Frank Hibben, an archaeologist, went to look at the cave and began digging there. He found more pottery, but it was only a few hundred years old. When he dug deeper, he found bison bones and Folsom Points. Hibben kept on digging, coming to an even deeper layer in which there were bones of extinct horses, camels, mammoths, and mastodons. Spear points found beside these bones were unlike any found before.² The makers of these points were named Sandia Man. They may have lived 15,000 to 20,000 years ago. They may have also hunted in the area we now call Colorado. They may have been related to Folsom and/or Clovis Man. Or perhaps they weren't.

What is known is that the Native American tribes which occupied the Front Range area when Colorado became part of the United States were relative newcomers. People which have been described by archaeologists as belonging to the Dismal River culture established villages on the South Platte around 1300 A.D. However when the Spanish settled in New Mexico, Apaches controlled eastern Colorado. The Apaches were ousted by Comanche and Kiowa raiders from the north. Then around 1800, the Cheyenne and Arapahoe occupied northeastern Colorado, ousting the Comanches and Kiowas. All this change on the plains contrasts strongly with the long residence of the Utes, their past shrouded in prehistory, in central and western Colorado. Yet even on the plains some things have remained constant. Successive groups of people moving onto the semi-arid plains have camped in the same well-watered spots.³ Thus the places that would later attract Euro-American settlers had often been familiar stopping places for Native American tribes.

Spanish Explorers Come North from Mexico

Within fifty years of Columbus' discovery of what Europeans came to refer to as the New World, Don Francisco Vazquez de Coronado is said to have led a splendidly equipped expedition to the borders of Colorado in hope of

¹Ayer, E. (1981) *Indians of Colorado: The Colorado Chronicles, Volume 3*. (Frederick, CO: Platte'n Press) p. 4.

²Downy, & Metcalf, p.6

³Leonard & Noel, p. 14

finding riches. Searching for cities of gold in the unknown lands north of Mexico, he is said to have crossed the Arkansas River in what is now the southeastern part of Colorado. However in 1541 Coronado had no way of knowing that the austere region to which the Spanish gave the name "Colorado" or "color red"¹ would in the future produce fabulous amounts of the golden treasure he sought. Finding no fabled cities or readily available riches, these first European explorers straggled back to Mexico. Although the Spanish continued to lay claim to the undefined area north of Mexico, it was not till the mid 19th century that gold-seekers found the rich veins of ore hidden beneath the Colorado mountains.

The first recorded report of an event involving Europeans taking place in what is now Adams County is connected with an unauthorized expedition led by Francisco Leyva de Bonilla and Antonio Gutierrez de Humana. The expedition spent the winter of 1594 in what is now New Mexico. The next spring they pushed north in search of gold to the river identified by historian Alfred B. Thomas as the Platte River. All members of the expedition were massacred there except for the guide, Josephe, who returned to Mexico, bringing word of what had happened. At that time the area was inhabited by the plains Apache, who considered the land their own and the Spanish expedition an invasion force. Yet during the next century it would be contact with the Spanish in New Mexico, from which they would obtain horses, metal and other trade goods, that would profoundly change the till then agricultural Apache culture. They would become the first tribe to develop the nomadic economy, based on the horse and on the vast herds of buffalo that roamed the Great Plains, which we routinely associate with the Plains Indians.²

During that period this area was on the borderland of Spanish settlements in *Nuevo Mexico*. The first such settlement was established in 1598 when Don Juan de Onate, an *adelantado* or colonial contractor, set out with 130 families, 8 missionaries, 270 Indian and Black slaves, 83 wagons full of supplies and 7,000 head of livestock to establish the first Spanish settlement on the upper Rio Grande River. In August, 1598, six years before the English founded their first permanent colony at Jamestown, Virginia, Onate founded San Juan, capitol of the new "Kingdom and Providences of New Mexico." The capitol was moved by his successor to Santa Fe, about 30 miles south, in 1609. The Palace of the Governors in Santa Fe was built in 1610, ten years before the Pilgrims landed at Plymouth, and is still in use by the present governor of the state of New Mexico.³

Even before the Spanish arrived, the Plains Apache had traded with the Pueblos at Taos, Pecos and elsewhere in what later came to be called New Mexico. They continued to come to trade after the Spanish settled in the area.

¹ *Distinctive Denver* (Denver, Colorado: Denver Chamber of Commerce) 1926, p. 6

² Wagner, Albin, *Adams County: Crossroads of the West, Volume II* (Adams County, CO: Board of County Commissioners) 1977, p. 6.

³ *Ibid*

From the South Platte, the old Indian trade route followed Cherry Creek south to the headwaters of Fountain Creek at present-day Colorado Springs, then went on to the Arkansas River and on south along its tributaries toward New Mexico. In later times, when it was used by the mountain men, it came to be known as the "Trapper's Trail." There is strong evidence that in later years an annual *rendezvous* or trade meet between the Indians and New Mexicans developed on the South Platte in the area of present-day Adams County.¹ However Spanish control of the area was soon challenged by the French. Traders called *coureurs de bois* or rangers of the woods were finding their way from Illinois and Louisiana up the western branches of the Mississippi and Missouri Rivers toward *Nuevo Mexico*.

FROM BEAVER PELT TO GOLD FEVER

The first treasures to be gathered from the high Rockies by immigrants from Europe were furs. At a time when beaver hats were the height of fashion in the cities of the eastern U.S. and in Europe, there were fortunes to be made by those daring enough to cross the "Great American Desert" and trap beaver in the mountain fastness beyond. For those determined to try their luck the South Platte River offered a convenient water route leading from the Mississippi-Missouri River system to the heart of the Rocky Mountains. From its headwaters west of Pike's Peak, the South Platte penetrated the Rampart Range, to flow out across the plains, meeting the North Platte in what is now Nebraska, just beyond the north-east corner of Colorado, to form the Platte River which met the Missouri near Omaha. Peter and Paul Mallette, the first Frenchmen to penetrate from Illinois to Santa Fe, are credited with having given the river its French name "Plate," meaning shallow or flat, in 1739.² The name stuck, in a misspelled version, as the Platte. Fur trappers travelled the route along the Platte in increasing numbers, trading furs for supplies. In 1806 Lewis and Clark, returning from exploring Louisiana Territory, met 11 different parties of fur traders ascending the Missouri in a single month.³ Nor were the trappers the only people who were on the move.

Already living in the area between the South Platte and Arkansas Rivers were the Jicarilla division of the Apaches. The Pawnee, who lived in mud-covered tipis, farmed in what is now Nebraska. Between 1719 and 1749 the Comanches poured into South Platte area from the Northwest, crowding out the Apache. Other tribes were being pushed farther and farther west by the advancing white civilization. A "ripple effect" had become observable. Eastern tribes displaced by the advancing American frontier crowded out their western

¹ *Ibid.*, p. -

² Wagner, Albin, *Adams County: Crossroads of the West, Volume I* (Adams County, CO: Board of County Commissioners) 1977, p. 8.

³ Wagner, *Volume II*, p. 8.

neighbors, who were in turn forced to move. Sometime before 1800 the Kiowas, a tribe with quite different speech and customs, drifted into the Platte-Arkansas area. At about the same time the Arapahos, Algonquins from Northern Minnesota, made a final migration and settled in the high plains area.¹ The Arapahoe, whose name meant "many tattoos," had been pushed southward by the Sioux.² George Bent, Colorado's first trader, reported that great numbers of Cheyenne did not move south of the Platte until 1826,³ the Cheyenne at that time having heard about the great number of horses between the Platte and the Arkansas.

Territorial claims made by European nations were also changing. Since 1682 the French had claimed, as part of the territory of Louisiana, the Mississippi River and all rivers draining into it. However in 1763, the French transferred back to Spain all of their Louisiana country west of the Mississippi. The French and Indian War (which began in Ohio territory in 1754 when George Washington and the Virginia militia were defeated by the French at Fort Necessity) had gone badly for the French. Though forced to cede all their territory east of the Mississippi to England, the French did not want England and its American colonies to gain control of France's North American possessions. This was avoided by ceding the territory west of the Mississippi to Spain. Within decades, though, the American and the French Revolutions radically had changed relationships among the competing factions. By 1800 Napoleon was able to return the territory transferred to Spain to the possession of France. However in 1803, in need of funds and determined to keep France's North American territory out of British hands, Napoleon sold the Louisiana Territory to the United States for \$15 million.

The much publicized Pike Expedition, the first official attempt by the United States to ascertain what it had bought, did not use the South Platte route. However the second expedition, that of Major Stephen Harriman Long in 1820, followed the South Platte all the way to the mountains. Long was a Dartmouth graduate and had been an instructor at West Point. His expedition covered twenty-five miles per day and reported seeing immense herds of bison blackening the whole country and vast numbers of horses, descended from the domesticated stock originally introduced by the Spaniards. At times they were fooled by the great open spaces, where wolves could look as big as horses and sometimes buffalo seemed to be standing in pools of water. Finally, on June 30 they sighted the first landmark of the Rocky Mountains visible from far out on the Platte Trail, the double peak called Two Ears by early trappers but now named after the leader of the expedition. The first official Fourth of July celebrated in Colorado took place in what is now Brighton when Long's party were encamped there

¹Propst, Nell Brown, *Forgotten People: A History of the South Platte Trail* (Boulder, CO: Pruett Publishing Company) 1979, p. 2-3.

²Wagner, *Volume II*, p. 9.

³Wagner, *Volume II*, p. 5.

In his official report Long stated that the entire region between the Mississippi River and the Rocky mountains was almost wholly unfit for cultivation and thus uninhabitable. He very effectively spread the word of the Great American Desert. However this did nothing to deter the trappers who prospered greatly from the fur trade between 1822 to 1845. If he were lucky, a trapper could catch two to four hundred beaver in a season. At four to six dollars a skin, a man could earn from one to two thousand dollars a season. In those days carpenters, masons and other such skilled workers were making \$400 to \$600 for a full twelve months' work.¹ There was also the lure of adventure. Christopher "Kit" Carson explained what lured him west:

I was apprenticed to David Workman to learn the saddler trade. I remained with him two years. The business did not suit me, and having heard so many tales of life in the Mountains of the West, I concluded to leave him. He was a good man, and I often recall to my mind the kind treatment I received from his hands. But taking into consideration that if I remained with him and served my apprenticeship I would have to pass my life in labor that was distasteful to me, and anxious to travel for the purpose of seeing different countries, I concluded to join the first party for the Rocky Mountains.²

As more trappers traveled west, contact increased between white men and tribes such as the Cheyenne who inhabited the high plains. Propst describes some of the gestures which were part of the sign language the Cheyenne used with visiting traders. Lifting the hand as if taking an oath meant "halt." Moving the lifted hand back and forth from left to right meant "Who are you? I don't know you." Claspng both hands and shaking them in the air voiced the question "Are we friends?" There were also the signs for the various tribes:

Sioux--sign of cutting the throat with the hand:
 Cheyenne--sign of cutting the arm several times:
 Arapaho--seizing the nose with thumb and index finger.³

Making oneself understood was important. To most of the plains tribes the words "stranger" and "enemy" had the same meaning. There were also the risks presented by the environment itself. It is estimated that one out of five trappers lost his life in the Rockies. The era of these "mountain men" was relatively short, however. Eventually the area became overtrapped and fashion shifted from

¹Mercall, Noel & Smith, p. 64.

²Mercall, Noel & Smith, p. 63.

³Wagner, vol II, p. 11

beaver pelt to silk hats, but not before the craze for beaver had caused the first permanent settlements to be built in Colorado.

These settlements seemed at first of little import to the native tribes who lived on the plains. In the late summer of 1851 thousands of Sioux, Shoshones, Crows, Assiniboins, Arikaras, Arapahoes and Cheyennes gathered at Fort Laramie on the North Platte. Officials told them that the U.S. army only wished to build posts and to secure safe routes for prospectors and settlers on their way to California and Oregon. The government did not want their land. Twenty-seven wagonloads of gifts were delivered. Saying they wanted to promote harmony among tribes who sometimes fought over territory, agents allocated land to each group. A large tract stretching some 200 miles east from the Rocky Mountains between the Arkansas and North Platte Rivers was reserved for the Arapahoe and Cheyennes. Those tribes agreed to the Treaty of Fort Laramie, allotting over 40,000 square miles to fewer than 10,000 Arapahoes and Cheyennes. However the treaty was never ratified. Soon gold would be discovered in Colorado.¹

EARLY ADAMS COUNTY HISTORY

In *The Forgotten Past of Adams County* Thornton High students in the class of Richard Marcy and William O'Conner in 1976 described how Native Americans, probably Arapahoe or Southern Cheyenne, used Eastlake Hill, now near the corner of 144th and Colorado Blvd., as a lookout point. This is the highest point in the area currently known as Adams County. Much of the history of early Adams County recounted here is based upon the research done these students and those who followed after them in a unique class called "Mountain, Plain, and Plateau" which not only learned about Colorado History and geography but also went out and did research, conducting their own "field work," digging, and sorting working from a list of unsolved puzzles connected with Adams County compiled by the State Historical Society.

The story of the fur trading post, Fort Convenience, was more of a puzzle than most. Beginning only with the bewildering clue "Fort Vasquez No. I," they set off to investigate whether the Fort Vasquez they had read about in the history books was number II, and whether the original had been built in Adams County. In pursuit of their research they travelled to the Fort Vasquez museum near Greeley, where they were told that Louis Vasquez had built many forts in the area. A plaque to the museum said that Vasquez had also built a Fort Convenience five miles north of Denver. Was Fort Vasquez No. I actually another name for Fort Convenience, located "conveniently" in Adams County?

Louis Vasquez and William Sublette, experienced explorers and trappers, were employed by the Rocky Mountain Fur Company, which was involved in

¹ Leonard & Noel, p. 15 & 484.

exploring and documenting the wilderness area of northern Colorado in order to expand a dwindling supply of fur. In the 1820's both men had been involved in exploring the western regions. There was uncertainty whether this portion of North America belonged to the United States or to Mexico or perhaps simply to the Native Americans who lived there. It was to the advantage of Americans wishing to claim sovereignty that new settlements in the area should be referred to as "Forts." But it is likely that the little shack known as Fort Convenience was never strongly fortified but merely a rest stop with an imposing name.

The Fort was made of cottonwood logs and adobe bricks. When completed the Fort consisted of a crude dwelling, a trading store, a shop, and an enclosed corral. It was used as a center of fur trade, a trading post, and a place where mountain men could buy such supplies as flour, salt, gunpowder, and lead for making bullets. However the main use of the Fort was probably to store furs and supplies. Vasquez and his men used the Fort as a base of operations and went to the Indians to trade. As a mountain man might spend months trapping alone, Vasquez tried to make visits they made to the Fort times to remember. He threw "whingdings" with jugglers, wrestlers, music, games of chance and shooting matches which would go on for days. Indians who lived nearby would dance and sing for the men they did business with, bringing with them women whose presence was most welcome.

Vasquez himself spoke eight languages and, because he could read and write, stayed in the Fort and did the bookwork while his men did the trading. In a letter believed to have been written while he was at Fort Convenience he asked for some novels from his brother, whom he called Godfather. While Vasquez was in St. Louis in 1832 to buy a year's supply of odds and ends used for trade, a newspaper there wrote, "The Old Mountain man, Louis Vasquez is in town. He is purchasing supplies for his newly established trading post at the foot of the Great Rockies." Although Vasquez was only in his early thirties at the time, he had spent so much time in the mountains and had led such a hard life that he was, nevertheless, known as "The Old Mountainman." The fact was, in the old west an average life span was about thirty years. Life was hard. Sometimes a "bath" on the trail meant draping your clothes across an anthill so that the ants could eat the lice and bedbugs. Much of what passed for medicine was merely whiskey and syrup.

Due to its bad location, Fort Convenience was abandoned about the fall of 1835. The river which had been intended to be used to float furs to market was not deep enough. There was competition from other forts. Fort Convenience had become "inconvenient."¹ At its peak it was garrisoned by no more than 20 hunters. No physical evidence remains. Due to the fact that early trappers

¹Frank, T. & Hughes, S. "The Overland Trail and Stage Route," in *The Forgotten Past of Adams County*, vol.III, p. 1.

²Ota, J.; Salazar, A.; Sicola, S.; Sullivan, J.; Anderson, D.; Kieffe, L.; Russell, S.; & Woehle, T. "Fort Convenience," in *The Forgotten Past of Adams County*, vol. I.

attached little significance to an outpost's name, the history of those early years is sketchy. However, judging from the position of other posts built on the South Platte, Fort Convenience was probably built on the east side of the river, the side the old Trapper's Trail was on, and located on the first terrace above the river bed. This would put it in the area of the present Adams County Social Services Building, 4200 E. 72nd Ave., in Commerce City.¹ The saga of the Vasquez Forts continued with the building of Fort Sarpy, Fort Lancaster, and Fort St. Vrain. The Fort which bears Vasquez's name was besieged by Indians in 1842 and later burned and abandoned. The era of the fur trapper was waning, but another sort of adventurer was soon to enter the Colorado scene.

Americans Move West

The California-bound 49-ers for the most part by-passed Colorado, going north over the Oregon Trail instead or south over the Santa Fe Trail. However early in 1859 rumours of gold in the Pikes's Peak country fired the imaginations in the Midwest, bringing eager gold-seekers to the Front Range of the Rockies. The financial panic of 1857 had left thousands in the Midwest anxious to better their fortunes and the Colorado gold discovery was much nearer and easier to reach than the previous ones. It has been estimated that 100,000 men crossed the plains to Colorado that year, their frame of mind expressed by the slogan "Pike's Peak or Bust."² However many were disappointed by what they found and by May were returning east. This gold rush petered out in a matter of weeks, but stubborn prospectors who stayed behind found placer gold in paying quantities, triggering a tidal wave of emigration. The boom-and-bust cycle was repeated as the gold which could be easily washed out of stream beds or scooped up at the grass root level was quickly exhausted. Then the same story repeated itself when the discovery of pure silver veins sparked a silver rush to Georgetown in 1864. Soon the easy metal had been picked up and the prospectors wandered away from the Rockies, leaving their shacks to the elements.³

By this time, though, settlement by Europeans of the area which became Adams County had begun. Col. John D. Henderson, a prominent figure in the Kansas border wars between the pro-slavery Missouri "Red-Necks" and the Kansas "Free-Soilers" in the middle 1850's, arrived in Denver in late December, 1858, with a load of groceries consisting mainly of whiskey and crackers. It is said that Henderson, unable to afford hay for his oxen at the inflated prices in the mining camp, turned the team out on the prairie, expecting them to die in the winter. However, while out hunting the next spring, he found them near Bijou Creek, fat and well-fed on buffalo grass. Seeing this evidence that the area would

¹Wagner, Vol II, p. 13.

²Wagner, *Volume II*, p. 16.

³Arps, Louisa Ward, *Denver in Slices* (Denver, Colorado: Sage Books) 1959, pp. 15-17.

support cattle, and knowing that the new settlements were hungry for fresh beef, Henderson set out to establish a ranch 15 miles north of Denver. He settled on an island in the Platte River, later known as Henderson's Island, now the site of Adams County Regional Park. By 1861 Henderson had 2,000 head of cattle. His ranch was a prominent feature on early maps of Colorado.¹

Among those who came to Colorado in 1859 were five men from Illinois and Wisconsin--William Hazzard and his brother George W. Hazzard, Andrew Hagus, Thomas Donelson and James Bundell--who, after prospecting with little success in the mountains, returned to the South Platte and staked out five claims along the river. After more prospecting, they came back in October to build five cabins on the claims. George Hazzard and Andrew Hagus, the two unmarried members of the party, were left to guard the cabins while the other three returned to their families for the winter. These three returned with their families in the spring of 1860, bringing with them Frank Aichelman. The men then left their families to farm the claims while they prospected in the mountains. However, at least one man, Andrew Hagus, remained behind to help raise vegetables and "supplies" for sale in Denver and the mining camps.²

Supplying many of the necessities that would otherwise have to be shipped from the East, these small farms came to be recognized as important to Denver and the mining camps. All the men seem to have continued to try their hand at mining over the years, but they always returned to their farms, where they grew grain, some garden crops, and a variety of livestock. The hay they raised was "bottom hay," the long grasses that grew along the river bottom. More farm families moved in, many turning to irrigation to insure enough water for their crops. The Brighton Ditch, first called the Elkhorn Ditch, dates from December, 1863. On February 16, 1865 Hiram J. Graham, Greenbury J. Ross, and Orris Knapp organized the Fulton Ditch Company, which dug what was to become the major canal in the area.³ This move reflected great faith in the future of the area, given a number of disasters which hampered development.

Swarms of grasshoppers had destroyed the crops in 1862 and 1864. In 1863 a fire had destroyed most of Denver. The flood of 1864 not only damaged crops but also had washed away the settlers' homes along the river bottoms. The Civil War was still being fought. A more immediate threat, however, came from deteriorating relations with the Indians.

WHAT BECAME OF THE CHEYENNE AND ARAPAHOE

Gold seekers in 1858 and 1859 had enjoyed generally peaceful passage across the plains. The site where Denver was founded had been a favorite

¹Wagner, *Volume II*, p. 22

²Wagner, *Volume II*, p. 16-17.

³Wagner, *Volume II*, p. 17.

campground of the Arapahoe, who relished the wild cherries which had given Cherry Creek its name. Early prospectors mingled with hundreds of natives. One of the first journalists to visit Denver, Albert Richardson, looked out from his cabin on a dozen Indian lodges, where he saw "braves lounging on the ground wearing no clothing except a narrow strip of cloth around the hips," as well as women "dressing the skins of wild animals or cooking puppies for dinner." Nearby there were "naked children playing in the hot sand."¹

Some of the Arapahoes and Cheyennes even left their wives and children camped near Denver when they went off to fight the Utes.² Such good relations did not last, however:

The Indians needed open land as hunting grounds. The settlers wanted to own it, and dig ditches through it. Ranchers wanted the grass for their cattle. They thought that the Indians did not need all of the land. The Indians did not live by farming and raising cattle. They lived by hunting the buffalo, which needed wide, open spaces for grazing. The buffalo were afraid of places where many people lived, and so they began moving farther and farther away. It became harder for the Indians to find enough buffalo to eat. Soon they saw that the farms, ranches, and towns were crowding them off of their land.³

Horace Greeley, touring the goldfields in June 1859, pleaded for compassion, predicting that otherwise the aboriginal people "will be extinct within the next fifty years." Few paid attention. In April, 1860, "drunken devils and bummers" attacked Indians camped near Denver and raped the women. The old mulatto trapper, James Beckwourth, called it "hellish work," lamenting that the natives had been "abused worse than dogs" on their own land.⁴ Compassion, however, was less interesting to boomers and gold seekers than land. In order to gain clear title to farms and mines, to Denver, Golden, Central City, and Boulder, the promises made at Fort Laramie in 1851 had to be undone.

In 1860, Indian agent Albert G. Boone, grandson of the frontiersman Daniel Boone, approached the Cheyennes and Arapahos. The government sent them gifts, and Boone spent his own money to buy more. In early 1861 his investment paid off. Some of the chiefs agreed to the Treaty of Fort Wise, which gave the United States control of the Denver area and most of the rest of northeastern Colorado. The flawed treaty--not all the chiefs signed it--was signed

¹ Leonard & Noel, p. 16

² Downey & Metcalf, p. 111.

³ Downey & Metcalf, p. 112.

⁴ Leonard & Noel, p. 16

on February 18, 1861, just 10 days before Congress made Colorado a territory.¹

The native tribes were ravaged not only by hunger but by diseases, to which they had little resistance, brought in by Euro-American immigrants. Elbridge Gerry, sent by Governor Evans in 1863 to inquire as to why the Southern Cheyenne had not kept their promise to meet with the white chief, was informed that their camps were ravaged by whooping cough and diarrhea, and that in just the two months since Gerry's last visit thirty-five of their children had died.²

The sodbusters were a main part of the problem. By plowing up and fencing in the land, they were destroying the centuries-old buffalo migration patterns. But it was not just the disruption of the food supply of the Plains people that was at the heart of the matter. What forced the open conflict was the confrontation between two incompatible cultures. "Thou shalt not steal," said the Bible of the eastern Americans. "Thou shalt steal from the enemy, and it will give thee great honor," said the code of the Plains Indians. Killing and scalping an enemy would bring honor, perhaps not as much as counting coup, but it did show bravery, and being brave was the most important thing for a man.³

With fewer and fewer buffalo to be found, some Indians began raiding ranches, killing or driving away the ranchers' cattle and horses. The settlers were angry and afraid. Troops were sent after the Indians. Armed clashes resulted. Raids and military retaliations became more violent. The Civil War prevented regular army units from being sent west, so local army units were made up of Colorado volunteers who were strongly influenced by the climate of fear created by news of Indian raids and the widespread suspicion, fired by news of the Sioux uprising which had killed several hundred whites in Minnesota in 1862,⁴ that the Sioux were uniting the tribes for a war against the whites. The widespread feeling of calamity was further magnified by natural disasters, such as the flood which had washed away a sizable part of Denver and the grasshopper plague.

On November 29, 1864, the First and Third Colorado Cavalry under the command of Colonel John C. Chivington attacked and massacred the peaceful Cheyenne and Arapahoe camped on the reservation set aside for them on Sand Creek, a tributary of the Arkansas River. In reprisal all the Plains Indians rose

¹ Leonard & Noel, p. 16

² Hoig, S. (1961) *The Sand Creek Massacre* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press) p. 32

³ Metcalf, Noel & Smith, p. 87-88.

⁴ Hoig, p. 54.

up, attacking wagon trains, stage stations and isolated settlers. Settlers in the Adams County area sought shelter within the adobe walls of old Fort Lupton or sent their families to Denver. In Denver people barricaded themselves in the Mint, expecting the city to be burned, as Julesburg was in 1865. Volunteer troops escorted stage coaches and freight wagons to Denver to keep the city from starving. Eventually the end of the Civil War allowed regular troops to be sent west. However trouble continued in the South Platte area until 1867, when the Arapahoe were resettled on reservations in Oklahoma and Wyoming and the Cheyenne in Oklahoma and Montana.¹ Fighting continued in eastern Colorado until 1869, when General Eugene Carr, assisted by William "Buffalo Bill" Cody, defeated Cheyenne chief Tall Bull south of Sterling.²

BUFFALO TRAILS TO RAILROAD TRACKS

"The buffalo trail became the Indian trail, and this became the trader's 'trace'; the trails widened into roads and the roads into turnpikes and these in turn were transformed into railroads." Thus did Frederick Jackson Turner describe the process by which settlement of the West took place. This was very much the pattern which settlement followed in the area of Colorado which became Adams County. The South Platte River and its tributaries are the dominant geographic feature. Early pioneers traveling across the plains needed water both for themselves and their livestock, so wagons going west followed the same river that had once carried the fur traders' canoes. Wagon trails became roads. Eventually these roads were supplemented by railroads.

There are a few places where traces of the old wagon trails have survived. One of these is in Adams County. In 1917, while working on his farm on County Road 2 1/2, east of Brighton, John Williard, Sr., discovered an old wagon trail which had been used by early settlers. Among the artifacts left by the settlers were a shingling cleaver, wagon spokes, wagon hubs, many mule and horse shoes, as well as a bolster, which was a curved piece of wood used to support the canvas over the wagon. After doing some research at the State Historical Society, John Williard, Jr., found that the trail crossing the property was called the South Platte cutoff. Heavy wagons had followed the Platte River all the way into Denver, but the lighter wagons had followed the South Platte cutoff, which split from the trail used by the heavier wagons at Julesburg. Used roughly from 1800 to 1870, the South Platte cutoff went through Fort Morgan, Fort St. Vrain, Fort Vasquez, Fort Lupton, and on into Denver.³

Denver had been founded by gold-seekers who, in the late fall of 1858, chose to establish a camp at the mouth of Cherry Creek instead of heading home

¹ Wagner, *Volume II*, p. 17.

² Leonard & Noel, p. 20.

³ Black, M. & Rassmussen, B. "Wagon Trail," in *The Forgotten Past of Adams County, Vol IV*, p. 68-69

for the winter. The road from Denver to the settlement at Boulder, known as the Salt Lake road, was heavily travelled. Supplying the mountain mining camps was Denver's whole reason for existence in the early days. By the early 1860's James Baker, a well known hunter, scout, guide and Indian fighter, had built a toll bridge over Clear Creek just beyond the present corner of 53rd and Tennyson. Denver was only four miles away from Baker's bridge while other crossings over Clear Creek were 15 or more miles from the rapidly growing city. The fee was said to vary according to Baker's mood, but in general was \$1 for a wagon and \$.50 for a horse. During some days traffic was so heavy that it would be backed up two miles, waiting to cross.

Between Denver and such Missouri River towns as Kansas City, Leavenworth, Atchison, and Omaha lay 600 miles of prairie, much of it devoid of white settlers. During the first rush to the mountains in 1858 and 1859 people had crossed the plains pushing wheelbarrows and handcarts, riding in farm wagons and prairie schooners. On May 7, 1895, the first coaches of the Leavenworth and Pike's Peak Express arrived in Denver, travelling in pairs for protection and bringing in passengers, mail, and excess freight.

The stage's arrival became the high point of daily life in Denver. At the sound of the rumbling vehicles drawn by four horses or mules--a ruckus that could be heard a mile away, townspeople rushed to the depot. Only high rollers--politicians, journalists, gamblers, fancy ladies and financiers--could afford the ride, but everybody could enjoy the spectacle as passengers tumbled out and dusted themselves off. Mail was quickly taken to the post office where homesick folk waited in long lines. The stage company charged \$.25 per letter in addition to federal postage, inspiring some to read their mail, then return it as someone else's and demand a refund.

When the Pike's Peak Express went bankrupt in 1860, it was bought and merged with another stage line to form the Central Overland California and Pike's Peak Express. Tri-weekly stage service to Denver ran along the east bank of the Platte through what we now know as Adams County.² The overextended COC&PP also ran out of money (prompting employees to call it "Clean out of Cash and Poor Pay") and was sold at auction in 1863 to Ben Holladay, the Western stagecoach king.³ Holladay changed the name of the company to the Overland Stage Line. In 1864 and later the company was hurt badly by Indian retaliation for the Sand Creek Massacre. The stage station at Julesburg was

¹ Leonard & Noel, p. 23.

² Frank, T. & Hughes, S. "The Overland Trail and Stage Route," in *The Forgotten Past of Adams County*, vol. III, p. 1.

³ Leonard & Noel, p. 34.

burned along with the town. However Wells Fargo, which bought Holladay out in 1867, continued to serve railroadless parts of Colorado into the twentieth century.

In 1866 Denver received a severe blow when the Union Pacific railroad announced, quite logically, that it would route its tracks through the plains of Wyoming rather than over the mountains west of Denver. For Denver, the situation was serious. Whereas harbours and river ports carried the trade of other cities, railroads were the lifelines of settlements in the inland West. If Denver was to prosper, it needed a railroad. Aggressive local citizens led by Gov. John Evans raised enough money to finance the Denver Pacific Railroad, which tapped the main line at Cheyenne in 1870.¹ No longer would people in the Denver area be dependent for their supplies upon three-ton wagons lumbering across the plains. No longer would it be necessary to load as much as \$40,000 in bullion on a stagecoach with a guard riding shotgun, and with all the attendant dangers of accidents, Indian raids, and robberies.

Hughes Station or Hughes Junction, located on old Brighton Road where the gravel pit is today, was the first permanent settlement in the vicinity of Brighton. Named for Bela M. Hughes, president of the Denver Pacific, the town consisted of a frame depot, telegraph station, section house, and a few farms and ranches. When first founded in 1860 the station was used for stagecoaches instead of trains. The laying of railroad track began in 1869 at the junction of the Union Pacific in Cheyenne and proceeded southward to the present site of Brighton. From this spot the Denver and Boulder Valley Railroad was also being laid west to the Erie coalfields, and on into the mountains. On June 22, 1870, construction was completed into Denver. The next day the last stage arrived in Denver from Hughes station.² The last run of the once-great Overland Stage was this one between Hughes Station, or Brighton, and Denver.

A few years later Daniel F. Carmichael began buying lots around Hughes Station, platting a town in 1881, and donating land to any congregation that wanted to build a church. His mansion eventually became the first courthouse.³ According to her obituary, Mrs. D. F. Carmichael changed the name of Hughes Station to "Brighton" after her birthplace in Brighton Beach, New York. During the 1880s the town prospered, gaining the Fulton Irrigation Ditch, a newspaper, and incorporation. Main Street boasted Carmichael's \$30,000, three-story opera house, the Kurer-Empson Cannery, and the Great Western Sugar Company plant. In 1904 Brighton out-campaigned Fletcher (now Aurora) and Harris (now Westminster) to become the county seat of the new Adams County.

All through this era John Wesley Hiff of Denver was supplying railroad construction crews with beef, which he fattened on the prairie near Fort Lupton.

¹ Arps, Louisa Ward, *Denver in Slices* (Denver, Colorado: Sage Books) 1959, pp. 17-18.

² Halbach, K. & Cluff, K. "Hughes Station" in *The Forgotten Past of Adams County, Vol IV*, p. 56-59.

³ Leonard and Noel, p. 346.

⁴ Leonard & Noel, p. 346.

Between 1866 and 1876, Iliff bought nearly 30,000 head of longhorn from a Texan named Charles Goodnight. In doing so, he and his partner A. Fenton became part of a huge new industry which was to spawn a unique culture of its own in the years following the Civil War. The first long distance cattle drives were acts of desperation. Like most of the South after the Civil War, Texas was broke. There was no local market for the herds of longhorns which had multiplied while the men were off fighting. In the spring of 1866 many Texas cattlemen made plans to drive their cattle to the new railheads in Kansas for shipment to the East.

Goodnight decided, along with Oliver Loving, to open a trail to Colorado. The first drive was made with 2,000 cattle and 18 riders. Goodnight originated the design for the well-known chuck wagon (later manufactured by the Studebaker Company) for the long drive. The trail opened by Goodnight, continuing on up to Wyoming, passed through Adams County and benefitted the ranchers in the area by offering a source of stock. A new kind of prairie culture quickly grew up, that of the open range, in which men on horseback guarded tremendous herds of half-wild, long-horned descendants of the Spanish cattle first brought to *Nuevo Mexico* by Don Juan de Onate and his 400 colonists in 1592.¹

When the first Colorado brand book was issued by the Colorado Cattle Growers Association in 1884, about half the brands were on horses and cows in what is now Adams County. In the three centuries since the ill-fated expedition of Leyva and Gutierrez in 1594, history had come full circle. For it was the Spanish culture which had set the style, evolved the equipment and techniques--even developed most of the vocabulary that would typify the American cowboy. The braided rawhide rope, known for centuries in Spain as *la reata*, became the cowboy's "lariat." Cow hands were known in Spanish as *vacqueros*, an extension of the word *vaca*, meaning cow. Americans changed the term to "buckaroo." The name for the heavy leather trousers, called *chaparreras* and worn for protection in the heavy chaparral thickets, was shortened to "chaps." Yet there was a difference in the economics surrounding cattle raising as it had been practiced by the Spanish and as it developed in the American West. The Spanish had raised cattle mostly for tallow and hides, rather than for meat.² Not till the advent of the railroad was it possible to ship whole herds of cattle raised on the western plains to areas with large enough populations for such vast amounts of meat to be put to use.

FRICITION BETWEEN RAILROADS AND FARMERS STRENGTHENS GRANGES

Before long the Denver Pacific and Boulder Valley Railroads were consolidated with the Union Pacific. Union Pacific trains still pass through

¹ Wagner, *Volume II*, p. 23.

² Wagner, *Volume II*, p. 23.

Brighton. Cotton Creek Elementary School stands on land originally purchased from the Union Pacific railroad in 1869. However friction soon grew between the railroad and the farmers who found themselves dependent upon it. Since the railroads brought manufactured goods from the East and shipped Western cash crops back, the rates charged by the railroads had an enormous impact on the income of western farmers. The farmers, like many other Americans, became convinced that the main cause of the depression of the 1870's was government favoritism, credit schemes and the unbridled rates of the developing railroads.

The fraternal Grange movement grew up among farmers at a time of growing protest against the high prices charged by the railroads. Eventually the Grange was instrumental in getting the Interstate Commerce Act, creating the Interstate Commerce Commission, passed in 1887. Another positive result of Grange activity was the establishment of the Montgomery Ward Company, supported by the Grange, to sell goods more cheaply by mail order. Although the Grange Movement in Colorado began in 1873 in Vasquez (now Wheat Ridge) and Ralston (now Arvada), two early Granges were also organized in what is now Adams County: Platte Valley Grange No. 13, north of Denver, and Fifty-Niner Grange No. 34 at Island Station (now Henderson).¹ The charters of these early Granges have lapsed, but other Granges were organized in the same communities in later years. Northglenn, Colorado, originally crystallized around a grange hall (Riverdate Grange Hall Number 187) which housed not only grange meetings but also social, civic, and religious gatherings.

Throughout the later nineteenth century, the Adams County farming population continued to grow. Since trees were in short supply, settlers out on the plains commonly constructed their first homes with sod cut from the soil on their farms. These houses were cheap to build and fairly warm in winter, when heated by a stove, as well as cool in summer. Cornstalks, straw, corn cobs, even cow "chips" were often used instead of wood in the stove.² The homestead laws at the time required homesteaders to live on the land for three consecutive years and to break sod on 60 acres of land.

Thomas Thompson, a chef in the Harvey Houses or train station restaurants run by the Santa Fe railroad, homesteaded 320 acres at what is now 104th and Lowell in 1882. His wife and three children lived in a dugout in what is now Wandering View while he continued to work for the railroad. The sod was so hard that the horses could not plow uphill. The Thompsons ran cattle on the land, grew hay and were the first farmers in Colorado to plant summer fallowed wheat. In 1884 Joseph Marion, who had been a scout with General Custer, homesteaded the area now known as The Ranch. A claim shack was built. Marion built a two-story brick house on the land in 1907 and lived there with his wife and three children until his death in 1927. Mrs. Marion divided the land

¹ Wagner, *Volume II*, p. 24-25.

² Metcalf, Noel, & Smith, p. 164

among their children who, in 1940, sold the land to Mr. Wilkins. In 1948 Wilkins sold the land to Fred Ward, one of the top Hudson automobile dealers in the U.S.

The Wards raised and showed gaited, American standard-bred horses. One of the two barns on the property was turned into a luxurious show barn with wooden floors, paneled walls, and offices. All the buildings on the property were painted white with red trim. There was a swimming pool behind the house. A long driveway with tall trees on either side led to the house. There were twenty-seven miles of fence around the Ranch. Fred Ward was known for flamboyant gestures. One morning he and his guests flew to Albuquerque just to have breakfast at one of his favorite restaurants. When celebrities were in Denver, Ward would invite them to stay at the Ranch so that they could get away from the city. Some of his more prominent guests included the actors Bob Hope and Jane Russell. This luxurious life was cut off, however, when Fred Ward was convicted of double-mortgaging Hudson automobiles in 1951. He spent five years in the state prison at Canon City and two years in the federal penitentiary at Leavenworth, Kansas. The Ranch was sold in Bankruptcy Court for \$152,000 in 1953. While in prison Ward made \$500,000 by coming up with a washer for women's nylon stockings but he never regained control of the Ranch.¹

EARLY SCHOOLS IN WHAT IS NOW ADAMS COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT 12

During the early gold rush years food and other necessities were exorbitantly high in price as everything which could not be produced locally had to be freighted in. Potatoes grown by settlers in what would later become Adams County could be taken by wagon loads to the mining camps and sold for almost their weight in gold. Gold dust, produced by sluice-mining, was largely used in place of money. Even in these early years, however, people were looking toward the future. Realizing the importance of education, in 1873 parents in the community of Welby circulated a petition with the names of all children from cradle-size to the younger married women so that they could organize a school. Most of the parents were farmers. This school, the original Cline School, was located in an abandoned claim shanty, about twelve feet square, standing on a hillside about forty feet west of the present site of the Cline School on 78th and York in what is now Mapleton School District.²

As far back as 1887 there were organized school districts in Adams County. Before Adam Patten, an early land developer, founded Westlake in 1901 there had been a frame school on the Westlake site. This school served the children of local farm families who produced wheat, oats, hogs, sheep, chickens

¹Depperschmidt, S.; Mortensen, L.; Philippus, G. "Fred Ward Ranch," in *The Forgotten Past of Adams County*, vol. 1, 1976.

²Wood, R.; Mohr, G.; Minor, K. "Cline School (Welby Area)," in *The Forgotten Past of Adams County*, vol. 1, 1976.

and turkeys on their irrigated land. The present brick Westlake School, in what was then School District 34 (now a part of Adams County District 12), was opened in 1902 with 48 students. Westlake School got its name from a lake that was supposed to have been located west of the school (actually it was more to the north of the school) but which is now dried up.

The Westlake School included grades one through eight. One teacher was hired to teach all grades and was paid fifty dollars per month. Immediately the new Westlake School became the center of the community. Social events such as weddings, holiday celebrations and dances were held there. Most of the children belonged to the 4-H Clubs: boys worked on such projects as raising calves, chickens and other farm animals while girls engaged in cooking and sewing projects. Students attended school regularly and scored fairly high on the Stanford Achievement Tests. A boy from Westlake represented the county as one of the twenty-five best spellers in the state. After they completed the eighth grade, if they wished to continue their schooling the District paid tuition for the Westlake students to attend high school in Lafayette, Colorado.¹

In 1836 William Holmes McGuffey had signed a contract with a publisher for a series of texts consisting of four readers, a speller and a primer. These books were widely used throughout the U.S. till the 1920's and were probably the texts used in the Westlake School. The techniques generally used to teach reading included learning the alphabet, spelling the syllables and words, reading orally and memorizing sections of the content. Beyond teaching reading, the primary purpose of the McGuffey Readers was to develop character. Thus they contained stories with dominant themes of kindness, consideration for the aged, and social responsibility.² With only one teacher to teach all eight grades, the help of the older students was necessary to make the school work. They practiced their reading and math skills by working with the younger students.

TRUCK FARMS AND SUGAR BEETS

The extension of irrigation in Adams County gave rise to small "truck farms" along the South Platte which raised cabbage, tomatoes, celery, cucumbers and other vegetables for Denver and the rest of the region. Their produce was most often sold at the Denver City Market. An effort was also made to develop a canning industry based on locally grown vegetables. Max Kuner began the Kuner Pickle Company's association with Brighton in 1895 when he moved a building from Greeley to Brighton as a "salting works" for pickles and sauerkraut. Born in Bavaria, Kuner had come to the United States alone when he was seven years

¹Fleck, E.; Jones, B.; Moulder, B.; Tompkins, M. "Westlake School," in *The Forgotten Past of Adams County*, vol. 1, 1876.

²Johnson, J. E. "Back to Basics? We've Been There 150 Years." *The Reading Teacher* 32 (March 1979) pp. 644-48.

old. The company headquarters was moved to Brighton in 1916, after Kuner's death.¹

The first sugar beets in Colorado were planted by Peter Magnes of Littleton and L.K. Perrin on Clear Creek in present-day Adams County in the middle 1860's. "If we had sugar beet factories in Colorado,...farmers would produce more gold than all the miners in the mountains," wagered Magnes in 1866. Although it took decades, his words proved prophetic. Sugar beets became the most prolific remunerative crop in the state. Six Platte Valley factories consolidated in 1905 as the Great Western Sugar Co., destined to become the largest beet sugar company in the nation. In 1976 the Great Western factory in Brighton could slice about 2,250 tons of sugar beets a day, or 50 carloads, the daily equivalent of 5,400 hundred-pound bags of sugar. During its 85-day period of operation in the fall, the factory could process over 100,000 acres of beets.² However the end in the early 1960's of the *bracero* program, which had brought Mexican nationals into the U.S. to work, had caused beet growers to mechanize or turn to other crops which did not require hand labor. An era ended in Adams County when the Great Western Sugar Company announced in January, 1977, that they were closing the Brighton factory.

WOMEN'S ROLE IN SETTLING THE PLAINS

Lydia Maria Ring, one of Denver's first schoolteachers spent six weeks travelling from Leavenworth, Kansas, to Denver in 1860. When she arrived she could find no place to stay so she lived in a tent for several weeks...As Elizabeth Byers's coach rolled into Denver at sunrise, she felt "like the advance guard of civilization." Elizabeth, who once witnessed a murder and subsequent lynching, later wondered if she would have had the courage to stay if she had known what faced her. "Being a pioneer woman," she reminisced, "wasn't easy, but it never lacked interest."³

Such a sanguine summary might have met with disagreement from other women pioneers. Women who ended up widowed or divorced often sank into poverty and oblivion. In 1888 women made an average of \$6 a week and servants such as cleaning women commonly worked 10 to 15 hours per day. To add insult to injury, businessmen then, as now, usually paid women less than they did men in comparable jobs. A woman clerk complained to the Colorado Bureau of Labor Statistics: "A man in my place would get double the wages I do."⁴ Still,

¹Wagner, Albin, *Adams County: Crossroads of the West, Volume II* (Adams County, CO: Board of County Commissioners) 1977, p. 32.

²*Ibid.*, p. 34-35.

³Leonard & Noel, p. 89-90.

⁴Leonard & Noel, p. 93-94.

western society was more flexible than that on the East Coast and women were able to venture into many traditionally male professions.

During the 1880s, over 800 "Cattle Queens" ran ranches in Colorado. One of the most famous cattlemen was Elizabeth Iliff. After the death of her husband, John W. Iliff, Elizabeth took over their vast cattle kingdom and ran it in a very able way. Other nineteenth-century women added to their family's income by taking in boarders, baby-sitting, and running shops, restaurants, hotels and other businesses. Farm women often sold butter and eggs, poultry and produce.¹

Although the Colorado Medical Association refused to admit women in the 1870s, the Denver Medical Association admitted them in the 1880s. By 1900 the census tallied more than 100 women physicians, or 17 percent of the doctors in the city. Mary Lathrop, who came to Colorado to recover from tuberculosis in 1887, left journalism to become Denver's first woman attorney in 1896. In 1918 she was asked to join the American Bar Association, one of the first women to be included. Teaching employed 1,027 Denver women in 1900, which meant that they constituted nearly 80 percent of the city's educators.²

Such women saw Colorado's majestic landscape from a different perspective than had the prospectors and fur traders. In 1893 a young college-professor, Katherine Lee Bates, was moved to write a poem while standing on top of Pike's Peak. She said, "I was looking out over the sea-like expanse of fertile country," when the opening lines "floated into my mind."³ Her poem "America the Beautiful" includes what is perhaps the most famous description of Colorado's spectacular landscape:

O beautiful for spacious skies,
For amber waves of grain,
For purple mountain majesties
Above the fruited plain!

Yet, despite their many contributions, until 1893 Colorado's constitution allowed women to vote only in school board elections. In 1877 men rejected equal suffrage. Finally the Colorado Equal Suffrage Association, founded in 1890 by six women, challenged the *status quo*. Writer Ellis Meredith—who worked for the *News*, solicited outside help; however national leaders Susan B. Anthony and Lucy Stone were skeptical. "The whole case is at a disadvantage,

¹Metcalf, Noel, & Smith, p. 189.

²Leonard & Noel, p. 96.

³Metcalf, Noel & Smith, p. 6.

Stone told Meredith, "for the fact there was no preparation time in advance."¹ However, with only \$25 in their treasury, 28 local suffragettes went ahead with their campaign. Meredith sought newspaper support. Equal suffrage auxiliaries opened throughout the state. Society ladies lent their names and Baby Doe Tabor donated office space in the Opera House. Organization, editorial support, political endorsements and careful campaigning worked. Legislators referred the suffrage question to the voters in 1893 and Colorado's men approved women's suffrage by over 6,000 votes. A few years earlier Wyoming had given the ballot to women. However it was in Colorado that, for the first time in the United States, men specifically voted for full women's suffrage. In fact, until California sanctioned women's suffrage in 1911, Denver was the largest city in the nation in which women had the right to vote.

WESTMINSTER UNIVERSITY

On June 14, 1891 it was announced in the Denver newspaper that a new Presbyterian University billed as the "Princeton of the West" would be built on top of Crown Point near the farming community of Harris, now Westminster. Construction began but the Panic of 1893 tightened funds and construction of Westminster University had to be delayed. Estimated construction cost had risen to \$1,000,000. In 1899 rumors were going around that the University would have to be abandoned but funds were raised in the East and construction continued. Colorado residents also donated funds, with Maxey Tabor giving \$106,000 from the estate of his mother, Augusta Tabor, first wife of H.A.W. Tabor.

About sixty students were enrolled in coed classes in 1908 but every one of the teachers left the University in April. No records have survived to explain why the faculty disappeared. However a new group of teachers was hired for the 1909-1910 school year. By 1912 the school's debts were paid off, but soon new financial problems arose. Teachers continued to work without pay in an attempt to keep the school from closing. In 1915 the Board of Trustees changed Westminster to an all-male University. This proved to be the death knell for the school. World War I was then in progress in Europe and when the U.S. entered that war most of the Westminster students were drafted. In 1917 the University was forced to close.

In 1920 the building was purchased by the Pillar of Fire Church for \$40,000. The building was reopened as Westminster College and Academy. Five years later the name was changed to Belleview College, no doubt because of the beautiful view from Crown Point. Reverend Ray B. White, son of Mrs. Alma White who founded the Pillar of Fire Church, served as President till his death in 1946, followed by his brother Dr. K. White. In 1928 part of the main building

¹Leonard & Noel, p. 99.

was converted to a radio station, KPOF, which is the oldest radio station in the U.S. still on the air with its original call letters.¹

THE DEPRESSION OF 1893

The Panic of 1893 which threatened Westminster University was but the final factor in an economic debacle from which some thought Colorado unlikely to recover:

Colorado's economy was in jeopardy even before plunging silver prices precipitated collapse in mid-1893. Overbuilt and underfinanced railroads frequently steamed into bankruptcy. Ranching was declining by the 1890s because of overgrazing, hard winters, and stricter federal land laws. On the plains, sodbusters invaded the grassland, unaware that the ample rains that made their fields bountiful in the 1880s would not fall in the 1890s. Mine owners also recklessly expanded. By 1890, Colorado produced nearly 60 percent of the nation's silver. There seemed no end to the supply, but demand was limited. As production increased, prices fell from \$1.05 an ounce in 1890 to \$.83 in early June 1893, and then precipitously to \$.62 by late June. In the high country many silver mines shut down and laid off their workers.²

Many farmers and ranchers lost their land because they could not make mortgage payments. Throughout the summer of 1893 and into 1894 thousands of ex-miners flooded into the Denver area, causing overburdened charities to limit aid to those who had been in the city for at least 60 days. A tent and shack city sprang up at Riverfront Park along the South Platte. Perhaps the most famous riches-to-rags story was that of Horace Tabor, best known of the silver kings, and his second wife, Baby Doe. Tabor was forced to sell his mines, opera houses and office buildings, even his mansion. Eventually Tabor returned to the mountains, bought a "house" for \$10 and started prospecting for a new bonanza. His appointment in 1898 to the Denver postmastership saved Tabor from destitution. However Baby Doe Tabor, who had once worn a \$7,000 wedding dress and a \$75,000 diamond necklace, spent her last years wearing rags and using gunny sacks for shoes. She survived until 1935, the time of the Great Depression, when her frozen body was found in a shack at the Matchless Mine in Leadville.³

¹ Nealer, K.; McCormick, B.; & Lange, M. "Bellevue College," in *The Forgotten Past of Adams County*, vol. 1, 1976.

² Leonard & Noel, p. 103.

³ Metcalf, F.D.; Noel, T. J.; & Smith, D. A. (1984) *Colorado: Heritage of the Highest State* (Boulder, CO: Pruett Publishing Company) p. 186.

THE ORGANIZATION OF ADAMS COUNTY

Present day Adams County was formerly part of old Arapahoe County, first organized by Kansas Territory in 1855 and named after the Arapahoe Indians, then its most numerous inhabitants. Initially the county stretched from the present Kansas border almost to the Continental Divide, an area comprising one fifth of what is now Colorado. Following the Pike's Peak Gold Rush of 1858-59, the new town of Denver, named after the current governor of Kansas Territory, was designated the county seat.¹ As settlers arrived other counties were formed: Boulder (1861), Jefferson (1861), Denver (1902) and Adams (1902). With the creation of the City and County of Denver, the most urbanized areas were assigned to Denver, while the rural regions generally were placed in Adams and Arapahoe Counties.²

When Adams County was first organized in 1902, it was given all the land left over from the old Arapahoe County after the City and County of Denver and South Arapahoe County (the present Arapahoe County) were carved out of it. Thus Adams County originally sprawled across the state, extending all the way to Kansas. However contemporary editorials in the *Brighton Blade* and the *Brighton Register* strongly favored chopping off the eastern end in order to create a county of a more manageable size. In 1903 the eastern half of Adams County was divided between Washington and Yuma counties. Except for annexations by the City and County of Denver which have nibbled away at the county's southwest boundary, Adams County has retained the same boundaries since 1903.³

Adams County was named after Governor Alva Adams, elected in 1896. The first businessman elected governor of Colorado, Adams served three terms during one of the stormiest and most controversial periods in the history of Colorado politics. Born in a log cabin in Iowa County, Wisconsin in 1850, he had moved with the rest of his family to Greeley, Colorado in 1871 due to the poor health of his brother. Adams is credited with building, with his own hands, the first building within the city limits of Colorado Springs, a small lumber office. A Democrat and a fiery orator, Adams was first elected governor in 1886 after a contest for a U.S Senate seat had split the Republican party. Declining a renomination, he then retired to private life. However his party persuaded Adams to run again in 1896. During his second term in office Adams was able to institute many reforms, since he had been elected without the help of Arapahoe County (which then included the City and County of Denver) and was, therefore, in a position to be independent of Denver's political bosses.

¹ Wagner, vol. I, p. 20.

² Leonard and Noel, p 277.

³ Wagner, vol. I, p. 24.

In 1902 Adams came close to being elected to Congress. His last campaign for governor was in 1904, when he ran against Republican incumbent James H. Peabody. This campaign followed close on the Cripple Creek Strike by the Western Federation of Miners, which had ended in the dynamiting of the Independence railway station and the brutal suppression of the union by Governor Peabody. Never in the state's history had a political contest caused such rancor and bitterness. Adams was elected by a margin of approximately 10,000 votes and was inaugurated on January 12, 1905. However the Republican-controlled state legislature appointed a committee of nine Democrats and eighteen Republicans to investigate charges of election fraud. Ample evidence of fraud by both parties was found by the committee, but the Republicans were in the majority both on the committee and in the legislature. On March 16, 1905, the state legislature declared Peabody the winner of the election. Peabody, however, immediately resigned, conducting no business as governor. So, less than 24 hours after the vote on Adams' overthrow, Peabody's Lieutenant Governor, Jesse F. McDonald, was sworn in as the sixteenth governor of Colorado. One reporter closed his account of McDonald's inauguration by saying: "Colorado, always spectacular in politics, is more spectacular than ever in having three different governors within one day!"¹

THE POOR FARM

Before 1933 no public welfare programs existed in Colorado beyond the county level. The only provision made for elderly indigents was the institution known as the "poor farm" set up at the direction of individual counties. In April, 1898 Arapahoe County (which then included what are now Adams County and the City and County of Denver) agreed to buy the McCool Ranch at East 124th Avenue and Henderson Road, originally owned by John Henderson, the first rancher in the region, as site of a new poor farm. The old farm just north of what is now the Adams County line had been found inadequate. When Old Arapahoe County was divided in 1902, the City and County of Denver retained control of the Poor Farm, even though it was in the newly organized Adams County. However the Adams County were able to send people who needed help there.²

In the early years of county government, the merits of each welfare case were decided by the Adams County Commissioners themselves. Adams County was a leader in providing social services to its residents. Pensions were granted to deserving people from funds raised by a special poor tax, and the aged and destitute were sent to the Denver Poor Farm, where residents lived and worked, raising much of their own food. When the depression hit, though, conditions

¹ Wagner, vol. I, p. 22-23.

² Russell, E. & Anderson, T. "Denver Farm" in *The Forgotten Past of Adams County, Vol. II*, 1978, p. 24

deteriorated. The last manager of the County Farm, Harold R. "Duke" Lascelles, was hired by the City of Denver in 1931 after the former superintendent of the farm, Major Harold B. Moore, was shot and killed by one of the residents. When Lascelles arrived with his wife and two children the only equipment the farm had was an old plow and two aged fire horses who took off at a gallop every time the dinner bell rang, thinking there was a fire. However Lascelles, a professor of agriculture at Colorado State University in Fort Collins, was able to turn things around. Under Lascelles' direction the farm became renowned for its prize-winning herd of Holstein dairy cows, considered the top dairy herd in the state.

In 1952 Mayor James Quigg Newton of Denver closed the Denver Poor Farm at Henderson. All the residents, 103 women and over twice that number of men, were moved to various nursing homes around Denver within the short space of three days. Apparently Mayor Newton had planned to use the area for a Denver country club, but the plan fell through after the newspapers criticized him for moving the poor farm's patients. Many of the buildings stood empty for several years while others were leased out by the City of Denver.¹ Finally, in 1960 Adams County purchased the 356 acres for \$176,500 in order to develop it into a regional park and fairgrounds. Adams County was able to excavate enough gravel from the land to pay most of the cost. The hole that was left is now an eight acre lake.²

AFTER THE PANIC

Even in the 1870s cattleman John Iliff had realized that the days of the open range would not last forever. Farmers were moving onto the plains and towns were being built. Iliff began to make changes in the way he did business. Ranchers had been losing a third or more of their herds during storms and harsh winter weather. He began building shelters for his animals and cutting hay for winter feed. Iliff also brought in better breeds of cattle. Longhorn meat was tough and stringy. People preferred Shorthorn and Hereford meat. Also, Iliff was one of the first to realize that the open range could be overgrazed. At the time that Iliff died in 1878 few other cattlemen had followed his example. However, after the disastrous years of the late 1880s, the ranching industry transformed itself, adopting more modern business methods as well as such practices as fenced pastures, winter feeding and better breeds of cattle.³ Although the open range was gone, the cattle industry now had a more solid foundation, taking its place as one of the most important industries in Colorado's economy.

¹Ibid.

²Miller, J.; Kinnear, S.; Owsley, K. "Adams County Fairgrounds," in *The Forgotten Past of Adams County*, Vol. I, 1976.

³Metcalf, Noel & Smith, p. 157-158.

Some of the sting was taken out of the collapse of silver and the 1890s depression by the discovery of gold at Cripple Creek, southwest of Pike's Peak. Cripple Creek was the last of the nineteenth century Colorado mining rushes. However mining had become expensive and was now a big business. The mines were owned by large companies or by stockholders who lived far away. Most of the men at Cripple Creek were miners who worked for someone else. Due to low pay the miners joined labor unions. In 1894 a strike over low wages and long working hours brought a settlement which brought the miners an eight-hour day with \$3-a-day wages. Mining in Colorado had come a long way since 1859--from the lonely miner with his pick and pan to the large company and the hired miner. Yet Colorado had been fortunate compared to other western states whose mining days were over. Mining remained the single most important factor in the state's economy during the last forty years of the nineteenth century.¹

The struggle to extend the benefits won by miners in Cripple Creek to miners elsewhere in the state was far from easy, however. As miners from Idaho Springs to Leadville to Telluride walked off their jobs, numerous brawls, injuries and several murders created bitterness between workers and management. Such violence peaked in 1904 when someone dynamited the Independence Mine depot in the Cripple Creek District, killing thirteen men. Then-Governor James H. Peabody sent in the Colorado National Guard. Striking miners were illegally arrested, locked in "bull pens," and even loaded on railroad cars and shipped to Kansas. On August 11, 1904 the *New York Times* called Colorado's labor wars "a reign of terror." Finally, under reformist Governor John F. Shafroth who held office from 1908-1913, an eight-hour workday law was passed for mining and other dangerous professions. Other reforms enacted during that time included a voter initiative process, primary elections for picking political candidates, a Public Utilities Commission, a state civil service law, prison reform and child labor laws.

By the turn of the century Brighton had emerged as one of Colorado's first agribusiness centers. Until around 1900 German families emigrating from Russia had done much of the stoop labor. Then Naochi "Harry" Hokasono began supplying Great Western and other employers with cheap Japanese labor. During the 1920s the Japanese Association of Brighton was formed to protect their interests, insisting that sharecroppers should give no more than a fourth of their profits to landlords. Many were able to save money, buy their own land, then send to Japan for "picture brides." Both brides and grooms hoped that the other would bear some resemblance to the photographs used by the matchmakers. Whole families worked in the fields. During World War II many Japanese volunteered for military service, often serving in the army's highly decorated, casualty-ridden 442nd Battalion.²

¹ Metcalf, Noel & Smith, p. 114-115

² Leonard & Noel, p. 346-347.

One Adams County resident who remembers those days is Mike Tashiro. His parents came from Japan in 1917 and he was born the following year. The oldest of seven children, he was forced to drop out of Brighton High at the age of 15, when his father became ill. It is a Japanese custom that the oldest of the children supports the household, therefore Mr. Tashiro made sure that the rest of the children got an education. He became a farmer and worked about 100 acres by hand until modern machinery changed the nature of farming, so that he had to farm 200 to 300 acres just to make a living. He decided to try something different, buying a restaurant called the Terrance Inn, located at U.S. 85 and Bromley Lane in Brighton. During World War II, when the government was relocating Japanese from California to camps in Colorado, the Tashiro's were not relocated. This only affected California residents. However they had to live under certain restrictions. For example, they could not go more than 20 miles from Brighton without a special permit. There were thirty to forty Japanese families living in Brighton at the time.¹

BURN LEE SCHOOL SERVES ADAMS COUNTY MINING FAMILIES

Burn Lee School, a one-room school with students attending grades one through eight occupying the same building, was established in 1910, while Governor Shafroth was in office. Heated by a coal stove and lighted by an oil lamp, Burn Lee served pupils living near the Blue Ribbon Mine in Brighton as well as students in neighboring communities. In addition to classroom there was a small room and kitchen for the live-in teacher. Other structures on the property were an outhouse and a three-sided stable/shed for students who rode their horses to school. The property on which the school sat was owned by the Nordstrom family, some of whom still live near the old school site and continue to be active in civic affairs in Adams County.

Located in the far northwest corner of Adams County in School District 6, one mile west of Huron on what is now 160th Ave., Burn Lee was named after its first teacher, Miss Brownley. The student body in 1910 included eighteen students. However fifteen years later enrollment had dropped to almost nothing, largely due to the closing of the Blue Ribbon Mine in 1925. At this time the Burn Lee School Board and County Superintendent decided to move the school. So Burn Lee was moved, using only one horse to do the job, to 160th and Huron. The move caused Burn Lee's enrollment to increase so much that a new room had to be built onto the back of the old structure.

Two new teachers, Miss Alice Wiggitt and Miss Sarsen, came to teach at Burn Lee in 1926. They shared the small living quarters and were paid a salary of \$80 per month. The school was divided into one classroom with grades one through four, another with grades five through eight. Miss Wiggitt taught the

¹ Alderete, L. & Ota, J. "Mike Tashiro" in *The Forgotten Past of Adams County, Vol. IV*, 1981, p. 40-42.

lower grades at Burn Lee from 1926 to 1930. She finally retired in 1971, after 48 years of dedicated service to various Adams County school districts. Due to decreased enrollment, in 1941 Burn Lee went back to being a one-room school. In 1950 when the present Adams County School District 12 was formed, Burn Lee was consolidated with Westlake Elementary, which made up a large portion of the district.

Mrs. Ruth Baxter, who served on the school board from 1935 to the time when Burn Lee was closed in the 1950's noted that "the same year Meritt Hutton was built was the same year Burn Lee ended." Another former pupil of Burn Lee, and a school board member, Peter Nordstrom recalled of the eight years he spent at the Burn Lee school, "there were not more than eight houses around at the time." Although the boundaries for Burn Lee stretched all the way from the Weld County line to 144th in Brighton, "There were no buses, so the kids had to walk."¹

WORLD WAR I

World War I began in Europe in 1914, four years after Burn Lee opened. At first the war's only impact was to strengthen the local economy. Colorado farmers and ranchers found European markets for their crops and livestock, while Colorado's mining industry enjoyed new booms in copper, lead, zinc, tungsten, molybdenum and coal. However after the U.S. joined the war on the side of the Allies, about 43,000 Coloradans joined the armed forces. One thousand were killed.²

After America's entry into World War I, the army decided to establish a hospital near Denver and on April 19, 1918, broke ground on a 600 acre tract of land at East Colfax and Peoria in Aurora. The site had been the A.B. Gutheil Nursery. Gutheil had been the County Judge for Adams County for many years. His two-story frame home became the residence of the hospital's commanding officer.³ The facility was formally dedicated in October, 1918, but it was not until July 1, 1920, that the installation was renamed Fitzsimmons General Hospital in honor of a native of Kansas, First Lieutenant William Thomas Fitzsimmons, Medical Officers' Reserve Corps, who was the first American officer to die as a result of enemy action in World War I. During World War II Fitzsimmons General Hospital became the world's largest military medical installation.

World War I also influenced people's thinking about education. During the war it was discovered that many soldiers could not read well enough to read the instructions needed in connection with military life. Many articles were written

¹Campling, N. & Darland, D. "Burn Lee School" in *The Forgotten Past of Adams County, Vol. IV*, 1981, p. 1-8.

²Metcalf, Noel & Smith, p. 207

³Wagner, vol. II, p. 40.

lamenting the situation and urging that reading instruction be improved. Among the innovations which took place during this period were a change in emphasis from oral to silent reading; rapid expansion of reading research; and the development of remedial reading techniques.¹

EASTLAKE SCHOOL SERVES A PLANNED COMMUNITY

In 1910 a railroad was built twenty miles east of Westlake. The population in the area began to increase. Adam Patten, who had tried to make Westlake a boomtown but failed because the town had no railroad, then developed Eastlake, approximately seventeen miles north of Denver, as a "planned community." The original Eastlake School District Twelve, Adams County, was created by the consolidation of the old Block School (old District Four, located at East 104th Avenue and Colorado Boulevard) and the old Webster School (District 71, located at East 112th Avenue and North Washington). Both schools were closed when Eastlake was opened.² Riverside Grange Hall was the social center and polling place for the Eastlake area. (The Grange sold the hall in 1974 to the American Legion, Post No. 22.) A bond election for \$25,000 was held on March 31, 1919, to finance construction.

Eastlake School was erected in 1920 and accommodated 110 students in the Eastlake area. The school included all twelve grades and graduated its first class, which consisted of one student, Mr. Lewis Patterson, in 1925.³ At first there were only two teachers, one for grades one through eight, another for grades nine through twelve. Eventually the school expanded to include four classrooms and five teachers: one primary, two junior high, one high school, and one principal who also taught. Back in the days when Eastlake held high school students, baseball and track were popular. Basketball was played on an outdoor court as Eastlake never had a gymnasium. The school was then well known for its debating teams. In 1954 the Westlake School took grades six through nine, leaving grades one through five at Eastlake. Two years later, in 1956, another reorganization sent grades one through six to Eastlake. Two classrooms were added to the building in 1959. In 1962 three additional classrooms, an office, lounge and restrooms were added.⁴

Such expansion meant that older students could spend more time concentrating on their own studies and less time helping their younger brothers and sisters. The period after World War I was marked by a strong emphasis on

¹ Smith, D. V., "The Nature and Urgency of the Problem--Expanding Demand That Current Life Makes on the Readers," in *Keeping Reading Programs Abreast of the Times*, ed. William S. Gray (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1950), p. 153-157.

² Fox, C. *A Historical Study of School District Twelve, Adams County's Growth and Reading Curriculum*, unpublished dissertation, Walden University, 1980, p.61.

³ Ibid, p. 62.

⁴ Fagg, R.; Stein, D.; & Stein, G. "Eastlake Elementary School," in *The Forgotten Past of Adams County*, vol. 1, 1976.

silent reading.¹ With the closing of the frontier and the spectacular growth of business and industry, reading was no longer a luxury. Road signs and railway schedules had become a part of everyday life. The day of the frontiersman who could get along fairly well signing his name with an "X" was gone. Learning to read was increasingly seen less as a goal in itself than as something which enabled students to do and to study other things. Basal reading series making use of standard word lists as a basis for selecting vocabulary became popular. Primary readers now contained a large number of realistic stories, while intermediate readers contained largely informative material.²

BANK ROBBERY IN EASTLAKE

In 1921 the First National Bank of Eastlake was robbed, with \$13,000 taken. Two young men and a young woman who worked at the King and Willy Ranch (which ran from what is now Washington to Colorado Boulevard, and from 136th to 120th Streets) had gone to deposit their weekly paychecks but decided that they wanted more money. Before leaving the bank they locked two hostages, Miss Cathguard, bank teller, and Ed Whitter, bank guard, in the vault. A bystander who had witnessed the robbery called the sheriff.

Other townspeople, who had caught onto what was happening, took up the chase. The girl was caught trying to hide in the wheat fields. One of the men was caught north of town. The other man had an accomplice waiting in a car at the King and Willy Ranch. Catching sight of them, the head woman at the King and Willy Ranch, who known as "Grandma," held them at gunpoint with a sawed off, twelve-gauge shotgun until the sheriff came and took them away. This ended the robbery, but did not solve the problem of getting the hostages out of the vault. The only people who had the combination were Miss Cathguard and the First National Bank of Denver, which had a subinterest in the bank.

Some people had to go and flag down the train. After learning what was happening, the train engineer zoomed all the way into Denver. They ran and got a cab to take them downtown to the bank, but bank doors were locked. As they were pounding on the doors, calling "Let us in!" a policeman came along, wanting to arrest them for creating a disturbance. However, after learning what was going on, he let them go. In the meantime, someone back in Eastlake had found the combination to the vault on the back of a scrap of paper and the hostages were finally released.³

¹ Fox, C. *A Historical Study of School District Twelve, Adams County's Growth and Reading curriculum*, unpublished dissertation, Walden University, 1980, p. 17.

² Gray, W. S. "Teaching Reading," in *Encyclopedia of Educational Research*, 3rd ed.

³ Branning, H.; Martinez, L.; & Sayre, S. "Eastlake, Colorado," in *The Forgotten Past of Adams County*, vol. 1, 1976.

THE 1920S AND THE ARRIVAL OF THE AUTOMOBILE

After the struggles and tragedies of the early years of the century, the 1920s proved a safer, happier decade for Coloradans. The state developed a diversified economic base that included mining, agriculture, industry, commerce, and tourism. A new business, the oil industry began to boom as the automobile age began to accelerate. As automobiles hit the roads in increasing numbers, they eventually doomed the old streetcar systems which had been built in such cities as Denver, Boulder and Fort Collins. Already Denver had begun to grow outward into streetcar suburbs, neighborhoods along or near streetcar lines. Many of these were later annexed. However other suburbs such as Aurora, Englewood, Littleton and Lakewood have remained independent towns.¹ The arrival of the automobile greatly speeded up the process of suburbanization which was to dramatically change the face of Adams County.

Changes were taking place in the farming areas, too. Since the Russian Germans and the Japanese who had originally done much of the stoop work on the farms now owned and tended their own land, sugar beet growers in rural Adams County began importing Mexican and Mexican-American agricultural workers. During World War I and the 1920s hundreds of Hispanics moved into the Brighton area. An estimated 9,000 Spanish-speaking migrants had become residents of Metropolitan Denver by 1929, many of them settling in Adams County.²

Even back in 1924, parents in what became Adams County School District Twelve were concerned that students should be provided with enough reading material. Minutes from the Westlake Congress of Parents and Teachers from December 1, 1924, record the following:

Suggested also that there is too little reading matter, magazines especially, in many homes for the children and that the Congress might help remedy this by placing in the school some good magazines such as the *National Geographic*.³

The Congress of Parents and Teachers provided forty-five dollars for library books, the books to be selected by a committee consisting of the Congress president, school board members and the County School Superintendent.⁴

Betty Paine, a 1931 Eastlake High School graduate remembers that there were seven in her graduating class. "Spanish was a required subject for all students. We had history, math, typing, and no gym or home economics. I took

¹ Metcalf, Noel & Smith, p. 210.

² Leonard & Noel, p. 347.

³ Westlake Congress of Parents and Teachers, minutes, meeting of 1 December 1924 (Handwritten).

⁴ Fox, p. 89.

chemistry but not everybody did."¹ In the District official ledge of 1920 through 1925, graduation requirements are listed:

Standard of high school and requirements for graduation. Length of course=four years. A credit, unit, or point is one full high school subject carried successfully one full school year.

A half credit, point of unit is one full high school subject carried successfully one half a school year.

Four high school subjects are an ordinary course.

Sixteen credits, points, or units are required for graduation.

The high school periods are 40 minutes long, and in a full high school subject are given five times a week.²

According to the Eastlake High School ledger the following subjects were offered to students during the 1920-1925 school years: English I, II, III, IV; Spanish; American History; World History; Civics; Ancient History; Economics; General Science; Physics; Chemistry; Geometry; Algebra; Solid Geometry; and Music.³ If you count up the number of subjects and remember that a student had to take sixteen of these to graduate, you can see how little choice there was.

HARD TIMES HIT

The good times of the 1920s ended with the Great Depression which began in 1929 with the crash of the New York Stock Exchange. Stock prices collapsed and many companies went out of business. In 1933 about a quarter of all Americans were out of work, including thousands of Coloradans. Many people resorted to methods of survival similar to those used by early settlers: hunting jackrabbits for stews, panning for gold, capturing coyotes for the \$5 per head bounty. Many families planted vegetable gardens and raised rabbits, chickens, pigs and goats to save on the grocery bill. The Depression was especially hard on retired older people without families to rely on. The poorest of them could be seen poking around in garbage cans for food and clothing. If they had a little money, they would shop at the many pawn shops, flea markets, and second hand stores which popped up during the 1930s. To help the elderly poor, the state of Colorado set up an old age pension plan, using taxes on liquor and other items. A few years later, President Franklin D. Roosevelt set up the Social Security system to aid the old and helpless nation-wide.⁴

Increasingly, Colorado's geographical position in the center of the western U.S. would become an important factor in economic expansion:

¹ Fox, p. 90.

² "Eastlake High School Ledger," 1920-25, Adams County School District Twelve (Handwritten).

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ Metcalf, Noel & Smith, p. 220.

In 1933 attorney James Grafton Rogers predicted that "the extent to which Denver holds its lead as a western center for federal bureaus may be of vast importance to its future." As the government expanded during the New Deal, Denver's federal employment grew. By 1935, architect G. Meredith Musick, Sr., proclaimed that the city had gained "the undisputed title of second capital." In 1936 the *Post* guessed that there were from 8,000 to 10,000 federal workers puttering away in such buildings as the Old Customs House, the New Customs House, the Telephone Building, the Post Office, and the Patterson Building...In 1943 the Chamber of Commerce counted 185 federal administrative offices in the Mile High City, of which 134 were regional or national in scope.¹

Many of the programs enacted by President Roosevelt after his election in 1932 had a visible impact upon Colorado. After passage of the Silver Purchase Act of 1934 the government began buying up all the silver that could be mined for \$1.29 an ounce. Gold was bought at \$35 an ounce. Old mines began to reopen and miners went back to work. The Works Progress Administration spent \$110 million in Colorado, hiring the unemployed to build roads, bridges, schools, libraries, ball fields, swimming pools, sewers and airports. Young people between the ages of eighteen and twenty-five found jobs with the Civilian Conservation Corps. The CCC paid unemployed youth to build hiking trails and campgrounds, fight forest fires, make dams, and to do many other jobs in the national forests and parks. Red Rocks outdoor theatre near Denver, Flagstaff Mountain Road near Boulder and the Winter Park ski area were among the many CCC projects.²

SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT AT WESTLAKE

Westlake School originally had a coal furnace and two double outhouses outside behind the school were the only bathrooms. However the old Westlake School was one of the first rural districts in the area to have its own hot lunch program. In the 1930's Mr. and Mrs. Brown, a husband and wife teaching team who lived in the school basement, supervised a hot lunch program with the help of volunteer mothers. By the early 1940's the school was able to hire a cook for about three dollars per day. The teacher in charge of running the lunch programs kept a record of the money spent and collected. If the funds ran low the teachers would get together and arrange money-making projects to balance the cost of the lunch programs. Former Colorado Attorney General John

¹ Leonard & Noel, p. 232.

² Metcalf, Noel & Smith, p. 224.

Metzner attended Westlake School. Catherine Nott, a retired first grade teacher, recalled teaching in District Twelve in the early 1940s:

We had four teachers and we worked together. We had lots of programs. I played the piano and the seventh grade teacher directed the plays.

Our curriculum was what was in the book and whatever frills teachers added. Education was very basic: reading, writing, arithmetic and music.¹

During the period between 1935 and 1950 progress in science overshadowed other aspects of education. This period was marked by international conflict and the beginning of the atomic age. There was a drastic drop in reading research, so that the number of new basal reader series published was drastically reduced, while a strong emphasis was put on the social value of reading. This was also a period of population decline in the area of the Westlake School. By 1939-40 the number of students at Westlake declined to twenty. In 1952 Westlake was closed because it had too few fire exits. However in 1953 the District had to reopen the school because of increases in population. In 1967 Westlake had an enrollment of a hundred and fifteen students.

WORLD WAR II CHANGES COLORADO ECONOMY

The changes had started before the war. Despite its isolationist leanings, depression-plagued Denver saw that there were money and jobs in defense industries. To induce the army to locate an air corps training center near the city, Denver floated \$750,000 in bonds to purchase the Agnes Phipps Memorial Tuberculosis Sanatorium at Sixth and Quebec. To its 880 acres the city added another 960 and to seal the deal provided a bombing range of 100 square miles southeast of town. All was donated to the army, which on February 26, 1938, dedicated Lowry Air Base, naming it after Denverite Francis B. Lowry, who had been shot down over France during World War I. Six years later over 600 buildings dotted the post where thousands of army airmen (the Air Force became an independent service in 1947) learned aerial photography, bombing techniques, and low-level flying. So rapid and massive was the buildup that Lowry soon proved inadequate. On May 18, 1942, contractors started pouring the concrete for another air facility, Buckley Field, southeast of

¹ Fox, p. 89.

Lowry, which was dedicated less than six weeks later on July 1, 1942.¹

World War II meant that thousands of uniformed personnel crowded the streets around Denver and jammed Union Station. An estimated 4 million servicemen and women passed through Denver during the war. Near the Municipal Airport over 3,000 Continental Airlines workers modified B-17s and B-29s and a few fighter aircraft to make them war-worthy. Air raid drills were faithfully carried out, although it was generally agreed that Denver was in more danger from Lowry pilots practicing low level flying than from the Germans or the Japanese.²

In May, 1942, the War Department announced plans to build a huge chemical warfare plant in Adams County, just north of Fitzsimmons Army Hospital. Construction on the Rocky Mountain Arsenal began in June, with construction headquarters set up in an Adams City grade and High school. Approximately 200 families had to be moved to clear the 20,000 acres of Adams County farmland required. Among the 700 buildings moved were 154 homes. Many of those moved had homesteaded the land. To gather 2,600 acres of unharvested corn, a crew of 70 convicts was brought from the state penitentiary at Canon City. For many years the old Rose Hill School, no longer accessible to students, served as an Officers Club for personnel at the Arsenal.³

The groundwork for Colorado's postwar boom was being laid. Colorado beef, lamb, and pork, as well as wheat and sugar, were shipped to feed people abroad as well as at home. Vanadium, molybdenum, and tungsten were mined to help make steel. As the nuclear age began, the Western Slope became a prime region for mining and processing radium and uranium. With 138,832 Coloradans fighting in World War II, manpower became short at home. Women worked in factories, ran farms and ranches, drove buses and managed businesses. Even the old superstition about women in mines bringing bad luck was set aside. In 1944 Fitzhugh Carmichael, a University of Denver Professor, estimated that women held half the 206,000 jobs in the metropolitan area. Not all the women in this work force were Colorado natives, however. Some were women who had come to be near husbands of boyfriends in the military.⁴

Spin-offs from other military projects have changed Colorado in many ways. Camp Hale near Leadville is a good example. During World War II, the U.S. Army trained soldiers in ski warfare there. For fun on weekends, the soldiers skied around the old silver city of Aspen. After the war, some of these soldiers remembered the

¹ Leonard & Noel, p. 220-221.

² Leonard & Noel, p. 224, 229.

³ Wagner, Vol. II, p. 41.

⁴ Leonard & Noel, p. 228.

sparkling powder snow and the scenic slopes surrounding this quiet mining town. They came back and helped convert a near ghost town into the world famous Aspen ski resort. Later some of the Camp Hale veterans helped lay out some of the three dozen other ski areas that now make Colorado America's most popular spot for winter sports.¹

Although such growth in the Colorado high country might seem far removed from Adams County, the ski traffic contributed greatly to making Stapleton International Airport which bordered Adams County on the south one of the five busiest airports in America by the 1980's.² By the 1990s it would be clear that a larger airport was needed, and that Adams County would be the logical place to put it.

THE POST-WAR ERA

After the war the federal presence in the Denver area remained constant. Lowry remained an active post and Buckley was devoted to Naval Reserve and the Colorado National guard. Federal agencies moved from downtown Denver offices to the now-vacant Remington Arms Plant, which was converted to the Denver Federal Center. Servicemen who had taken a liking to the Denver area during the war returned to go to school and start families. John Gunther was not alone among national observers in portraying Denver as a sleeping giant. Within a few years a drab provincial city would be transformed into a sprawling metropolis.³

Trying to keep up with the million newcomers who settled in the Denver metropolitan area between 1945 and 1983, the state engaged in a concentrated spurt of road-building. In the post-war years Adams County boomed. Denver's first official interstate highway, I-25, took 10 years to construct. Dubbed the Valley Highway locally, I-25 followed the South Platte River Valley and was finally dedicated on November 23, 1958. By then Thornton, developed by Sam Hoffman, had become a burgeoning community. In 1960 the \$8,000 to \$11,000 brick homes had been snapped up by 11,353 new residents, many of them first-time home buyers. By 1990 Thornton housed 60,000 people. In 1959 Perl-Mack opened show homes, in what is now Northglenn, for what it called "The Most Perfectly Planned Community in America." On its thirtieth birthday in 1989 Northglenn was home to over 30,000 residents.

CONSOLIDATION OF SMALL ADAMS COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICTS

¹ Metcalf, Noel & Smith, p. 226

² Metcalf, Noel & Smith, p. 216.

³ Leonard & Noel, p. 234-5.

As had happened in World War I, World War II had revealed that thousands of the young men inducted into military service did not have adequate reading skills. It also demonstrated that reading could be taught to these young men in an amazingly short time. Other studies uncovered inadequate reading skills in high school and college students. Such discoveries led to a general tightening-up of informal teaching procedures and a renewed emphasis on systematic reading instruction. Part of the sense of urgency came from a fear that the widespread use of mass communications such as the radio, comics and the movies in the post-war era would reduce interest in reading, making instruction more difficult and causing students to get less practice in reading outside of school. At the same time, the technological revolution was causing thousands of unskilled laborers to lose their jobs because of automation. There was a fear that without a strong education young people might find themselves unemployable.

Many people argued that small community schools could not provide the diverse curricular and extracurricular offerings available at larger schools. Across the nation small rural school districts were being consolidated so that their students would have the same sort of educational choices available to students at urban schools. Following World War II, there was strong feeling in the state legislature that it was time to consolidate the many small school districts which had grown up in Adams County and other parts of Colorado. The old Bouchoutz School on West 88th Avenue and Huron Street closed in 1945. Pleasant View School (District Fifty-Three), organized in 1887 and located north of Eastlake, was added to District Twelve in 1947.

In July of 1950 voters decided to form the present Adams County School District 12 (hereafter referred to as Adams 12) by consolidating all of District 20 Hutchinson and District 34 Westlake with parts of District 12 Eastlake, District 6 Burn Lee, District 16 Welby, and District 27 Brighton. The remaining parts of Districts 6, 12, 16, and 27 went to the new District 27J Brighton. In terms of area the new District Twelve now included approximately sixty-two and a half square miles with a maximum length of eleven and a fourth miles and a maximum width of eight miles.¹

¹Fox, p 64.