

You should see it," he added. "The boom started in the winter and trees for cabins were cut at the snow line. In the spring the stumps were found to be ten feet high."

The idea of ten-foot stumps was exciting, so I went hunting for the place. The last stretch of road was rough and washed out and when I should have been at the site of the town there were no signs of it. The road had by now become a stream-bed. Where was Irwin? Suddenly in front of me, on either side of the gully and at regular intervals although overgrown with weeds, were water hydrants, rusty but erect. So this WAS Irwin and the gully was the main street.

In 1879, when a man named Fisher drove a team up the valley there was no town and no one had found the rich ore deposits which lay in the immediate vicinity. Fisher's wagon got stuck in mud and so grateful was he for the help given him by a man named Mace who came to his aid that he promised his benefactor that he "would locate him in on any mining location that he found." A few days later Fisher located two claims, the Forest Queen and the Ruby Chief, both destined to be big producers. The Forest Queen he gave to Mace, keeping the Ruby Chief for himself.

About the same time Dick Irwin and other men who had made a strike in the vicinity, packed several tons of ruby silver ore on burros and sent it to Alamosa and the railroad, 200 miles away, to be shipped to Denver to be smelted. Then winter set in and the prospect holes were abandoned, but in Denver word got about that rich ore had been found in the Elk Mountains and by spring the news had spread from the Atlantic to the Pacific.

Not only had ore been found at the Forest Queen and Forest King mines, but the Sylvanite near Gothic Mountain showed vast quantities of native silver and the Augusta in the same neighborhood promised rich returns. As soon as weather permitted, therefore, prospectors from all over the country began stamping to the new silver region.

The camp was called Irwin, after the Hon. Richard Irwin, one of the original discoverers of silver in the region and a member of the first Colorado Legislature. As more paying mines were found more men scrambled over the passes and floundered through the deep snow to reach the incredible camp before all the choice locations were staked out.

A townsite was platted, lots were sold, and tents and cabins erected. In no time the place grew to amazing proportions and squeezed out or annexed its adjacent rivals—Ruby and White Cloud.

Irwin, a Ghost Town of the Elk Mountains

MURIEL SIBELL WOLLE*

An old photograph and a mine inspector's question sent me looking for Irwin. The photograph showed a booming mining camp with more than one business street, hundreds of buildings and a white church with a steeple. The town was laid out in a sloping valley surrounded by timbered hills with a backdrop of snowy peaks. I asked the name of the town and found it was Irwin.

Later that summer I met a mine inspector. "Have you been to Irwin?" he asked. "It was a big camp with lots of buildings.

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Everyone was waiting for the snow to melt. Prospectors plunged over the mountains but supplies had "to wait until they could be packed over the range." Dick Irwin hired an ox-team to haul supplies from Gunnison to the snow line at King's Ranch, a few miles below Irwin, the trip taking six days. By the spring of 1880 "tons of goods were dumped at the foot of the long grade below Irwin waiting for the snow to go." Many of these supplies were perishable and were desperately needed by the miners in the new camp. There was no flour nor bacon for sale, and lumber was



IRWIN AT THE HEIGHT OF ITS BOOM, 1881-1882
(Courtesy of Robert H. Walker, "The Little Arts Studio," Gunnison, Colo.)

extremely scarce. Finally those who had ordered the supplies "employed packers at 10 cents a pound to bring the produce in, on their backs, by traveling on the snow crust in the early morning. "The packers would start about three o'clock and arrive in camp about five carrying 100-200 pounds on their backs and earning from \$10-\$20 each trip."

The snow was still twenty feet deep in spots. Clearing the ground for a cabin was like digging a cellar. There was no saw-mill and builders contracted for sets of house logs as soon as they were cut. Carpenters were paid \$10 a day. Lots were selling at \$10-\$25, only to be resold for fabulous sums. In the original platting of the city a lot was set aside for the newspaper office and another for the church. J. E. Phillips claimed the newspaper lot and began shovelling snow so as to clear the ground for his office.

Before he had finished shovelling he was offered \$1000 for the lot for a grocery site.

Everyone was building. Before long Main Street ran a mile up the gulch and was filled with a "seething mass of people." At the peak of the boom, between 1880 and 1882, there were 5,000 people milling about the town and even the winter population was over 2,500. Bands played in front of the theatre; a snowshoe run was laid out; a post office was opened and a telegraph service established. Five daily stages ran all summer from Gunnison via Crested Butte. Twenty-three saloons with every kind of gambling device ran full tilt. "Irwin had everything a modern city of 3,000-5,000 people could have and all in the space of six months." Everyone had money and spent it freely.

Irwin's first newspaper, the *Elk Mountain Pilot*, got off to a good start in spite of almost insurmountable difficulties. The editor, J. E. Phillips, shipped his hand press direct from Rosita to Alamosa, the freight forwarding point for Irwin, in March, 1880. From there it was freighted by ox-team to the foot of the long hill three miles from Irwin, where the press and everything else was dumped out. Phillips and his companions held a meeting in the snow, resolving to cross the range as soon as snowshoes could be made. When these were ready "the printing material was distributed among the men, when with type in pockets, part of the hand press under each arm and cases of paper strapped to their backs the journey across the great mountain range began. The ascent was made, many times at an angle of 45 degrees, and the descent commenced, the typos gliding gracefully down on their snowshoes over an unknown depth of snow." Arrived in Irwin, Phillips set up the press in a log cabin and printed the first issue of the *Elk Mountain Pilot* on June 17, 1880. "The first six copies sold for \$158," later copies sold for normal prices.

Under the able guidance of J. E. Phillips the *Pilot* ran successfully for four years and only closed down when "Irwin was getting down to a whisper." When Gunnison County demanded taxes, it was the *Pilot* that led the campaign to resist payment on the basis that Irwin was not in the county but was laid out "within the boundaries of the Ute reservation and therefore could not record its plat nor register the sale of lots." The town's location on the eastern edge of the Ute territory caused some apprehension in the early days. A company of so-called Minute Men were ready for any emergency. Capt. U. M. Curtis, the United States interpreter for the Utes, stayed in camp during 1880 to see that no trouble occurred, but by mutual agreement Indians and miners let each other pretty much alone, and even when Irwin became a booming camp Indian clashes were unknown.

The mines of Irwin carried "brittle wire, ruby horn, and native silver with arsenical iron." The most important mines were the Forest Queen, the Ruby Chief, the Bullion King, Venango, Chiquita, Hopewell and Lead Chief, although before the summer of 1881 there were as many as 25 shipping or treating ores.

Beyond the town and across Lake Brennard were Ruby and Purple Peaks, on whose slopes were located the Ruby Chief and Ruby King mines. The Forest Queen, at the lower end of town, was worked perhaps longer than any of the other mines, employing 100 men at one time and 30 men as late as 1891. In 1900 it was unwatered and continued to produce until 1932, when it was assessed at \$1,000 and advertised for sale at \$40.45, yet at one time the owner had refused \$1,000,000 for it. Today there is some work being done in the mine for it still contains valuable ore. In fact none of the mines were worked out, but low grade ore and increased costs of extraction made them unprofitable.

The long winters and the deep blankets of snow which shrouded everything greatly hampered production. A story is told of a man who snowshoed to the camp to get some information about the Hidden Treasure mine. When he reached the spot where the mine should have been he "saw a deep hole in the snow where there were signs of habitation. He tossed down a snowball. There was an answering 'hello'."

"What place is this?" he asked.

"The Ruby Camp Post Office."

"Can you tell me where there is a mine called the Hidden Treasure?"

"Yes, right across the way under about 70 feet of snow."

"Huh," he remarked, "It's certainly been well named," and he returned to Gunnison.

In its day Irwin was visited by all kinds of people, including Wild Bill Hickok, Bill Nuttall of vaudeville fame, Theodore Roosevelt, Governor Routt and General Grant. Grant's visit caused the greatest excitement, the "town being all agog about how to entertain its distinguished guests." Irwin had no regular band but "they loaded a kettle and a base drum into a spring wagon, pulled by two little mules . . . and he drove up through town to the Ruby Chief" mine ahead of the general and his party.

All the miners who owned horses brought up the rear in a whooping, shooting cavalcade to add flourish to the affair. At the Ruby Chief some fine specimens of ore were laid out for the guests' inspection and a trip through the mine was arranged. Later Grant was entertained at the exclusive Irwin Club, the only place out-

side of a saloon where members could meet friends or discuss business. Despite the lusty life of the camp there were relatively few violent deaths as compared with other places but "deadly snowslides took a liberal toll of lives every winter." In 1891 a snowslide at the Bullion King buried four persons. The body of one woman was brought into Crested Butte on a sled made of snowshoes and drawn by nine men. Another of the victims was found alive after having been buried four hours.

When a cemetery was contemplated it was found impossible to dig in the rocky soil of the camp and a site near the road to Ruby-Anthracite (or Floresta as it was called later) was selected. "The first man died with his boots on, killed by exploding dynamite." A coffin was made but as there was no parson to officiate, J. E. Phillips, who had the only prayer book in camp, was prevailed upon to read the burial service.

Later, when Bishop Spalding visited the camp and conducted service in a tent, the Phillips prayer book was pressed into use again. The tent in which the bishop spoke had been prepared for the event. Fresh sawdust had been spread on the dirt floor and candles arranged around the box which served as a pulpit. The tent was so close to the gambling hall that all during the service the "clinking of chips and the voice of the dance hall caller could be heard singing out 'honor to your partners, allemande left, ladies and gents waltz to the bar'." The proprietor refused to stop play during the time of the meeting but he announced to his customers, "You fellows, plug up the kitty and give the bishop the benefit of the next play," with the result that a hat full of silver was collected.

Croft's *Gripsack Guide* of 1881 devotes several paragraphs to Irwin and describes it as a city containing "a great number of stores of all kinds, one stamp mill, one large sampling works, six sawmills, one bank, three churches (Episcopal, Methodist and Presbyterian), one theatre, many hotels, chief of which is the Elk Mountain House, a brass band and one weekly newspaper, the *Pilot*." In spite of all these necessities the town had no dairy as feed for cattle was very expensive and there was no place to graze cows. A herd was located east of Crested Butte and milk and butter were delivered at regular intervals. "Instead of skimming off the cream to make butter and selling the inhabitants of Irwin skimmed milk, the dealers hit upon a novel plan of leaving the cream on the milk and by the time they had chugged and jolted over the rough road, 10 miles, they had a lump of butter in each milk can and thus had fresh milk and butter to sell to their patrons."

By 1883 the town was so well established that it had several streets lined with frame buildings and marked with iron street signs, a schoolhouse and a waterworks. The water from Lake Brennard (now Lake Irwin) was piped several hundred feet through the hill at the upper end of Main Street and then through town, to supply a series of water hydrants which had been installed. Yet by the end of that very year no ore was being shipped and but few miners were employed in the mines. "One by one



IRWIN AS IT APPEARED IN 1946
(By Mrs. Muriel Sibell Wolle)

people were leaving and it began to look as if the place was fast drifting into a ghost town." By 1884 it was virtually deserted and by 1925 "the only thing left were Sam Metzler's water plugs up and down the gulch." For years the place lay dormant with only occasional mining being done.

In 1946 I visited Irwin again. The water hydrants were still there, but fewer of them and they leaned drunkenly. Climbing up to the Forest Queen mine, I looked back toward the lake and the Ruby Chief. There lay Irwin below me, flattened piles of lumber marking the site of many of its buildings, especially along Main Street. The log schoolhouse up near the lake stood roofless, with big trees growing inside it; terraces marked the location of many private homes and stores, from which even the timber was

gone, and caving foundations or a hollow in the ground indicated where the building had stood. The ground was marshy and carpeted with dog tooth violets. The only sounds were the rustle of wind, the whistle of marmots, and the gurgle of water which rushed harmlessly down what had been the main thoroughfare.

The Pioneers of Estes Park

FLORENCE J. SHOEMAKER*

On October 15, 1859, Joel Estes Sr. and his son, Milton, made an exploring and hunting trip to the head of Little Thompson Creek, near Longs Peak, Colorado. While in this vicinity they unexpectedly came upon a little mountain park which had probably never before been seen by white men. Milton Estes says of their first view of this park:

We stood on the mountain looking down at the headwaters of Little Thompson Creek, where the park spread out before us. No words can describe our surprise, wonder and joy at beholding such an unexpected sight. It looked like a low valley with a silver streak or thread winding its way through the tall grass, down through the valley and disappearing around a hill among the pine trees. This silver thread was Big Thompson Creek.¹

There are others who claim to have been with Mr. Estes on this trip. Joel Estes Jr., in a letter to his nephew, Harry Ruffner of Denver, said Joel Estes Sr. visited the park in 1860 on a prospecting expedition, accompanied by a George Smith.² There may be a possibility that Mr. Smith was in the party, for when Senator Teller and Dunham Wright visited Mr. Estes during the winter of 1861-62, a man by the name of George Smith was one of several men living in the Estes cabin.³ Dunham Wright says he met Estes in 1860 when the park was first discovered. He wrote, "Indeed, I was with him on that trip."⁴ The certainty remains, however, that Joel Estes Sr. was the discoverer of the park which today bears his name.

The members of the Estes party had no idea what they had found, but the beauty and seclusion at once appealed to Mr. Estes

*This is part of a Master's thesis written at the State College of Education, Greeley. Mrs. Shoemaker now lives in Albuquerque, New Mexico.—Ed.

¹Milton Estes, *The Memoirs of Estes Park*, 5.

²Letter from Joel Estes Jr. of Farmington, N. M., to Harry Ruffner, Denver, Colorado, July 4, 1917, in files in Office of National Park Service.

³Dunham Wright, "A Winter in Estes Park with Senator Teller," *The Trail*, July, 1920.

⁴*Ibid.*

and in 1860 he built two log cabins and some corrals for the stock which he moved from his Platte River ranch. For about two years Mrs. Estes and the smaller children remained in the valley while the men of the family cared for the stock in the park. In 1863 two Estes families moved into the park to make their homes. They were: Mr. and Mrs. Joel Estes Sr., Jasper, F. M. (Marion), Joel Jr., Mary Jane and Sarah Estes, and Mr. and Mrs. Milton Estes and two sons. Milton Estes had married Mary L. Flemming, August 11, 1861, and their third son, Charles F., born February 19, 1865, was the first white child born in Estes Park.⁵



THE JOEL ESTES HOMESTEAD

The nearest ranch was on the upper St. Vrain River over a rough twenty-five mile trail so the two families lived a secluded life, but certainly not one of want. Fish, berries and game were plentiful and milk and cream were always available. The stock was never killed because there was plenty of wild game. One fall and winter Milton, using a muzzle loading rifle, killed one hundred head of elk besides deer, mountain sheep and antelope. Most of the clothing worn by the family was made of animal skins and flour sacks.⁶ Hay was raised for winter feed for the stock and was cut with a common scythe. The winters were usually severe;

⁵Enos A. Mills, *The Rocky Mountain National Park*, 6.

⁶Milton Estes, "Memoirs of Estes Park," *Colorado Magazine*, XVI, 126.

in November, 1864, a two and one-half foot snow fell and lay until spring. Dressed game and skins were taken to Denver about every two months and sold. Payment for them was often in gold dust. It was on these infrequent trips that the Estes family got their mail and what staple supplies were needed.⁷

There were a few freshly cut Indian lodge poles in the park when the Estes family first settled there, but the nearest the Indians ever came after that time was a Ute raid in 1865 on the St. Vrain River near where Lyons now stands.⁸

As early as 1864 the little mountain park where the Estes family made their home was attracting sightseers. In that year W. N. Byers of the *Rocky Mountain News* and a party made an unsuccessful attempt to climb Longs Peak. After Mr. Byers returned to Denver he gave the park the name of Estes Park in honor of his host. Two other early visitors were William and Charles Baldwin.⁹ The first religious service to be held in Estes Park was in August, 1865, when a Rev. Richardson, his wife and a party of five from Denver came into the park on a camping trip.¹⁰ Henry M. Teller seems to have been the first health seeker in Estes Park. In the fall of 1861 he hiked into the park after an attack of mountain fever, and was a guest at the Estes camp all of that winter; by spring he had fully regained his health.¹¹

Mr. Estes claimed all of the park and sold it in one transaction to Michael Hollenbeck and a man known simply as "Buck."¹² The purchase price of this now valuable land is not exactly known but has been given as \$50.00, a yearling steer or a yoke of oxen.¹³

The Estes family left the park April 15, 1866,¹⁴ for a warmer country where they could go into the cattle business. Joel Estes Sr. is said to have moved to Tramperos, Colfax county, New Mexico, in 1874. Joel Estes Jr. died in Farmington, New Mexico, September 29, 1927.¹⁵ Mary Jane Estes Ruffner died at St. Anthony's Hospital in Denver, October 30, 1913.¹⁶

In 1926 a memorial to Joel Estes Sr. was erected in Estes Park. The stone is a large granite rock, in its natural state, weigh-

⁷*Ibid.*, 128.

⁸*Ibid.*, 129.

⁹*The Denver Post*, October 15, 1916.

¹⁰Estes, *Colorado Magazine*, *op. cit.*, 125.

¹¹Letter from Dunham Wright to the Estes Park Chamber of Commerce, in files in office of National Park Service.

¹²Estes, *Colorado Magazine*, *op. cit.*, 127.

¹³*The Denver Post*, October 15, 1916.

¹⁴Milton Estes, *The Memoirs of Estes Park*, 11.

¹⁵Letter from Esther Pickens, Omaha, Nebraska, to Roger W. Toll, September 26, 1927, in files in Office of National Park Service.

¹⁶*The Trail*, November, 1913.

ing about two tons and selected from the hilltop about a quarter of a mile from where it now stands. It is seven feet high and was set on a foundation of rocks. Carl Piltz did the work. On the stone is a bronze tablet presented by the Estes grandchildren and the Estes Park Chamber of Commerce.¹⁷ It reads:

In memory of Joel Estes, discoverer, October 15, 1859. Pioneers, Patsy Estes, Sarah Estes, Molly Estes, Milton Estes, Joel Estes, F. M. Estes, J. W. Estes, Mary Jane Estes. Presented by the Chamber of Commerce and grandchildren, Milton Estes, Joel S. Estes, Edwin Estes, Mrs. C. H. Graham, Mrs. W. T. Myler, Mrs. J. D. Taylor, and Noma Ritters.¹⁸

Michael Hollenbeck sold the park to a Mr. Jacobs for \$250.00, who sold out to Hank Farrar. In 1867 Griffith J. Evans, a Welshman, bought the property.¹⁹ Mr. Evans had a few guest cabins on his ranch and among his earliest guests was an English woman, Miss Isabella L. Bird. She lived in one of the smaller cabins, away from the main house, and took her meals with the Evans family. Miss Bird described the Evans' house as being

. . . a log cabin of big hewn logs. The chinks should be filled with mud and lime but these are wanting. The roof is formed of barked young spruce, then a layer of hay, and an outer coating of mud, all nearly flat. The floors are roughly boarded. The "living-room" is about sixteen feet square, and has a rough stone chimney in which pine logs are always burning. At one end there is a door into a small eating-room, at the table of which we feed in relays. This opens into a very small kitchen with a great American cooking-stove, and there are "two bed-closets" besides.²⁰

Of Mr. Evans and his partner, a Mr. Edwards, Miss Bird says:

The ranchmen are two Welshmen, Evans and Edwards, each with a wife and family. The men are as diverse as they can be. "Griff," as Evans is called, is short and small, and is hospitable, careless, reckless, jolly, social, convivial, peppery, good natured. . . . He had the wit and taste to find out Estes Park, where people have found him out, and have induced him to give them food and lodging, and add cabin to cabin to take them in. He is a splendid shot. . . . He has a most industrious wife, a girl of seventeen, and four younger children. . . . Edwards, his partner, is his exact opposite, tall, thin, and condemnatory looking, keen, industrious, saving, grave, a teetotaler, grieved for all reasons at Evans' follies. . . .²¹

Mr. Fernando Willott, a cousin of Mrs. Emma Hubbell Shumway, was a tutor for Griff Evans' children for a while²² for there was no school in Estes Park before 1880.

It has been said that Mr. Evans drank a great deal more than was good for him and at times was querulous. One of the men with whom he was alternately friendly and quarrelsome was

¹⁷*Estes Park Trail*, May 28, 1929.

¹⁸*Ibid.*

¹⁹*The Denver Post*, October 15, 1916.

²⁰Isabella L. Bird, *A Lady's Life in the Rocky Mountains*, 127.

²¹*Ibid.*, 128.

²²Roger W. Toll, personal interview with Mrs. E. B. Shumway, note in files in office of National Park Service.

James Nugent, known as "Rocky Mountain Jim." Nugent was said to have been born in New Hampshire and to have been with the Hudson Bay Company before coming into the park about 1867 or 1868. He built a cabin in Muggins Gulch and from there made trapping trips over the park region. While on one of these expeditions to Middle Park he claimed to have lost an eye in a fight with a bear on July 6, 1869.²³

When Miss Bird went into the park she met Rocky Mountain Jim. Those who saw him at this time said he was anything but clean, with long unkempt hair and dressed in dirty ragged clothes.²⁴ From the romantic Miss Bird we get a little different picture of Nugent. She said he was

. . . a broad, thickset man, about middle height, with an old cap on his head, and wearing a grey hunting-suit much the worse for wear . . . a digger's scarf knotted round his waist, a knife in his belt, and a "bosom friend," a revolver, sticking out of the breast-pocket of his coat; his feet, which were very small, were bare, except for some dilapidated moccasins made of horse hide. . . . His face was remarkable. He is a man about forty-five, and must have been strikingly handsome. He has large grey-blue eyes, deeply set, with well-marked eyebrows, a handsome aquiline nose, and a very handsome mouth. His face was smooth-shaven except for a dense moustache and imperial. Tawny hair, in thin uncared-for curls, fell from under his hunter's cap and over his collar. One eye was entirely gone, and the loss made one side of the face repulsive, while the other might have been modelled in marble. "Desperado" was written in large letters all over him. . . . Of his genius and chivalry to women there does not appear to be any doubt; but he is a desperate character, and is subject to "ugly fits," when people think it best to avoid him.²⁵

There were some in the park who said Miss Bird was in love with Rocky Mountain Jim.²⁶ Whether or not this is true cannot be said, of course. Her biographer, Anna M. Stoddard, said that Miss Bird had a vision of Nugent shortly after he was shot, but avoided much mention of her Estes Park experiences after her return to England.²⁷

Rocky Mountain Jim was a victim of a tragic shooting in June, 1874. There are conflicting stories about the reasons for it, but what evidence there is points to Griff Evans as the man who killed Nugent. Some say the tragedy was the result of Evans' activities as a land agent of Lord Dunraven. When Nugent was suspected of presenting too much opposition to the English Company's increased holdings it was thought best to get rid of him on some trumped-up charge. The job was given to Evans.²⁸ Another

²³Abner Sprague, personal interview, September 26, 1939.

²⁴*Ibid.*

²⁵Bird, *op. cit.*, 93.

²⁶Mills, *op. cit.*, 17.

²⁷*Ibid.*

²⁸Abner Sprague, personal interview, September 26, 1939.

story was that Evans shot Jim because of the latter's attentions to a daughter of Evans.²⁹

The version given by Abner Sprague, who talked to Mr. Brown, the only eye witness, a few days after the shooting was to the effect that an English nobleman who was a guest of Evans intrusted \$100.00 to Rocky Mountain Jim to pay the expenses of a trip to Denver and return. The purpose of Nugent's trip was to contact a lady friend of the Lord's, tell her arrangements had been made for her visit to the park, and to bring her back with him.³⁰

Jim left for Denver. Nothing more was heard from him until Evans and the Englishman met him riding across a meadow in the park some days later. When asked why he had not fulfilled his mission Nugent delivered a none too complimentary message from the lady in question. She refused to spend the summer in Estes Park, as the guest of the Lord or any one else. Heated words were exchanged between the men but finally they went on their respective ways.³¹

A few days later Nugent, accompanied by a man by the name of Brown, were fording a little stream by Evans' cabin. As they neared the door, Evans, under the influence of liquor, ran out of the cabin and shot at Rocky Mountain Jim. The Englishman came to the door, noted Evans' poor shot and advised him to "give him the other barrel." This shot, also poorly aimed, glanced off an old stage coach and split, part of it lodging in Nugent's forehead, the other part in his brain. Nugent and Brown managed to flee and it was not known at once the seriousness of Nugent's injuries. He was finally persuaded to go to Longmont, where he lingered between life and death until some time in September, 1874, almost three months after the shooting. The doctors in attendance said it was only his strength and unusual stamina that made it possible for him to live that long.³²

Nugent at once accused Evans of the shooting. Evans was arrested and brought to Fort Collins and was given a preliminary hearing and bound over for trial in the district court. On July 15, 1874, the opening day of the 1874 term of the district court, District Attorney Byron L. Carr filed an information with the clerk, charging Evans with assault with a deadly weapon with intent to kill Nugent. The case was not called until July 14, 1875, a year later. During that time it was alleged that Evans was not guilty of the charge. The shooting was said to have been done by

²⁹Mills, *op. cit.*, 15.

³⁰Abner Sprague, personal interview, September 26, 1939.

³¹*Ibid.*

³²*Ibid.*

a young Englishman who had been sent out from England in December, 1873, to look after Lord Dunraven's interests. It also developed that Brown, the only eye witness, had disappeared and has never been heard of since. When the 1875 term of court convened Mr. Carr's successor, G. G. White, entered a "nolle prosequi" in the case against Evans and the accused was discharged from custody.³³

About this same time George Hearst, nicknamed Muggins, built and lived in a small cabin at the mouth of what came to be known as Muggins Gulch, east of the park. Hearst worked as herder for some cattle owned by Dan Gant and a Mr. Sowers.³⁴

In 1872 the Earl of Dunraven, accompanied by Sir William Cummings and Earl Fitzpatrick, came on a hunting expedition into Estes Park. Part of the time they were guests at the Griff Evans ranch. On one of the trips Dunraven met Theodore Whyte, an Irish mining engineer, who was a member of the Dunraven hunting party of 1873.³⁵

The beauty of the park and the excellent fishing and big game hunting appealed to Dunraven so much that he at once wanted to make the entire park into a private hunting preserve and lodge for himself and his friends. In 1874 Whyte was hired to manage the Dunraven interests and at once set to work to acquire Estes Park. It was learned through an attorney's office that all lands on which there were streams or springs would have to be entered and proved upon. According to law each entry was to contain 160 acres.³⁶ A petition was signed by a number of persons supposedly wishing to settle on the land, asking for a government sub-division of the park and paying for the surveys until final entries were made. This was done, and by May, 1874, about 4,000 acres were filed on and claimed. In June and July about 1,000 acres more were filed on by men who were never seen in the park and who probably never existed.³⁷ Rough cabins were constructed on many of the entries to partly comply with the law.³⁸ On other claims four logs were laid on the ground as claim shanties.³⁹

During the fall of 1874 a letter was written to Denver persons by a summer health-seeker in the park, telling what was being done by the English Company. This made it imperative that the Company hire men who were willing to swear to having filed on

³³Estes Park Trail, June 2, 1922.

³⁴Estes, *Memoirs, op. cit.*, 15.

³⁵The Denver Post, October 15, 1916.

³⁶*Ibid.*

³⁷Abner Sprague, personal interview, September 26, 1939.

³⁸Estes Park Trail, April 28, 1922.

³⁹E. C. Johnson, personal interview, May 20, 1940.

the 5,000 acres in question. This acreage was at once proved up on under the preemption law and paid for at \$1.25 an acre. Some of the patents were soon issued for the new lands, but others were held up for investigation. At a hearing before the Land Commissioner in Washington the lands in question were proved to belong to innocent purchasers and patents were issued under the names of these claimants. Those patents were then transferred to the Dunraven Company.⁴⁰

During the fall of 1874 and spring of 1875 many actual settlers came into Estes Park. This put a stop to the wholesale entry of lands by the Dunraven interests. The balance of the English Company's holdings were secured through purchase of lands entered either by actual settlers or by filings of employees of the Company who had at least seen the land. Lands acquired in this way increased the Dunraven holdings to about 6,000 acres.⁴¹

The Company tried to discourage actual settlers by one annoyance after another. Dunraven stock was run on other's property and people were asked to move from fraudulently claimed lands.⁴² The Company lands were fenced in such a way that the settlers were cut off without roads to their own homes or to other parts of the park. This made it necessary for the County Commissioners to appoint viewers who went into the park and laid out roads.⁴³

The pioneer settlers of the park took advantage of much desirable land overlooked by the English Company. Soon claims were being laid out in Black Canyon, Beaver Creek, Willow Park, the Wind River region and around many little springs. Among the early settlers who contested the Earl's claims were A. Q. McGregor, H. W. Ferguson and W. E. James.⁴⁴

When Dunraven realized it would be impossible for him to own all of the park region and make a fenced-in game preserve of it he leased the land. Theodore Whyte held the lease from about 1883 to 1890. During part of this time he raised registered Hereford cattle. He would make annual trips to England, where he would buy a few head of stock and ship them to New York. From there they were expressed to Denver, then taken to Lyons from where they were led into Estes Park.⁴⁵

⁴⁰Estes Park *Trail*, April 28, 1922.

⁴¹Abner Sprague, personal interview, September 26, 1939.

⁴²Estes Park *Trail*, June 6, 1922.

⁴³*Ibid.*, June 16, 1922.

⁴⁴Abner Sprague, personal interview, September 26, 1939.

⁴⁵C. Byron Hall, personal interview, May 4, 1940.

C. Golding Dwyer acquired the Dunraven lands after Whyte gave up his lease. Frank Bartholf was a later lessee who employed Louis Papa to take care of his cattle. Louie, as he was called by everyone, was a powerful, striking looking man. He was more than six feet tall and weighed about 200 pounds. His grandmother was a full-blooded Sioux Indian and his grandfather was a French-Canadian voyageur. His father was half Spanish and half Sioux Indian.⁴⁶ Louie had worked with cattle most of his life, was an excellent horseman and could follow any kind of trail. Once when he was working on the Big Thompson River a band of raiding Indians stole his saddle horse. Louie immediately gave chase, recovered his horse as the raiders were going up the Poudre River and barely escaped alive. He had a little cabin near the site of the present Loveland Power Plant in the Big Thompson canyon.⁴⁷

Lord Dunraven was never in Estes Park after the late 1880's. In 1907 he sold his property to B. D. Sanborn of Greeley and F. O. Stanley.

The noted landscape artist, Albert Bierstadt, was induced by Dunraven to visit Estes Park. He painted many of his most popular pictures in this region, especially in the vicinity of a lake which now bears his name. It was Mr. Bierstadt who helped Lord Dunraven select the site for his English Hotel which was built in 1877. The place selected was a meadow east of the present village, which later came to be known as the English Meadows. This hotel was the first strictly tourist hotel ever built in the park. It was a long, three-story frame building. There were twelve narrow windows and a large door opening onto the first story columned porch. Over this porch, and apparently the same size, was an open deck surrounded by a small hand railing. These porches ran the full length of the front of the building and about half way around each end. For a time the hotel was managed by Mr. and Mrs. Theodore Whyte. A news item written in 1885 reads:

Mr. and Mrs. Theodore Whyte opened the English Hotel with a grand ball, inviting all of the Estes Park residents, and many people from Denver. . . .⁴⁸

Mr. C. E. Lester took charge of the hotel in 1893 and operated it for thirteen seasons. Some time during this period the name was changed to the Estes Park Hotel. The building burned August 4, 1911.⁴⁹

⁴⁶The *Denver Post*, October 15, 1916.

⁴⁷E. C. Johnson, personal interview, May 20, 1940. Ed.—Louie was step-son of Mariana Modena, noted mountain man, who was the first settler in the Thompson Valley.

⁴⁸Estes Park *Trail*, April 26, 1940.

⁴⁹Notes in files in Office of National Park Service.

Reminiscences of Early San Luis

EMILIA GALLEGOS SMITH*

San Luis, the little town in which I have lived all my life, is considered to be the oldest permanent settlement in Colorado, having been founded in the spring of 1851 by a group of people who had come or whose ancestors had originally come from Spain and had settled in Mora and Taos, New Mexico.

Under the Beaubien Grant, strips of land were given to the settlers in order to encourage them to till the land and establish homes. The little valley in which the town is nestled at the foot of two mesas which protect it from the tiresome southwesterly winds, was very attractive to the early settlers as they found it to be excellent farming land—fertile, rich heavy bottom soil—also verdant pasture land for the stock that they had brought with them. The valley is watered by the Culebra River which rightfully gets its name from the way it winds its slinky way down from the majestic Sangre de Cristo Mountains to the east and into the mighty Rio Grande to the west.

The early homes were of three types, one the *jacal* or log cabin made of logs placed in an upright position, the *fuerte* or cabin, made with the logs placed horizontally, while the third was the adobe house. These adobe houses, though lacking conveniences, were substantial and very well built. The adobes, or baked mud bricks, were made of a certain clay, sand and straw mixed together, poured into molds and then turned out to be baked and dried by the sun. The adobes were 18 to 20 inches in length and from 9 to 10 inches in width. The walls were built "double," that is, two adobes were placed lengthwise and one adobe crosswise, making very thick walls. The strength and durability of the walls is proven by the fact that many of them exist at the present time—as strong as they were nearly a hundred years ago.

The home in which I lived was built in 1854. A few years ago when the house was being remodeled, one of the workmen found a board nailed to a joist with the inscription, "This house was built in 1854." The house has been in continuous use through all these years and is in condition to stand for many years more. The same well that was used in the early days in the center of the square, or *plazita*, is still in use—its crystalline artesian water flowing constantly, watering the luxuriant lawn which was planted at a later date.

*Mrs. Smith comes of a prominent family of southern Colorado and lives today in San Luis.—Ed.

The object of building the house in the *plazita*, or square, something like a fortress, was to have a place where the people of the village could congregate in case there would be an attack by the Indians who lurked to the north and to the south. The well was in the enclosure for emergency, as sometimes they might have to remain in the *plazita* for several hours. When an alarm was given that the Indians were coming, the men would stand guard on the flat roofs, ready to fire if necessary, until all danger of the attack was over, and not until then would the women and children be allowed to leave the enclosure and go about their business. Corrals were also enclosed by thick, heavy adobe walls for the protection of the livestock.

Sometimes there was trouble between the Utes and the Navajos. The Utes would steal children from the Navajos, and vice versa, then they would sell the little Indians to the settlers in return for money, flour, groceries and merchandise. The girls were trained in the duties of the house as domestics, while the boys had charge of the care of the stock—one of the principal occupations. The owners of these children treated them kindly, gave them a good home and brought them up as good Christians.

East of San Luis lies the *Vega*, stretching like a huge lawn for many, many acres. *Vega* means meadow and was given by direct grant by Beaubien to the people of San Luis and San Pedro as a public grazing ground—each family being allowed so many head of sheep, goats and cattle to graze at will. The *Vega* or "commons," which is the largest in the United States, under the terms of the grant, can never be sold, fenced or in any way commercialized. Even today, upon a summer evening just about sunset one may see the little *vaqueros* coming from different directions to take their cows home for milking time—the cheerful strains of their whistled lays mingling with the basso of the *ronas*, or frogs, as they rehearse for their nocturnal serenades.

A History of Unitarianism in Denver

FRANK MERRIAM KEEZER*

One hundred years ago last August a party of American adventurers, headed by two young men from Boston, was following the trail leading southward up the valley of the South Platte. They passed deserted Fort St. Vrain and had reached Cherry Creek. One of the party wrote: "Here was a great abundance of wild cherries, plums, gooseberries, and currants. This stream, however, like most of the others which we passed, was dried up with the heat, and we had to dig holes in the sand to find water for ourselves and our horses. Two days after, we left the banks of the creek, which we had been following for some time, and began to cross the high dividing ridge which separates the waters of the Platte from those of the Arkansas."

The gentleman who wrote these words was then twenty-six years of age and destined to become one of America's most distinguished historians, for it was none other than the famous Francis Parkman, and his companion who was with him on the homeward journey from the land of the Sioux was Quincy Adams Shaw. They were both scions of aristocratic and influential Boston Unitarian families and I call their names to your attention for the reason that, without doubt, they were the first Unitarians to set foot on the territory which is now known as Denver.

These first two Boston Unitarians, who camped near the confluence of the Platte and Cherry Creek 100 years ago, were Harvard men and Harvard has played a big role in the history of this church. Our first pastor, L. E. Beckwith, and later Thomas J. Van Ness, Samuel A. Eliot and his assistant, Ernest C. Smith, together with David Utter, were all Harvard men, and they brought to this pulpit the Harvard tradition of high scholarship and noble living.

Twelve years after Parkman camped near Denver, the gold seekers built the first log cabins on our soil. Thirteen years later, in 1871, when this town had a population of about 4500, the seeds were sown for what developed into the First Unitarian Society of Denver.

*This is an abbreviated version of a paper read by Mr. Keezer before the Western Unitarian Conference at Denver on June 1, 1946.—Ed.

The story of this Society begins in the month of May, 1871. There had recently come to town a young man by the name of L. E. Beckwith, who had just graduated from Harvard Divinity School, the reason for his arrival in Denver being to visit his parents, who had come out here from the state of Maine a few years earlier. There being no Unitarian Church, Mr. Beckwith discussed the situation with his parents and their friends with the result that the suggestion was made that the young minister set a time and place when a Unitarian service would be held for the first time in the town of Denver.

It was much easier to arrive at the conclusion that Unitarian services would be held than it was to find a place of meeting. Mr. Beckwith and his new found Denver friends searched the town over for a hall which they considered suitable for a religious service, but none was available. How this little group came to the conclusion that they would apply to court officials and endeavor to secure the district court room as a first place of meeting has never been divulged. But it was brought about; the fact is, that public notices appeared in the *Rocky Mountain News* and other papers under date of May 14, 1871, stating that Reverend L. E. Beckwith, son of Mr. George C. Beckwith, would preach that afternoon at the district court building, at 3 o'clock. The announcement further said that "this gentleman is a recent graduate of the Cambridge School, Unitarian, and will assist during his stay in organizing a Unitarian Society here."

About 50 people, largely strangers to each other, appeared in the court room at the appointed hour, and according to the history prepared by Mrs. D. D. Belden, which was read at the 20th anniversary of the organization of the Society, the audience "saw seated in the Judge's chair, behind the desk, a youthful but scholarly looking man, who, after opening the services by the reading of hymns, prayer, etc., proceeded to deliver a well-digested, logical and eloquent discourse, illustrating the religious ideas common to the Unitarian denomination. The discourse was well received, and all seemed interested."

Very shortly, Mr. Beckwith was requested by Colonel E. H. Powers, H. P. Bennet, John L. Dailey, D. D. Belden, F. B. Crocker, Dr. William Smedley, and others, to establish a Society in Denver, the object of which would be to maintain a liberal church. Mr. Beckwith continued to hold services for several weeks thereafter and on August 17, 1871, incorporation papers were filed under the name of the First Unitarian Society of Denver, with Hiram P. Bennet, Alfred Sayre and George C. Beckwith as incorporators. These gentlemen, together with Freeman B. Crocker and Colonel D. C. Dodge, were named as trustees.

The Society adopted the following Expression of Faith and Declaration of Purpose:

EXPRESSION OF FAITH

We believe in the unity of God. We have faith in the immortality of the soul. We recognize the spiritual element in humanity and the necessity of its development and cultivation.

DECLARATION OF PURPOSE

Our object shall be to study the principles and practice the duties of a pure and undefiled religion.

We would cherish the faith in a God of infinite goodness, wisdom and perfection.

We would seek the truth wherever we may find it, whether in the principles that God has expressed in the universe of matter, in the inspired words of the great and good of all ages and climes, or the law of conscience which the Creator has written on the tablets of our own hearts.

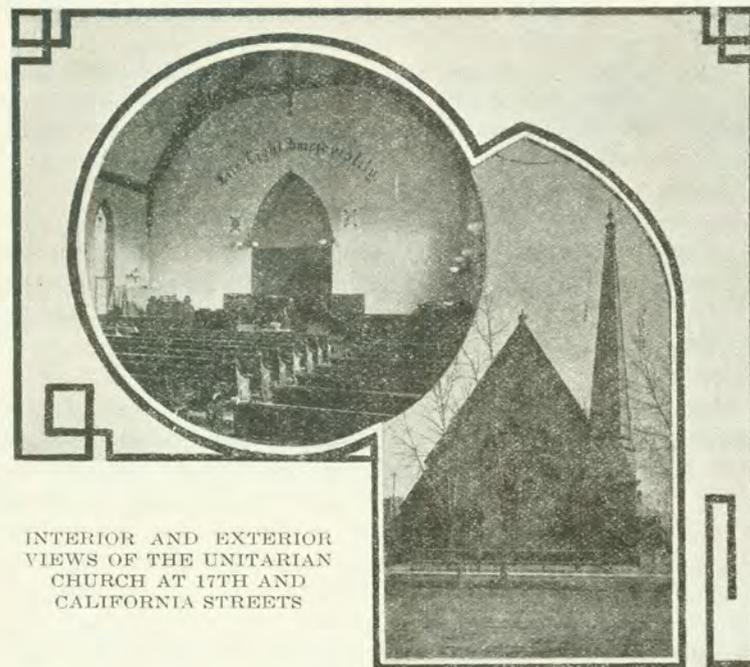
We would unite and work together in sympathy, bearing one another's burdens, helping the needy, cheering the sorrowful, reforming the vicious, aiding each other in the endeavor after a pure and holy life, assisting one another, both by precept and example, in the search after truth and after God.

On May 8, 1872, Mr. Beckwith resigned his pastorate of the Church because of failing health, which resignation was accepted May 26, 1872. Lay services were continued for many weeks, sermons being read by Mr. John M. Moore, one of the oldest and most respected members of the Society. These services were quite as well attended as any previous ones, and the interest seemed unabated.

After correspondence with the American Unitarian Association, Rev. S. S. Hunting, Western Secretary of the Association, came to Denver for the purpose of investigating the situation then prevailing and to assist in securing a new pastor. A meeting was held at Crow's Hall Sunday, August 18, 1872, at which Mr. Hunting was present and a number of the leading members of the Society agreed to subscribe a sufficient amount of money to provide expenses for the reopening of church services, this being done with the understanding that the secretary would aid in securing a suitable pastor for the Society. Correspondence was carried on with the Rev. W. G. H. Stone, of Berlin, Wisconsin, who accepted the call extended to him and he arrived in Denver on the eighth day of October, 1872.

On October 20, 1872, the Society held its first service under the pastorate of Mr. Stone in the basement of the Baptist Church, there being about 40 persons present. This basement was an extremely dark and dismal place and was popularly known at that time as the "Baptist Dug-out." It was waiting the super-struc-

ture, but was being used in the meantime for various purposes. Among those who attended this service in the dug-out was Dr. William Smedley, and we have his written statement that: "Soon after this a new pastor of the Baptist Society arrived in town, who was a live businessman as well as a minister, and he assured his parishioners that the Lord would never allow them to prosper if they insulted Him by worshiping in such a place." They soon removed.



INTERIOR AND EXTERIOR
VIEWS OF THE UNITARIAN
CHURCH AT 17TH AND
CALIFORNIA STREETS

Because no permanent meeting place could be obtained it was decided to make plans for the erection of a church building, and this was done.

In the summer of 1873 four lots were purchased at the corner of 17th and California Streets, the unpaid balance of the purchase price of these lots to bear interest at one per cent per month.

Four contractors submitted bids varying from \$4840 down to \$3797 and it was voted to award the contract to the lowest bidder. The minutes show that "very soon after the letting of the contract it became apparent that the contractor was both incapable and irresponsible. The contract was therefore turned over to Bryant & George, the bondsmen, who took the work in

hand." Delays of one sort and another seemed interminable, but at last the building was completed, outfitted and ready for occupancy.

Before taking possession, however, the trustees and the building committee had one more hurdle to jump, for they were notified by Bryant & George, the bondsmen who had completed the structure, that the keys to the church would not be delivered unless the committee first paid the last penny of the last payment due on the building and now I quote from the official records:

"Accordingly circulars were issued and sent to all delinquent subscribers and other friends of the cause, asking them to meet in counsel." This was done with the result that the requisite amount was paid in cash and the key to the church delivered to the chairman of the committee.

The building was frame construction, of Gothic architecture, with stained glass windows and a seating capacity of 225. It was well finished and furnished and was dedicated Sunday, December 28, 1873. Rev. S. S. Hunting, Western Secretary of the American Unitarian Association, preached morning and evening to a crowded house.

The year 1874 was far from prosperous, for the panic of 1873 still cast its dark shadow over all activities of the Society. It was with difficulty that sufficient funds were obtained for running expenses during the latter part of 1874, and while the Society had the highest regard for its pastor, yet the leading members came to the conclusion that "a change in the pastorate of Unity Church is in our opinion demanded."

Mr. Stone resigned January 3, 1875, and no regular pastor was employed until October 27, 1878, when W. R. Alger, former pastor of the Church of the Messiah in New York City, was called to our pulpit. There is no doubt but that Mr. Alger was one of the most brilliant pulpit speakers of that period, but notwithstanding this fact, toward the end of the year church attendance had greatly diminished and the treasury of the Society was depleted.

Mr. Alger's pastorate was terminated October 27, 1879, and there followed a long period when the church was closed. It was then that the ladies of the Society came courageously to its rescue. The Trustees voted "to turn the affairs of Unity Church, social, religious and especially financial, into the hands of the ladies of the church, whose zeal, fidelity, faith, courage and executive ability had been fully proved." At that time there was a mortgage debt of \$3000 and floating obligations of

\$1000. The five trustees contributed \$50.00 each toward the obligation and during the ensuing year the ladies produced by various methods approximately \$1000, thereby placing the Society on a firmer financial basis than it had been for a long time, with the result that the Rev. R. L. Herbert of Geneva, Illinois, was called to the pulpit and he preached his first sermon September 19, 1880.

Mrs. D. D. Belden, who was an active member of the Society throughout the pastorate of Mr. Herbert, states in her history published in 1891 that "Mr. Herbert was a man of talent—a profound thinker—a forcible writer, and a conscientious and laborious Pastor. His first determination was to secure the payment of the church debt, now increased to \$3700 and by his efforts a donation of \$1000 was promised from the American Unitarian Association, on condition that the remaining \$2700 be immediately raised. By the generous contributions of the Trustees and friends of the church this was accomplished, and in the spring of 1881 the debt was paid, and the church property freed from incumbrance.

"In August, 1881, Mr. Herbert died suddenly. There seemed to have been given him a work to do in Denver, and after his coming he quickly accomplished that work and went home to his rest. The payment of the church debt is Mr. Herbert's memorial, and his name must ever be gratefully associated with Unity Church."

For a period of seven months after the death of Mr. Herbert no services were held in the church, but in the meantime negotiations were carried on with Rev. A. M. Weeks of Chelsea, Massachusetts, and he accepted a call to the pulpit, which he first occupied on March 19, 1882. Mr. Howard Crocker is probably the only person living in Denver at the time this history is written, who was personally acquainted with Mr. Weeks. He states that Mr. Weeks was a young man of much ability and engaging personality. And during those days when the city was still young he did all that was possible to build up and maintain a strong and faithful following for our church. Mr. Weeks was with us for less than two years, and at the age of thirty-three he died, on January 29, 1884.

For eight months the church was open for services for a portion of the time and at other periods it was closed.

On October 13, 1884, Mr. Thomas J. Van Ness occupied our pulpit for the first time and from that moment there was a rapid upward swing in the affairs of our Society. During the first two years that Mr. Van Ness was here the congregation

constantly increased, so that the little church at 17th and California Streets was crowded to the doors, and it became manifest that a larger edifice was required, with the result that early in 1886 the original church was sold, and 3½ lots located at the northeast corner of Broadway and East 19th Avenue were purchased and the present building erected thereon, the cornerstone being laid November 7, under the auspices of the Grand Canton



UNITY UNITARIAN CHURCH,
BROADWAY AND EAST 19TH
AVENUE, DENVER

Arapahoe No. 1 Patriarchs Militant, of the Independent Order of Odd Fellows. The church was dedicated Sunday, September 4, 1887, Rev. Minot J. Savage delivering the dedicatory sermon and Rev. Brooke Herford delivering the address to the people.

During the remaining years that Mr. Van Ness occupied our pulpit, the church continued to grow in numbers and influence, its members being very prominent in all benevolent and philanthropic activities then being conducted in Denver.

The first free kindergarten school in Denver was founded under this roof, a sewing school for girls was established and a Society for the Wise Distribution of Charity was aided in great degree by our members. It was then that Unity Club was founded, as well as the Woman's Auxiliary, together with a Men's Literary Society known as the Channing Club.

Mr. Howard F. Crocker has drawn a picture for your historian of the scene that was enacted each Sunday morning in this church during the ministry of Mr. Van Ness. Mr. Crocker

was then a very young man who served as an usher all the time that Mr. Van Ness was a minister in this building. He states that the doors of the church were opened at 10:30 in the morning. The pews of the members and regular contributors were reserved until 10:55 and then all seats in the church were available to the public.

Another young man who served as usher with Mr. Crocker was Theodore G. Smith who, years later, became president of the International Trust Company, which now occupies the site of the first church of our Society at 17th and California Streets. During those days the church was filled from top to bottom, chairs often being placed in the aisles and the report which has come down to us is, that wonderful discourses delivered in a most magnetic manner were always heard from this pulpit.

Mr. Van Ness had labored with such diligence here in Denver that his health began to fail, with the result that he resigned October 1, 1889, suggesting as his successor, Rev. Samuel A. Eliot, who began his services as our pastor on October 1, 1889, being formally installed November 10, 1889.

I cannot do better than quote from the history of Mr. John H. Gabriel, written 25 years ago and giving a first hand description of the activities of our Society during Mr. Eliot's pastorate. Mr. Gabriel was particularly well qualified to do this for all of it he saw and a part of it he was. Mr. Gabriel writes:

The years of Mr. Eliot's pastorate were busy and fruitful ones for the Society. Mr. Eliot was a good preacher and a great organizer, a man of wonderful executive ability. He not only worked systematically but possessed the faculty of securing work from everyone else. His fine presence and splendid diction commanded attention and respect. His earnestness and sincerity brought to him ardent assistants and supporters. He gathered about him many young people who became a great strength and support to the Society in after years. During his pastorate the active membership of the Society reached its greatest number, 535, and the Sunday School its greatest number, 277. The membership of the Young People's Club reached 140 and the other organizations of the church were strong and active. The name of the Woman's Auxiliary was changed to the Woman's Alliance, and Unity Club became a strong literary society. During this period Rev. Ernest C. Smith served as assistant pastor for six months and Mr. C. E. Montague as parish assistant for another six months. More money was raised and expended on the work of the church during Mr. Eliot's pastorate of three and one-half years than in any other equal period in the history of the Society. He established the Rocky Mountain Conference May 17, 1890, with nine churches and missions represented. Although active within the church, each of the organizations took a prominent part in benevolent and philanthropic work outside the church. His was the moving spirit in the formation of the Associated Charities organization of Denver, and the union

Thanksgiving services which are maintained to the present time. Deep was the regret and great the loss of the Society, when Mr. Eliot tendered his resignation on December 10, 1892, to take effect March 1, 1893, to accept a call to the pastorate of the First Unitarian Church of Brooklyn, New York.

During the administrations of Mr. Van Ness and Mr. Eliot, which covered a period of eight and one-half years, we reached the highest pinnacle of our career. It was as though we stood on the summit of the Matterhorn, so high was our reputation in this community. This corner at 19th and Broadway was, at that time, a mighty magnet that drew to us men, women and children in great numbers, for it was universally recognized that there was no worthy cause in this town that did not have our hearty and substantial support, and many of Denver's best and most successful civic movements were inaugurated by our Society.

We should all bow in reverence and admiration to the memory of our leaders of that era. They were magnificent.

With the termination of Mr. Eliot's pastorate we come to the end of our pioneering days. We have seen the Society founded, two church edifices erected and our position in the community as a leading religious institution made secure.

In this short sketch it is impossible to name all the individuals who were active in the establishment of our Society, but among those most frequently mentioned in the early records are: Colonel E. H. Powers, Attorney; Colonel D. C. Dodge, who was associated with General William J. Palmer of the Rio Grande Railroad; Alfred Sayr, Attorney; D. D. Belden, Attorney; H. P. Bennet, first Territorial delegate to Congress and United States Commissioner; Dr. William Smedley, pioneer dentist; John M. Moore, founder of Moore Hardware Company; Henry C. Dillon, Attorney; William S. Jackson, later one of the most prominent citizens of Colorado Springs; Alfred Butters, stockman and capitalist; F. B. Crocker, who established a grocery business in Denver in 1860; John D. Best, wholesale grocer; E. F. Hallack, leading lumberman of the period, and John L. Daily of the *Rocky Mountain News* and for many years County Treasurer.

We have sought, over the years, to conduct our services so that those who pass beneath our portals will feel that they have entered a sanctuary of light and learning, where an intelligent and effective appeal has been made to their higher attributes and aspirations, so that as they run their courses and meet their fellowmen they will be courageous and helpful comrades in the many struggles and vicissitudes of life.

For three quarters of a century we have carried on. Sometimes we have staggered, often we have stumbled, but we have never fallen. When the going was hard and difficult, we have lifted our heads high and with level eye marched forward, ever carrying aloft the banner of our faith, the flag of the free and untrammelled church, the ensign of Unitarianism.

Coraville, Denver's First Post Office

H. PARKER JOHNSON*

The discovery of the envelope herein illustrated and post-marked "Coraville, K. T., June 22" (1859) leads to this recording of an obscure but interesting chapter in the postal history of our early Gold Rush period.

Our early gold seekers have been described as a heterogeneous lot coming from all walks of life and from all professions from lawyers to gamblers; however, all those that came here were anxious to establish communication with the outside world. In those days communication meant the United States mails, or express service, for there were no telephones or telegraph.

The nearest post office was some 200 miles to the north, at Fort Laramie, and the '58ers at first were dependent on anyone going or coming from that remote post office to carry the mail. Finally an old trapper named Jim Saunders was persuaded to carry the mails from the Cherry Creek towns of Denver City, Auraria (the West Denver of today) and Montana City to Fort Laramie. On November 23, 1858, the first trip was made, which was completed January 9, 1859. The "Saunders Express" charged 50c per letter carried and history records his arrival back in Denver as a signal for celebration and rejoicing. The 50c charge for letters was apparently of no great importance, due to the eagerness of the miners to receive letters and news from home. Saunders made several other trips before Jones & Russell got their Leavenworth and Pike's Peak Express Company into operation.

As we shall note later on in this story, the Leavenworth & Pike's Peak Express Co. and the Coraville Post Office are closely allied, thus it is important to record here a short sketch of this Express Company, which later on was to become the operator of the famous "Pony Express." The freighting firm of Russell,

*Mr. Johnson is a member of this society and is a collector of such Colorado historical items as old envelopes, railroad time tables and passes, and books. His collection of Colorado Ghost Town and Express Company covers is probably the most extensive in existence. Mr. Johnson is Deputy State Bank Commissioner.—Ed.

Majors and Waddell had long been active in freighting throughout the far West and had been carrying freight and supplies to the army posts in Utah during the Mormon rebellion. Russell was by nature visionary and a speculator. He had been impressed with the stories of the gold discoveries around Cherry Creek in the fall of 1858 and foresaw a great rush to the new Eldorado after the passing of winter. He conceived the idea of establishing an express company to run from the Missouri River to the Pike's Peak gold region and tried to sell the idea to his partners, who were pessimistic over the financial possibilities unless a mail contract could be made with the government. Russell went to Washington to endeavor to get a mail contract but was unsuccessful, due mainly to the fact that the Postmaster General in those days was one A. V. Brown, a Southern sympathizer, who wanted to link any communication system with the West through Southern territory rather than through Central or Northern. However, Russell was given the exclusive right to carry the mails to and from the Missouri River and the gold fields and the postmaster at Leavenworth, Kansas, was instructed to turn over the mails destined for the Rockies to the Express Company when established. With no mail subsidy, Majors and Waddell refused to join Russell in the enterprise, so Russell interested another freighter by the name of John S. Jones and together they busied themselves during the rest of the winter and early spring in preparing and equipping the express company, which entailed an expenditure of over \$100,000. It was a large enterprise as stage lines went.

The mails in the meanwhile were brought to the embryonic towns at most irregular intervals and at excessive fees, which resulted in demands of the people that the government establish a regular U. S. Mail. This was just what Jones & Russell wanted and were preparing to provide. About this time an obscure and almost meaningless news item under the date line of Washington, March 28, 1859, appeared and read as follows:

"A Post Office has been established at CORAVILLE, in the Pike's Peak Region and Mathias Snyder, formerly of Virginia, has been appointed postmaster. A contract for a daily mail to Coraville has been given to Major Ben McCullough and B. K. Ficklin. The contract for carrying the mail from Leavenworth to Coraville Pike's Peak Region was made under the Act of 1825 authorizing the establishment of Special Post Offices to be sustained from their net proceeds and such is the arrangement in this case, that the compensation is in no event to exceed \$500 per annum. If the post route bill had passed and the contract made under it, this service would have cost \$30,000 to \$40,000 a year.

The contractors will be mainly compensated for their outlay in the carrying of passengers."¹

Obviously, the establishment of the Coraville post office under these terms was absurd, and needless to say McCullough & Ficklin never carried the mails under such terms, which leads to the query as to why such a post office was established and who was responsible?

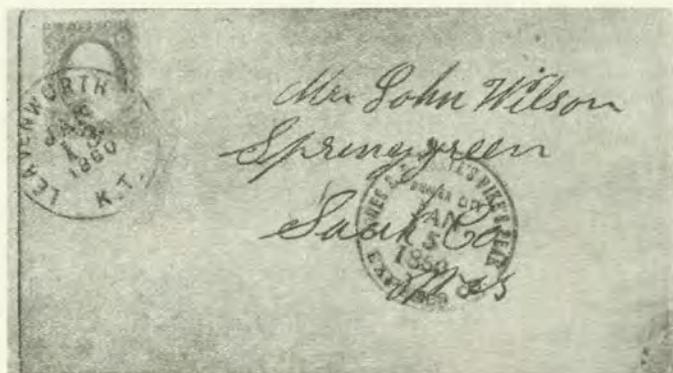
As stated earlier in this article, the records and history surrounding the Coraville post office are obscure, thus the answers to the questions are mainly a matter of conjecture. In arriving at an opinion there is one premise to start on, namely, that any post office in order to operate and be of service is dependent upon transportation by which mails can be sent and received. In this case there was no means of carrying the mails the 600 odd miles between the Cherry Creek towns and the Missouri River, which was across lands that were uncharted, and totally uninhabited for a large portion of the way except by Indians. As far as the post office was concerned there not only was no means of getting the mails transported but no possibility of being able to contract for such transportation in view of the fact that transportation expenditures would have to be paid from the receipts of the office, which would be wholly inadequate to interest anyone in making a contract for such work. Thus it appears that the Coraville office was established for some reason other than one for practical usage. This conclusion brings us back to the Leavenworth & Pike's Peak Express Company, which was still in the process of being organized. Russell had been unsuccessful in negotiating a mail contract, which meant that his Express Company would have to carry the mail as express matter and make a charge for it at a figure considerably in excess of the three cent postal rate. The people in the area were asking for a regular U. S. Mail, thus Russell doubtless reasoned that "window dressing" in the form of a regularly established post office would add the necessary "officialdom" to his private enterprise if used in conjunction therewith. The Express Company's charge of 25c a letter could be more easily explained to the people if it came from "official post office sources" as representing the cost of transportation which was not otherwise provided by the Post Office Department.

In the meantime Spring had come, and to the Rockies flocked gold seekers by the thousands—the Pike's Peak or Bust rush of

¹Quoted from *Rocky Mountain News* of May 7, 1859.

The Post Office Department in Washington has verified the facts contained in this news item with the statement, "The Post Office of Coraville, Kansas Territory, was established March 22, 1859, with Mathias Snyder, Jr., as postmaster. He served until his successor, Richard Edes, was appointed April 22, 1859. Office was discontinued June 25, 1859."

the Spring of '59 was under way and Jones and Russell had guessed right. They had been able to get their equipment of fifty-two Concord stage coaches and 800 horses and mules; they had charted their course through northern Kansas and across the Great American Desert and on May 7, 1859, the first coach bringing mail and passengers arrived in Denver City. Its arrival was met with great acclaim and celebration; it was, in fact, one of the outstanding events of our early history.



ENVELOPE BEARING THE FRANK OF JONES AND RUSSELL'S PIKE'S PEAK EXPRESS, JANUARY 5, 1860

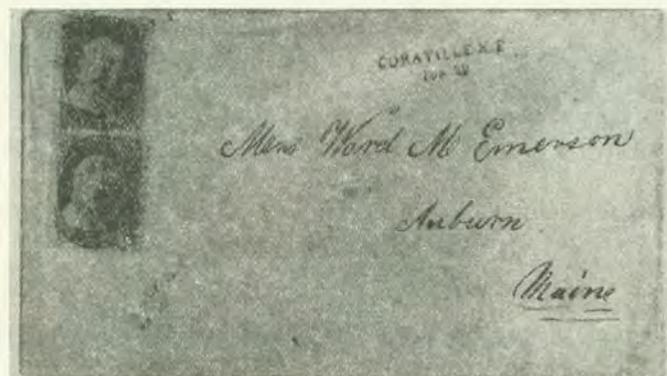
The Coraville post office was located in and apparently operated as a part of the L. & P. P. stage office, which was located on what is now 14th and Larimer Streets. An example of how this post office operated is illustrated by the following recordings taken from the diary of Charles C. Post as he arrived in the Pike's Peak region via the Arkansas River route. The entry was dated June 27, 1859, and reads:

We came to town at half past eight o'clock. We left the main road and came down Cherry Creek bank and crossed to Auraria on west side. We were very much disappointed to find so large and flourishing towns, we saw lots of men, women and children all busy and apparently as contented as people are in Decatur. What a great and sudden change, eight months ago not a single tent or habitation had here been seen on the town sites: now a moving, living and energetic people are building a great metropolis. I broke to the post office [meaning Auraria]; no letter. Went to Denver and at the CORAVILLE post office found six letters, thirty cents each and four newspapers at ten cents each; so much for Jones & Russell's U. S. Mail contract. [Misstatement, for L. & P. P. did not operate under a mail contract.] Well I was glad to get the letters and did not judge the money at all. . . .²

²The entry from Post's diary was taken from *Southwest Historical Series*, XI, 53-54, edited by LeRoy R. Hafen.

Mention is made of a post office in Auraria (West Denver of today). It is true that a post office was established there but was short-lived due to the fact that they had no means of transporting the mails other than the L. & P. P. Express and at express rates of 25c. This is another story and will be written up at a later time.

Thus far we have seen no evidence that the Coraville Post Office ever acted in its normal capacity of a post office by permitting dispatch of letters at the established postal rate of 3c. Illustrated, however, is a cover which was postmarked Coraville, K. T., June 22, 1859³, and apparently mailed and carried at the regular 3c rate. (One of the stamps has been removed and lost, although a portion of its postmark cancellation remains.) How did such an envelope come into being if the



ENVELOPE BEARING THE RARE CORAVILLE POSTMARK, JUNE 22 [1859]

Coraville office had no means of dispatching other than through the facilities of the L. & P. P. Express Co., at express rates of 25c? The answer to this lies in a peculiar series of mistakes based on misinformation received by J. N. Fox, the Denver general agent of the express company.

It was soon evident that the receipts of the Express Company were not sufficient to meet the high operating costs, so Russell again renewed his efforts to secure a mail subsidy. The mails to Salt Lake City were under contract to Hockaday & Leggett for \$130,000 per annum. Those operators were likewise having financial difficulties and the service they were rendering the Mormon colony was poor. Russell concluded that the L. & P. P. could successfully handle the Salt Lake run in conjunction with the Denver route; that the mail contract at \$130,000 would aid his

³"K. T." means Kansas Territory, which was used in the postmark because Denver was in the Territory of Kansas in 1859. Colorado Territory was not established until February, 1861.

It is important to note that Mr. Post paid 30 cents for each letter received. This charge was made from 25 cents express charges plus 5 cents for advertising undelivered letters. *The Rocky Mountain News* carried lists of letters advertised as undeliverable because the addressee was unknown to the Express Company. This also shows that the main function of the Coraville P. O. was to hold such undeliverable letters in official U. S. P. O. capacity. It also indicates the close relationship between the Express Co. and the Coraville P. O.

finances, and that by handling the Salt Lake mail he would be in a favorable position to obtain an additional contract for a branch line to the gold regions. With these plans in mind, he purchased the Salt Lake contract, including all express equipment, in late May, 1859, for \$144,000, and immediately moved the course of the route to the Platte River. The Denver office was informed of the mail contract and the change of route and Mr. Fox, the manager, concluded that the mails would henceforth be carried as U. S. Mails at the 3c rate and not as express matter.⁴

The Coraville post office immediately became a dispatching office instead of an office used merely to hold letters not deliverable by the Express Company and to advertise such letters. Three mails originating in the gold regions were dispatched East as U. S. Mail and carried in the coaches of the Leavenworth & Pike's Peak Express Co. The letters sent thus were postmarked "Coraville K. T." and were sent for the regular 3c rate. As soon as the Leavenworth office noticed the mail coming through in this manner they immediately advised Mr. Fox of the Denver office that a mail contract had not been secured for the mails originating in the gold regions and that henceforth mail should be sent as express matter. Mr. Fox attempted to inform the people of the region through the *Rocky Mountain News* and in the July 8, 1859, issue, his statements were carried to the effect that he, Fox, had contemplated that the mail would go as regular U. S. Mail for 3c and believed that arrangements had been so effected. After three mails had been dispatched in this manner he was informed that a mail contract from Denver had not been granted and then the L. & P. P. was forced to go back to the 25c express rate.

This cover was one of the few mailed during that short period. It is of course a very rare item and is the only one known to exist today.

Discouraged by his inability to obtain a mail contract for the Pikes Peak Region, Russell concluded that the Coraville Post Office had served its purpose. In a *Rocky Mountain News* item in the issue of July 23, 1859, appeared the statement: "We understand that the Coraville Post Office has been discontinued. . . ." This brings to a close the story of Denver's first post office—a government agency used for the benefit of a private enterprise.

⁴Another reason that doubtless influenced Mr. Fox in concluding thus was the fact that he was under considerable pressure from the people to have his Express Company carry the mails at regular 3-cent postal rates. The *Rocky Mountain News* of July 8, 1859, editorialized at considerable length on the subject of mail rates and printed various letters written in protest about the mails. In one letter written by a group of miners they ask, "How is it that the postmaster of Coraville is also the postmaster of Denver City and as such charges 25 cents extra for letters going to the States and 30 cents for those coming out and at the same time is an employee of the Express Company?" This again bears out the close relationship between the Express Company and the Coraville P. O.

However, it may be said in favor of the Leavenworth & Pike's Peak Express Co. that it formed the only real link between the gold region and the nearest established towns which were along the Missouri River. The owners lost a fortune in bringing the mails when the Express Company should have been granted a subsidy in the same manner as the Butterfield Company which served the California area. The L. & P. P. continued to bring the mails to Denver, Auraria and the newly formed mountain towns even at a financial loss until early 1860. Denver was without a post office until August, 1860, and in the meantime was served by privately owned express companies, the Central Overland California & Pike's Peak Express Co. (this company was the L. & P. P. reorganized) and by the competing Western Stage Lines over which ran the messengers of Hinckley's Express Company.