

The Immigrant Saloon in Denver

BY THOMAS J. NOEL*



Swiss immigrant Florian Spalti's saloon and bakery on the corner of H and Blake streets in Denver was often a gathering place for members of the local Swiss Society and the Turnverein. Spalti (foreground on corner) used his saloon as a stepping stone to success in his rise to the status of "capitalist."

In their struggle to establish roots in a new country, immigrants relied on saloons as both a haven for old world culture and an introduction to their new home. Although the family, the church, and other institutions also played major roles in the lives of immigrants, saloons sheltered many of the activities of foreigners. While some citizens of Denver attacked the saloon as a nest of political corruption, moral debasement, and inferior peoples, many foreign-born newcomers to the Queen City felt differently. They relished their taverns as ethnic clubs and community centers for a wide range of social, political, and economic activities.

The Germans in Denver were among the most prominent, prosperous, and populous foreign-born groups with homes and taverns scattered throughout the city.¹ By 1880 over one-third of all Denver saloons were German owned. Inside these Teutonic taverns, customers could speak and sing German, enjoy German music and dance, read German newspapers and magazines, procure strudel and sauerkraut, and quaff German beer and wine. Establishments such as the Turn Hall, Bavarian House, the Kaiserhof, Deutsches House, Germania Hall, Mozart Hall, Saxonia Hall, Heidelberg Cafe, Walhalla Hall, and the Edelweiss served not only "Dutch (German) lunches" but also the customs and the culture of the old country.

The best known of the German taverns was the Turn Hall. Founded in 1865 the Turners remain the oldest continuously operating ethnic club in Colorado. Initially the Turners met in Adolph Schinner's City Bakery and Saloon, but, over the years, they moved into increasingly larger quarters culminating with the fine, four-story, turreted hall they

* Thomas J. Noel wishes to thank the National Science Foundation for a research and travel grant funding this study.

¹ Stephen J. Leonard makes this point in the text and the cluster maps of his "Denver's Foreign-Born Immigrants, 1859-1900" (Ph.D. diss., Claremont Graduate School, 1971), the most extensive treatment to date; see also Leonard, "The Irish, English, and Germans in Denver, 1859-1890," *The Colorado Magazine* 54 (Spring 1977):126-53.



erected on Arapahoe Street in 1889.² Besides a drinking hall, the Turnverein contained exercise rooms that were equipped with the help of donations from various German-owned breweries in Denver. At the urging of the German community, exercise classes were also inaugurated in the Denver public schools after the Turnverein donated the salary of the pioneer physical education instructor, Professor Schmitt.³ By 1880 the Turnverein, or "the German Temple of Art" as historian William B. Vickers called it, was the most commodious hall in Denver.⁴ As such, it not only housed German community affairs but also public concerts, plays, operas, lectures, and political rallies. The Turn Hall not only harbored German cultural life, it also hosted services for the dead. Traditionally members planned in advance to treat their funeral party to lunch and beer at the hall.

An 1874 incident at Turn Hall demonstrated the political clout of the Germans, which protected them while some other foreigners underwent varying degrees of discrimination. When a Denver policeman attempted to arrest a Turn Hall patron for after hours drinking,

the Germans ejected the officer and sent a hot letter to city hall: "We want it clearly understood that we want no policeman in our hall in any official capacity."⁵ In deference to the powerful Teutonic community, Mayor Francis Chase sent an apologetic letter promising to ignore the midnight closing law in the case of the Turners.

Germans, including many in the liquor business, quickly became members of the Denver aristocracy. One-time saloon keepers John J. Reithman and his brother-in-law, John Milheim, and the brewers John Good, Philip Zang, and Adolph Coors made enough money to place themselves in the upper circles of the Denver elite. Many solid Germans promoted their countrymen's fortunes in Denver. Frederick Steinhauer, a founder of the Turnverein and member of the territorial legislature, wrote to old country newspapers extolling Colorado as "a better place for a young man to secure his living and independence." As a member of the Denver School Board, Steinhauer promoted German language and culture and ordered ninety readers for the German school.⁶

Many Denverites benefited from the German interest in music and the arts. Denver Turners organized the first singing society, the Maennerchor. In 1873 the saloon-keeping Kaltenback family ordered a \$10,000 orchestrion from Berlin. When the elaborate organ arrived a year later the Kaltenback's joyously renamed their tavern Orchestrion Hall. It took one week to assemble and tune the massive, eleven-foot high machine and attach all of the reeds, horns, drums, and a xylophone. To celebrate the premiere of the instrument, hundreds of Denverites and mountain people crowded into the hall. "No one," an observer recalled, "had ever supposed there were so many Germans in the region and were amazed that the beer held out through the long night." As Teutons swilled their brew and sang along, the largest musical apparatus between the Missouri River towns and California ground out "Die Wacht am Rhein," Robert Schumann's "Traumerei," George Schweitzer's "Yodel Hi Lee Hi Loo," and Ludwig van Beethoven's "Moonlight Sonata."⁷

Teutons gave Denver not only music and culture but also one of its first festivals, Bock Beer Day. This traditional German holiday came in the spring when brewers cleaned out their beer fermenting vats and made from the residue a syrupy brew called bock beer. Editor William Byers of the *Denver Rocky Mountain News* reported that all

² Denver Turnvereins, *Souvenir des Denver Turnvereins* (Denver: n.p., 1890), p. 29; Frank S. Woodbury, *Tourists' Guide in Denver* (Denver: Times Steam Printing House and Blank Book Manufacturing, 1882), p. 58.

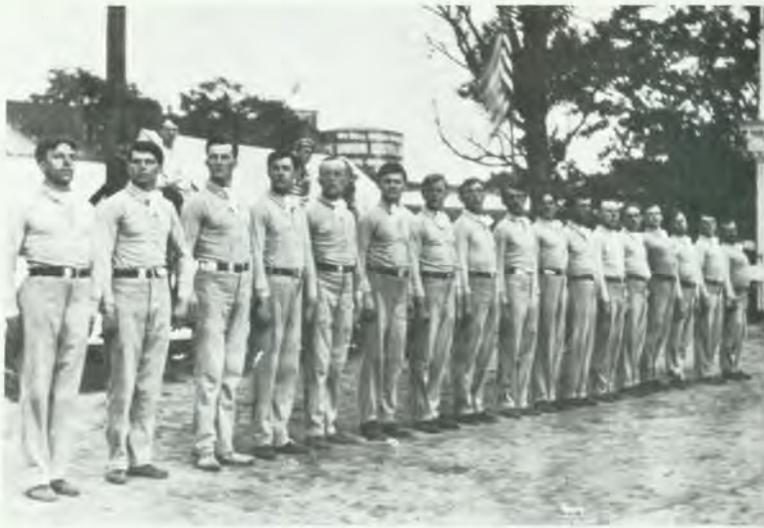
³ *Denver Rocky Mountain News*, 6 October 1866; "The Denver Turners," pp. 57-64, 82, cited in Jake Schaezel, *Memories of Denver* (Denver: privately printed, 1975).

⁴ William B. Vickers, *History of the City of Denver, Arapahoe County, and Colorado* (Chicago, Ill.: O.L. Baskin & Co., 1880), p. 291.

⁵ *Denver Rocky Mountain News*, 18, 20 February 1874, cited in Leonard, "Denver's Foreign-Born Immigrants, 1859-1900," p. 110.

⁶ "Letters of Frederick Steinhauer," translated from the German by Karl Steinhauer, *The Colorado Magazine* 10 (July 1933):156-58.

⁷ This account of the orchestrion is drawn from Sanford A. Linscome, "A History of Musical Development in Denver, Colorado, 1858-1908" (D.M.A. diss., University of Texas, Austin, 1970), pp. 65-66.



Denver Turners "dress right" preceding gymnastics in 1907.

nationalities joined in the beer fest as large wagons from the local breweries, decorated with flags and laden with kegs of beer, rumbled continuously through the streets to the saloons. Otto Heinrich's saloon at Sixteenth and Larimer set the record for Bock Beer Day, 1874, serving some 3,000 glasses of beer, 50 loaves of bread, and 125 pounds of meat.⁸

Although Germans enjoyed a happier life in nineteenth-century Denver than many other groups, the twentieth century changed that. As the most powerful Denver ethnic group and one whose wealth was heavily invested in the liquor business, Germans came under attack from Prohibitionists. To counter the attacks of the "temperentzlers," Teutons met at the Turn to organize the Citizens Protective Union, which defended the saloon as "the poor man's club house, his restaurant, and his infirmary."⁹

When Coloradans voted to inaugurate statewide prohibition on New Year's Day, 1916, many Germans lost their jobs in the liquor industry. The Zang Brewery, Neef Brothers Brewery, and dozens of other manufacturers, wholesalers, and distributors ultimately closed along with over four hundred Denver saloons. A much greater number of Germans lost their traditional beer hall socialization. But an even heavier blow to the Teutonic community came with the outbreak of World War I, when Germans became the target of a widespread and irrational hate campaign. Regardless of their professed and proven

patriotism, German-Americans were fired from their jobs, illegally imprisoned, and physically and verbally abused. Denver public schools outlawed German language classes and restaurants began calling sauerkraut "liberty cabbage" and hamburgers "liberty steaks."¹⁰ After the double-barreled blow of prohibition and World War I, the once ubiquitous German saloon largely vanished from the Denver cityscape.

The Irish, like the Germans, experienced little trouble melting into the mainstream of nineteenth-century Denver. "No Irish Need Apply" signs stayed back on the eastern seaboard for several reasons. The presence of Indians, Orientals, and Blacks at the bottom of society tended to push the English-speaking, white-skinned Irish up a few notches in western cities. Irishmen were also well received in Denver because those able to travel this far west usually had some money or a guaranteed job with the railroads, smelters, or other employers. By the time they reached Denver the children of Erin typically had lived in other North American cities, as the Irish immigration stream flowed through Boston, Philadelphia, New York, and Canadian port cities and then across the country. This previous experience in America meant that the Irish reaching Denver generally spoke understandable English and had acquired job skills.

Many Irishmen came as "terriers," as the Irish railroad crews called themselves. And, like the railroads, many of these laborers made Denver their headquarters. Irishmen moved into trackside, working-class neighborhoods in Auraria, North Denver, and North Central Denver. Soon after their arrival, some of these Irishmen established blue collar bars, strategically located between the jobs and the homes of their countrymen. Passersby reported barroom fights between Irish Catholics and Irish Orangemen.¹¹ And, late into the night, alcoholic aromas and the lyrics of "My Wild Irish Rose," "You'll Never Find a Coward Where the Shamrock Grows," "Wearin' of the Green," and "Where the River Shannon Flows" drifted out of open tavern doors.

Saloons promoted Irish clubs and helped distribute the *Rocky Mountain Celt*, which claimed to be the only Irish-American newspaper in the West. Denver chapters of the Ancient Order of Hibernians, the Irish Progressive Society, the Irish Fellowship Association, the Irish Land League, and the Saint Patrick's Mutual Benevolent Society were established by the 1880s. Saloon-keeper Patrick Frain

⁸ *Denver Rocky Mountain News*, 21 May 1874.

⁹ *Denver Post*, 2 February 1899.

¹⁰ Lyle W. Dorsett, "The Ordeal of Colorado's Germans during World War I," *The Colorado Magazine* 51 (Fall 1974):279-93; Robert L. Perkin, *The First Hundred Years: An Informal History of Denver and the Rocky Mountain News* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday & Co., 1959), p. 536.

¹¹ Schaezel, *Memories of Denver*, p. 50.

spearheaded the crusade of the Irish Land League to raise funds, while the Saint Patrick's Mutual Benevolent Society sought to encourage Gaelic literature, lectures, and band music. While some of these groups convened in bars, one Irish organization, Saint Joseph's Catholic Total Abstinence Society, attempted to dry out the hard-drinking in the city.¹²

Irish solidarity and saloon-hall shenanigans reached an annual climax on 17 March. Initially the Ancient Order of Hibernians conducted drinking and dancing festivals in honor of Saint Patrick, and by the 1890s a coalition of clubs, churches, and taverns began sponsoring a downtown parade of celebrants bedecked with green ribbons.¹³ Mayor Robert W. Speer pronounced the parade an official city celebration in 1906. After the state prohibition law dehydrated Denver in 1916, the festival fizzled. And when Ireland, or at least the Irish Republican Army, began flirting with Germany during World War I, Denverites dropped the parade entirely. Anti-Catholic, antiimmigrant, pro-Ku Klux Klan sentiment during the 1920s further discouraged would-be celebrants of Saint Patrick's Day. Not until 1962 did a group of Denver Irishmen convene in Duffy's Shamrock Tavern and launch a successful campaign to re-instate the parade in honor of the patron saint of Ireland.¹⁴

Although the Irish born represented less than three percent of the population in the Mile High City by 1900, they operated ten percent of the taverns.¹⁵ These Irish pub keepers help to explain why Irishmen were able, in a predominantly non-Irish city, to elect Irish mayors and councilmen. The political clout of the group revolved around triangular political cells formed by saloon keepers, politicians, and policemen—three professions attracting large numbers of gregarious, politically-sensitive Irishmen.¹⁶ These triangular partnerships were based on saloon keepers who got themselves or associates elected to office. Once in office, the saloon candidate hired policemen who would protect the saloon.

Saloon-keeping Irish councilmen included James Doyle, John Conlon, Andrew Horan, and William Gahan. Of these bartending aldermen, one of the most successful and long-lived was Eugene Madden.

¹² Woodbury, *Tourists' Guide to Denver*, pp. 57-58; *Denver Rocky Mountain News*, 12 January 1882, 9 April 1884; Leonard, "Denver's Foreign-Born Immigrants, 1859-1900."

¹³ *Denver Daily News*, 20 March 1886; *Denver Times*, 18 March 1899.

¹⁴ Olga Curtis, "The Chairman is Only Half Irish," *Denver Post, Empire Magazine* (9 March 1975):16-19.

¹⁵ U.S., Bureau of the Census, *Twelfth Census of the United States* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1901), 1:796-99.

¹⁶ *Souvenir History Denver Police and Fire Departments* (Denver: Denver Litho, 1900) and *Denver Fire and Police Departments Illustrated* (Denver: Smith Brooks, 1905) contain police force rosters showing a disproportionate number of Irish surnamed officers under police chiefs John F. Farley (1889-1904) and Michael A. Delaney (1904-1912). The preponderance of saloon advertisements in these police publications also suggests a close, working relationship between law enforcement officials and saloon keepers.



Madden's saloon at 1140 Larimer Street in the early 1900s, with bartenders Michael Flaherty and Edward Madden (in aprons), owner Eugene Madden (center with mustache), and Denver Police detective Mike Carroll (with pipe).

Madden served nine, consecutive, city council terms with strong support from his Larimer Street saloon and the nearby police department, where his brother was a captain. Constituents could call Councilman Madden anytime, day or night, to get a friend or relative out of jail. A second-generation Irishman, Madden was a soft-spoken man who walked his Auraria ward, giving kisses to the babies, candy to the ladies, and food and coal to the needy. If Madden bailed out Saturday night troublemakers, he also offered Sunday morning support in the neighborhood Irish Catholic church Saint Leo's. Extremely successful as both a councilman and a tavern owner, Madden was one pre-prohibition saloon keeper to survive the seventeen year drought and reopen in 1933.¹⁷

Irishmen found politics to be good business. Erin-born brothers Michael and John Flaherty, for instance, came to Denver around 1890 to work at the Globe Smelter. After years of smelter toil, they opened Flaherty's Saloon on Larimer Street. When state prohibition closed the

¹⁷ This account of Madden is drawn from an interview with State Senator Dennis Gallagher, Sullivan's Bar, Denver, 17 March 1977; interview with Cortland Doyle, Ship's Tavern, Denver, 3 February 1978; *Denver City Directories*; obituary for Eugene Madden, *Denver Post*, 9 December 1941.

bar, Michael switched to the construction business where his support of Mayor Speer paid off. Although political connections helped earn Flaherty initial contracts to do city streets, alleys, and sewers, his fine construction work (he even used glazed bricks in sewers) and pride in living up to 100 percent of the contract enabled him to stay in business.¹⁸

Although Irish, saloon-keeping politicians were stereotyped as corrupt and intemperate, this was hardly the case. Even the Voters League, a reform group hostile to saloons, found that at least one Irish tavern "has always been considered a model institution and was never known to be a scene of drunkenness or grafting." Thomas Henry, the Irish-born owner of this Market Street bar, never drank while bartending or drank to excess anywhere according to the league's character assessment when Henry ran in 1904 for district supervisor.¹⁹

If some Irishmen found their saloons to be bases for political, police, and business life, many others found taverns a congenial place to gather. Dull but exhausting jobs coupled with the Irish propensity for late marriage led them to bars. Their culture and even their church sanctioned drink. The saloon, declared Father Thomas Malone, editor of the *Colorado Catholic*, was the "working mans' club."²⁰

The Jews, like other nineteenth-century groups, found the liquor business relatively easy to enter. Frederick Zadek Salomon opened a pioneer general store selling, among other things, a great deal of liquor, including ale from the first Denver brewery, Rocky Mountain, which Salomon cofounded. Salomon became treasurer of the first Denver Chamber of Commerce in 1860 and also helped organize the Hebrew Burial and Prayer Society that year. Charles M. Schayer, who started out in Denver with a small liquor and cigar store in 1870 and became one of the larger wholesale liquor dealers, was a German Jew. He served as a founder, first treasurer, and second president of Temple Emanuel, the first synagogue in the city. N. Rosenthal, Joseph Bloch, Benjamin Hamburger, Moses Sporberg, and Samuel N. Rose all one-time liquor dealers also were among the twenty-three Jews to organize the pioneer synagogue.²¹

¹⁸ Interview with Thomas Flaherty, Denver, 31 December 1974; *Denver City Directories*.

¹⁹ Voters' League Materials, Edward Costigan Papers, Western Historical Collections, University of Colorado Libraries, Boulder.

²⁰ Robert F. Bales, "Attitudes Toward Drinking in the Irish Culture," in D.J. Pitman and C.R. Snyder, eds., *Society, Culture and Drinking Patterns* (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1962); for a study of Irish drinking propensities, see Richard Stivers, *A Hair of the Dog: Irish Drinking and American Stereotype* (University Park, Penn.: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1976); *Denver Rocky Mountain News*, 11 March 1899.

²¹ Marjorie Hornbein, *Temple Emanuel of Denver: A Centennial History* (Denver: Temple Emanuel, 1974), pp. 14-16; Allen D. Breck, *The Centennial History of the Jews of Colorado, 1859-1959* (Denver: University of Denver, Department of History, 1960), p. 32.

The Jews did not suffer the violent and intensive discrimination that was reserved for Blacks, Orientals, and to a lesser extent, the Italians. They held prominent commercial, professional, and political positions, which gave their people prestige and economic and political clout. "The Hebrews of Denver," editorialized the *Denver Times* upon the completion of the second Temple Emanuel at Twenty-Fourth and Curtis streets in 1882, "are to be congratulated and complimented upon having built so fine a synagogue and upon the high grade of social and intellectual standing of the members."²²

Yet, discrimination pursued the Hebrews as some of the confidential credit reports of R.G. Dun's Denver agent indicate. In assessing the character of Samuel Rose, a founder, a president, and a major supporter of Temple Emanuel, the Denver agent belabored the fact that Rose was a Jew. While admitting that Rose's liquor and cigar business did well and enjoyed good credit locally, the Dun appraiser told the New York office that he was "not of good character and standing. Too quarrelsome and revengeful. Whips his wife . . . a Jew." A later report claimed Rose's "trade is primarily with the small class of saloon men and he necessarily takes large risks. He does too large a credit business for his capital."²³

Upper-class and commercial discrimination against the Jews also emerged with the development of exclusive clubs in the 1880s. The Denver Club traced its origins back to the Denver Whist and Chess Club of the 1860s, of which Fred Z. Salomon was a founder and tavern-keeper Isadore Deitsch a director. Yet, when the whist and chess players reorganized as the Denver Club in 1881, Jews were barred from membership in one of the most influential groups of men in Denver.²⁴

The pioneer Jews, who came to Denver primarily from German backgrounds, frequently did well in spite of occasional anti-Semitism and the resulting business handicaps. Merchant Wolfe Londoner's election as mayor in 1889 symbolized their generally smooth integration into the community. This situation began to change, however, in the 1890s. Hundreds of Hebrew families from Russia and Eastern Europe settled along West Colfax Avenue from the South Platte River bottomlands to the near west side. Many of them were unskilled; few spoke English. They worked as peddlers, box makers, junk dealers, day laborers, and rag and bottle pickers. These junk men became the bogeymen of the city, strange-looking and strange-talking people who

²² *Denver Times*, 1 September 1881.

²³ R.G. Dun and Company Collection, *Credit Ratings for Colorado Territory*, entries for Samuel Rose dated 14 November 1871 and 2 November 1874, Baker Business Library, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass. (hereinafter cited as R.G. Dun, *Ratings*).

²⁴ Ida L. Uchill, *Pioneers, Peddlers and Tsadikim* (Denver: Sage Books, 1957), p. 156.

were teased, taunted, and molested as they scoured city streets and bar alleys for recyclable refuse, rags, and bottles. One Jewish rag picker was attacked by what the Jewish newspaper called "Christian hoodlums." He was insulted, beaten and his rickety wagon, with its load of rags, was burned. A child of the Jewish ghetto recalled that he and his family dressed in gunny sacks to soften the stonings frequently given his people. This fellow's father, a "schochet" at a slaughter house, was forced to bring kegs of beer to work for the gentile employees. If they did not get their beer, they told him, he would not get his work.²⁵

Despite some persecution, the Hebrew newcomers maintained their religion, their identity, and their culture, partly with the aid of several Jewish tavern keepers. One of their first sources of kosher food was Albert Wongrowitz's popular saloon and delicatessen. By the warm stove of his saloon, located next to Temple Emanuel, patrons lingered to hear the community history, gossip, and news that the amiable Wongrowitz dispensed with his lox, bagels, and wine. On West Colfax, Adolph Goldhammer opened his saloon hall to the Yiddish community for meetings, debates, lectures, and plays.²⁶ Other Jewish immigrants also operated delicatessens that were second only to the synagogues as purveyors of Jewish customs.

In comparison with most German, Irish, and Hebrew immigrants, the Italians received a chilly reception in the Queen City of the Plains. Only a sprinkle of Italians settled in Denver before 1880, when the census taker found 86 natives of Italy. In the following decade, however, the railroads and other industrial operations actively recruited cheap Italian labor and by 1890 their numbers in Denver had climbed to 608.²⁷ Their upward struggle from the South Platte River bottoms, like their slow climb out of the bottom classes, was made despite economic and cultural obstacles.

Italian tavern keepers played a major role in the emergence of these southern Europeans. A few respectable saloon keepers assumed a major responsibility for improving the lot of their countrymen while several disreputable Italian bars and barroom murders seriously damaged their standing in the city.

In the summer of 1872 Angelo Capelli settled in Denver, where he opened a small bottomland produce stand and soon afterwards, the Highland House. Capelli's career demonstrated that geographic mobility on the frontier could bring success. He had failed in Saint Louis and opened his Denver business under his wife's name, a dodge that did not escape the attention of Denver credit agents. Despite his

limited capital and poor credit appraisal, this pioneer Italian innkeeper did well. Two years later the Capellis owned several properties, could get credit for "any reasonable amount," and were worth about \$5,000 to \$6,000 clear. Presumably because of the favorable reports on the thriving railroad city of the 1870s that Angelo and his wife sent home, other Capellis began trickling into the Queen City. They operated several family taverns and by 1890 the family had opened a confectionary shop, a macaroni factory, a meat market, fruit stands, and a real estate business. In 1880 Capelli was appointed the first Italian consul in Denver to assist the growing number of Italian immigrants to Colorado.²⁸

Peter Albi, another pioneer saloon keeper, housed the Italian Publishing Company and the Italian language gazette, *Roma*, in his Fifteenth Street tavern. Albi and his family took up the grocery business in 1891, a bank in 1892, then real estate and the Cascade Laundry Company in the 1920s. Albi sponsored roughly one hundred Italian immigrants coming to Denver, promising immigration authorities that he would find homes and jobs for his Calabrian countrymen.²⁹ Other leading Italian families—the Aiellos, the Carbones, the Frazzinis, the Mosconis, and the Zarlengos—also established inns that served their growing community.

A few Italians established successful nineteenth-century businesses. But the majority found only the poorest of jobs, primarily as day laborers. Hundreds of Italians lived in shacks throughout the river bottoms, and along the South Platte River, at least, their children could gather watercress for sale in the nearby city market. And beside the Platte, these former European peasants found water for their vegetable patches. Many of them became urban farmers and hawked their produce in carts on Larimer Street.

As the Queen City flourished and their vegetable patches flowered and fruited, many of these riverside farmers acquired the capital to buy a horse and a wagon. After putting a canvas roof on the wagon and hanging scales on the side, Italians launched their turn-of-the-century invasion, infiltrating every neighborhood in Denver and even the suburbs with their street song of "Vegetable man! Vegetable man! Nice-a-ripa-tomatoes."³⁰

Some of these street peddlers saved enough to establish less peripatetic businesses. Tony Zarlengo began his new life in Denver as a day laborer in 1898, switched to peddling two years later, and in

²⁵ *Denver Jewish Outlook*, 22 June 1906; Uchil, *Pioneers, Peddlers and Tsadikim*, p. 158.

²⁶ Uchil, *Pioneers, Peddlers and Tsadikim*, pp. 226, 228; *Denver City Directories*.

²⁷ U.S., Bureau of the Census, *Tenth Census . . . 1880; Eleventh Census . . . 1890*, 2:690-93.

²⁸ R.G. Dun, *Ratings*, entries for Angelo and Mary Ann Capelli, 5 September 1873, 13 August 1875; Giovanni Perilli, *Colorado and the Italians in Colorado* (Denver: n.p., 1922), pp. 27, 159; *Denver City Directories*.

²⁹ Interview with Louis Albi, Denver, 7 February 1975; *Denver City Directories*.

³⁰ Perilli, *Colorado and the Italians in Colorado*, p. 29; Schaezel, *Memories of Denver*, p. 51.

another two years converted his first Denver residence at 1905 Division Street under the Twentieth Street Viaduct into a saloon. Other one-time street vendors developed huge wholesale produce plants, which are still clustered along the South Platte River bottomlands where the Italians first found fertile soil.

Initially impoverished, illiterate, and unskilled, the Italian immigrants were disliked by some Denver nativists for their foreign tongue, their Catholicism, their eating and drinking habits, and their occasional criminality. Over the years newspaper stories denounced the numerous Italian saloons as the havens for merchandising stolen property and other crimes.³¹

The Capellis, the Albis, and other respectable Italian families were concerned about the impoverished and violent elements of their community. In hopes of Americanizing and refining their poorer countrymen, they established Columbus Hall and the Italian-American Club. Siro Mangini, who married one of the Capelli daughters, named his Larimer Street tavern after a countryman, Christopher Columbus. Surely, Mangini thought, here was one Italian whom Americans knew and appreciated. At Christopher Columbus Hall, Mangini occasionally dished out ravioli to neighboring shopkeepers, to politicians, and to the policemen who walked the beat. Mrs. Mangini and their ten children, who lived above the saloon, worked all day to prepare these feasts. Because of the Manginis' efforts, Italians found themselves more welcome, at least on Larimer Street.³²

Mangini and fellow tavern keepers Luigi Mosconi and Joseph Turre formed the *Unione Fratellanza* and Augustine Roncaglia, proprietor of the Columbia House, introduced the Garibaldi Society to Denver. Michael Notary, coowner of the North Denver Liquor House, founded the Mount Carmel Society. Frank Mazza, another successful businessman who started out as a tavern owner, helped found *Unione e Fratellanza Italiana*, *Bersaglieri Principedi Napoli*, and the *Club Italo Americano*. The *Societa Nativi di Potenza*, founded in 1899, still survives as one of the strongest groups with the continuing support of tavern-keeping clans such as the Smaldones and Aiellos. These ethnic clubs played a role in helping the Italians to "make it." Leaving behind their tents and shacks in the bottomlands, Italians moved up, after 1900, into the old, tree-shaded neighborhoods of North Denver

CHRISTOPHER COLUMBUS HALL,

A CHOICE LINE OF

Wines, Liquors and Cigars,

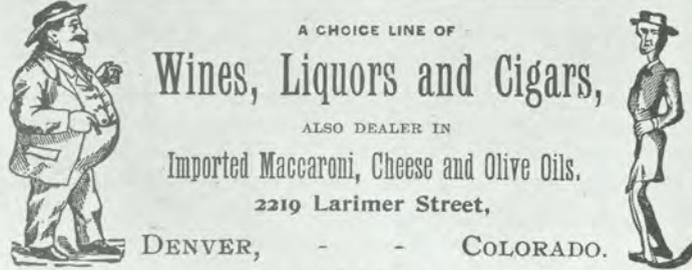
ALSO DEALER IN

Imported Maccaroni, Cheese and Olive Oils.

2219 Larimer Street,

DENVER, - - - COLORADO.

I drink at Christopher Columbus Hall. **SIRO MANGINI, Prop.** I don't, but will.




Italian saloon keeper Siro Mangini, who owned the Christopher Columbus Hall on Larimer Street, sometimes served Italian meals to his clientele, the effects of which were revealed in his advertisement.

³¹ David J. Cook, *Hands Up; or, Twenty Years of Detective Life in the Mountains and on the Plains* (Denver: Republican Publishing Co., 1882), pp. 12-19; G.N. Scamehorn, *Behind the Scenes; or Denver by Gas Light* (Denver: Geo. A. Shirley Pub., 1894), p. 59; William E. Barrett, "The Man from Rome," in *Denver Murders*, ed. Lee Taylor Casey (New York: Duell, Sloan and Pearce, 1946), pp. 35-58; unidentified newspaper clipping for 15 March 1884, *Sam Howe Scrapbooks*, 1 (1885), Documentary Resources Department, Colorado Historical Society, Denver (CHS).

³² Interview with John E. McFahm, great-grandson of Siro Mangini, Denver, 20 February 1977; *Denver Post*, Zone 3 Supplement, 19 May 1976.

and Highland.³³ Here they opened up some of the more elegant and popular restaurants and bars of twentieth-century Denver.

Unlike some native-born Americans, but like many other Europeans, Italians regarded wine and spirits as a healthy, basic ingredient of their culture. The Italian National Church in Denver, Our Lady of Mount Carmel, fully sanctioned this drinking tradition. The outspoken first pastor of the church, Father Mariano Felice Lepore, even became the widely publicized advocate of one would-be saloon.³⁴

When Prohibition came, Italian abstinence did not. Italians resorted to the basements of their homes or the back rooms of taverns, which became "Soft Drink Parlors" where they quietly made, aged, and drank their own wine. Soon Italians supplied spirits not only for their own consumption but for thousands of other thirsty Denverites through speakeasy and bootlegging operations.³⁵ Regardless of what the law said, the tavern and the glass of wine remained too essential to the Italian life style to be abandoned.

Along with the Italians, Slavic immigrants from southern and eastern Europe also made homes in Denver. Hoping to escape the poverty, the wars, and the political chaos of the crumbling Austro-Hungarian and Russian empires, thousands of Slavs immigrated to Colorado between 1880 and World War I. By 1900 Slavs comprised the fourth largest foreign-born group in Denver. They included Czechs, Slovaks, Slovenians, Serbs, Croats, Poles, and Russians (including many Russian Jews and non-Slavic Germans from Russia). The Russians, by 1920, became the single largest group immigrating to Colorado with Yugoslavs, Czechoslovakians, and Poles the twelfth, thirteenth, and fourteenth largest groups respectively.³⁶

The Slavs settled in the smelter factory town, which squatted on the South Platte River just north of Denver, the town later incorporated as Globeville. Their neighborhood was among the poorest in the city. Smelter smoke and stockyard stench hovered over their homes. Streets remained unpaved and sidewalks nonexistent long after Denver annexed Globeville in 1902. Globeville served as the dumping ground not only for poor immigrants, the smelters, and the stockyards, but also for the rail yards of the Union Pacific and the Burlington railroads. The Riverside Cemetery was located in the area in 1876 and

followed by the municipal poor house in the 1880s. Meat-packing and rendering plants, iron works, and the city asphalt plant went there. Later an early public housing project and both of the interstate highways in Denver were allowed to carve up the Globeville neighborhood further.³⁷

Life in Globeville was hard. Slavic newcomers gathered old box car lumber from the railroad repair shops to build their homes, putting them together with the old nails straightened for reuse. Slavic families landscaped their shacks with vegetable patches, chicken houses, pig pens, and rabbit hutches. Often children added to the menagerie and family menus by visits to the stockyards, where railroad unloaders gave away calves, piglets, and lambs born in transit. To help feed their families, young boys slipped under parked railroad freight cars. After drilling holes in the car bottoms, they collected burlap bags full of wheat, corn, and other grains for empty cupboards at home.³⁸

Some of the smelter companies constructed houses for their employees. Typical of company housing was Sheedy Row, an alley of homes between Washington Street and the Globe Smelter. The row of shacks was named for Dennis Sheedy, president of the Globe Smelting and Refining Company. With the profits he earned by underpaying and underhousing smelter workers, Sheedy built his mansion at 1115 Grant Street, the "millionaires row" of the Capitol Hill neighborhood several miles to the south and many more miles away socially.³⁹

At the turn of the century, the American Smelting and Refining Company's Globe and Grant plants paid common laborers a minimum wage of \$1.75 for a ten-hour day while skilled smelter workers received between \$2.50 and \$3.50 for a twelve-hour day. Some of these workingmen found it convenient to make their homes in the numerous saloons in Globeville. Commonly smelter district saloons contained a first-floor tavern and second-story sleeping rooms for workingmen. Usually the saloons were owned by Globeville residents, but some taverns belonged to the smelter companies. The Globe Hotel, for instance, was a smelter owned store, boarding house, and tavern located just across the street from the smelter. Although prices were high the company did extend credit because paychecks were delivered through the hotel, which first deducted housing, grocery, and bar bills. After these deductions the workman often went home on payday with only a few dollars in his pocket.⁴⁰

³³ Information on Italian clubs from Marcello Gandolfo, *Gli Italiani nel Colorado: Libro Dedicato agli Italiani, 1899-1900* (Denver: By the author, 1922); *Denver Times*, 17 November 1901; Ruth E. Wiberg, *Rediscovering Northwest Denver: Its History, Its People, Its Landmarks* (Denver: Northwest Denver Books, 1976), pp. 38-42.

³⁴ *Denver Times*, 17 March 1901; Christine A. DeRose, "Inside 'Little Italy': Italian Immigrants in Denver," *The Colorado Magazine* 54 (Summer 1977).

³⁵ *Denver Express*, 11 April 1925.

³⁶ Colin B. Goodykoontz, "The People of Colorado," ed. LeRoy R. Hafen, *Colorado and Its People: A Narrative and Topical History of the Centennial State*, 4 vols. (New York: Lewis Historical Publishing Co., 1948), 2:83.

³⁷ Daniel F. Doepfers, "The Globeville Neighborhood in Denver," *Geographical Review* 57 (October 1967):506-22; Larry Betz, *Globeville: Part of Colorado's History* (Denver: By the author, 1972).

³⁸ Interview with Frank Makowski, Denver, 21 April 1977.

³⁹ Edith Eudora Kohl, *Denver's Historic Mansions: Citadel to the Empire Builders* (Denver: Sage Books, 1957), pp. 58-62.

⁴⁰ U.S., Congress, Senate, *A Report on Labor Disturbances in the State of Colorado, from 1880 to 1904*



An early-century, well-stocked Globeville saloon.

The many Slavic saloons in Globeville functioned as neighborhood community centers. John Predovich's hall at 4837 Washington Street housed religious, fraternal, and union groups. Organizational meetings for the establishment of Holy Rosary Slovenian Catholic Church and Saint Martin's Polish Alliance, as well as meetings of smelter workers, took place at Predovich's. Activities of the Czech-Slavic Benefit Society were conducted in the saloon of Vaclav Cerny, who served as the group's chairman. Globeville politics centered around the so-called "King of the Slavs," Max Malich, who reigned from his popular saloon hall. Malich, an adroit politician who spoke four languages, was noted as a political broker who could deliver the votes. Walter Root's saloon and boarding house became the Western Slavonic Association Hall after the group was incorporated in 1908. This association still provides members with life and home insurance, sends flowers to the sick, and arranges funerals. In this alliance of various Slavic groups, the poor immigrants of Globeville pooled their capital to help each other overcome hardships.⁴¹

With miserable working conditions, workingmen relished their barroom relaxation. Teamster Joe Tekavec recalled Joseph Prijatau's saloon where "We'd water our mules at the big trough outside and then go in and water ourselves. You could get a big mug of beer for five cents and then there was free lunch fixings on the end of the bar,

too. Prijatau's was a great big, two-story place with smelter workers staying upstairs. When the 3:00 P.M. whistle blew over at the Globe Smelter, they'd come out of Prijatau's saloon like bees out of a hive." For workmen lunching at the job site, the bar had take-out service. "They'd fill up a five pound lard can with suds," Tekavec reminisced, "for only a dime."⁴²

In poor communities such as Globeville, saloons also served as banks. The business manager for the American Smelting and Refining Company, which controlled the Denver smelters by 1900, complained to the Colorado Board of Labor Arbitration that "fifty per cent of the checks paid to our employees for years back have been cashed by saloon-men, and the canceled checks show it. Over \$2,500,000 of the concern's money has been laid out over saloon bars, amid the fumes of whiskey and beer."⁴³ Instead of looking for banks in Globeville, robbers held up saloons. They made off with \$140 in cash and four smelter checks, for instance, in an 1887 hold up at the Saint Louis Beer Hall.⁴⁴

The Slavs have been slow to abandon their old neighborhood and its tavern halls. The halls of the Western Slavonic Association, Slovenian Home, Saint Jacob's Croatian-Slovenian Club, and the Saint Martin's Society of the Polish National Alliance still stand. To this day John Popovich's Slovenian Home and Beer Gardens serve as the social center of Slavic Globeville. Yet, as Popovich lamented in 1977, "We're the last survivor of all those old Slavic saloons."⁴⁵

Among the many institutions that foreigners brought, saloons were perhaps the most conspicuous and the most numerous. Nativists widely condemned saloons as impediments to the Americanization of foreigners, as centers where old world values were perpetuated. Indeed, as recent scholars have shown, Prohibition was, in part, an effort to erase the alcohol havens of "inferior" peoples, an effort by white, Protestant natives to discipline Catholic and Jewish immigrants.⁴⁶ "The foreign born population," as one national Prohibition leader phrased a standard argument of dries, "is largely under the social and political control of the saloon."⁴⁷ Both in order to

⁴² Tekavec interview.

⁴³ Quoted in John M. Barker, *The Saloon Problem and Social Reform* (Boston: Everett Press, 1905), p. 11.

⁴⁴ *Denver Times*, 17 May 1887.

⁴⁵ Interview with John Popovich in his saloon, Globeville, 20 October 1977.

⁴⁶ In his definitive study of Colorado prohibition, Elliott West, "Dry Crusade: The Prohibition Movement in Colorado, 1858-1933" (Ph.D. diss., University of Colorado, Boulder, 1971), concludes, "Wets and dries differed not in whether they lived in city or country—they could be found in both places—nor in their occupations or economic positions but in their religion, ethnic background, and cultural makeup" (pp. 389-90). Joseph R. Gusfield, *Symbolic Crusade: Status Politics and the American Temperance Movement* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1963), makes a similar argument, although he includes industrial workers (often non-Protestant immigrants) and the secularized upper class as wets.

⁴¹ *Inclusive*, 58th Cong., 3d sess., Sen. Doc. 122, p. 133; interview with Joseph Tekavec, Denver, 22 February 1977.

⁴² Tekavec interview; M. James Kedro, "Czechs and Slovaks in Colorado, 1860-1920," *The Colorado Magazine* 54 (Spring 1977): 110; *Amendments and Supplements to the By-Laws of the Western Slavonic Association* (Denver: Western Slavonic Association, 1973).

Americanize immigrants and to curb their political power, reformers argued that the saloon must be abolished. Nativist opposition to the saloon was keen in Denver, which had fewer foreign-born citizens than most large cities—only twenty-three percent of the population in 1890. Denverites joined the anti-immigrant, anti-Catholic American Protective Association (APA) in great numbers, perhaps as many as 10,000 by 1894.⁴⁸ Although the APA soon disappeared, nativism did not, as the popularity of the Ku Klux Klan in the 1920s demonstrated. Immigrants found Denver one of the more insular and xenophobic of American cities.

Prohibitionists and Nativists agreed that saloons functioned as bastions of cultural diversity and multi-purpose immigrant centers. Poor immigrants cashed their checks, sought loans, and deposited money with saloon keepers. Saloons dispensed foreign language literature and some tavern keepers read and/or wrote letters for their illiterate customers. In poorer neighborhoods, saloons might be the only place where people could simply sit down for a rest, get a glass of water, use the toilet, or clean themselves. Saloons were also adult education centers where newcomers were oriented to local living and working conditions. Politically, the saloon harbored both front hall rallies and back room deals. The saloon, xenophobic Americans complained, was a haven for the “unAmerican” activities. The multi-functional immigrant saloon drew the combined attacks of Nativists worried about swelling foreign population, of Progressives concerned about the saloon-infested slums of the city, and of Prohibitionists who tended to blame all problems on alcohol.⁴⁹ Forgetting that the largely American-born-pioneer generation had relied on the saloon for many useful functions, the second generation Denverites condemned the tavern as a foreign and detrimental institution.

In their crusade to eliminate the immigrant saloon, Nativists and Prohibitionists by and large succeeded. When bars became legal again in 1933, few immigrant taverns reappeared. The saloon, as an ethnic bastion of Denver, had largely vanished. A voluptuous blonde sang in the Heidelberg Cafe during the early morning hours of 1 January 1919, “Last night was the end of the world,” and it was for hundreds of immigrant saloons.⁵⁰

⁴⁷ Barker, *The Saloon Problem and Social Reform*, p. 49.

⁴⁸ Jerome C. Smiley, *History of Denver, with Outlines of the Earlier History of the Rocky Mountain Country* (Denver: Denver Times-Sun Publishing Co. 1901), p. 648; Robert G. Athearn, *The Coloradans* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1976), p. 197.

⁴⁹ This point is made in James H. Timberlake, *Prohibition and the Progressive Movement* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1966).

⁵⁰ *Denver Post*, 1 January 1916.

The Kaiserhof became the Kenmark and the Edelweiss was transformed into Keables Sandwich Shop. Walhalla Hall became a Walgreen's. Goldhammer's Yiddish tavern in west Denver's Little Jerusalem reemerged nondenominational and nondescript as Jim and Freida's Bar. Siro Mangini's Christopher Columbus Hall became the Bronco Bar, and Aiello's Italian Village was rechristened Patsy's Inn. Madden's Saloon, the long-time center of Irish political clout and social life, was replaced by Al's Super Service Station. John Predovich's saloon, the one-time stronghold of Globeville Slavic community activity, died with Prohibition like so many other ethnic bars. After repeal, a new tavern moved into Predovich's old hall and began operations under the neon proclamation, Mayflower Bar.⁵¹

A previous contributor to THE COLORADO MAGAZINE, THOMAS J. NOEL received the B.A. degree and the M.A. degree in library science from the University of Denver. He holds M.A. and Ph.D. degrees in American history from the University of Colorado. The author of articles in numerous scholarly journals and in various magazines, Noel was the recipient of the Society's 1975 LeRoy R. Hafen Award. An instructor at the University of Colorado at Denver and an itinerant teacher around the Queen City, his book RICHTHOFEN'S MONTCLAIR: A PIONEER DENVER SUBURB was recently reprinted by Pruett Publishing Company of Boulder.

⁵¹ Building changes are determined here by using the *Denver Householders' Directory*, a supplement to the *Denver City Directory* since 1925.

Rabbi in a Progressive Era: C.E.H. Kauvar of Denver

BY MICHAEL W. RUBINOFF

Charles Eliezer Hillel Kauvar served as rabbi of the Denver *Beth Ha Medrosh Hagodol* (Hebrew for "the great house of learning") synagogue for sixty-nine years. His ministry from 1902 to 1971 coincided with the number of years that he spent in the rabbinate. Kauvar's career was an eventful one, and it had a major impact in molding the Jewish community in Denver and in shaping the direction of Judaism in the United States. During the course of his ministry, Kauvar emersed himself in countless projects of both a secular and nonsecular nature. He displayed a deep, abiding interest in helping the needy of the community, in assisting juveniles, in promoting health care, and in setting a spiritual example for others. Concerned with the issues of his time, Kauvar wrestled with new trends in theology, attacked totalitarian threats from abroad, combated bigotry on the local level, and addressed the complex issue of Zionism in America.

Kauvar is important in Denver history, too, because his early life and background were not typical of the "frontier" experience so common to turn-of-the-century Colorado. Yet, he quickly adapted to the Denver environment, and in the years between 1902 and 1927 the rabbi played a notable role in many civic enterprises. These various endeavors closely followed the development of the Progressive movement in Colorado and the rise of the Ku Klux Klan to power throughout the state after World War I.¹

Kauvar was born on 14 August 1879 in Vilna, Lithuania. His father died in 1891, and the family left the Russian Empire for a new life in the United States. Settling in the Lower East Side of New York, Kauvar attended elementary school on Henry Street, near the settlement house for immigrants made famous by Lillian Wald. He received



A young Charles E.H. Kauvar as he appeared on his arrival in Denver in 1902 to offer spiritual guidance to the Beth Ha Medrosh Hagodol congregation.

his bachelors degree from the City College of New York in 1900, earned a masters degree from Columbia University in 1901, and then entered the Jewish Theological Seminary of America (JTS).²

While studying to be an Orthodox rabbi, Kauvar taught Hebrew school and worked among the disadvantaged who lived in the slum areas of the Lower East Side. His affinity for helping others was a product of his deep religious faith coupled with a literal application of the ancient Jewish concept of assisting the less fortunate. Kauvar's own immigrant experience provided him with a background that furthered his views on humanitarianism. In short, Kauvar by ethnicity and upbringing would come to fit the progressive mold.³

¹ C.E. Hillel Kauvar, Biographical Questionnaire, American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati, Ohio (hereinafter cited as AJA); *Denver Intermountain Jewish News*, 21 May 1976.

² *Denver Times*, 18 September 1902; many immigrants and/or first-generation Americans took active roles in various reform projects during the first decades of the twentieth century. Often times the work of these individuals paralleled similar efforts by middle-class, second- and third-generation Americans who comprised the bulk of the Progressive movement. Among these immigrants and/or first-generation Americans who gained prominence are Alfred E. Smith, Louis D. Brandeis, Robert F. Wagner, Samuel Gompers, Fiorello H. LaGuardia, and Abraham Cahan.

³ The spelling of *progressivism* in the text does not denote any partisan political label. The term designates the reform philosophy of the period from 1901 through the late 1920s that involved great numbers of persons in local and national socio-political programs. Progressive capitalized denotes the political party and the national movement.

Kauvar was graduated from the JTS as class valedictorian in June 1902. Later that month, he accepted an offer from Henry Plonsky in Denver to visit the city and meet the local community. Kauvar's resulting stay in the Queen City impressed both him and Plonsky's new congregation, *Beth Ha Medrosh Hagadol* (BMH). When the synagogue's pulpit was offered, Kauvar accepted the position and returned to Denver in time for the Jewish High Holidays in September.⁴ He was twenty-three when he came to BMH. Photographs show him as a rather dapper man of below average height with a full head of dark hair, sharp eyes, and a mustache that did not quite meet his goatee. He looked like an Orthodox rabbi born in the old world, but Kauvar had the confidence needed for the demanding work of running a congregation in the new world. Kauvar's appearance was crucial, because Rabbi William S. Friedman of Temple Emanuel, eleven years his senior, had already established himself as a popular figure in the city.

Friedman, unlike Kauvar, was born in Chicago in 1868. He was a graduate of the Hebrew Union College in Cincinnati and had been at Temple Emanuel since 1899. Friedman had the ability to mix well with the Reform Jews, who comprised his congregation, and with many gentiles in Denver. Friedman and Kauvar represented two completely different worlds of Judaism that troubled American Jewry. The Jewish population of Denver was estimated at four thousand in 1902, and it was severely split between the more prosperous and established Reform Jews of central European origin—who identified with Friedman's liberal interpretation of Judaism—and the lower- to middle-income Jews, most of whom were new immigrants from Russia and Rumania. This latter group had founded a number of small synagogues in west Denver and held religious views that were far more traditional and Orthodox than those espoused by Friedman. From the onset, Kauvar had a good working relationship with the west Denver Jews.⁵

The young rabbi had been at BMH for just over one year when he first confronted Friedman in the secular sphere. The issue grew around the need to provide better health care and treatment for the west Denver Jews, many of whom were afflicted with tuberculosis. The National Jewish Hospital for Consumptives had been created by the members of Temple Emanuel to handle only curable patients. This



Rabbi William S. Friedman assumed leadership of Temple Emanuel in 1899, and his congregation was comprised primarily of liberal, well-to-do, Reform Jews.



⁴ Allen D. Breck, *The Centennial History of the Jews of Colorado, 1859-1959* (Denver: University of Denver, Department of History, 1961), p. 89; *Denver Post*, 4 April 1959; *Denver Rocky Mountain News*, 11 May 1952; *Denver Times*, 2 October 1902.

⁵ Marjorie Hornbein, *Temple Emanuel of Denver: A Centennial History* (Denver: Congregation Emanuel, 1974), pp. 50-55; interview with Rabbi Manuel Laderman, Hebrew Educational Alliance Congregation, Denver, Colorado, June 1976.

selective policy caused immediate problems for the Jewish community, since the numbers of tubercular Jews arriving in Denver from the East was growing on a steady basis. Many of the new arrivals were dismayed to find that the highly regarded hospital would assist only incipient cases.⁶

During this time, Kauvar rose to the forefront of the Jewish leaders in the city who sought a way to aid the less fortunate tubercular patients. He soon joined with several laymen and physicians under the leadership of Dr. Charles D. Spivak, a member of his congregation. Together they worked to create what eventually became the Jewish Consumptives' Relief Society (JCRS), now known as the American Medical Center at Denver. Dr. Spivak's group first met on 31 October 1903 to establish on West Colfax Avenue another institution to help more desperate patients.⁷

The JCRS quickly faced the opposition of Rabbi Friedman, his mouthpiece the *Denver Jewish Outlook*, and representatives of the National Jewish Hospital. Friedman did not like the institutional approach applied to people who came from outside the city, since it might well flood Denver with many hopelessly sick individuals. Another hospital, he concluded, would only duplicate the work already done at the National Jewish Hospital. Rabbi Kauvar and Dr. Spivak both held fast in maintaining that an obligation existed to help the needy, regardless of religion. It was Friedman's view that the patients admitted to the new facility would require more money for their care.⁸ Kauvar was elected to the JCRS Board of Trustees, and he and Dr. Spivak appealed to communities outside of Colorado for support. They worked together on the press and propaganda committee to insure the survival of the institution during its struggling years. Throughout his residence in Denver, the rabbi continued to serve the hospital in a variety of capacities, not only as a trustee but also as a spiritual leader and as a member of the burial committee and the instruction and recreation committee.⁹

The National Jewish Hospital and the JCRS were located at opposite ends of Colfax Avenue. The distance between the two institutions reflected the split in the Denver Jewish community, a division that covered a wide number of issues including the subject of Zionism. For example, Friedman saw the concept of a Jewish nation-state as abhorrent, and his posture was shared by many Reform Jews.

⁶ Breck, *Centennial History of the Jews of Colorado*, p. 103.

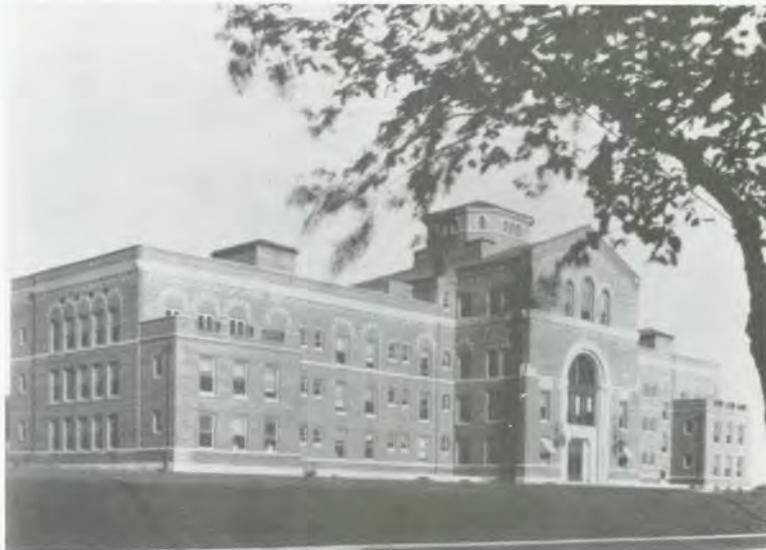
⁷ Ida Libert Uchill, *Pioneers, Peddlers, and Tsadikim* (Denver: Sage Books, 1957), pp. 242-43.

⁸ Breck, *Centennial History of the Jews of Colorado*, p. 104.

⁹ "Report of the Jewish Consumptives' Relief Society, 1905-1907," *Beth Ha Medrosh Hagadol* Congregation, Denver, Colorado (hereinafter cited as BMH).



The National Jewish Hospital in Denver opened its doors in 1899 to combat tuberculosis on a national scale. The movement for such a hospital, initiated by Rabbi Friedman, eventually led to a large complex, including the B'nai B'rith infirmary building (below) completed in 1926.



Kauvar, on the other hand, championed the Zionist cause and became its leading exponent in Denver. Reform Jews feared that Zionism would raise the specter of dual loyalty in the minds of American gentiles, but Rabbi Kauvar had no misgivings about this possible problem. He felt that Jews could be both patriotic Americans and Zionists.¹⁰

As significant as this schism was in the Jewish community, even Friedman and Kauvar put aside their differences when it came to looking after those children who were either orphaned or made homeless because of the tubercular state of their parents. In fact, by 1906 a group of eleven Jewish women had established just such an orphanage, which was incorporated that year as the Denver Sheltering Home.¹¹ Nevertheless, incorporation was no substitute for a truly active organization that could provide a place to house the children. On 19 January 1908 more concrete steps were taken at a meeting in the vestry rooms of Temple Emanuel. The number of sponsoring patrons prior to the meeting was already listed at three hundred. A committee consisting of Rabbi Kauvar, Rabbi Friedman, Rabbi Idel Idelson, Henry Frankle, and Herman Strauss issued an appeal with the hope to interest all coreligionists with charitable inclinations in this philanthropic movement.¹²

By the end of January 1908 the organization enjoyed sound community support. The Jewish Sheltering Home, whose purpose was to form an asylum for orphaned or helpless children, had both Friedman and Kauvar as vice-presidents.¹³ The mass meeting at the temple also raised enough money to purchase an eleven-room house situated on West Colfax Avenue. Its location between the National Jewish Hospital and JCRS was advantageous to future growth. The eventual success of the home saw the establishment of an office in New York in 1920 and in 1926 a change of name to the Denver National Home for Jewish Children. Kauvar, who insisted on a policy of admitting both Jews and gentiles to the JCRS, also saw the orphanage assume a similar position, though a Hebrew school was always a part of the facility. In time asthmatic children took the place of many of the early orphans, and after World War II the institution was again renamed the Jewish Home for Asthmatic Children.¹⁴

As he engaged in city-wide matters of Jewish concern, Rabbi Kauvar enlarged his scope of activities. Within a year of his arrival in



"Open air life" was one feature of the "Preventorium" program begun in 1921 to aid tubercular children at the National Jewish Hospital.

Denver he had helped to organize the First Free Loan Society in the city. The Loan Society, which later became a part of the Jewish Service Agency, was established by the rabbi in conjunction with several Jewish businessmen who wanted to copy the New York City plan of aiding poor and needy Jews. Eleven years after its formal organization, Rabbi Kauvar was able to boast of the Society that "the percentage of loss has amounted to one-half of 1 per cent and most of that has been caused by death."¹⁵

Kauvar also was involved in civic affairs that pertained to all religious sects. He had been in Denver only a few weeks when Frank E. McDonough stopped by and asked him, "Rabbi, we are making a church survey in your neighborhood, will you help us?" Kauvar replied, "Of course, I will." McDonough was apparently surprised by such a quick and positive response and repeated the rabbi's "of course" questioningly. The rabbi simply replied, "Are we not all God's children?"¹⁶

This incident began Kauvar's long association with the non-denominational Denver Community Chest, an organization that always found a ready and willing worker in him. Not only did he take a leadership role in its campaigns, but over the ensuing years many of his congregants took his cue for social service. In 1926 McDonough, then a judge and president of the Denver Community Chest, was invited to be a guest speaker at BMH. In the course of his remarks to the congregation, he stated that "he would never forget the words, 'Of course! Are we not all God's children?'" which dated back to that first conversation with Kauvar.¹⁷

¹⁰ *Denver Jewish Outlook*, 22 June 1904.

¹¹ Breck, *Centennial History of the Jews of Colorado*, p. 113; Uchill, *Pioneers, Peddlers, and Tsadikim*, pp. 259-61.

¹² *Denver Jewish Outlook*, 10 January 1908.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 24 January 1908.

¹⁴ Uchill, *Pioneers, Peddlers, and Tsadikim*, pp. 260-61.

¹⁵ Riley Cooper, "Faith and Trust in Mankind are Justified in 11 Years of Jewish Free Loan Society," n.d., C.E.H. Kauvar Papers, Box no. 1625, AJA.

¹⁶ C.E. Hillel Kauvar, Response Notes, 22 May 1952, Kauvar Scrapbooks, BMH.

¹⁷ John R. Mulroy, Rabbi Kauvar-Honorary Citation, 25 January 1954, Kauvar, Response Notes, Kauvar

Kauvar took an early interest in a wide range of secular activities. His background in philosophy led him regularly to attend the meetings of the Denver Philosophical Society, in which he served a term as president. He had a keen enthusiasm for the history of the American West and belonged to the Colorado Historical Society. In January 1909 he joined three other clergymen in addressing the Colorado Society of Social Health, where he discussed ways in which the clergy could advance the cause of social health. Like many early-century progressives, Kauvar believed that the clergy must instill in the public the idea that "true morality" could prevent a great deal of "unnecessary physical distress."¹⁸

Father William F. O'Ryan was perhaps one of the clergymen closest to Kauvar during the latter's early decades in Denver. A native of Ireland, O'Ryan shared Rabbi Kauvar's concern for the promotion of social legislation for children. The two took a great deal of public abuse from large sectors of the Denver community, some members of which were quoted as saying "let them take care of their congregations and let politics alone." But politics was never very far from Kauvar's mind. In January 1905 BMH held a bazaar where Kauvar and a number of important political personalities gave speeches. Among the participants were Colorado Governor Alva Adams, a Democrat, former Denver Mayor Wolfe Londoner, a Republican, and Judge Benjamin B. Lindsey, who at various times was a Democrat, Progressive Republican, and Independent. Later that year Governor Charles S. Thomas, a Democrat, shared the platform with Rabbi Kauvar during a city-wide rally protesting the tsarist pogroms against Jews living in Russia.¹⁹ Throughout his career, Kauvar endeavored to remain on friendly terms with leading figures in both the Republican and the Democratic parties.

There were times when the Denver rabbi joined other progressives in taking a leading role in politics. The city election of 1911 provides a good example. Mayor Robert Speer, a venal, autocratic political boss was running for reelection with the help of powerful outside interests. Speer had the strong support of the Denver Union Water Company, which wanted its franchise renewed. Nonetheless, in seeking the mayor's seat, something he continued to do from 1904 to 1918, Speer encountered a municipal governmental front of determined Denverites who brought about one of the significant election reverses of the Progressive period.²⁰

¹⁸ Scrapbooks, BMH; United Way, Honorary Members (1974-76); Mile High United Way, Denver, Colorado 1976 (the Denver Community Chest is now known as the Mile High United Way).

¹⁹ *Denver Rocky Mountain News*, 24 September 1922; *Denver Jewish Outlook*, 30 January 1909.

²⁰ *Denver Rocky Mountain News*, 14 March 1947; *Denver Jewish Outlook*, 10 January, 17 November 1905.

²¹ Sandra Dallas, *Yesterday's Denver* (Miami, Fla.: E. A. Seeman Publishing, 1974), p. 21.

The particular coalition of Republicans, Democrats, and Independents that came together to defeat Speer not only fought against enormous odds but also constituted a diverse group. Limited to a campaign fund of \$1,400, the progressives had the support of the *Denver Times*, the *Denver Rocky Mountain News*, and the *Denver Express*, along with that of political leaders such as Judge Benjamin Lindsey and Senator Edward P. Costigan.²¹ George Creel, a *News* journalist observed that "the corporations, fighting back, ordered an advertising boycott, but while it made a sizable dent in revenues, Senator [Thomas M.] Patterson stayed out. The churches were also scared into opposition by rich parishioners, and only Father O'Ryan and Rabbi Kauvar, two dauntless souls, gave us pulpit support."²² Speer's defeat gave Denver such sought after progressive reforms as the initiative, the referendum, and the recall.²³

The election of 1911 found the rabbi and several clergymen and laymen joining in the campaign. One of the politicians involved in Speer's defeat was Judge Benjamin "Ben" Lindsey, a close friend of Kauvar. A native of Tennessee, Lindsey was born in 1869. His father was a one-time Confederate army captain who moved his family to Denver in 1879. The diminutive Lindsey eventually became a lawyer, involved himself in Democratic party politics, and later was appointed by Governor Thomas to be the public administrator and guardian of the Denver County Court in 1899, just three years before Kauvar arrived to become the BMH rabbi.²⁴

Prior to undertaking the Denver County Court judgeship in 1901, Lindsey became increasingly aware of problems afflicting the orphans and underprivileged children of the city. Thus, he shared with Kauvar a deep concern for helping the disadvantaged juveniles. The judge and rabbi's long relationship blossomed into a mutual effort to help solve juvenile delinquency among both Jewish and gentile children in the community. While serving on the juvenile court, Lindsey had to deal with numerous Jewish delinquents. For the most part, these cases involved the children of east European Jews whose parents, living in the West Colfax Avenue area, were either too ill or too poor to handle adequately their Americanized youngsters. Here Rabbi Kauvar served as a liaison between the Jewish community and the juvenile court. As a vice-president of the Jewish Sheltering Home, Kauvar sought to

²¹ Charles Larsen, *The Good Fight: The Life and Times of Ben B. Lindsey* (Chicago, Ill.: Quadrangle Books, 1972), pp. 116-17; the author acknowledged Rabbi Kauvar's assistance in writing the book (p. ix).

²² George Creel, *Rebel at Large: Recollections of Fifty Crowded Years* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1947), p. 97.

²³ Larsen, *The Good Fight*, p. 117.

²⁴ Marjorie Hornbein, "The Story of Judge Ben Lindsey," *Southern California Historical Quarterly* 55 (Winter 1973):469-71.

prevent the incarceration of Jewish youths in detention homes. Judge Lindsey gave Kauvar and other officials involved with the home the opportunity to deal with the first offenders. Prior to the establishment of the home, Jewish children had been sent to gentile institutions, so the judge's new policy helped to alleviate the anxieties of the Denver Jewish community and, at the same time, initiated an enlightened program in dealing with all juvenile offenders. BMH rarely had delinquency problems and in 1952, Rabbi Kauvar observed that as far as his congregant's children were concerned, there had been fewer than five adolescents in fifty years in either the juvenile or criminal court.²⁵

Both Rabbi Kauvar and Father O'Ryan saw a great deal of injustice in statutes that pertained to juveniles. Despite the vehement objections of wealthy and powerful interests, the two clergymen joined Judge Lindsey in a campaign to improve the Colorado and Denver juvenile court laws. In due time, child labor laws and child conviction laws were enacted through the combined efforts of Lindsey, Kauvar, O'Ryan, and other progressives. Kauvar, who believed that the problem of juvenile delinquency could be corrected, urged rehabilitation for "all youth with a religious background, whether Jewish, Protestant, or Catholic."²⁶ With Rabbi Kauvar providing a line of communication to the Jewish community, Judge Lindsey worked with community leaders in permitting Jewish officials to deal directly with their own delinquents. Newsboys, some eighty-percent of whom for a time were Jewish, particularly benefited from these new juvenile policies, which provided for a division of the Juvenile Improvement Association. Many of the newsboys recalled Kauvar's deep understanding and abiding interest in these enterprises.²⁷

Rabbi Kauvar, who referred to Ben Lindsey as "the Kid's Judge," said that the Denver magistrate "knew the heart of youth and youth loved and trusted him."²⁸ Indeed, the rabbi's observations seem correct, since Lindsey advocated an honor system at the State Industrial School, where juveniles were sent without guard. Few ever violated Lindsey's trust, confirming for the rabbi and the judge their idea "that inherently all children are good." Since the Denver progressives were so determined to deal with juvenile crime in 1913, a number of them, both laymen and clergymen, founded the Denver Morals Commission, which Kauvar served on through 1915.²⁹

While Lindsey's juvenile court rulings eventually were copied and adopted in various forms throughout the nation, he found few friends like Kauvar to applaud his juvenile program and to support his opposition to the county commissioners. Such vested interests, closely linked to the utility corporations and the Democratic party machine,



The "Kids' Judge," Benjamin B. Lindsey served as Denver juvenile and family court judge from 1907 to 1927.

viewed Lindsey as a threat. They vengefully fought against him. To be sure, the animosity of several gentile clergy, some of whom were intolerant of a free exchange of ideas, would soon assert itself in the 1920s at a critical time when bigotry and prejudice would sweep across Colorado.³⁰ Nevertheless, Lindsey could always count on the strong support of Kauvar.

The influence of Kauvar on city affairs and the esteem in which he was held were demonstrated in the sentiments of Lindsey. In a letter to Amdee L. Fribourg of BMH, the judge described Kauvar as a "spiritual dynamo." "The coming of Dr. Kauvar to Denver has been a benediction," wrote Lindsey. "I say it feelingly and deeply from the bottom of my heart and I know of no man in Denver who has meant so much to the moral welfare and spiritual uplift. . . . He has been an

²⁵ Uchill, *Pioneers, Peddlers, and Tsadikim*, pp. 190-91, 259; Charles Rosenbaum, Community Tribute Address to Rabbi C.E.H. Kauvar, 22 May 1952, Kauvar Scrapbooks, BMH.

²⁶ Hornbein, "Judge Ben Lindsey," p. 471; *Denver Rocky Mountain News*, 14 March 1947; Rosenbaum, Community Tribute Address, 22 May 1952.

²⁷ Uchill, *Pioneers, Peddlers, and Tsadikim*, p. 190; Rosenbaum, Community Tribute Address, 22 May 1952.

²⁸ C.E. Hillel Kauvar to Judge Ben Lindsey, n.d., C.E.H. Kauvar Papers, Box no. 1629, AJA, Cincinnati.

²⁹ Robert S. Gamzey, "Modern Patriarch," *Denver Rocky Mountain News*, 1948, C.E.H. Kauvar Papers, Box no. X-135, AJA, Cincinnati; *Denver Jewish News*, 23 February 1917.

³⁰ Hornbein, "Judge Ben Lindsey," pp. 471-74.



The Beth Ha Medrosh Hagodol Synagogue.

inspiration to me and to all who have had the privilege and pleasure of coming in contact with his remarkable personality and his wonderful work."³¹

Lindsey joined Rabbi Kauvar in ceremonies for laying a cornerstone when BMH began building its new synagogue at Sixteenth Avenue and York. In a calm before the storm, a large number of community leaders gathered for this formal dedication on 5 October 1919. Despite the ongoing "Red Scare," Lindsey shared dignitary status with a wide spectrum of community leaders. Governor Oliver H. Shoup, Mayor Dewey C. Bailey, Rabbi Friedman, Father O'Ryan, Rabbi Isaac A. Braude, the Reverend Henry R.A. O'Malley, Rabbi Ephraim Z. Halpern, and the Reverend Henry A. Buchtel were present for this community-wide celebration.³²

There was much to celebrate in 1919 as BMH prepared to enter a new edifice. Rabbi Kauvar had been honored with a life contract by the congregation. Zionist hopes were high since the issuance by Great Britain of the Balfour Declaration in November 1917 promised that a Jewish national home was to be created in Palestine. The Paris Peace Conference ending World War I had supposedly found a way to end

all wars. President Woodrow Wilson in seeking to make the world safe for democracy was advocating the entry of America into a League of Nations. But beneath the surface of local, national, and international developments, clandestine political movements were beginning to take form.

An upsurge in political demagoguery had precipitated an end to the progressivism of the prewar period. Civil wars in Europe, coupled with a growth in totalitarian governments, particularly in Russia and Italy, threatened the old order of western civilization. In the United States, the Ku Klux Klan, long thought to be a dead relic of post-Civil War days, capitalized on the growing disenchantment of many Americans who were bewildered and angered by the country that had emerged from the recent crusade in Europe. The onset of national prohibition, the fear of Bolsheviks, radicals, socialists, anarchists, and anyone who spoke favorably of Soviet Russia, the increase in immigrants from southern and eastern Europe, the freer movement of Blacks—all these things frightened many white, Anglo-Saxon Protestants into draping themselves in the American flag to defend their enclave under the slogan of "100 Per Cent Americanism."³³

The Ku Klux Klan Imperial Wizard William Joseph Simmons, a native Alabamian whose father had been an officer in the Klan in Reconstruction days, remembered how his old Negro "mammy" had told him of the Klan night riders who "used to frighten the darkies." His involvement in Klan activities began in Georgia in 1915, and he arrived in Denver in early 1921 to start promoting his cause.³⁴ Denver and the entire state of Colorado, which had witnessed anti-Chinese riots in 1880, anti-Semitic tirades by the Populists in the 1890s, and book burnings and near lynchings during the anti-German hysteria of World War I, provided fertile ground for Simmons and his national organization.³⁵

Over one-quarter million people lived in Denver by 1920, and its thirty-five thousand Catholics and eleven thousand Jews were visible targets for the Klan. Many of the thousands of Coloradoans who had joined the American Protective Association, an antiimmigrant and nativist organization of the 1890s, quickly embraced the Klan and within a few short years managed to gain control of the governor's mansion, the mayor's office in Denver, the state assembly, county

³¹ David M. Chalmers, *Hooded Americanism* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday and Co., 1965); Kenneth T. Jackson, *The Ku Klux Klan in the City, 1915-1930* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1967).

³² Chalmers, *Hooded Americanism*, pp. 28-29; Jackson, *Ku Klux Klan in the City*, p. 126.

³³ Carl N. Degler, *The Age of the Economic Revolution, 1876-1900* (Glenview, Ill.: Scott, Foresman and Co., 1967), p. 107; Richard Hofstadter, *The Age of Reform* (New York: Vintage Books, 1955), pp. 77-81; Lyle W. Dorsett, "The Ordeal of Colorado's Germans during World War I," *The Colorado Magazine* 51 (Fall 1974):277-93.

³¹ Ben B. Lindsey to A.L. Friberg, 31 May 1912, C.E.H. Kauvar Papers, Box no. 1625, AJA.

³² Corner Stone Laying Exercises BMH Synagog [sic], Dr. Abraham J. Kauvar Papers, Denver, Colorado.

offices throughout the state, and influential positions in both political parties. The result of these political successes was the eventual election of two pro-Klansmen from Colorado to the United States Senate. One out of every seven Denverites was a member of the Klan by 1923.³⁶

Dr. John Galen Locke of Denver, the Grand Dragon of the Colorado Klan, had cause to be proud of the way his organization had taken the state. He had converted it into one of the most successful outposts of racial intolerance, religious bigotry, and hoodlum rule in the entire United States.³⁷ Even as the Jews of Denver braced themselves for an anti-Semitic onslaught, Henry Ford's *Dearborn Independent* continued to pour out domestic anti-Jewish propaganda, while abroad in Germany Adolf Hitler's National Socialist party was threatening the Jewish population and promising that *Der Tag*, a day of reckoning, would come for the Jews.

The climate of hatred soon developed into physical abuse and terror. On top of Table Mountain in the neighboring city of Golden, the Denver Klan burned its fire crosses. They were also fond of Friday nights along West Colfax Avenue. In automobile caravans carefully routed to go past various synagogues, Ku Kluxers, who were wary of the "international character of Jewry," interrupted the pre-Sabbath arrangements of Orthodox Jews and shouted obscene remarks and insults at worshippers going to services.³⁸ Nine miles west of Denver, "klonklaves" were held against a backdrop of burning crosses on Ruby Hill. Anti-Semitic appeals were used by Kleagle Hi Grimm as part of his invitations to members of the Masonic lodges and other organizations. The Klan made solid progress in these endeavors and successfully managed to blackball Jews from membership in various lodges.³⁹

Denver Jews, who were greatly outnumbered by the Klan, did not unite to combat the hooded order. Economic boycotts, parades through city streets in full regalia, and even a Klan women's drum and fife corps, all contributed to a widespread intimidation of the Jewish community. Jews could not believe that after all these years their neighbors could support so vigorously a movement that seemed to smack of possible pogroms and persecutions.

Three prominent members of BMH did fight against the Klan, however. They were Simon J. Heller, Philip Hornbein, and Rabbi

³⁶ Chalmers, *Hooded Americanism*, pp. 126-27; Jackson, *Ku Klux Klan in the City*, p. 215; James H. Davis, "Colorado under the Klan," *The Colorado Magazine* 42 (Spring 1965):93-108.

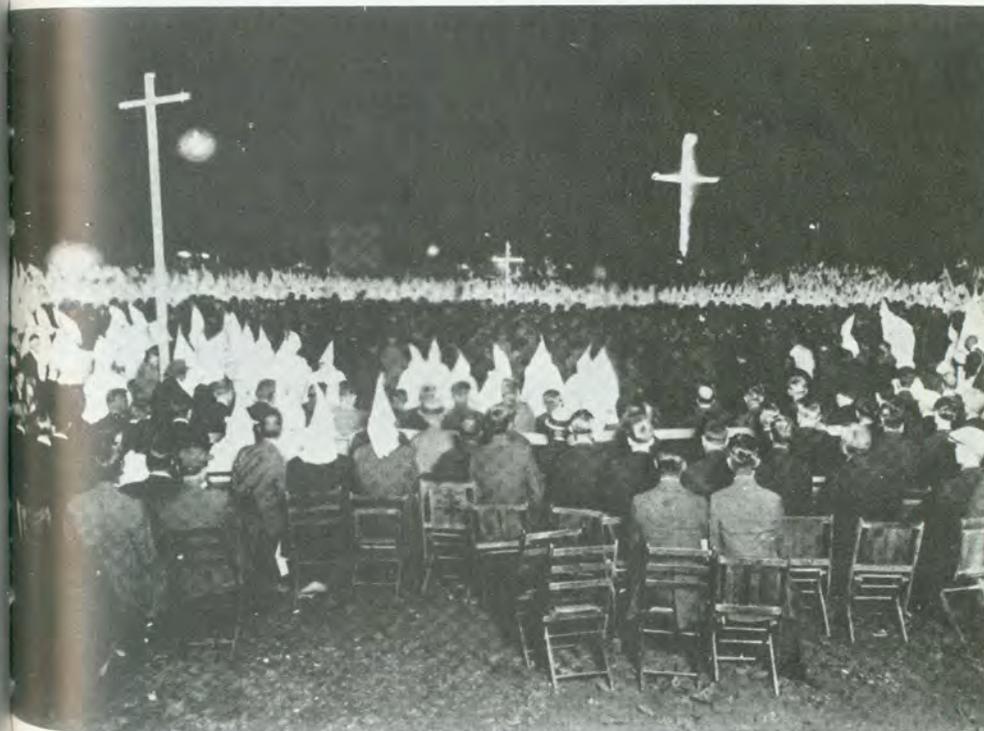
³⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸ Jackson, *Ku Klux Klan in the City*, p. 218; Larsen, *The Good Fight*, p. 192; William J. Barker and Jackie Lewin, *Denver!* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday and Co., 1972), p. 34.

³⁹ Barker and Lewin, *Denver!*, p. 34; Jackson, *Ku Klux Klan in the City*, p. 219; Uchill, *Pioneers, Peddlers, and Tsadikim*, p. 162.



Grand Dragon John Galen Locke led the Ku Klux Klan in Colorado, where rallies like this one on Castle Mountain near Denver instilled racial and religious hatred.



Kauvar. Heller worked with the Anti-Defamation League, while Hornbein, who in 1902 as a fledgling lawyer had been among the first to welcome Kauvar to the city, now openly defied the Klan and talked about fighting their rule in court.⁴⁰ In fact, while the Ku Klux Klan eventually declined both in Colorado and around the country owing to internal organizational conflict, discredited leadership, and negative programs, it was in court where the Denver Jews and the city itself suffered perhaps their greatest defeat at the hands of the Klan. The judicial election of 1924 was bitterly contested by enemies of Judge Ben Lindsey. The juvenile court magistrate, who had always run very well in the Jewish areas, had long been held suspect by the Klansmen. Now in light of Lindsey's controversial views on marriage, the Klan found itself in a strange alliance with members of the Catholic church and several supposedly enlightened Protestant bodies.⁴¹

Judge Lindsey's opponent, Royal R. Graham, the Klan candidate, filed a lawsuit contesting the former's victory in the election. During the ensuing court fight, Lindsey openly proclaimed in front of his cross-burning opponents and their clerical allies that he was proud to have Jewish supporters and friends. The Klansmen, who vociferously rebutted that Jews could not be assimilated into American society, were outraged at several of his remarks. Lindsey sharply attacked the "two-hundred per-cent Americanism" of the Klan and its attitudes towards Jews, Blacks, and Catholics. He spoke out against the censoring of school textbooks, the introduction of loyalty oaths and immigration quotas, the inequality of prohibition enforcement, and the fanaticism of fundamentalism in religion. The judge concluded that the Klan was "a yellow streak in our national life, a streak so yellow that a sane dog would be ashamed to own it."⁴²

When the case of the disputed election went before District Judge Julian Moore, Lindsey's attorney Philip Hornbein and Rabbi Kauvar were at his side. The first ruling went in Lindsey's favor. Moore, notwithstanding the Klan's pressure, found that the votes in District J-6, a Jewish voting area, were legitimate. Thus, the charge of fraud failed. The recounted J-6 votes were tallied at 548 to 15 in Lindsey's favor, and the decision allowed the feisty juvenile court magistrate to stay on the bench. Graham, meanwhile, committed suicide in September 1925 as fraud charges were being prepared against him in another county. His widow picked up the cause against Lindsey in 1926 and appealed to the Colorado Supreme Court. On 24 January

1927, the court overturned the previous ruling, and the election was held to be invalid because of the alleged irregularities in District J-6. Benjamin B. Lindsey was consequently ousted from the juvenile court after serving for twenty-five years.⁴³

Ecstatic Ku Kluxers and their clergymen allies rejoiced over the state supreme court ruling. Grand Dragon John Galen Locke noted that "but for the splendid work of Denver Klan No. 1, in all probability Judge Lindsey would still be sitting arrogantly on his little juvenile throne." The Reverend Loren Edwards of the Denver Trinity Methodist Episcopal Church proclaimed that "Denver would be well rid of the present judge." He was joined by a host of other churchmen that included the Reverend Hugh McMenamin of the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception, the Reverend A.H. Morse of the First Baptist Church, and the Right Reverend Fred Ingley of the Episcopal Church, all of whom hailed and applauded Lindsey's removal from the juvenile court.⁴⁴ After he had warmly supported the Catholic clergy and their lay leaders in fighting the Klan, Lindsey could only reply, "I spoke with a number of Catholic priests in defense of their cause and stand . . . in unending opposition to the bigotry that violated their rights." With hostile forces coming down on him from all sides, the unseated judge observed that "the cross and the fiery cross both made war on me."⁴⁵

Only one clergyman stood by the embattled Lindsey through it all and throughout the rest of his life—Rabbi Kauvar. While no other Denver religious leader spoke a single word in defense of the judge when the Klan won its victory, Rabbi Kauvar told the *Denver Rocky Mountain News* that "Judge Lindsey has made a wonderful juvenile court judge. I insist that he sees a cross-section of life and thinks it is the whole, but his bark is far worse than his bite. I am very sorry to hear of the ouster decision by our Supreme court [*sic*], and I would be very happy to see Judge Lindsey reappointed."⁴⁶

History did ultimately vindicate Ben Lindsey.⁴⁷ The illegality of his ouster was exposed, and as Rabbi Kauvar later remarked, "Judge Lindsey had to die before the city he loved came to recognize his greatness."⁴⁸ On the occasion of Lindsey's death on 26 March 1943 at

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 194-97.

⁴¹ Jackson, *Ku Klux Klan in the City*, p. 229; Hornbein, "Judge Ben Lindsey," pp. 473-74; *Denver Rocky Mountain News*, 25 January 1927.

⁴² Hornbein, "Judge Ben Lindsey," p. 473.

⁴³ *Denver Rocky Mountain News*, 25 January 1927.

⁴⁴ Larsen, *The Good Fight*, p. 267. The most recent historical evaluation of Ben Lindsey in Denver can be found in Lyle W. Dorsett, *The Queen City: A History of Denver* (Boulder, Colo.: Pruett Publishing Company, 1977).

⁴⁵ *Denver Rocky Mountain News*, 14 March 1947; Larsen, *The Good Fight*, p. 247.

⁴⁰ Uchill, *Pioneers, Peddlers, and Tsadikim*, p. 161; Breck, *Centennial History of the Jews of Colorado*, p. 197; *Denver Rocky Mountain News*, 14 March 1947.

⁴¹ Hornbein, "Judge Ben Lindsey," p. 473; Larsen, *The Good Fight*, pp. 183-97.

⁴² Larsen, *The Good Fight*, pp. 194-95.

the Good Samaritan Hospital in Los Angeles, Rabbi Kauvar eulogized his departed friend: "As a jurist he left his impress upon our state and nation as the defender of human rights rather than the protector of property rights. . . . With the courage of his convictions he lifted his voice in protest against injustice and battled valiently [*sic*] this hydra-headed monster of racial prejudice, religious intolerance and bigotry, economic inequality and class distinction. . . . Judge Lindsey with unnumbered acts of kindness and love, will live in the lives he has blessed as long as mothers are honored and as long as children are loved."⁴⁹

The demise of the Ku Klux Klan improved the status of progressivism in Denver. But the loss of Lindsey after the 1927 court decision was a serious blow to local reformers. Nevertheless, in the years before the Great Depression Colorado made concrete reform advances. Rabbi Kauvar's work with Father O'Ryan was a step towards ecumenicalism at an early date. The rabbi furthered inter-faith harmony through an association with the Methodist-backed University of Denver, where he taught for forty-five years beginning in 1920. He was among the founders of Brotherhood Week in Denver and actively participated in pulpit exchanges that improved relations between persons of different faiths. Kauvar's efforts with Lindsey in assisting Jewish juvenile delinquency problems had a positive effect on an entire generation of youth. The rabbi's involvement in local politics demonstrated a bipartisan openness, and his support of Lindsey at a time when few people actively defied the Ku Klux Klan was indicative of a man with a strong sense of social consciousness.

In addition, Rabbi Kauvar's activities for specific Jewish progressive causes coincided with his interest in Denver. His drive for an open admissions policy at the JCRS and the Jewish Sheltering Home point to his concern for taking the lead in helping all segments of the population. The rabbi was cognizant of the Jewish need for a community-wide vehicle to coordinate various functions and institutions. The idea of a *kehillah*, or self-governing, autonomous body, recalled a time in east European Jewish history when Jews preferred to be accountable to themselves when intra-group problems arose. Rabbi Kauvar championed both the federating of the Jewish charities in Denver and the creation of a *kehillah*, notwithstanding the opposition of Rabbi Friedman. In 1912 the Central Jewish Council of Denver was established with Rabbi Kauvar as its first president. The rabbi's prescience in laboring to create such a body foreshadowed the day when Jewish communities throughout the United States would all have

some form of unifying council or federation. The Central Jewish Council that was formed during the Progressive period has lasted down to the present, having undergone both structural and name changes.⁵⁰ The present-day Allied Jewish Federation of Denver is the vibrant community organization that Kauvar originally helped to establish.

Throughout his life, the rabbi continued to support those causes that he had championed with the juvenile court magistrate Benjamin Lindsey. Believing in the merit of the individual, as opposed to the importance of the state, Kauvar emerged as a major leader and spiritual force in Colorado. He maintained his prominence in the community long past the years from 1902 through 1927. Until his death in Denver at age ninety-two on 23 August 1971, Rabbi C.E.H. Kauvar remained a "spiritual dynamo."⁵¹

MICHAEL W. RUBINOFF received the B.A. and the M.A. degrees in education from Arizona State University and the Ph.D. degree in American history from the University of Denver. A "Judaica Studies Essay Winner" at the University of Denver in 1975, Rubinoff is the author of several articles published in the WESTERN STATES JEWISH HISTORICAL QUARTERLY, a journal for which he is a contributing editor. Currently a resident of Phoenix, Arizona, he is a member of the Organization of American Historians, Phi Alpha Theta, and other educational and scholastic fraternities.

⁴⁹ C.E. Hillel Kauvar, Judge Ben B. Lindsey, n.d.; C.E.H. Kauvar Papers, Box no. 1629, AJA.

⁵⁰ Uchill, *Pioneers, Paddlers, and Tsadikim*, pp. 149, 270-71; Breck, *Centennial History of the Jews of Colorado*, pp. 110-11; C.E. Hillel Kauvar, "The Central Jewish Council, October 1912," C.E.H. Kauvar Papers, Box no. 1625, AJA; C.E. Hillel Kauvar, *The Jewish Conception of Charity: Shall the Jews of Denver Federate Their Charities?* (Denver: Beth Ha Medrosh Hagodol Congregation, 1912).

⁵¹ *Denver Rocky Mountain News*, 24, 25 August 1971; *Denver Post*, 24, 25 August 1971; *Denver Intermountain Jewish News*, 27 August, 10 September 1971, 4 February 1972.

Poles in the Early Musical and Theatrical Life of Colorado

BY STANLEY L. CUBA*

During the past century many internationally-known musicians and actors have performed in Denver and elsewhere in Colorado. They were increasingly attracted to the state by the construction of first-rate theaters, like the Tabor Grand and later the Broadway in Denver, and by the progressively more settled character of the area, an outward manifestation of which were the accoutrements of culture in the form of plays, concerts, and recitals. Furthermore, a number of settlers in Colorado from "back East" enjoyed musical and theatrical presentations and wished to recreate some of their former environment in their new home. The increasing wealth of the state, derived from its developing precious metals industry, provided the financial wherewithal to pay the fees commanded by the renowned performing artists of the period.

A number of these visiting artists were of Polish background, and their appearances in Denver and Colorado have not been widely written about. Helena (Modrzejewska) Modjeska, the Shakespearean actress, and Ignace Jan Paderewski, the concert pianist and Polish statesman, are most frequently cited because of their legendary status, their numerous performances in Colorado during more than one-quarter century, and their English-language memoirs, published in the United States. In addition to these two stars, a number of other Polish-born artists of equal merit also appeared locally, though not on such a frequent basis. Among them were Henri Wieniawski, Xaver Scharwenka, Josef Hofmann, Leopold Godowsky, Edouard de Reszke, and Marcella Sembrich-Kochanska. They all provided first-class entertainment for the residents of Colorado. Individuals of Polish

background likewise conducted music schools and managed theaters locally in the second half of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth centuries.

The documentation of the activities and the experiences of these Polish musicians and actors in Colorado provides insights into the changing cultural ambience of the state and the reception, usually everywhere enthusiastic, of talented, foreign-born artists by local residents. Their visits were not devoid of difficulties and, particularly in the 1860s and 1870s, they did not always perform in ideal surroundings. While Poland at that time was partitioned among Russia, Prussia, and Austria, and therefore did not exist as an independent country with unfettered cultural outlets, it exported to the rest of Europe and to the United States an unusually large number of performing artists. Many of them individually achieved international recognition as the best in their respective fields. Because of the political situation in Poland, music and the theater very often presented the only areas of relatively uncensored self-expression for the many Poles who frequently performed in American theaters and concert halls.

Soon after the discovery of gold in 1858-59 on the future site of Denver, theatricals, together with saloons and music halls, figured prominently among the local amusements. By October 1859 two rival theaters were already in business—Apollo Hall on Larimer Street and Reed's Theater in Cibola Hall on Ferry Street. Public halls and theaters, which hosted traveling amateur and small-scale professional productions in the sixties, also existed in Golden City, enroute from Denver to the mountains, and in Mountain City, another mining camp near the present-day site of Central City and Black Hawk, west of Denver. On 21 August 1860 John ("Jack") Langrishe and his friend George McArthur arrived in Denver from Fort Laramie (Wyoming) "to look at the mines and calculate the chances of a successful dramatic enterprise" in Denver City.¹ What began as a "six nights only performance" for Langrishe in September 1860 turned into a very successful career as a frontier actor, impressario, and theater manager in Colorado for more than a decade. His local presentations of hit performances from the New York, Paris, and London stages earned him the unofficial title of "Father of the Colorado Theater."

Mazeppa, based upon Lord Byron's work of the same name, was among the presentations staged by the Langrishe company in May 1862 at the People's Theater in Central City, which he and his partner Mike Dougherty had opened on 5 April. *Mazeppa* was the first play

* The author wishes to thank the staffs of the Denver Public Library Western History Department, the Colorado Historical Society, and the New York Public Library at Lincoln Center for their patient assistance, as well as W.H. Cain of the Humanities Research Center at the University of Texas at Austin. Tadeusz Sadlowski of New York contributed helpful materials and Frank Cuba of Denver gathered xeroxes of appropriate reviews from Colorado period newspapers.

¹ W.B. Vickers, *History of the City of Denver, Arapahoe County and Colorado* (Chicago: O.L. Baskin & Co., 1880), p. 192; Melvin Schoberlin, *From Candles to Footlights: A Biography of the Pike's Peak Theatre, 1859-1876* (Denver: Old West Publishing Co., 1941), p. 39 for a description of Denver theaters and Jack Langrishe.

with a Polish-related theme to have been presented in Colorado. In heralding the production the *Denver Rocky Mountain News* noted that both gentlemen had "spared neither pains nor expense to produce this Drama in grand and magnificent style. Gregory, friends, be on hand early if you want a seat Monday night."² The admonition indicates that this staging of *Mazeppa*, like most other theatrical endeavors of the period, would be well attended. This is because such public performances, apart from the pianos that some families hauled across the plains, constituted the only link with the established life styles that the newly settled pioneers had previously known in the East and Midwest.³

Mazeppa tells the story of a real historical figure, Ivan Mazeppa (a Ruthenian), who served at the Polish court in the seventeenth century. According to his social rival, Jan Pasek, a seventeenth-century diarist par excellence, Mazeppa's love affair with his neighbor's pretty wife in the Ukraine was discovered and the "villain" ordered to be tied naked to a horse, which was then sent galloping off into the steppes, exposing its human baggage to the elements. (This aspect of the Mazeppa story may have never really happened, though Pasek included it in his *Memoirs* under the year 1662 to avenge the injustice Mazeppa committed against him many years earlier.) The "wild ride" nevertheless gave *Mazeppa* much of its dramatic quality and audience appeal in nineteenth-century America. Following its production in Central City, the Langrishe company presented *Mazeppa* and the horse opera *Timour the Tartar* at the People's Theater in Denver, beginning on 7 June 1862.⁴ Denver theatergoers were greatly attracted by the advertisement in the local press of "two live horses on the stage," an indispensable feature of the production. A Denver newspaperman exhorted potential viewers with the following notice: "The Theater to-night will be the scene of scenes unparalleled, of tableaux imposing, and of feats both wonderful and grand. . . . Go and see Mazeppa and Olinska meet on the boards of the old Apollo, and hear the former, in the language of Byron, exclaim:

A thousand tyrant fathers I would have—
From all their wrath my loved Olinska save,
Or earn an early, but an honored grave."⁵



The Denver Theater (far right), where the Zvistowski Sisters performed in June 1872, was the most famous theater in the region in territorial days.

During the pioneer theatrical period in Denver, a number of traveling groups, including the Zvistowski Sisters were hosted in the Denver Theater. At the time of their appearance in June 1872 the Denver Theater enjoyed the reputation of being the "first real and respectable theater" in the city until its destruction by fire in 1877. It also served as a public meeting hall, housing such events as the memorial services for President Abraham Lincoln and discussions on the issue of the first railroad to Denver. A large wooden structure on the corner of Sixteenth and Lawrence streets, the Denver Theater had been built in 1861 as the Platte Valley Theater.⁶ A year later Jack Langrishe bought it from George Harrison, made many improvements, and renamed it. About two months before the Zvistowski Sisters appeared locally, the new management had remodeled the theater. The *Denver Rocky Mountain News* observed that "the old place has never been inviting in the least degree; but it is hoped now, by completely reorganizing the interior, to make it attractive, comfortable and pleasing."⁷

The Zvistowski Sisters, also called the "Z Trio" (probably to facilitate pronunciation), appeared from 13 through 19 June 1872 at the Denver Theater in Milton Nobles' popular burlesque, *Ixion, or The Man at the Wheel*. The Z Trio consisted of Christine nee Ludlam and her two daughters, Emeline and Alice. Known as the "Queens of Burlesque," they were already quite celebrated in America as a traveling troupe before their Denver performance. Christine, prior to coming to the United States around the middle of the nineteenth century, was one of the Ludlam Sisters, who were famous as Covent Garden dancers in London in the 1840s and early 1850s. By 1858 she

² Schoberlin, *From Candles to Footlights*, p. 89; *Denver Rocky Mountain News*, 17 May 1862.

³ Sanford A. Linscome, "A History of Musical Development in Denver, 1858-1908" (D.M.A. diss., University of Texas at Austin, 1970), p. 381.

⁴ Marion Moore Coleman, *Mazeppa Polish and American* (Cheshire, Conn.: Cherry Hill Books, 1966); Fanny Barlow and "her Gallant Grey" would appear in *Mazeppa* at the Teller Opera House in Central City after 1878 (Schoberlin, *From Candles to Footlights*, p. 259); Jerome C. Smiley, *History of Denver, with Outlines of the Earlier History of the Rocky Mountain Country* (Denver: Times-Sun Publishing Co., 1901), p. 907; Vickers, *History of the City of Denver*, p. 278.

⁵ *Denver Rocky Mountain News*, 18 June 1862.

⁶ Not everyone regretted the theater's passing, including Vickers, *History of Denver*, pp. 192, 291. For a description of the opening, see *Denver Rocky Mountain News*, 26 October 1861.

⁷ Schoberlin, *From Candles to Footlights*, pp. 224-25.



and her husband, M. Zavistowski, were traveling with the Keller Troupe; she did dances and he served as ballet master of the troupe. By the late 1860s Christine and her two daughters were performing popular burlesques like *Masaniello*, *Ixion*, and *Wip Wan Winkle* (written especially for them). They were billed throughout the country at establishments such as Hunter's Theater in Galveston, Texas (May 1867), Mrs. F.B. Conway's Park Theater in Brooklyn, New York (June 1869), Wood's Museum and Menagerie in New York City (August-September 1869), Perkins' Theater in Houston, Texas (December 1869), and the California Theater in San Francisco, California (April 1871).⁸

While the Zavistowski Sisters apparently stopped in Denver only once, their six-night stand in June 1872 proved very successful, as the house was crowded every evening.⁹ The *Denver Rocky Mountain*

⁸ *Denver Rocky Mountain News*, 13 June 1872; W.H. Crain, Humanities Research Center, University of Texas at Austin, to Stanley Cuba, 3 August 1977; *Playbill*, 8 February 1858, 3 April 1871; Spalding and Rogers Amphitheater, New Orleans, Louisiana; J.S. Gallegly, *Footlights on the Border: The Galveston and Houston Stage before 1900* (The Hague: Mouton & Co., 1962), pp. 177, 181; George C.D. Odell, *Annals of the New York Stage*, 15 vols. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1927), 8:526, 586.

⁹ Schoberlin, *From Candles to Footlights*, p. 225.

News, whose editor William Byers supported the theatrical endeavors in the city, lauded their engagement. "All who viewed the laughable extravaganza presented by the troupe were fully satisfied that no effort has been spared to please. The Misses Christine, Ernestine and Alice showed themselves to be ladies of grace and culture, fully capable of sustaining any character for which they are cast."¹⁰

The following year Denver music lovers had the opportunity to hear two concerts at Guard Hall by the brilliant Polish violinist, Henri Wieniawski. He was the first musical artist of importance to appear locally.¹¹ During the 1872-73 season, he, together with the famous Russian pianist Anton Rubinstein, made a concert tour of the United States; it had been arranged by the American impresario, Maurice Grau, in cooperation with M. Chizzola Albites in Paris. Despite the large receipts and enthusiastic audiences, Rubinstein only lasted to New Orleans, Louisiana, because "it was all so tedious that I began to despise myself and my art."¹² Wieniawski continued the farflung tour, which encompassed even the West Coast and San Francisco, from which he realized 100,000 francs. Billed in Denver as the "solo violinist to his Majesty, Emperor of Russia," a position that he enjoyed for twelve years in Saint Petersburg, Wieniawski played a program consisting of *Fantasia* (Faust), *Aria* (Bach), *Reverie* (Vieuxtemps), and *Andante and Carnival de Venice* (Paganini). He was accompanied on the piano by Mona L. Rembielinski. Also performing with Wieniawski were Carl Wolfsohn, the virtuoso pianist, and Mme. Jule de Ryther, who presented some operatic selections.¹³

The review of the first concert commented less on Wieniawski's playing than it did on the honor that he had bestowed upon the local inhabitants by coming to Denver. The cultural elite of Denver perhaps felt a subconscious longing to be on a par with their Eastern confreres. The reviewer observed that "the interior cities, removed from the recognized art centers, do not generally warrant, remuneratively, the appearance of such masters. In this instance Herr Wieniawski by his presence here has, presumably, recognized the fact that Denver is a point where genius is appreciated, and withal, a city where the celebrities of the profession—either music or drama—are sure of being warmly welcomed and richly recompensed."¹⁴

¹⁰ *Denver Rocky Mountain News*, 20 June 1872.

¹¹ Smiley, *History of Denver*, p. 907; Edgar C. McMechen, "Art, Drama, and Music," in LeRoy R. Hafen, ed., *Colorado and Its People*, 4 vols. (New York: Lewis Historical Publishing Co., 1948), 2:461.

¹² Anton Rubinstein, *Autobiography of Anton Rubinstein*, trans. Aline Delano (Boston: Little Brown & Co., 1892), pp. 114-16.

¹³ *Denver Rocky Mountain News*, 18, 19 July 1873.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 18 July 1873.

Even so, Wieniawski had to contend with several performance difficulties attendant to an "interior city" like Denver. Before a filled concert room, the virtuoso "labored under the disadvantage of being in a hall with bad accoustics, where the full effect and harmony of his music was not reached, yet he overcame that obstacle as best he could, and the result was such as to carry his auditors into ecstasies of enthusiasm. . . . Wieniawski surpasses all our previous experience of violinists. . . . he stands confessed the Paganini of the day."¹⁵

During the rest of the decade traveling theatrical troupes continued to appear in Denver and in hinterland mining camps. However, the Queen City's theatrical status during those years did not please everyone. Writing of 1879 Denver, historian William B. Vickers confessed that his city was "sadly deficient in places of legitimate amusement." The Denver Theater, destroyed by fire, had been replaced by Guard Hall, the only opera house in town. Vickers lamented that "it is small and uncomfortable, being poorly ventilated. No regular stock company is maintained by the manager, but it is often occupied by traveling troupes. . . . To the shame of Denver it must be written that Leadville, Central [City] and several other towns in the state are provided with better theaters than the capital."¹⁶

The problem of irregular and inferior entertainment in Denver changed markedly with the construction of the Tabor Grand Opera House in 1881. Combined with the travel possibilities afforded by the railroads, the Tabor helped to "close the gap between Denver and civilization." Built by Horace Tabor, silver king and later Colorado senator, who already had erected a smaller version of the same in Leadville where he had struck it rich, the Tabor Grand Opera House at Sixteenth and Larimer streets cost \$800,000 and was opulently finished with cherry wood, gilt, and plush. It was a veritable "temple of the Muses" in the West and one of the best-equipped theaters of its day in the United States. From opening night on 5 September 1881, the Tabor "reigned supreme for about a decade as the epitome of the urbanism that Denver sought." However, the Tabor was more than just an elegant theater. It was a social institution.¹⁷ The opera house, together with Tabor's patronage, attracted the finest dramatic and operatic entertainment of the day to Denver and Colorado.¹⁸

Helena Modjeska, the internationally-known Shakespearean actress and tragedienne, appeared at the Tabor Grand for week-long engagements on an average of every two to three years between 1883 and



The renowned Polish violinist Henri Wieniawski appeared in Denver in July 1873 during his American concert tour of 1872. Wieniawski performed at Guard Hall, Fifteenth and Curtis streets, which replaced the Denver Theater after the 1877 fire.



¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 19 July 1873.

¹⁶ Vickers, *History of Denver*, p. 291.

¹⁷ Linscome, "A History of Musical Development in Denver, 1858-1908," pp. 460, 410.

¹⁸ John Burke, *The Legend of Baby Doe* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1974), p. 165.

1892.¹⁹ In addition to Denver she performed during this period at the Tabor Opera House in Leadville, and the opera houses in Aspen, Colorado Springs, and Greeley.²⁰ Because of her wide-ranging travels, she did more than any other dramatic artist of her caliber to present classical Shakespearean drama and accomplished nineteenth-century European playwrights to the public living outside major, American urban centers. The local newspapers never failed to comment upon her Colorado tours, and, in turn, she wrote about the state's scenic beauty to her American friends "back East," as well as to friends and relatives in her native Poland.

Modjeska first performed at the Tabor Grand Opera House in Denver during the week of 11 June 1883. The notice that enthusiastically heralded her performance also implied that Denverites had been victimized previously by poor theatricals. "Aside from her acting," a reporter commented, "Modjeska will impress her audience tonight in two particulars: her accent. . . . and her dresses, which are the finest and most superb to be seen anywhere. In another respect the entertainment will come somewhat as a great relief—the company is good."²¹ Interestingly, Modjeska played the lead in *Camille*, by Alexander Dumas, an opera that was considered by many with a puritanical bent as too daring, off-color, if not downright wicked.²²

Nevertheless, Modjeska's opening night in Denver was an overwhelming success. The *Denver Rocky Mountain News* reported that "it has never been the good fortune of this public to behold an actress who is all an actress. If the [final] scene were real, there could be no more full and natural action, look, gesture or intonation than Modjeska gives it on stage. . . . She has moreover a melodious voice. Her speech is musical, and her accent, which has been sometime animadverted upon, is simply such a deflection from plain English speech as gives a piquant flavor to the lines."²³

The enthusiasm of the *News* for Modjeska's six-day Denver appearance was not shared by its rival newspaper, the *Denver Republican*, whose attitude throughout remained both detached and critical. In advance of her opening evening, for example, its amusements column noted "that Modjeska is making the mistake of so many 'stars' by imposing upon the people a lot of 'sticks' as supports. There is no



Modjeska performed in the 1880s on the stage of the Tabor Grand Opera House in Denver. The building was demolished in 1964.



¹⁹ For the best treatment of her American career, see Marion Moore Coleman, *Fair Rosalind* (Cheshire, Conn.: Cherry Hill Books, 1969) and Helena Modjeska, *Memoirs and Impressions* (New York: Macmillan Co., 1910).

²⁰ Pueblo also hosted Modjeska. A photo at the Pueblo Public Library shows a Modjeska poster at the entrance to the local Grand Opera House. However, dates have not successfully been established.

²¹ *Denver Rocky Mountain News*, 11 June 1883.

²² Cornelia Otis Skinner, *Family Circle* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1948), pp. 23-24.

²³ *Denver Rocky Mountain News*, 12 June 1883.

²⁴ *Denver Republican*, 12 June 1883; *Denver Rocky Mountain News*, 19 June 1883.

cleverer actress in the world than Modjeska, when she is not indifferent or careless, but one person does not by any means make a show." The *Republican* review of her opening night contrasted markedly with that of the *News*; the former reported the empty seats, pointed out all the technical difficulties, and chastized the management. This contrary attitude prompted the *News* to comment that "the *Republican's* influence is wonderful. Last week it exhausted its feeble powers in an attempt to prejudice the public against Mme. Modjeska. The result was that the attendance grew larger every night."²⁴

Among those present on Modjeska's opening night in Denver was Eugene Field, at that time a paragraph man with the *Denver Tribune*; he would later become a prominent American journalist, author, and poet.²⁵ At the conclusion of her performance, Field, a real prankster, threw down to Modjeska from his box a beautiful bouquet of roses, which he then proceeded to snatch back on a long string as she went forward to pick them up. Field also enjoyed lampooning people and writing fantastic stories about the actors and personnel at the Tabor Grand during the years between 1881 and 1883, which only served to spread its reputation throughout the United States. The Polish actress did not escape Field's pen. Following her performance of *Romeo and Juliet* on 16 June 1883, he wrote a tale in the newspaper that someone had tried to poison her on the stage by filling the suicide vial with phosphorous.²⁶ The story was subsequently widely circulated in the American press.

Field made up for his bad-boy behavior in a lovely poem, "The Wanderer," which he wrote in Modjeska's honor after her departure from Denver. It was signed "Helena Modjeska" and accompanied by a note that "it is the first attempt at versification we have ever seen from the pen of this gifted and versatile woman, but the lady who, with Madame Modjeska's consent, copied it from the latter's scrap book, tells us the famous actress has written very many meritorious poems, none, however, having appeared in English in print."²⁷ Modjeska took the "joke" in good humor, which initiated a long and sincere friendship with Field. "The Wanderer," nevertheless, proved helpful public relations material for her, since she was often besieged by autograph-seekers during her American tours. They eagerly sought her signature on a printed version of the poem for their own scrap-

books. Modjeska was only too happy to comply.²⁸ Only when Field published "The Wanderer" in 1890 in *A Little Book of Western Verse* did its true authorship become known.

Modjeska's Denver performance in *Camille* also inspired Field to write a very humorous ballad, "Modjesky as Cameel." First published in Field's "Sharps and Flats" column in the *Chicago Daily News* in 1890, the poem conveys the impressions of the miners and some of the aspirants to culture and "higher society" as they viewed classical drama rendered by an actress, with what for them, was a funny-sounding foreign name. In later years Field enjoyed presenting for Modjeska's visitors his imitation of her in *Camille*, complete with "exaggerated theatrical sentiment and with the broken English accent which she permitted herself in the freedom of private life."²⁹

Despite the brilliant success of her first Denver engagement, Modjeska was not altogether happy. A letter she wrote from Denver to Stanislaw Witkiewicz,³⁰ her faithful admirer and an artist in Poland, reflects an unrequited longing for her native country, which ended with her death in California twenty-six years later.

Stupid it is, this life of mine, frightfully. Devouring me and reducing me to the rank of vegetables, not living beings. . . . If once in a while I have a moment to think, it is of home, of family, of you. But I cannot think for long, as my brains are so tired and withered and everything that sneaks through seems veiled as by some mist, like the visions of a man who is drunk, pleasant at times, and again terrifying. I have to return home as quickly as possible, or I'll return morally dead.

I am so tired and worn out that I can no longer even weep for myself and it seems to me that is the way I shall always be. This week is the last of the season. I'll have a ten-week rest when it is over, and then on the 19th of September commence a new tour of America.

And what for? I ask the question and do I know what for? People tell me, "One has to make money." Yes, I make money, too. And my only conclusion is that when I return home I shall give out everything . . . and not until then shall I be truly happy. Perhaps I shall be able to do some good then, perhaps be of help to some poor orphans, at last perhaps even do something for my art. All these maybes are what keep me going on with living.

²⁴ For a biography, see Slason Thompson, *Eugene Field: A Study in Heredity and Contradictions*, 2 vols. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1901).

²⁵ Recounted in Coleman, *Fair Rosalind*, pp. 299-303. Field pulled equally embarrassing pranks when Christine Nilsson's Concert Company and Oscar Wilde appeared at the Tabor; see James H. Baker and LeRoy R. Hafen, eds., *History of Colorado*, 5 vols. (Denver: Linderman Co., 1927), 3:1,258.

²⁷ *Denver Tribune*, 22 June 1883.

²⁸ "When Field, for example, went to California in search of health in the winter of 1893-94, Mme. Modjeska placed her ranch, located near Anaheim at his disposal. The ranch contained about 1,000 acres, and he was given carte blanche to treat it as his own during his stay" (Thompson, *Eugene Field*, 2:246; Coleman, *Rosalind*, p. 304).

²⁹ *Chicago Daily News*, 27 September 1890; Field, *Modjesky as Cameel* (New York: Private Printing, 1914) copy in Denver Public Library, Special Collections; Thompson, *Eugene Field*, 2:245.

³⁰ "Stanislaw Witkiewicz," *Wielka Encyklopedia Powszechna* [Great general encyclopedia] (Warsaw: Polish Scientific Publishers, 1969), 12:362-63.

When will I see you again? When will I be able to hug Marusia? Oh, my God, I cannot see your paintings, though I know that some are already finished. I would at least like to have photos of them. I ask you not to forget me and to write.³¹

Modjeska's letter is equally important for the glimpse it provides into the unglamorous aspects of her life, the fatigue and the lack of an ordered life style, which were shared in varying degrees by performing artists and companies who toured America during the same period.

In the ten weeks until the beginning of the next season, Modjeska and her husband toured some of the scenic spots of the West. They were joined in Denver by their son, Ralph, then a top-ranked student at the *Ecole Supérieure des Ponts et Chaussées* in Paris and later one of the great bridge builders of America.³² Prior to leaving for Los Angeles and the Mission Capistrano via Santa Fe, New Mexico, Modjeska and her family, as related in her letter to Helen Gilder, "climbed to the top of Pike's Peak and visited the Cave of the Winds (with its beautiful stalactites), as well as the Garden of the Gods [all in the Colorado Springs area]. We traveled a great deal and came to love this country more than ever before."³³

Modjeska's sixth American season (1886-87) under A. Haymann, director of the theater in San Francisco, included performances in Denver, Leadville, Colorado Springs, and Greeley. She came to Denver from Los Angeles via Manitou Springs. A washout on the Denver and Rio Grande Railroad caused a twenty-four-hour delay, and, therefore, she spent 14 and 15 August at Manitou House with part of her troupe. (One of the best organized in America at that time, Modjeska had put her company together in the seven weeks following the close of her fifth American tour.) In describing her journey from Los Angeles to Manitou Springs, she would later recall, "I traveled the famous Denver-Rio Grande Railroad in Colorado. It is perhaps the most beautiful line in America; it cuts through Marshall Pass located 11,000 feet above sea level in the Rocky Mountains."³⁴

During Modjeska's usual week-long engagement at the Tabor Grand (15 through 21 August 1886), the *Denver Tribune-Republican*, as if atoning for its lukewarm reception several years earlier, carried a

³¹ Coleman, *Fair Rosalind*, p. 304. Polish version in Jerzy Got and Jozef Szczublewski, eds., *Korespondencja Heleny Modrzejewskiej* [Correspondence of Helena Modrzejewska] (Warsaw: State Scientific Publishers, 1965), 2:40-41.

³² See Wiktor Kwast, "Ralph Modjeski," *Polski Słownik Biograficzny* [Polish biographical dictionary] 21/3, no. 90 (Wrocław: Ossolineum, 1976):536-37.

³³ Dated ca. 30 August 1883, Tallac, Calif. in Got and Szczublewski, *Korespondencja*, 2:41-42. Helen DeKay Gilder (1847-1916), an American painter and after 1874 the wife of Richard Watson Gilder (1844-1909), poet and publisher of *Scribner's Monthly*, later *Century Magazine*.

³⁴ *Colorado Springs Daily Telegraph*, 15, 18 August 1886; *Swiat* [World] (Cracow, Poland), November 1890, quoted in Jozef Szczublewski, *Zywot Modrzejewskiej* [The life of Helena Modrzejewska] (Warsaw: State Scientific Publishers, 1975), p. 451.



Helena Modjeska as Camille.

very complimentary interview conducted in her private parlor at the Windsor Hotel. The interviewer noted that "she has the dignity of a queen, blended with a sweet simplicity of a village maiden. True loveliness and inborn grace are the qualities which make her greatness of appearance. [She is] a tall woman, slender and gracefully formed, having soft brown hair, very dark eyes and features."³⁵

Performances followed on 23 through 25 August at the Tabor Opera House in Leadville and at the opera house in Colorado Springs on 27 August. Commenting on the difficulties that Modjeska had experienced in learning English prior to her American debut in San Francisco in 1876, the *Colorado Springs Daily Gazette* termed her local appearance the "event of the season." Echoing the sentiments expressed in many other contemporary American newspapers, it observed that "Madame Modjeska . . . has perhaps won the distinction of being the foremost English-speaking actress of this epoch."³⁶ She concluded her Colorado visit in late August by opening the newly-built opera house in Greeley with performances of *As You Like It* and *Mary Stuart*.³⁷ The newspaper recorded her appearances with a comment on prevailing admission prices, noting that the audience might have been larger if ticket prices "had been placed at one dollar." In addition, the reporter observed that "a correspondent elsewhere criticises the coldness and apparent lack of appreciation on the part of Greeley audiences, and there is no doubt room for improvement in this direction. Actors and actresses like to see some evidence that their efforts are appreciated; it makes them feel better and act better."³⁸

In Greeley Modjeska's private railway car, called the *Dave Garrick* after the English playwright, attracted as much notice as her inauguration of the opera house. Practically everyone turned out to view her home on wheels. Such a sight was infrequent in northeastern Colorado, and the palatial car was described as a "hotel in miniature" with a "cellar in the shape of four large provision lockers under the car." The car was equipped for good living. "In the grand saloon there is a piano and the private boudoir, bathroom and kitchen are wonderful examples of what comforts can be supplied in a small space . . . Modjeska says that without these comforts no actress would be able to withstand the fatigue of a series of one-night stands and do justice to her part at night."³⁹

Modjeska became increasingly enamored of the Colorado Springs area. She held rehearsals there for her company beginning on 19 September 1887, in advance of her eighth American season, which opened locally with *Twelfth Night*, on 30 September. The town, with the majestic Pikes Peak as a backdrop, reminded her of Mount Blanc in Switzerland; it also afforded her ample opportunities to go horseback riding, a favorite pastime.⁴⁰ Besides reporting on her local performances, the Colorado newspapers, like those elsewhere in the country, featured interviews with Modjeska to share with their readers other aspects of her personality and her views on the theater. On one occasion she stressed the importance of Shakespeare for herself as a professional actress. "I find in the works of Shakespeare the greatest relief of the novices of my profession. The ambition of playing Shakespeare in his native language was the chief incentive that pushed me upon the boards of the English-speaking stage. Were it not for the happiness of performing occasionally the characters he has created, I might have lacked in the strength necessary to continue my career."⁴¹

Modjeska returned to Colorado in July 1889. Her Denver appearances (8 through 13 July) proved to be an outstanding success with the *Denver Tribune-Republican*. General William T. Sherman and his party, then in the Mile High City, occupied two boxes at Modjeska's performance and received an ovation from the audience during intermission following the first act.⁴²

From Denver Modjeska journeyed with the Booth & Barrett Company across the Continental Divide to play on 15 and 16 July at the Wheeler Opera House in Aspen, then a bustling Colorado mining camp. Leading artists like Modjeska did not often perform in Aspen because of its relative remoteness and the mercurial fortunes of the local house. Her appearance, therefore, attracted "two of the largest and it is not too much to say the best audiences ever assembled in the . . . theater" to see her perform *As You Like It* and *Adrienne Lecouvreur*. Even the torrential rain on Tuesday evening, 16 July, "did not keep a very large audience [as it did in Denver the previous week] from braving its inclemency" to see Madame Modjeska.⁴³ During both Aspen performances she received cordial plaudits from her viewers, which prompted her to comment that she had been particularly pleased with the large, cultured audience that saw her in

³⁵ Interview reprinted in the *Colorado Springs Daily Gazette*, 22 August 1886.

³⁶ Coleman, *Wanderers' Twaits*, pp. 65-69; *Colorado Springs Daily Gazette*, 28 August 1886.

³⁷ *Greeley Tribune*, 18 August 1886.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 1 September 1886.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 25 August 1886, recounted in Coleman, *Fair Rosalind*, p. 395.

⁴⁰ Szczublewski, *Zywot Modrzejewskiej*, p. 463.

⁴¹ *Colorado Springs Gazette*, 4 October 1887.

⁴² Coleman, *Fair Rosalind*, p. 879; *Denver Tribune-Republican*, 9 July 1889.

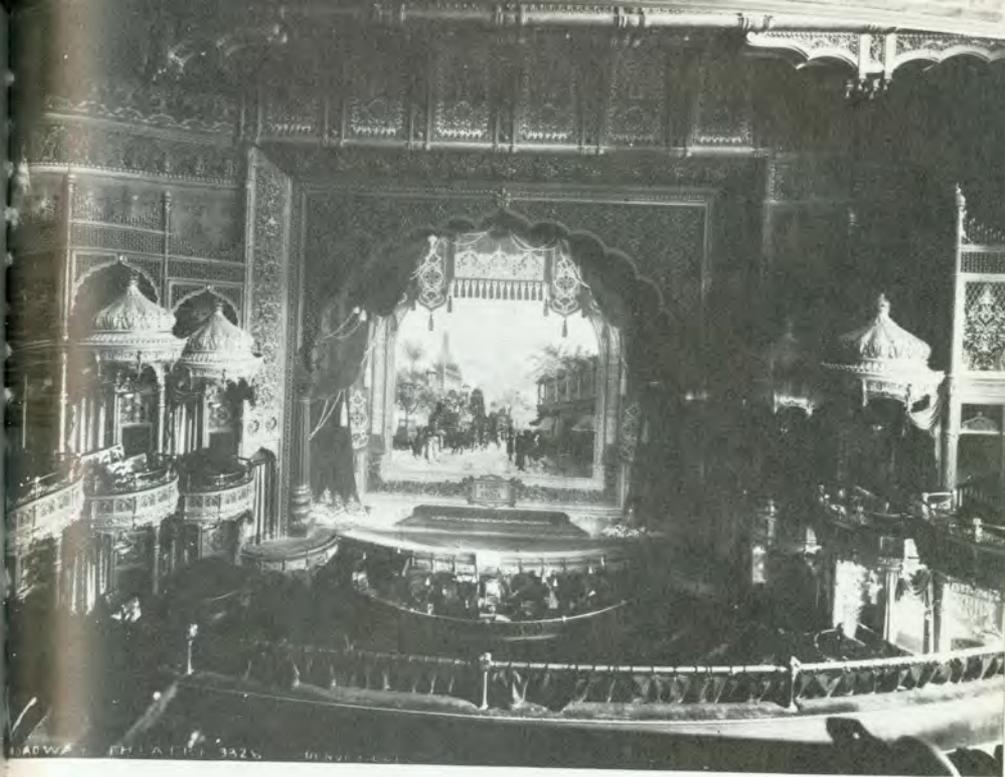
⁴³ Unidentified clipping in Langowitz Scrapbook, Theater Division, Lincoln Center Library, New York City.

As You Like It and that she had never played the part of Rosalind “before a house that more quickly recognized the fine points of the play.”⁴⁴

Modjeska played at the Tabor Opera House in Leadville—the last time she would appear there—on 17 and 18 July in the same roles she had presented in Aspen. In Colorado Springs on 20 July a large and always appreciative audience, augmented by a number of theater lovers from nearby Manitou who came by special train, greeted Modjeska at the opera house where she performed *Adrienne*. On the afternoon of her Colorado Springs performance, Mr. and Mrs. Thomas C. Parrish hosted a reception for Modjeska at their home on North Weber Street.⁴⁵ Such receptions were an important, though sometimes tiring part of her public life as an actress. Through these social functions culturally aware individuals were provided an opportunity to see and talk with Modjeska at close range. At the same time the gatherings helped to enhance her local popularity.

When Modjeska returned to play in Denver in the 1890s (1892, 1893, 1899) and in 1901, her last appearance in the Mile High City, she held her week-long engagements not at the Tabor Grand, but at the new Broadway Theater located on the municipal thoroughfare of the same name. While not as elaborate as the Tabor—it cost William Bush, its first manager, only \$250,000 to build—the Broadway could accommodate 1,800 with standing room for another 1,000 people. (It would also host the appearances of Polish musical and vocal artists in the 1890s and early 1900s.) The Broadway eventually became the leading house in Denver as the city began to move away from Sixteenth and Curtis streets toward the newly-developing residential district in the immediate neighborhood of the state capitol. Furthermore, the Silver Panic of 1893 had wiped out Horace Tabor’s empire, including his opera house, which of necessity passed into other hands. The Broadway Theater, which opened on 18 August 1890, was termed a meeting of the Orient and the Occident, “a dream of beauty realized, a picture of color and rare harmonious richness, a wealth of attractiveness. . . . The building [the observer hastened to add] is absolutely fireproof.”⁴⁶

One of the most portentous moments of Modjeska’s Denver engagement in 1892 occurred not on the stage but in her suite at the Windsor Hotel where she auditioned a young and very nervous Maude Durbin, a product of the local academy, Wolfe Hall. Quite surprised



In the 1890s the Broadway Theater eclipsed the Tabor Grand Opera House. The Broadway hosted Modjeska, Paderewski, Sembrich-Kochanska, and other Polish artists.

⁴⁴ *Aspen Daily Times*, 16 July 1889, quoted in Bertha Louise Shaw, “History of the Wheeler Opera House, Aspen, Colorado, 1889-1894” (M.A. thesis, Western State College, Gunnison, Colo., 1965), pp. 87-88.

⁴⁵ *Colorado Springs Gazette*, 21 July 1889; Coleman, *Fair Rosalind*, pp. 500-501.

⁴⁶ *The City of Denver: Its Resources and Their Development* (Denver: Carson, Hurst and Harper, Art Printers, 1891), pp. 65-66.

that Modjeska agreed to receive her, Maude was equally taken aback to see the great lady seated on a chaise lounge in a lacy tea gown—smoking a cigarette! Upon learning that Maude had never before seen a woman smoking a cigarette, Modjeska replied, “So now you have,” and intimated, “In my country we have the saying, ‘One breaks bread with an Arab and smokes with a Pole!’—But don’t be alarmed! I shan’t ask you to join me!”⁴⁷ Maude offered to recite for Modjeska, who was attracted by her charming speaking voice. After the season was over she kept her word to Maude and engaged her to come to New York and join her company. Maude subsequently met Otis Skinner, Modjeska’s leading man and co-star, whom she married a few years later.

While the *Denver Rocky Mountain News* advertised her Denver engagement in April 1899 as that of “the Peerless Modjeska,” her appearance two years later was not uniformly well received. A quarter-century of steady performances with both a matinee and an evening presentation on Saturdays during each season had naturally begun to take their toll. *Macbeth*, given on 16 December 1901 at the Broadway was “elegantly staged . . . with all of the details incumbent upon the successful presentation of a Shakespearean drama. . . . In the role of Lady Macbeth Modjeska had opportunity to give full sway to her fine dramatic power. The portrayal of the coldly passionate wife of the ‘Thane of Cawder’ was rendered with deeply vivid realism.”⁴⁸ Modjeska did not fare so well, however, in the *Merchant of Venice* staged on 19 December before an audience of “students, literateurs and the highly cultivated people of [Denver].” In one of the very few unfavorable notices ever given her in Colorado the reviewer noted that she was “not the Modjeska of earlier years. Her acting is cold and lifeless, her voice uncertain and her whole presentation of the character of Portia was a colorless piece of work only redeemed from the insignificant by the grace and refinement which clung about the woman like the perfume of a flower.”⁴⁹

During her farewell American tour Modjeska appeared only once in Colorado at the Colorado Springs Opera House as Lady Macbeth on 26 February 1906. The local newspaper billed the evening as “The Modjeska Testimonial,” saying that “it is doubtful if any audience

ever assembled there in the past was animated by the feeling of intimate personal interest with the star that will exist on this occasion.”⁵⁰ The reception for one hundred guests at the hotel prior to the performance, the stacks of red and white flowers (Polish national colors) given by the local Knights of Columbus, and the genuine outpouring of public affection did not mollify the harsh notice in the *Gazette* the following day. The reviewer observed how unpleasant it was to look on a once-great actress and to see at the “age of sixty-one” that she was only a shadow of her former self.⁵¹

Colorado, nevertheless, retained a great affection for Modjeska. During her fatal illness in 1909 the Denver newspapers reprinted Eugene Field’s poem, “Modjesky as Cameel,” as if to recall her connections with the state in happier circumstances. In the 1930s a number of chairs were sold as memorials to the pioneers in order to raise money for the restoration of the opera house in Central City. (Today it is the site of the Central City Opera Festival held each summer.) One of the chairs was appropriately named in honor of Helena Modjeska with the following tribute: “This brilliant Pole made perennial visits to the new west and brought with her all the stirring art of the theater at its best. She was a great tragedienne, a fascinating actress in the days when there were giants.”⁵²

In the 1890s Denver began to attract large numbers of internationally-known musical and vocal artists who toured the United States each concert season, with their frequency increasing after the turn of the century. Some of these artists were of Polish or part-Polish background, including Ignace Jan Paderewski, Xaver Scharwenka, Josef Hofmann, Leopold Godowsky, Edouard de Reszke, and Marcella Sembrich-Kochanska. Several things drew them to Denver and Colorado. By the 1890s the Mile High City, formerly regarded by many as a “one-horse town,” had assumed the character of an established community with excellent growth prospects for the future.⁵³ Richard Harding Davis called Denver “a small New York in an encircling of white-capped mountains” and felt that the city appealed to the eastern man, who was considering mining or ranching locally “for the reason that the many other eastern men who have settled there are turning it into a thoroughly eastern city.”⁵⁴ Having quickly

⁴⁷ Cornelia Otis Skinner, *Family Circle* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1948), pp. 24-25. The whole meeting between Mmie. Modjeska and Maude is related therein.

⁴⁸ *Denver Times*, 18 December 1901. Earlier that year, on 2 March, her rendition of Lady Macbeth in Denver proved a great experience for a young woman named Louise (now Mrs. Cogswell) and her school girl friends, who had taken the train from a small town thirty-three miles south to the capital to see Modjeska. It was the first time any of them had viewed a good actress or a Shakespearean play. “She did not seem to act at all,” Louise recalled, “but she spoke the lines with simplicity and a wonderful, at times unearthly voice” (Marion Moore Coleman, “Reward Enough,” *Notes and Things* [Cheshire, Conn., 1971], no. 33).

⁴⁹ *Denver Times*, 20 December 1901.

⁵⁰ *Colorado Springs Gazette*, 26 February 1906.

⁵¹ Modjeska was really sixty-four at that time, but had made herself three years younger in America (Szczublewski, *Zywot Modrzejewskiej*, p. 661).

⁵² *The Glory That Was Gold: The Central City Opera House* (Denver: Central City Opera House Association of the University of Denver, 1932).

⁵³ This discussion of Denver and Colorado is based on Linscome, “A History of Musical Development in Denver, 1858-1908,” pp. 603-5.

⁵⁴ Richard Harding Davis, *The West from a Car Window* (New York: Harper, 1892), p. 215; quoted in Linscome, “A History of Musical Development in Denver, 1858-1908,” pp. 405-6.

developed into the largest city in the region and having begun in the process to compare favorably in the field of the performing arts with New York and Boston, Denver became a natural stopover enroute to the Pacific coast. The mile-high altitude gave Denver low humidity and clean air that likewise made it attractive to prospective visitors.

Another local drawing card was the Tuesday Musical Club formed by a dozen musically-minded women in Denver in September 1891 for the purpose of "developing the musical talent of its members and stimulating musical interest in Denver." The group included Miss Hattie Louise Sims, who was chosen its musical director in 1898. The daughter of wealthy and cultured parents, she studied voice in Italy for five years under Lamperti; she was also a classmate of Marcella Sembrich, the Polish diva, who would sing in Denver after the turn of the century. Following her return to the United States, Miss Sims made only a few public appearances before she was stricken with a severe case of nervous prostration, which ended her public career. She subsequently established herself in Denver as the leading vocal teacher and, as director of the Tuesday Musical Club, made the group famous not only locally but in musical centers throughout the United States for the internationally-known artists it sponsored in solo performances. Perhaps under the influence of the Denver-based club, the Colorado Springs Musical Club was formed on 3 February 1892.⁵⁵ Like its Denver counterpart, the Colorado Springs group financed the local appearances of artists like Paderewski, Hofmann, and Sembrich at Perkins Hall and at the Burns Theater. The group later became the Civic Music Association of Colorado Springs.

The activities of these music clubs were augmented after 1900 by the local impresario, Robert Slack, who for more than twenty-five years brought the most noted concert artists to Denver.⁵⁶ They included not only those of Polish descent but also Jan Kubelik, Melba, Enrico Caruso, Mme. Calve, and Fannie Bloomfield among others. Slack got his start as an impresario when he took a chorus of sixty voices to the Saint Louis Exposition of 1904. The group was conducted by Professor Henry Houseley, a noted English-born composer, who directed the Denver Choral Society. Slack brought his first attraction to the Queen City in 1904. He was joined about 1934 by Arthur Oberfelder, who had entered the same field in 1908, after the

construction of the City Auditorium for the Democratic Convention held that year in Denver.

International keyboard artists were likewise attracted to Denver in the last years of the nineteenth century by the abundance of piano teachers and students in the Mile High City. Pianos had been brought to Denver by early pioneers, first for accompanying and later as a solo instrument.⁵⁷ By the mid-1870s eastern and midwestern piano companies had already sent in their representatives. Among the first was Ladislaus E. Koniuszewski, who served as the local agent of the Saint Louis Piano Manufacturing Company in 1875. Before and after living in Denver, Koniuszewski enjoyed a varied career. During the Civil War he had enlisted for three-months service in 1861 with Company A (Rifle Battalion) of the First Regiment of Missouri Volunteers; he was honorably discharged with the rank of captain that same year at the Saint Louis Arsenal. Appointed major of the Twenty-sixth Missouri Infantry Regiment in January 1862, he served under General C.S. Hallton. After the Civil War before coming to Denver he worked for a petroleum and mining company and as an insurance solicitor for Godfrey & Brother, both in Saint Louis. At the turn of the century Koniuszewski was employed as a salesman at J.A. Monk's and Sons Distributing Company in Saint Louis.⁵⁸

The piano, which Ladislaus Koniuszewski briefly sold in Denver, remained popular with the young people, who were encouraged to study music in order to "finish" their educations. The double importance of the piano drew many reputable music teachers to Denver in the 1870s and 1880s, who, in turn, helped to attract visiting performing artists in later years. One of those who taught in Denver in the 1870s was Professor Alexander de Wolowski, a well-known pianist and vocalist who instructed classes with "his new and simplified system of reading music at sight. The Professor enables his pupils to sing in Opera, Concerta and Parlor in a very short time with ease, feeling and brilliancy." Exactly how long Professor de Wolowski taught in Denver is not known; however, he definitely had left the city by the end of the decade.⁵⁹

⁵⁵ Linscome, "A History of Musical Development in Denver, 1858-1908," p. 381.

⁵⁶ Alice Roeschlaub Williams, "Recollections of Music in Early Denver," *The Colorado Magazine* 21 (July 1944):146-55; James M. Tracy, "Development of Music in Denver and Colorado, 1898-1926," *The Lookout from the Denver Public Library: Music in Denver and Colorado*, ed. Malcolm G. Weyer, 1 (January 1927):19-38; Manly Dwyton Ormes and Eleanor R. Ormes, *The Book of Colorado Springs* (Colorado Springs, Colo.: Denton Printing Co., 1933), pp. 295-96.

⁵⁷ Baker and Hafen, eds., *History of Colorado*, 3:1,279.

⁵⁸ Born in Galicia (Austrian sector of partitioned Poland) in 1835, Koniuszewski enjoyed a life style characterized by geographical mobility, which was often typical for Polish immigrants and their children who came to the United States before the Civil War. Together with four other brothers and sisters, he had been brought in the late 1840s by his parents, John and Teofila Koniuszewski, to Cabell County (today, West Virginia). It was the site of a Polish colony started by Dr. Henry Kalusowski, a veteran of the November 1830 Polish insurrection against tsarist Russia. Koniuszewski's family subsequently moved to Saint Louis, where his father died in 1859 (Edward Prnkowski, "Star-Studded Cast in Forgotten Polish Colony," *Straz* [Guard] [Scranton, Penn.] 28 November 1974, p. 6); *Saint Louis City Directories*, 1866 and 1867, pp. 519 and 491, 1,034, respectively.

⁵⁹ Linscome, "A History of Musical Development in Denver, 1858-1908," p. 215; *Denver Rocky Mountain*

Jaroslav de Zielinski, a veteran of the 1863 Polish uprising and a soldier in the American Civil War, sought employment as a pianist-composer in Denver.



Jaroslav de Zielinski, a pianist, composer, and writer, visited Denver in August and September 1888. He was probably seeking employment at either the newly-formed Denver Conservatory of Music, founded in 1877, or as an organist at one of the Denver-area churches. This is indicated by his letter, dated 25 November 1889, and written from 417 Pearl Street in Buffalo, New York, to Miss E. Rann. He wrote that "to be sure Chicago would have been a better place for me and I may make the change yet—toward the East—New York City—but I came [to Buffalo] under a direct engagement to the church with a good salary." Zielinski, a veteran of the January 1863 Polish insurrection against tsarist Russia who subsequently served in the American Civil War as a trumpeter in Company L of the Fourth Massachusetts Cavalry, had lived successively in New York City, Grand Rapids, and Detroit before going to Buffalo. About 1910 he settled in Los Angeles where he directed the local Conservatory of Music and Arts, headed a music school, and founded the Zielinski Trio Club.⁶⁰

⁵⁹ News, 13 October 1876; Ladislaus J. Siekaniac, *The Polish Contribution to Early American Education, 1608-1865* (San Francisco: R & E Research Associates, 1976), pp. 69-71.

⁶⁰ Zielinski, Buffalo, New York, to his former pupil, Edith Rann, 25 January 1890, Immigration History Research Center, University of Minnesota at Minneapolis-Saint Paul; for an article on his similar activities in Grand Rapids, see Edward A. Symans, "De Zielinski: First Music Man," *Grand Rapids Press*, 15 August 1976; Mieczyslaw Haiman, *Udział Polaków w Wojnie Domowej* [Polish participation in the American Civil War] (Chicago: Polish Roman Catholic Union, 1938), p. 210; "Nicholas Slonimsky," *Baker's Biographical Dictionary of Musicians*, 5th ed. (New York: G. Schirmer, 1958 and 1971 suppl.).

Malvina Sobolewski, daughter of the composer E. Sobolewski, also visited Denver at approximately the same time as Zielinski, as indicated by her photo taken locally at A.E. Rinehart's studio. Whether she performed during her stay has not been established. Her visit was probably occasioned by the fact that her two younger brothers, Edward F. and John A., owned a hardware and house furnishings establishment, Sobolewski and Farquharson at 1728 Lawrence Street. Their firm was represented in 1887 in the first parade of the Annual Colorado Exposition.⁶¹

Ignace Paderewski, the famous Polish pianist, first appeared in Denver at the Broadway Theater on 17 and 18 April 1893.⁶² This initial engagement marked for him, as for Modjeska a decade earlier, the beginning of a long and very pleasant musical relationship with Colorado that lasted until the outbreak of World War II in 1939. Because Paderewski's reputation as a virtuoso had preceded him to Colorado, his Denver debut was understandably billed as a "must" of the season, attracting listeners from other nearby towns and cities. Groups gathered in Colorado Springs and other cities with special trains to bring them to Denver. The anticipation reached such proportions that a local newspaper jokingly termed it "Paderewskitis." It humorously observed that "one of the stages of the fever is the tendency to sighing like a thousand furnaces, followed by endearing exclamations. It is said that ladies do not eat candy or chew gum at a Paderewski concert." In a more serious vein the newspaper termed the pianist "a worthy successor to [Anton] Rubinstein . . . not only . . . admirable in technique, but . . . superlative in expression, and the enthusiasm his playing arouses is a deserved tribute to his genius."⁶³ Because of the rush for seats, professional and amateur scalpers flourished. Even young people working downtown had bought up to twenty tickets and then resold them at six dollars instead of the regular three.

Paderewski's debut in Denver drew large and enthusiastic audiences. The very praiseworthy review that appeared the following day began not with a discussion of his playing per se, but with a description of his mystique, including his lion's mane, which provided ready material for both painter and caricaturist.

Paderewski, a diffident-appearing, red-bearded, slightly built young man, redeemed from awkwardness only by some indeducable grace other than that of movement, stood bowing to a vast audience

⁶¹ The photo is now in the possession of the Missouri Historical Society in Saint Louis; *Denver Rocky Mountain News*, 4 September 1887.

⁶² He originally had been scheduled for the previous December, but illness forced him to postpone it (Linscome, "A History of Musical Development in Denver, 1858-1908," p. 384).

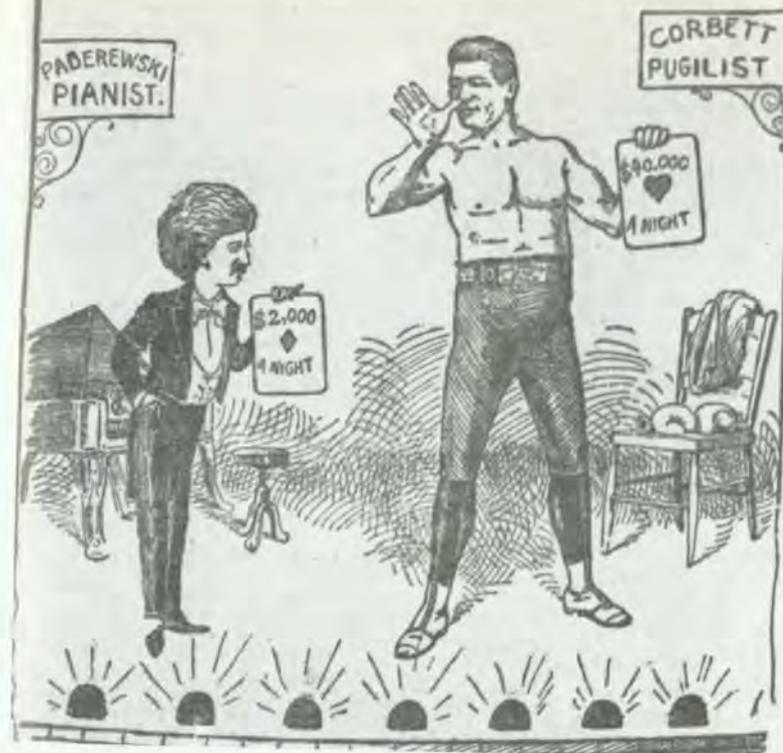
⁶³ *Denver Rocky Mountain News*, 16 April 1893.

at the Broadway last night. When a roar of applause burst forth, after his first number, the Bach-Liszt fantasie and fugue, he rose, almost like a school boy, between the ordinary chair on which he sits and the piano, and with his left hand resting on the instrument bowed once until a great tumbled mass of hair seemed to be all that surmounted his legs and then again only with a short nod.

Without further ceremony he sat down and ran over the keyboard in a succession of half dreaming chords, carressing the piano, rather than playing it, as one might smoothe the silky tresses of a beloved child.⁶⁴

Jim Corbett's boxing match immediately succeeded Paderewski's debut as the main attraction in Denver. As pointed out by a cartoon on the front page of the *Denver Rocky Mountain News*, Corbett received considerably more than Paderewski's \$2,500 guarantee. Following Corbett's match, one newspaper reporter drew some interesting parallels between the two "stars." In the process he commented on the cultural climate in the Mile High City in which the piano and the boxing ring were apparently not mutually exclusive.

The dreamy, soulful, yearning, sobbing of a Paderewski. The



stalwart, smashing, bag thumping, upper-cutting of a Corbett. . . . Any number of morals may be drawn from the contrast. The cultivated aesthete may rail at a Corbett; the fleshy minded may intimate that he really amounts to considerable more in the world than the artist. Both were at home in Denver, and it may be whispered that not a few of those who heard Paderewski on Monday or Tuesday with the interest of a devotee of St. Cecilia, went on Wednesday or Thursday and whooped with joy as Corbett gayly landed right and left hands on his boxing partner. . . . Odd as it may seem there is a common interest between Paderewski and Corbett. Both cultivate muscle, and in this respect Paderewski differs from the majority of those who live to esteem themselves musicians.⁶⁵

Paderewski returned to the Tabor Grand on 6 and 7 March 1896. The Denver newspapers discussed his thirteen-piece program featuring largely romantic composers and his technique, distinguished by a low-seated position at the piano and good pedal work. They likewise ascribed to him "a burdensome melancholy natural to a son of Poland," reminiscent of the characterization of Chopin and illustrating how musical stereotypes arise and enjoy wide currency. The *Denver Times* also humorously described the reaction of the local female population to Paderewski's appearance that year, indirectly indicating

⁶⁴ Ibid., 18 April 1893.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 23 April 1893.



both the numerical and the economic power of women at that time as supporters of performing artists. His drawing power as a matinee idol was analogous to the popularity of today's rock stars.

The crowd that besieged both entrances of the Tabor theater, and that pushed and jammed and shoved from as early as 1 o'clock to 2:30, was an unusual crowd. The conspicuous predominance of women was the striking feature. There have been matinee crowds without number in Denver, and they have been composed of women, too, but that of this afternoon easily outranked them all.

The man power in Denver is at its lowest ebb today, and it will continue to get lower and lower until the attenuated Polish pianist has packed the great Colorado silver dollars into his several hand bags and vanished toward the East.

In the theater women were to be seen everywhere, from top box tier down to the orchestra railing. Once in a while there could be distinguished the face of a man looking somewhat nervous, if not actually frightened, and awfully out of place.⁶⁶

Paderewski's luxurious private railway car, *Riva*, which he used on his western concert tours, and the Steinway grand piano that traveled with him made fascinating copy for Denver readers, both before and after the turn of the century. In addition to his public concerts, Paderewski was also entertained by local notables, such as Julie Palmer Penrose, the wife of Spencer Penrose, who invited him to her El Polmar estate in Colorado Springs.⁶⁷

His American tours also afforded Paderewski the opportunity to see old colleagues and meet new friends in his field. One of them in Denver was Dr. James M. Tracy, founder of the Liszt Music Study Club in 1910 for the purpose of studying music history. As president-instructor of the club, he delivered some forty lectures on the history of music each season for ten years. In connection with one of Paderewski's Denver appearances, Dr. Tracy recalled that "as upon previous occasions, the artist supplied me with a box for my family at the city auditorium and after the concert, together with the adorable Madame Paderewski, showered me with heartfelt love and attention. . . . I wish to reiterate my opinion of former years, that no pianist, musician of the present generation has ever impressed me so much since my days with Liszt as this great artist."⁶⁸

Just as Modjeska's cameo had earlier appeared on soap wrappers in America, so, too, was Paderewski's name and reputation incorporated by local merchants into their ads in musical programs and newspapers when the virtuoso performed in Denver. The Colorado National Bank

at Seventeenth and Champa streets advertised safe deposit boxes noting that "when Paderewski first came to America in 1891, he was only thirty-one years old and it is not unlikely that some of the photographs that he autographed then are reposing now among the personal treasures that are kept for auld lang syne in the safe deposit boxes of this bank. A safe deposit box is the very best place in the world for valuable photographs that could not be replaced." Similarly, the Bohn-Allen Jewelry Company, then located in the Foster Building at Sixteenth and Champa streets, advertised "Paderewski and Jaeger! The name Jaeger, in the world of jewels, means just what the name, Paderewski, does in the world of music."⁶⁹

Some of Paderewski's fellow keyboard artists of Polish descent, like Xaver Scharwenka, Josef Hofmann, and Leopold Godowsky, also performed in Denver beginning in the 1890s. While not always frequent visitors, their appearances, like those of Paderewski, were, nevertheless, well patronized by the devotees of piano music. During his residence in the United States after 1891, Xaver Scharwenka made his local debut at the First Baptist Church on 15 February 1892. A founder of several conservatories in Berlin, including that with Klindworth, Scharwenka as a pianist was "renowned above all for the beautiful quality of his tone" and for his compositions possessing "energy, harmonic interest, strong rhythm, many beautiful melodies and much Polish national character."⁷⁰ While commenting on his "Polish Dances," then very popular in the United States, the *Denver Rocky Mountain News* reviewed very positively his first local appearance. "Schwarwenka is an artist. As a pianist he takes his high rank and his playing last evening was remarkable for a finish and precision of technique, a feeling and tone that were really captivating. . . . His instrumentation is handled with ease and there is an illusive character to his music that makes it restless almost, but it is always brilliant and ornate."⁷¹

Following the concert, Henry Nast entertained Schwarwenka at a reception at his home, which gave the local artistic community a chance to meet the Polish pianist. Schwarwenka appeared in Denver for the second and last time in April 1897. His "Polish Dances" continued to figure in a number of local performances given by music students and orchestras before and after the turn of the century—by Dion de Romandy's Hungarian Orchestra at the Tabor Opera House on

⁶⁶ *Denver Times*, 6, 7 March 1896.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 23 April 1900; Marshall Sprague, *Newport in the Rockies* (Denver: Sage Books, 1961), p. 267.

⁶⁸ Tracy, "Development of Music in Denver and Colorado, 1898-1926," p. 37.

⁶⁹ Paderewski Program, 12 March 1923, Denver, in "Music Promotion Groups (Robert Slack), 1905-1929," Box 13, "Musical Society of Denver," Denver Public Library, Western History Department (hereinafter cited as DPLW).

⁷⁰ Eric Blom, ed., *Gröws's Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, 5th ed. (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1955), 7:466-67.

⁷¹ *Denver Rocky Mountain News*, 16 February 1892.

1 November 1894 and by the Denver Symphony in concert at the Broadway Theater on 8 February 1901.⁷²

The Tuesday Musical Club under Miss Sims sponsored a piano recital by Leopold Godowsky at the First Baptist Church in Denver on 21 February 1901. The son of a Wilno (Vilna) physician, he had made his first American visit in 1884 and had subsequently toured the country with prodigious success. His Denver program of works by Schumann, Liszt, Brahms, and Chopin was preceded by the performance of vocal selections by members of the Tuesday Musical Club, which was accompanied by a male chorus. Godowsky taught at different times at two leading American conservatories and served from 1909 to 1912 as professor and director of the Master School of the Royal Imperial Academy in Vienna. Distinguished for his tremendous contrapuntal facility and elasticity in the treatment of melodic passages, he continues to be remembered for his fifty-three studies on the Chopin etudes.⁷³

Polish-born pianist Josef Hofmann, who had concertized widely in America in 1887 and again after 1894, presented his first recital in Denver at the Broadway Theater on Tuesday afternoon, 25 February 1902. As with Paderewski, it marked the beginning of a long and pleasant association with area listeners, since Hofmann later returned to Denver on a number of occasions. According to Horace B. Matthews's review in the *Denver Times* on the day following his local debut, Hofmann "conquered his audience by the tremendous fire and passion of his playing, and the thorough and brilliant technique he displayed." The reviewer happily noted that the artist "is not a machine. It was a pleasure to hear him miss a note or two." In an era when theatrics at the keyboard were rampant, he was "totally devoid of affectation or pose. He has a vast technique, which he does not use as a means of display . . . and his hair [a reference to Paderewski's mane] does not make him look like an animated chrysanthemum." Matthews compared Hofmann's fortissimo to Rosenthal's when he wrote that the former "plays octaves with cyclopean force . . . from the whole force of his arm. Time and again he sent blazing passages of octaves crackling and storming up the keyboard. . . . The effect is something terrific."⁷⁴

In the fifty-odd years following his American debut at the Metropolitan Opera House on 29 November 1887, Hofmann became a master of the piano and a musical phenomenon, enjoying universal

acclaim. Achieving United States citizenship in 1924, he was appointed two years later as director of the Curtis Institute in Philadelphia. He wrote many compositions, chiefly for the piano, many of which were published under the pseudonym of Michael Dvorsky. Possessed of seemingly unlimited genius, Hofmann likewise invented shock-absorbers, air springs, and other automobile devices used by leading manufacturers.⁷⁵

Besides visiting keyboard artists, Denver also boasted in the last two decades of the nineteenth century a local prodigy, Benjamin Jarecki, of Polish-Jewish background. Born in New York in 1867, he received his early musical training there and at the age of seven debuted as a child prodigy at Steinway Hall; he also played private musicales at the Seligman mansion in New York. About 1876 the family relocated to Denver where his father, Max Jarecki, became a municipal lighting inspector. During the 1877 season Benjamin was introduced to local audiences. Five years later his friends and admirers arranged for a concert at Standard Hall in Denver as both a compliment to him and as a means of helping to raise the funds needed to send him to Europe for further music studies.⁷⁶

Jarecki spent the next twelve years studying piano in Berlin with Xaver Schwarenka, Karl Klindworth, and Moritz Moszkowski. After one of his successful performances in Berlin, Schwarenka was recorded as having told Jarecki, "Well, my pupil, America has triumphed tonight." He returned to Denver in 1885 and in 1887 for summer vacations during his studies. On the latter occasion the *Denver Republican* featured a large article dubbing Jarecki "Denver's Young Joseffy."⁷⁷

After his years of piano study in Berlin, Jarecki returned to his Denver home in the spring of 1894. Enroute to the Mile High City he stopped in New York for several weeks and presented a recital at Chickering Hall at Fifth Avenue and Eighteenth Street. His performance was very favorably received by the local press, which ranked him with Pachman, Jonas, and Burmeister, and even prompted some to remark that perhaps "another Paderewski had dawned upon the

⁷² Blom, ed., *Grove's Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, 4:318; Abram Chasins, "Josef Hofmann," *Golden Jubilee Concert* (Columbia Masterworks Production, ML-4929, 1946).

⁷³ *Denver Republican*, 21 July 1887; Linscome, "A History of Musical Development in Denver, 1858-1908," pp. 174, 382-83. In August 1881, while home from New York visiting his parents, Jarecki had appeared in concert with Hattie Louise Sims. The local newspapers termed the former as "Denver's Musical Prodigy," while the latter was described as "an artist who can boast of having few superiors in this country" (*Denver Republican*, 1 August 1881); *Denver Rocky Mountain News*, 24 September 1882.

⁷⁴ On Moritz Moszkowski (1854-1925), see A.S. Garbett, comp., *Gallery of Musical Celebrities* (Philadelphia, Penn.: Theodore Presser, 1909). Moszkowski's works were frequently played in Denver around the turn of the century, for example, by the Lehman Quartet at the First Baptist Church (13 December 1892), by the Denver Symphony on 11 January 1901, under Henry Houseley, and by John Philip Sousa and his band in grand concert at the Broadway Theater on 1 and 2 November 1903 ("Musical Society of Denver" and H.W. Warren Scrapbooks, DPLW); *Denver Rocky Mountain News*, 11 November 1894.

⁷⁵ "Schwarenka," Box 9, "Musical Society of Denver," DPLW.

⁷⁶ H.W. Warren Scrapbook, vol. 3, DPLW; Blom, ed., *Grove's Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, 3:693; *Ende*, January 1928, p. 19.

⁷⁷ "Music Promotion Groups," Box 13, DPLW; *Denver Times*, 26 February 1902.

horizon of the musical world." Once back in Denver Jarecki performed at the Broadway Theater on 5 March 1894, with the Mendelssohn Quartet and later that year on 9 September at the Tabor Grand. "The music lovers who heard him play on these occasions all agreed that the boy prodigy was rapidly developing into a master pianist."⁷⁸ Jarecki's career, which included plans to return to Berlin and to make a name for himself there as a pianist and then to settle permanently in New York, was cut short by his premature death from typhoid fever in Denver on 10 November 1894. His parents, who had spared no expense in his education, were understandably grief-stricken, since their son was on the threshold of a very promising musical career. He was laid to rest at the Jewish cemetery on Capitol Hill in Denver.

When Edouard de Reszke and Marcella Sembrich-Kochanska appeared in Denver after the turn of the century, the city already had a well-developed vocal and operatic tradition. This was due to the formation of groups like the Denver Maennerchor (established in 1870), the powerful German singing society that sponsored successful local productions as well as guest stars; the Denver Choral Union (established in 1872), later the Haydn and Handel Association, which produced the first cantata ever sung in the Rocky Mountain region; the Denver Chorus Club (1882-85) founded by Frank Damrosch for the purpose of studying choral work; the Denver Opera Club, initiated by A. Kaufman and Professor E.G. Passmore; and the Colorado Opera Company (established in 1881), which on 23 January 1882, presented at the Tabor Grand *Brittle Silver*, the first native Colorado opera. The activity and interest generated by these and other local organizations attracted to Denver internationally-known voices like Adelina Patti and Ilma de Murska, as well as traveling groups, including the Melville, Conreid, Duff, Templeton, the Milan Grand, and Her Majesty's Opera companies.⁷⁹

Edouard de Reszke, the Polish basso, appeared at the Broadway Theater on 7 December 1900, as "Marcel" in Meyerbeer's *Les Huguenots*; it was staged by the Metropolitan Opera Company under Maurice Grau. Edouard, who had first studied singing with his older brother, Jean, the famous tenor, and subsequently with F. Coletti in Italy, made his debut as the "King" in *Aida* at the Theatre Italien in

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Hafen, ed., *Colorado and Its People*, 2:460, 464-65; Baker and Hafen, eds., *History of Colorado*, 3:1,276-83. Dr. Leopold Damrosch, the father of Walter and Frank, appeared with his Grand Orchestra from New York at the Academy of Music in Denver in May 1883. Leopold was born in 1832 in Pzvan (Posen), then a part of the Prussian sector of partitioned Poland. In 1932 his son, Walter (then seventy years of age), visited Paderewski in his private railway car in Detroit and told him during a card game about the Polish origins of his father (Arthur Waldo, Phoenix, Arizona, who was present at that meeting, to Stanley Cuba, 27 February 1977).



Edouard de Reszke (1853-1917), the famous Polish basso, appeared as Marcel in Les Huguenots with the Metropolitan Opera Company in Denver at the Broadway Theater in 1900.

Paris in April 1876. At the time of his Denver performance, Edouard had been with the Metropolitan Opera for almost a decade and had earned wide critical acclaim for his performances of Wagnerian roles. The appearance of the Metropolitan Opera Company in Denver "was a culminating experience in grand opera for the city." De Reszke received excellent exposure, since much of the best music of *Les Huguenots* falls to "Marcel." He sang a duet with Mme. Gadska, which rewarded both stars with repeated curtain calls. At one point, however, the effect of the opera was marred when the ubiquitous stage hands removed some of the settings while the singing was in progress. De Reszke and Gadska, nevertheless, received enthusiastic reviews.⁸⁰

Marcella Sembrich-Kochanska, the diva of the New York Metropolitan Opera, first performed in Denver at the Broadway Theater in one matinee on 11 March 1901. She had taken off the 1900-1901 season from the Metropolitan Opera to make a tour of the United States with a small company of her own.⁸¹ Her appearance in Denver

⁸⁰ Denver, together with Los Angeles, San Francisco, Kansas City, Lincoln (Nebraska), and Minneapolis, was one of six cities where the company performed prior to the opening on 19 December 1900 of the subscription season of the Metropolitan Opera in New York City (Henry Edward Krehbiel, *Chapters of the Opera* [New York: Henry Holt & Co., 1908], p. 299); Linscome, "A History of Musical Development in Denver, 1858-1908," p. 571; *Denver Republican*, 8 December 1900; *Denver Times*, 8 December 1900.

⁸¹ Her full name was Prakseda Marcelina Kochanska, see Blom, ed., *Grove's Dictionary of Music and*



Marcella
Sembrich-
Konchaska
first performed in
the *Queen City* in
1901 on a tour of
the United States.
“Denver is all very
nice,” she
remarked in a 1906
interview.

as “Norina” in *Don Pasquale* began at 3:15 P.M. instead of the customary 2:15 P.M., because the “local banks, schools and many business houses had sent requests that the madame should not appear until all could have an opportunity of hearing her.” Reviewers noted that the house, while full, was “by no means commensurate with the merit of the performance, because Sembrich’s manager had not forwarded to Denver a sufficient number of posters in advance.” Nevertheless, what should have been a two-hour program lasted about one hour longer, because Mme. Sembrich received so many curtain calls. The long line of carriages in front of the Broadway did not begin to roll away until 6:15 P.M.⁸²

Because her first performance occurred in the afternoon, many Denver music lovers were unable to hear Mme. Sembrich. Slack, the local impresario, induced the management of her company to return to Denver that same season for a second appearance at the Broadway Theater on Saturday evening, 6 April. Verdi’s *La Traviata*, Mme. Sembrich’s favorite, was presented with a grand orchestra and a large chorus.⁸³

Musicians, 9th ed., 7:695; *An Outline of the Life and Career of Madame Marcella Sembrich* (New York: Marcella Sembrich Memorial Association, 1945); the author wishes to thank Mr. John Davis Skilton, Jr., of Fairfield, Conn., and president of the Marcella Sembrich Memorial Association, for granting him access to a number of Sembrich materials. See also Krebbiel, *Chapters of the Opera*, p. 306.

⁸² *Denver Daily Rocky Mountain News*, 12 March 1901; *Denver Times*, 11 March 1901; *Denver Republican*, 12 March 1901. Eugene Field, discussed earlier in connection with Helena Modjeska, regarded Mme. Sembrich as his favorite prima donna on the operatic stage. “He was one of the earliest writers on the press to recognize the wonderful beauty of [her] voice and the perfection of her method” (Thompson, *Eugene Field*, p. 251).

⁸³ *The Bill of the Play* (Broadway Theater), 24 March 1901, p. 13. Mme. Modjeska had preceded Sembrich

Mme. Sembrich again visited Denver in November 1906. About three weeks earlier she had arrived in the United States aboard the *Kaiser Wilhelm* for the purpose of giving the musicians in San Francisco, who had suffered in the earthquake earlier that year, the \$15,000 she had raised by subscription among her friends. Enroute back to New York, where she had to begin the Metropolitan Opera season with Enrico Caruso on 1 December, Denver figured in her itinerary, together with Dallas, Chicago, Saint Louis, and Cincinnati. While commenting exuberantly in her fourth floor suite at the Brown Palace Hotel that “Denver is all very nice,” she also chided her manager for picking her performance sites so far apart, necessitating many miles of tiring train travel. In Denver Miss Emma Phipps, daughter of Lawrence C. Phipps, took Mme. Sembrich “autoing” and entertained her at lunch at the country club on the day before her concert—Thursday, 8 November—at the Central Presbyterian church.⁸⁴ Her local appearance also attracted those from nearby Colorado Springs.

In February 1909 at the height of her powers Mme. Sembrich retired from the Metropolitan Opera where she had reigned for more than a decade. She had become in the process the greatest soprano of a generation and one of the most memorable operatic talents, who combined the absolute mastery of technique with an incomparable voice. In an interview Mme. Sembrich said she left grand opera because “in the operas of today the perfect technique, the absolutely perfect voice are no longer needed. I am not for this new tendency. . . . The voice . . . today, it is third—temperament and acting, they are first.”⁸⁵

Following her retirement, Mme. Sembrich began a long concert tour in America, which included Denver, to reach all of the people who wished to hear her sing. This previously had been impossible, since she was based at the Metropolitan Opera in New York City. She felt that “America [was] progressing wonderfully in music . . . [and would] stand with the best in musical appreciation. For a new country,” she said, “it is most artistic . . . Americans love music.” Mme. Sembrich performed at the newly-built Denver Auditorium on 7 December 1909. Her local audience, especially the female portion, was forewarned that they would not see her sing in her stunning gown

as the attraction at the Broadway during the week of 24 February. The two had met previously in New York and admired each other’s artistic talents. Modjeska wrote (in Polish) in Mme. Sembrich’s guestbook on 24 December 1898: “If I was a poet, I would write a sonnet to Rosigna; but not possessing the talent of verse, I can only thank you in ordinary prose for the moment of genuine artistic pleasure and delight, which your singing awakened in my soul. Long live the great Polish artist and woman, Marcella Sembrich!” (Author’s translation, Sembrich Guestbook, Marcella Sembrich Memorial Association, Fairfield, Conn.).

⁸⁴ *Denver Post*, 7 November 1906.

⁸⁵ *Denver Times*, 6 December 1909.

and gorgeous Parisian hat, which she wore during her afternoon concert appearances. Because she did not know until Monday of the week preceeding her Denver concert that it was to be an afternoon one, she had sent the ensemble with other trunks ahead to Los Angeles. She, therefore, remarked that she would "have to give Denver a little more singing to make up for the missing hat and afternoon costume. So . . . Denver is going to be the gainer."⁸⁶

Mme. Sembrich regretted that she and her husband Wilhelm Stengel, who always traveled with her, would not have time to explore the Colorado mountains and compare them with those surrounding her home on Lake Lucerne in Switzerland.⁸⁷ She intimated in her Denver newspaper interview that she loved to walk and would always rise early to do so if not performing the night before. Such observations undoubtedly helped to endear her to Colorado audiences. Mme. Sembrich was also an enthusiastic amateur photographer, judging by the snapshots in contemporary Denver newspapers showing her in City Park with her large box camera.

Prior to retiring from concert-singing in 1917, Mme. Sembrich appeared in Colorado, apparently for the last time, in 1913. Besides Denver, her usual stop, she included Pueblo and Colorado Springs on her itinerary. It was a great occasion for audiences in those cities. On 10 January she performed in Pueblo in the Philharmonic Series at the Grand Opera House, designed by Louis Sullivan. The *Yearbook* of the Colorado Springs Musical Club for the 1912-13 season heralded her coming by noting that "it has been an ideal of the . . . club to bring Mme. Sembrich to this city. . . . When her recital is over, we will know we have heard the greatest singer of our generation." This enthusiasm was borne out by Albert C. Pearson's review in the *Colorado Springs Gazette*. He wrote that "the privilege of hearing perfect singing is not given to us often. So blessed is the man or woman who has ears to hear, for we heard the real thing last night [at the Burns Theater]. . . . What a woman! The highest musicianship showed in every tone. . . . Thank God that the world has a Marcella Sembrich."⁸⁸

She was accompanied by Frank La Farge, pianist, and G. Casini, a Russian child prodigy on the cello whom she had discovered in Leipzig. To her classical program—the same one she presented in

Pueblo—Mme. Sembrich added a Polish folk song, "Coz za nieboraczek" [What a poor thing]. Following her Colorado Springs performance, she departed the state.⁸⁹

During the first fifty-odd years of its musical and theatrical life, Denver also had several theater owners and entrepreneurs of Polish descent. Mr. and Mrs. Alexander Blandowski came to Denver from Baltimore in August 1880 and opened a dancing academy under their name on 1 September of that year at the Forrester Opera House (formerly Guard's Hall).⁹⁰ Blandowski moved the dancing academy shortly thereafter from the opera house to the building previously occupied by the First Congregational Church on the southeast corner of Fifteenth and Curtis streets, because the former had "too many funerals for a temple of Terpsichores." His socials, held in connection with the dancing academy, began to draw the attention of the local press, which noted that "the regular weekly social at Prof. Blandowski's came off on Thursday evening amidst great enjoyment."⁹¹

By October of the same year the professor had expanded his activities to include the presentations of light theatricals. On a return visit from the Pacific coast, Neil Burgess, a great character comedian, appeared at the academy on 18 and 19 October in *The Widow and the Elder*, a farcical three-act comedy. George Stodart as "the Elder" performed with Burgess in the latter's own creation of "Widow Bedott" with the "celebrated original cast from New York." Katie Putnam immediately followed through 23 October with the Hasenwinkle Dramatic Company in *Lena the Madcap*, *The Old Curiosity Shop*, *The Child of the Regiment*, and *Fanehon the Cricket*.⁹² The month was rounded out with Milton Nobles' appearance in *A Man of the People*. Blandowski's local activities ended abruptly with the death of his wife in Denver on 3 December 1880. Although her obituary says that they had made a number of friends during their relatively short stay in Denver, Blandowski did not subsequently continue his dancing academy nor did he relocate in Baltimore.⁹³

⁸⁶ Ibid., *Denver Times*, 8 December 1909.

⁸⁷ *Denver Times*, 6 December 1909; *Słownik biograficzny teatru polskiego, 1765-1965* [Biographical dictionary of the Polish theater] (Warsaw: State Scientific Publishers, 1973), p. 633.

⁸⁸ *Colorado Springs Musical Club Yearbook*, Penrose Room, Colorado Springs Library. According to post cards in the possession of the Marcella Sembrich Memorial Association, she stayed at the old Antlers Hotel in Colorado Springs during her engagement. *Colorado Springs Gazette*, 14 January 1913.

⁸⁹ Her Pueblo appearance, while not presently able to be supported by printed reviews, is confirmed by post cards of the city on which unfortunately no exact performance dates are given. The post cards are in the possession of the Marcella Sembrich Memorial Association.

⁹⁰ The 1879 *Wood's Baltimore City Directory* lists "Blandowski, Alexander, drawing master, 64 Greenmount Avenue." The 1880 directory lists the same profession for him, though his address had been changed to 22 Greenmount Avenue; he no doubt married in the interim, since a Mrs. Maggie, dressmaker, is listed at the same address. Margaret was later given in Denver sources as his wife (Ms. Eva Slezak, Maryland Department, Enoch Pratt Free Library, Baltimore, Maryland, to Stanley Cuba, 23 February 1978); *Denver Rocky Mountain News*, 15 August, 4 September 1880; 1881 *Denver City Directory*.

⁹¹ *Denver Rocky Mountain News*, 17, 19 October 1880.

⁹² William Campton Bell, "A History of the Denver Theatre during the Post-Pioneer Period, 1881-1901" (Ph.D. diss., Northwestern University, Evanston, Ill., 1941).

⁹³ *Denver Rocky Mountain News*, 4 December 1880, and *Baltimore Morning Sun*, 7 December 1880.

A survey of the Colorado-related activities of musical and performing artists of Polish descent adds another dimension to the cultural history of Colorado and offers several conclusions. First, on account of the political situation in their own partitioned country, many Poles entered musical and theatrical life and necessarily achieved international recognition abroad, including the United States. Like their contemporaries, they were attracted to the Rocky Mountain area by audience demand for good performances and by the prevailing material prosperity that provided the required financial support for the arts. The prospect of prosperity facilitated the successful competition with the still-reigning, traditional European centers. By reading the Colorado newspaper reviews and the artists' own impressions of the area, a sense of the importance that these Polish keyboard and dramatic artists played in the local culture is gained. Because they were among the best in their fields, they were much beloved by the local citizenry, as the above-mentioned tributes to Modjeska, Paderewski, Sembrich, and others indicate. At the same time, as many contemporary critics noted, it was the artists of Polish descent who almost always elicited enthusiastic responses from audiences who, especially in Denver, were famous for their frigidity. Together with their compatriots—music teachers and theater owners—these Polish artists participated in and greatly advanced the development of the theatrical and musical culture in Colorado during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

The cultural programs director and the assistant to the president at the Kosciuszko Foundation in New York City, STANLEY L. CUBA holds B.A. and M.Phil. degrees from Columbia University, where he also attended the School of International Affairs. Currently a Ph.D. candidate in history at Columbia, Cuba is writing his dissertation on the Polish community in Colorado. He is a member of the Polish Institute of Arts and Sciences and the Pilsudski Institute (New York City), the Polish American Historical Association, and several other organizations, including the Polish National Alliance, Group 134, in his hometown of Denver. Cuba has published articles in the QUARTERLY REVIEW, POLISH AMERICAN STUDIES, TYGODNIK POWSZECHNY (Cracow, Poland), and in edited works.

Inside “Little Italy”: Italian Immigrants in Denver

BY CHRISTINE A. DEROSE

The Italian immigrants who reached Denver in the early 1870s had left poverty stricken homes to come to the land of opportunity. Upon their arrival, they were disappointed to find the situation contrary to their beliefs. Instead of riches they found more poverty—and discrimination.¹ While many pioneer immigrants to Denver were prepared for life in a frontier town, the Italian experience was different. Many Italians came directly to Denver from Italy, brought by railroads needing a cheap labor source.² Few of them spoke English and a majority were Roman Catholic in a predominantly non-Catholic society. They were often young, unmarried males without families and were viewed as threats to the women of the city.³ Thus, Italians were not openly welcomed, and their language and customs added to their predicament. Their history in the Denver area, as well as the rest of the country, is one of struggle and hard work, characterized by an uphill climb for social status and recognition.

The job opportunities in Denver afforded by railroads, smelters, breweries, and lumber mills, combined with the dry and sunny climate, appealed to the Italian immigrants. The first Italians arrived in Denver in 1872 and settled along the river bottoms of the South Platte River. Most of them were from the southern region of the old country, with large numbers from the provinces of Potenza and fewer from Napoli, Genoa, Calabri, and Milan. Angelo Capelli, a grocer, came in the summer of 1872, and he was followed a few weeks later by Gianbattista Cuneo, a restaurateur, and his wife and daughter. In the fall of 1872 John di Gian Francesco came to Denver, followed shortly by Siro Mangini and C.B. Frugazzi and his wife. Francesco and Mangini both had saloons in the

¹ Joseph Lopreato, *Italian Americans* (New York: Random House, 1970), pp. 32-33; Andrew F. Rolle, *The American Italians: Their History and Culture* (Belmont, Calif.: Wadsworth Publishing Co., 1972), p. 2.

² Stephen J. Leonard, “Denver’s Foreign-Born Immigrants, 1859-1900” (Ph.D. diss., Claremont Graduate School, 1971), p. 195.

³ Lyle W. Dorsett, *The Queen City: A History of Denver* (Boulder, Colo.: Pruett Publishing Co., 1977), pp. 3, 100.

Denver area.⁴ Italians in Denver, according to federal census data, numbered 608 in 1890. This figure, however, was a low estimate because many Italians who came in this early period were transient laborers and were never counted.⁵

In Denver small, inexpensive, one-room brick cottages became their homes. These little dwellings were located along Bell (Osage Street) and Palmer (Navajo Street) avenues, and along Clifton (Mariposa Street), Justine (Lipan Street), and Merill (Inca) streets. The Italians were crowded into the neighborhood because it was difficult to find residence anywhere else. Sanitation in this area was highly inadequate—with open ditches sometimes carrying typhoid fever and diphtheria to the residents of the area. It was mainly the farmers from southern Italy who settled near the South Platte River on lands considered less desirable by most people. This area along the river seemed the best place for these “strange” speaking, “oddly” dressed foreigners, but to the Italians this rich land was a blessing. This was the beginning of “Little Italy,” close to the railroad tracks and to the rich river bottoms of the South Platte River, but also dirty, overpopulated, confined, and segregated.⁶

The traditional Italian customs and ways of life flourished in “Little Italy.” Although divided by provincial rivalry, it was only here in this tight-knit community that they were able to live as they wished, without ridicule from the rest of the city. An early-century Denver newspaper reporter commented on these new people and their life styles:

Music and laughter and dancing are the vogue in this little Italy. When the days work is done, the cares that infest it are laid aside and husband and wife, father and mother, and son and daughter, make merry together.

Men and women of no nationality are more industrious than these sons and daughters of Sunny Italy. There is no distinction either. The only exception is in the case of old men and women. The younger members of their families care for them with the tenderest solitude.⁷

The cumulative influx of Italians to Colorado took place between 1880 and 1895. As this immigrant population grew, it felt the need to form organizations to serve the new arrivals. Religious, geographic, and political divisions were the catalysts for these new groups. The first Italian society, established in 1887, was called the *Unione Fratellanza*, and oddly enough, it welcomed Italians from both northern and southern Italy. Its leaders were Luigi Mosconi, Siro Mangini, and



Frank Mazza, who opened a macaroni factory in Denver in 1882, wears his uniform of the Bersaglieri, an Italian society he helped to organize in 1889.

Joseph Turre. Also in 1887, another society, Garibaldi, was formed by Agostino Roncaglia, an Italian banker and businessman. These two original societies, however, were relatively short-lived. Next came the military as well as the benevolent society, Bersaglieri, founded in 1889 by Frank Mazza, a wealthy Italian merchant. This society did not last long either. The women of the community also had an organization. In 1889 Italian ladies, presided over by Clara Cuneo Cella and Louise Sbarbaro, conducted a fair in the Exposition Building of the old River Front Park to create a fund for charitable purposes. In the early 1920s the funds from this organization were liquidated, and \$500 was donated to the Queen of Heaven Orphanage. By 1922 there were fifteen Italian societies in Denver, all with presidents of Italian descent who lived in the Northwest Denver community.⁸

Italian Catholic societies were established in Denver too. The oldest, Mount Carmel, was founded by Michael Notary in 1891. The society lasted until 1977 when all money collected was refunded to its members. Another Catholic society, San Rocco, was founded in 1892 by Joseph Labriola. By the turn of the century about two thousand

⁴ Giovanni Perilli, *Colorado and the Italians in Colorado* (Denver: n.p., 1922), p. 27; Marcello Gandolfo, *Gli Italiani nel Colorado: Libro Dedicato agli Italiani, 1899-1900* (Denver: By the author, 1922).

⁵ U. S. Bureau of the Census, *Eleventh Census Compendium 1890*, 2:690-93; Dorsett, *The Queen City*, p. 99.

⁶ *Our Lady of Mount Carmel* (South Hackensack, N.J.: Custombook Printing, 1975), p. 6.

⁷ *Denver Times*, 17 November 1901.

⁸ Leonard, "Denver's Foreign-Born Immigrants, 1859-1900," p. 193; *Denver Times*, 17 November 1901; Perilli, *Colorado and the Italians in Colorado*, pp. 33, 34.



A July 1920 Our Lady of Mount Carmel procession.

Italians from Potenza founded the *Societa Nativi di Potenza*. Its leaders included Rocco Tolve and Giuseppe Malpiedi.⁹ This group still exists today and holds the annual Saint Rocco Feast each summer. This feast was started in 1926 and attracts people from all over the city. Each year around 22 August a procession winds through the streets of "Little Italy," followed by a celebration with music, gambling, and good food. In 1949 Governor W. Lee Knous and Mayor Quigg Newton walked the nineteen-block parade along with members from the Potenza lodge. George Aiello, John Fiore, and Eugene and Clyde Smaldone bid a total of \$1,060 to carry the statue of Saint Rocco, and more than \$400 was pinned to the statue before the parade returned to Our Lady of Mount Carmel Catholic Church.¹⁰

For these Italian organizations the historic landing of Christopher Columbus in America carried special significance. Italians in Denver viewed the event as worthy of recognition. In 1907 Colorado became the first state to commemorate the discovery of America by Columbus. The primary person responsible for this feat was Angelo Noce, a printer and newspaper publisher who settled in Denver in 1885 and who gained prominence as a deputy county assessor and deputy sheriff in Arapahoe County.¹¹

Before coming to the Centennial State, Noce had tried to sell Italians on the idea of a legal holiday in recognition of Columbus, but with little success. In 1882 he arrived in Colorado and settled in Denver three years later. In 1890 he attempted to inspire the Colorado community to erect a monument to Columbus in the Queen City. He spoke to several members

of the Colorado General Assembly about having money allocated for the monument and also advocated the passage of a bill designating 12 October as a legal holiday. The proposal would have been considered but the allotted time for the introduction of the bill elapsed.¹²

On 12 October 1892 Italians in Denver celebrated the fourth centennial of Columbus's discovery of America with festivities that included a large parade through the downtown streets. The idea for this public demonstration supposedly began with Noce, but he was not given credit for the successful event by his countrymen. The committee that gained recognition consisted of Frank Damascio, Luigi Mosconi, Agostino Roncaglia, and A. Abiati, prominent and wealthy members of the Italian community. Local newspapers, including the *Denver Rocky Mountain News* and the *Denver Times*, however, credited Noce in reviews and editorials.¹³

This struggle continued until proclamations were issued in 1905 by Governor Jesse F. McDonald that declared 12 October 1905 and 1906 as legal holidays.¹⁴ This was an honor never accorded Italians by any state government in the United States. In actuality, it was probably the only major honor given to the Italians since they had come to this country in the late nineteenth century. All of the newspapers in Denver were united in praising Noce for securing the proclamations. The *Denver Post* observed that "if a bill introduced this morning in the house by Bromley (Representative Adams) passes, Colorado will have an additional holiday and Angelo Noce—veteran Italian will have achieved the objective of his life—the recognition by Colorado of Christopher Columbus."¹⁵

A further example of acclaim came from Ellis Meredith, legislative reporter for the *Denver Evening Times*: "House bill No. 65 by Mr. Bromley might be entitled, 'An Act for an Act to remind the people of Colorado!' It is a request bill introduced at the solicitation of Mr. Angelo Noce speaking for a large number of his countrymen. The bill provides that October 12 of each year hereafter shall be a legal holiday, to be observed as a legal holiday."¹⁶

Clearly, most Denverites understood the work that Noce had done. His problem was gaining recognition from his fellow Italians, and as evidenced by his book *Columbus Day in Colorado*, this is what Noce wanted most. In addition to the newspaper articles and letters from prominent people noting his role, Noce's book contained his personal account of the situation—"Not ambition but duty . . . inspired me

¹² *Ibid.*, pp. 24-25.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 29; Perilli, *Colorado and the Italians in Colorado*, pp. 32-33.

¹⁴ Noce, *Columbus Day in Colorado*, p. 30.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ *Denver Post*, 18 January 1905; *Denver Times*, 5 January 1905.

⁹ *Denver Times*, 17 November 1901; interview with Elisabeth Capra, Denver, Colorado, 5 March 1977.

¹⁰ *Denver Rocky Mountain News*, 22 August 1949.

¹¹ Angelo Noce, *Columbus Day in Colorado* (Denver, n.p., 1910), pp. 2, xi, 21.



F-41161 Grand Marshal Angelo Noce led the 1907 Columbus Day parade.

during the course of my laborious experience to make known the merits of an Italian in the foreign land and because of this great deed by him achieved, that one day be consecrated to his memory."¹⁷ Doctor Rudolph Albi purportedly told Noce that "to you Angelo Noce belongs the merit and honor of the Columbus Day, but to you this honor and merit we will contest and will not give it to you. If you were one of our 'gang' you would have before this been created a chevalier."¹⁸

Government officials and local newspaper articles in both English and Italian applauded Noce. However, important Italians snubbed him and took much of the praise for his work within the Italian community, because he was not in the group that included Albi or Damascio and he lived in east Denver not in Northwest Denver, where the majority of the Italians resided.¹⁹ Noce's idea of a holiday did eventually become reality, and on 1 April 1907, Governor Henry A. Buchtel signed the bill that made Columbus Day a legal holiday. On 12 October 1907 the holiday was initiated with Angelo Noce in the position of grand marshal of the parade celebrating the occasion.²⁰

More flagrant than the Noce-Columbus Day controversy was the violence and bitter infighting that occurred in the early years of the Italian community in Denver. Although there were too few Italians in the city to pose a threat to the rest of the population, there were enough to make the situation a very unsettled one. In 1875, only a few years after the Italian community was established, a gang of Italians hacked several of their conationals to death while one of the group sat by and played the harp.²¹ The *Denver Rocky Mountain News* avoided condemnation on racial grounds, but rather noted that the accused were Catholic, but not "very devout." The *News* also commented that the harpist "reminds us of the artistic grace the Italian throws even into his crime."²² The eight suspects in the case were tried and sent to the Colorado penitentiary without incident.

The year 1882 was a particularly violent one for poor Italians who lived near the tracks. They clashed both with native and immigrant workers. A number of Italians were arrested in late March 1882 for driving belligerent volunteer firemen into their hose house and then laying siege to it.²³ Only three Italians in the incident were fined. Just several weeks after this Americans stoned Italians on Holladay Street. In May an Italian-Irish fight at Twentieth and Holladay streets brought serious injury to an innocent bystander.²⁴

Italians, although a few were admittedly violent, were frequently harassed by the public. Public intolerance toward the Italian population was harsh, particularly during economic recessions. Brought to Denver to work on the railroad and in the mines, the Italians were poorly paid, given menial jobs, and often subjected to layoffs when cheaper labor was available. In 1884 Italians living along the South Platte River petitioned for relief for over seven hundred of their countrymen, left jobless by the Union Pacific Railroad. Those who helped raise funds for these unemployed immigrants encountered strong objections from those who opposed charity for indigents, who were contributing to the job competition. To help sustain their families, Italian children sold watercress that they had gathered along the river and cigar butts that they had collected. Representative of an unsympathetic public, a report stated that "the

¹⁷ Noce, *Columbus Day in Colorado*, p. 21.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 77.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 43.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 69-70; *Denver City Directory, 1905*, pp. 347, 467, 825.

²¹ Leonard, "Denver's Foreign-Born Immigrants, 1859-1900," p. 22.

²² *Denver Rocky Mountain News*, 11 November 1875, 19 May 1876.

²³ Leonard, "Denver's Foreign-Born Immigrants," p. 188.

²⁴ *Denver Rocky Mountain News*, 12 April, 28 May 1882.

majority of the children belong to these dagoes who would probably do the same thing if they had thousands of dollars."²⁵

In 1893 a lynching occurred. Dan Arata, an Italian bartender, allegedly killed a customer. After he was arrested, a mob assembled outside the jail and shouted "hang the Dago" to police guards. The mob then broke into the jail, dragged Arata from his cell, hanged him on the nearest cottonwood tree, and filled his body with bullets the following day. Someone cut down the blood stained branches of the tree and sold sections for ten to fifty cents to souvenir collectors.²⁶ Being Italian was a factor in Arata's murder.

Bitter fights continued among the various Italian factions in their tight-knit Denver community into the early 1900s. People were beaten, stabbed, and many died. Most of the fights were between members of the Potenza faction and other Italians not members of Potenza. Those from Potenza arrogated themselves a great deal of prestige, particularly in the area of social affairs. An example of these clashes occurred in March 1901, when Frank Lotito was shot and killed by Frank Sposato. Sposato denied that it was the result of a feud. He claimed that Lotito was a stranger whom he had met on the street and had fought. Sposato, however, showed no signs of a fight, while Lotito was badly beaten. Sposato, a month earlier, had acted as a judge in a cakewalk at Palmer Hall. His decision there caused criticism among those from the Potenza Society, which would not allow Sposato to become a member because he was not from Potenza in Italy. A quarrel arose and from that day on Sposato was a marked man, particularly with the Potenza Society, of which Lotito was a member.²⁷ Thus, not only did the Italians have problems with other nationalities in the community, they also fought among themselves. Nevertheless, they would band together against those not of Italian descent. The saying "blood is thicker than water" applied quite well to the citizens of "Little Italy."

A large part of the Italian history in Denver is centered around the Mount Carmel Catholic Church. The first Italians attended Saint Patrick's Catholic Church, an Irish church in the neighborhood where they lived. But they did not feel comfortable at Saint Patrick's, and the Irish did not want them there anyway. Also, as more Italians settled in Denver, they realized a pressing need for a church of their own. In 1891, Father Mariano Felice Lepore, a Jesuit, arrived in Denver and took up temporary residence at Saint Patrick's rectory. He began to organize Italian residents in the area for the purpose of starting a parish. Father Lepore purchased



Father Mariano Lepore, a Jesuit priest, organized the Italian Our Lady of Mount Carmel parish in Denver. A controversial figure, he was murdered in 1903.

seven lots on Palmer Avenue (Navajo Street) between West Thirty-fifth and Thirty-sixth avenues. He was able to build a small church in honor of Our Lady of Mount Carmel, and it was dedicated on 18 March 1894. The original church, constructed of wood, burnt to the ground in August 1898. The *Denver Times* reported that "the entire population of the colony thronged to the church, and the scene was one of lamentation." Father Lepore left the building unlocked after mass that morning, as usual, and went downtown. When he heard of the fire, he quickly returned to discover the ruins of his church. While definitely arson, to this day it is not known who started the fire that destroyed the original church edifice.²⁸

Father Lepore was a controversial figure. Even though he was Italian, many of his countrymen were not pleased with him. They accused him of base immorality, and many men forbade their wives and daughters to speak to him. He was a very handsome man with dark curly hair and charisma that attracted women.²⁹ He was further denounced following the destruction of his church. On 15 June 1899 an injunction was brought

²⁵ Dorsett, *The Queen City*, p. 101; Leonard, "Denver's Foreign-Born Immigrants, 1859-1900," p. 187-88; *Denver Rocky Mountain News*, 13 June, 11 August 1884.

²⁶ Dorsett, *The Queen City*, p. 101.

²⁷ *Denver Times*, 4 March 1901.

²⁸ *Our Lady of Mount Carmel*, p. 16; *Denver Times*, 27 August 1898.

²⁹ Ruth Eloise Wiberg, *Rediscovering Northwest Denver: Its History, Its People, Its Landmarks* (Denver: Northwest Denver Books, 1976), p. 40.

against him by the San Rocco Society saying that it had raised \$1,200 to help build the church and that the priest failed in his contract because he built the church out of wood instead of stone. The society demanded the return of its money. On 22 July 1899 Lepore was condemned by several Italian societies for immorality, failure to be a good priest, and influencing Italians in political elections. They asked Bishop Nicholas Matz for a replacement, but the bishop declined and stood behind the priest.³⁰

By December 1898 a temporary structure was completed while awaiting the building of a new church on the same site as the old one. Italians not in harmony with Father Lepore (San Rocco Society, Bersaglieri Society, Italian-American Independent Political Club) talked of building their own chapel in opposition to the new church. They proclaimed that they would build a new church despite Bishop Matz's disapproval. Opposition groups collected over \$4,000 by October 1899. The chapel was built, and its chief architect and donor was Frank Damascio, one of the wealthiest Italians in the city. The building was completed in 1902 but Bishop Matz refused to bless the San Rocco Chapel, as it was called. Its members considered breaking off from the church altogether and perhaps becoming a part of the Greek Orthodox Church.³¹

Each day the controversial Father Lepore came under heavier fire from those opposed to his practices. He went beyond the realm of his priestly duties and many people simply did not think his life style proper. In March 1901 Paulo Dejuene wished to build a saloon at 3259 Palmer Street, in the heart of "Little Italy." Many in the neighborhood objected saying that too many saloons already existed, that they were too noisy, and that a saloon only a few hundred feet from the parochial school would warp the minds of the young. Father Lepore was in favor of the saloon, however, and he said that it would bring no harm to the children. He also proclaimed that he would assist the Italian community, fight the machine Democrats who were blocking the saloon, and work to remove those in the neighborhood not in favor of the saloon.³² The Denver Police and Fire Board did not grant Dejuene the license. The Byran Italian Club in October 1902 denounced Father Lepore for his active participation in politics and his alleged ability to control the votes of his compatriots. Four hundred Italian families said that they would never submit to Lepore's dictates.³³

November 1903 marked the climax between those supporting and those opposing Father Lepore. Father Lepore, then thirty-five years old, was found in the doorway between the rectory and the sanctuary with



A second Our Lady of Mount Carmel Church was completed in 1904, replacing the one destroyed by fire.

several bullets in his body. A young man, Giuseppe Service, from the same town in Italy as Lepore, was discovered a few feet away, also with bullet wounds. Both men died the next day, and even though Service was the assumed assassin, no murder weapon was ever found and no one was ever convicted of the crime.³⁴

Father Lepore did not live to see the new church completed for it was dedicated on 18 December 1904 by Bishop Matz, with mass celebrated by the new pastor, Father Thomas Moreschini, O.S.M. (Order of Servants of Mary). Father Julius Piccoli, O.S.M., assistant pastor, gave the dedication sermon. San Rocco Chapel was then used for a time by Saint Patrick's Church, when a priest at that Catholic congregation was suspended. Later it became the Mount Carmel Grade School until it was razed in 1955. The structure next to the former school, 3611 Osage Street, has an interesting past, also. Originally it was the home of Frank

³⁰ *Denver Times*, 15 July 1899

³¹ *Ibid.*, 22 June 1899

³² *Ibid.*, 17 March 1901

³³ *Ibid.*, 15 October 1902

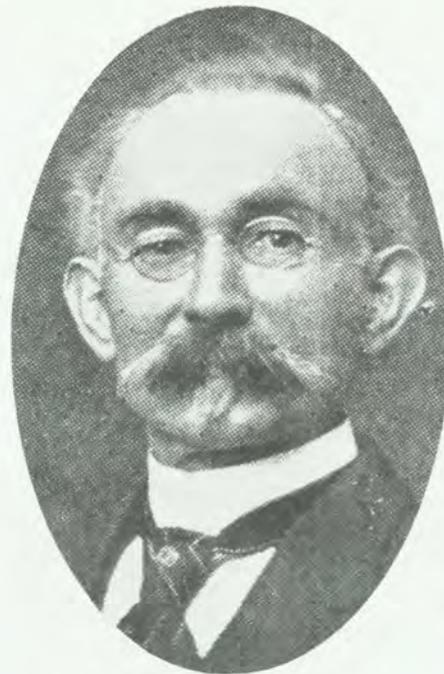
³⁴ Wiberg, *Rediscovering Northwest Denver*, p. 40.

*Mother Frances
Xavier Cabrini
(1850-1917)
directed the
Mount Carmel
Grade School
and founded the
Queen of
Heaven
Orphanage in
Denver.*



Damasco, a wealthy Italian businessman. His daughter, Elisa Damascio Palladino studied nursing and opened a convalescent hospital in her father's home. The house also served the Missionary Sisters of the Sacred Heart as a convent until it was purchased by the Cavarra family around 1943. Cavarra was a photographer in Denver and both he and his wife lived in the house until their deaths.³⁵ Built in 1891, the house has been designated a historic landmark and was restored by its current owners.

Father Lepore did not witness the opening of the new church, but he was responsible for starting the Catholic grade school in that area. Before his death, he wrote to Mother Frances Cabrini, mother general of the Missionary Sisters of the Sacred Heart. In 1903 she founded a motherhouse for her sisters in Denver and was responsible for the direction of the new Mount Carmel Grade School. Amazed at the dire need for such an institution and at the positive response she got from the Italians in the community, Mother Cabrini opened the school in the sisters' convent at Thirty-fourth and Palmer (Navajo Street) avenues. It served orphans, predominantly of Italian descent, but eventually became too small and overcrowded. Property was purchased at 4823 Federal Boulevard, and this site became Queen of Heaven Orphanage, which housed many Italian orphans.³⁶



*Frank Damascio,
an Italian
contractor and
wealthy leader
within his
community, built
the Mining and
Exchange Building
in Denver. His
residence in "Little
Italy" served for a
time as a
convalescent home
and a convent.*

Despite the many obstacles Italians faced, they were not insurmountable. The process was a slow and painful one, but more and more, Denverites were beginning to see Italians as civic leaders, doctors, lawyers, craftsmen, and shopkeepers. Others found opportunities in the building trades, in operating saloons, and in truck gardening. Prosperity prevailed in the 1880s, and some Italians partook in that new found wealth. The Mining Exchange Building, located at Fifteenth and Arapahoe streets, was erected by Frank Damascio, an Italian contractor. Frank Mazza, who arrived in Denver in 1878, started a macaroni factory in 1882, providing both products and employment for Italians in Denver. Some Italians were also part of the political process in the city. The first Italian appointed as a Denver police officer was August Mattei. Prosper Frazzini was elected as a state representative. Frank Mangini was in the state labor commissioner's office, Horace Palladino was chief computer in the City Engineer Department, and Domenico Lepore and Antonio Campiglia were in the assessor's office under Mayor Robert W. Speer. Among medical doctors in the city, those of Italian descent included Giuseppe Cuneo and Rudolfo Albi. Many truck farmed on the rich lands on the banks of the South Platte River and then sold the vegetables that they grew. Their businesses prospered, and today some of the largest produce wholesale businesses (Brarcucci Produce, V. Famularo and

³⁵ Ibid., p. 42; interview with Lorraine DeRose, Denver, Colorado, 15 March 1977.

³⁶ *Our Lady of Mount Carmel*, p. 17; Perilli, *Colorado and the Italians in Colorado*, p. 39.

Sons, Giambrocco Produce) are owned by Italians.³⁷ They all worked hard in the years of initial settlement, not only for individual economic betterment, but so that their families, very often not yet with them but still in Italy, could join them. As their families grew and their children attended school, they became Americanized, but in their tight-knit community tradition still prevailed.

Although a good deal of evidence of upward mobility among Italians exists, most of these immigrants were relatively unassimilated within the growing city. Italians closely identified with and remained tied to the community that they lived in. Part of this was imposed upon them by the prejudices of the dominant society, and part was due to the fact that they felt more comfortable associating with those of their own ethnic group. Few if any Italians were in country clubs or other social groups throughout the city.³⁸ They did, however, take an active part in the dealings of their own community, like Damascio and Mazza, who were involved in almost everything that was going on in "Little Italy." They were in on the Lepore controversy, the Columbus Day mix-up, and members of many Italian organizations.

In the decades that followed the establishment of "Little Italy" uncontrollable events would continue to have an effect upon the neighborhood. Prohibition became a major issue in Colorado in 1916 and doubtless influenced Italian involvement in organized crime.³⁹ The Great Depression left numerous Denver Italians jobless, but many were equipped to grow their own food and communal assistance eased the pangs of hardship. For example, conationals helped Vincenzo Capra excavate a basement for his home in return for meals, which his wife Elizabeth prepared.⁴⁰ World War II brought an end to the depression but created new problems in "Little Italy." Italians were ordered to disconnect short-wave radios and get rid of their firearms for fear that these Northwest Denver residents just might be Fascist. Ironically Vincenzo Capra had to do both these things while one of his sons and six of his nephews were fighting the war in Europe and the Pacific. On Osage Street alone, from West Thirty-fifth to West Thirty-sixth, fourteen young men, all sons of parents born in Italy, were serving in the armed forces. Twenty-five men from the parish, all Italian but one, died bearing arms during World War II. Italians, like other ethnic Americans, had paid a price in demonstrating their patriotism.⁴¹

³⁷ Perilli, *Colorado and the Italians in Colorado*, pp. 34, 38, 45.

³⁸ Leonard, "Denver's Foreign-Born Immigrants, 1859-1900," pp. 192, 193; Wiberg, *Rediscovering Northwest Denver*, p. 46.

³⁹ Wiberg, *Rediscovering Northwest Denver*, p. 46.

⁴⁰ Interview with Elisabeth Capra, Denver, Colorado, 5 March 1977.

⁴¹ Capra interview; DeRose interview; *Denver Post*, 8 July 1971, 11 May 1974; *Denver Rocky Mountain News*, 9 July 1971, 11 May 1974.

More changes came in rapid succession. The postwar years—with greater opportunities for GIs and an unparalleled affluence of the larger middle class that created a suburban explosion—witnessed the disintegration of the Italian community in Denver. As if trying to postpone the





As an ethnic community, much of the flavor of "Little Italy" has vanished. But the compact houses on cramped lots along Lipan, Osage, and other streets near the towering Our Lady of Mount Carmel Church

breakdown of the neighborhood, Mount Carmel Catholic Church opened both a high school and a new grade school in the fifties, but neither institution has survived to the present.⁴²

New institutions for community cohesiveness came too late for Italians of Northwest Denver. Today most of the early buildings still stand, but "Little Italy" is gone. People who were once a part of it have moved up in social status and have relocated in other neighborhoods. A few Italians remain, and it is with them that we have the last remnants of the strongly bonded community that once existed. Each week many descendants return to visit relatives, and in the summer these same people journey to the neighborhood to take part in the feasts and processions.⁴³ In

⁴² DeRose interview; *Our Lady of Mount Carmel*, p. 41; for comparison, see Timothy O'Leary and Sandra Schoenberg, "Ethnicity and Social Class Convergences in an Italian Community: The Hill in St. Louis," *Missouri Historical Society Bulletin* 33 (April 1977):77-86; Daniel F. Doepfers, "The Globeville Neighborhood in Denver," *Geographical Review* 57 (October 1967):506-22.

⁴³ Therese S. Westermeier, "Colorado Festivals: Part II," *The Colorado Magazine* 29 (July 1952):189.



evoke memories of the immigrants who built the neighborhood. Partly in remembrance of its origins, every summer the community comes alive with Italian feasts and religious processions.

"Little Italy" in Denver on any given day, it is still possible to visualize the many summer gardens, to smell the grapes ready to be made into wine, and to see the Italian women converse with each other while their husbands sleep on the porch and their children play in the streets. The history of Italians in the Denver area is a rich one, and their mark on the city is unforgettable.

CHRISTINE ANN DEROSE received the B.A. degree in history from the University of Colorado at Denver. Currently a graduate student in the University of Colorado at Denver, she is interested in women's history.

The Strange Story

BY EVALYN CAPPS WALKER*

Some may ask if this story has been documented. I can only say that it was told by my grandparents, my mother, and my aunt who lived through the ordeal, and what can be more factual than that. Aunt Leon Strange Labrie's version was printed in the *Monitor* many years ago.

The story actually begins in the City of Norwich, Norfolk, England, where, in a little, flint-panneled church in Thorpe Parish, Episcopi—my grandparents, Henry Jabez Strange and Susannah Amelia Hart, were married in the year 1850. The marriage certificate gave Henry Strange's father's occupation as "Cow-keeper," and Susannah Hart's father was listed as a "Sawyer." Henry in 1847 was apprenticed to a tailor, and Susannah was apprenticed to a seamstress—trades that they found useful all of their lives. Grandfather was requested to serve seven years and all of his time belonged to his master. He was not supposed to marry during that time, but, as he did, he must have obtained the consent of "William Larkman, Tailor and Draper, St. George's in the City of Norwich." Mormon missionaries were in England about this time and were converting many people to that faith. We believe this teaching had some effect on the lives of our grandparents.¹

My mother, Amelia Frances, Henry and Susannah's second daughter, was born in Norwich in 1854, Merry Leon having been born in 1852. In 1855 our grandparents with their two little girls set sail for America along with a group of Mormon converts. After a few weeks they arrived in Philadelphia where they stayed nearly three years and where two more girls, Rachel Lavina and Emma Salina, were born.



Susannah Amelia Hart Strange and her husband Henry Jabez Strange were married in England in 1850, sixteen years before these photographs were taken of them in Denver.

We do not know much of their life in Philadelphia, but mother remembered that they lived upstairs in a house near the "Town Pump." Whenever she heard someone at the pump she would take her little cup and run downstairs for a drink of fresh water.

In the spring of 1859 Henry and Susan Strange and their four, small daughters started across the continent to Salt Lake City with a group of other people, possibly Mormons. They did not have a wagon of their own, but grandfather bought space for them with another family. We were told that the man's name was "Boles," but how much of a family he had we do not know. I can imagine that they were crowded into a small area with what few possessions they had and with four, little, restless girls. We do know that they took along a small iron sewing machine,² which they had brought from England. No doubt many unpleasant situations arose, but, with a common purpose, these people traveled their few daily miles and endured the hardships as they came. There were some handcarts³ that could be pushed or pulled by the men and women, too, so those who could ride at least part of the time were fortunate. We do not know whether they went all of the way from Philadelphia with a wagon train or if they

* With the editorial assistance of Dr. Brit Allan Storey, formerly with the Colorado Historical Society and presently with the President's Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, Denver.

¹ It is probable that the Stranges were Mormon converts. Witness later in this account, for instance, emigration to the United States with a Mormon group, the attempted migration to Salt Lake City, and the use of the name "Bee Hive" for the store in Dodge City, Kansas.

² The first practical sewing machine was produced by Isaac M. Singer in 1850, and this would have been a very early model.

³ LeRoy R. Hafen has documented the Mormon handcart migration as involving nearly three thousand migrants between 1856 and 1860. Beginning in 1860 the Mormons provided better transport for their brethren.

joined other wagons on the Mormon trail at some assembly point such as Independence, Missouri. No one ever thought to ask.

Mother and Aunt Leon remembered that one of the oxen used by these two families was called "Broady." He was black and white and had large spreading horns. Another was called "White Head," and there were two others. The little girls would get tired in the wagon and they were glad to run along behind for awhile. This, too, grew tiresome even when they were discovering new flowers along the way and queer beetles and lizards that scurried out of their paths.

The herds of buffalo⁴ were sometimes frightening, and there was always the fear of Indians, though the parents tried to keep from showing their own concern. The girls remembered the circling of the wagons at night. The campfires made the dark more cheerful but also cast eerie shadows so they were glad to stay near the older people.

Fording the streams, which were often deep and swift, made quite an impression on the girls. They wondered what happened to the wheels when they could not see them in the muddy water. One stream they crossed was swollen with flood waters, and some of the wagons were carried down the river. One wagon turned over and the women and the children screamed with terror. This time some friendly Indians rode into the water, righted the wagon, and then guided them across the river. After that they realized that not all Indians were bad.

Mother told the story of a like incident that happened to them while crossing the "Sweet Water" where it was deep and swift.⁵ The wagon the Strange family was sharing was fast being swept into the current, and there was grave danger of sinking or being over-turned. Grandfather Strange took out his knife and began slashing the canvas so the family would not be trapped. The owner shouted angrily to him to stop, saying, "This is my wagon. Don't cut that canvas!" Grandfather replied, "Yes, but these are my wife and children and I'll save them any way I can." Fortunately help came in time to aid the driver across the river, which kept Grandfather from tearing the wagon to pieces. After that, any friendly feelings between the two families began to deteriorate.

Whenever the train stopped by a stream, the women washed clothes, which were then hung on bushes or laid on the bank to dry. I wondered how they endured the long skirts and petticoats dragging in the dirt day after day when there was so little chance to wash. Most of the streams were too cold and too swift for bathing.

One thing in particular the girls remembered was the loving care and concern of their parents, whose patience must often have been sorely tried. When I stand in the ruts of the Oregon Trail, it gives me "goose-flesh" to think that my grandparents and four little girls, one of whom became my mother, were part of one of the wagon trains that helped to carve the trail and that, no doubt, they stopped at Fort Laramie to buy food and supplies at the sutler's store and then went on in spite of danger and hardships.⁶ At Register Cliff we found the name and date "H. Boles 1859," so we know that they passed that way.

One day a quarrel came up between grandfather and some of the men in the train. Grandmother, who was a very good-looking woman and still only twenty-seven, overheard the men plotting to kill grandfather. With him out of the way, one of the other men would take grandmother for his wife. When grandfather heard of the scheme, he was very angry and decided to leave the wagon train. Thus, it was that the Strange family with four, little girls and all their worldly possessions were set out on the prairie. They did not know where they were but felt sure it was near Fort Bridger, Wyoming, possibly within eight or ten miles.⁷

Grandfather started out on foot to find help. For three days and nights grandmother and the little girls stayed in that lonely place in a tent made of sheets. They had nothing to eat but gruel made of flour and water. Wolves howled and the fear of Indians kept them in terror. All night they kept a fire burning with buffalo chips, which the older girls helped to gather. They could see the eyes of animals reflected in the firelight which, as they did not know what they were or if they might attack, added to their misery. Finally, to their great relief, some soldiers found them and took them to Fort Bridger.

Aunt Leon wrote that "the third night Mother awakened me, saying, 'Children get up. I hear a noise and for God's sake stay close to me.' The soldiers had heard of a woman and children on the road alone and so they came with a wagon and took us to the Fort. There they gave us food, and as we had had nothing to eat but gruel for three days and nights, we were all pretty hungry." Grandmother always

⁶ Fort Laramie, in eastern Wyoming near the junction of the Laramie and the North Platte rivers, was established at its present location in 1862, after moving from a nearby spot. The fort was established in 1834 as a fur trade post and was acquired in 1849 by the government as a military post for protection of the Oregon Trail. In 1862 the fort was relocated a short distance. The post, abandoned in 1890, served as a key military point in various Indian campaigns and in the protection of the Oregon Trail.

⁷ Fort Bridger is in the southwest corner of Wyoming on the Black's Fork of the Green River. James Bridger and Louis Vasquez abandoned a nearby trading post, which they had established in 1842, and from 1843 to 1855 used this as a seasonal trading and trapping center. Fort Bridger was the first western trading post built to capitalize on emigrants. In 1855 the Mormon Church purchased the property and operated it until 1857 when it was burned in the face of Colonel Albert Sidney Johnston's advancing federal troops. From its occupation by Johnston's troops during the Mormon War of 1857-58, the post was used by the army until 1890. Its major role was as a small post to assure control of the Indians.

⁴ Buffalo, Indians, prairie dogs, and rattlesnakes were among the most commented upon phenomena along the western trails at this time. The major slaughter of buffalo for their hides had not yet begun, and the massive herds would have been very impressive to young children.

⁵ The Sweetwater River, just east of South Pass in Wyoming, was paralleled by the Oregon Trail.

thought someone from the wagon train had risked his life to report the stranded family. At that time Mormon trains were not welcome at Fort Bridger as they had quarreled with the government, abandoned the fort, and set fire to the buildings. For lodging at the fort, grandmother was given a room made from the sides of a freight wagon covered with canvas. Buffalo robes kept the dirt floor warm and comfortable.

Nothing had been heard from grandfather, and it was feared that he had been killed by the Indians or lost in the spring storms that swept the prairies. One snowy day grandmother and the girls were overjoyed to see grandfather making his way to the fort. Aunt Leon remembered the excitement of that meeting. She wrote that "Mother was watching so saw him coming and ran down the road. When they met, oh their joy, for each thought the other was gone. Mother led him to our room and showed him the food that had been given to us. He was speechless with joy and the tears rolled down his cheeks. I can see it yet!" Grandfather was nearly starved as well as frozen, and the children wondered why their parents cried when their father was safe with them once more.

Mother remembered that a large, hard lump came on her wrist while they were at the fort.⁸ One of the officers pounded a lead bullet until it was thin and flat and then bound it on her wrist. In a short time the lump disappeared. They stayed at the fort all winter, paying their way by plying their trades of tailor and seamstress. Grandfather made use of the iron sewing machine by making buckskin garments, gloves, and even shoes for the soldiers. Grandmother sewed and mended for the officer's wives.

In the spring of 1860 the Strange family left Fort Bridger and, with an escort of soldiers, went back across the plains to Saint Joseph, Missouri. A son, Edward, was born there in March 1861. Grandfather sold supplies to the soldiers at Saint Joseph from an outfitted wagon—grandmother kept extra supplies hidden underneath the floor. As might be expected in an army camp, there were many frightening sights and sounds and many interesting things as well. The girls remembered seeing the soldiers training and parading and also the deep mud through which they often had to walk. One of the songs the girls heard and remembered was a political one. It went something like this: "Abe Lincoln is a good man, Jeff Davis is a fool. Abe Lincoln rides a fine horse, Jeff Davis rides a mule."

In 1863, driving their own wagon pulled by oxen named Brock and Bright, the Strange family again crossed the plains, this time arriving in Denver.⁹ This was a more pleasant trip, and they sang all of the

⁸ The hard lump on her wrist was perhaps a ganglion tumor.

⁹ Denver in 1863 had a population of about forty-five hundred, and after the "Great Fire" of 19 April 1863,



Crossing the plains in ox-drawn wagons was hazardous.

songs that they knew and made-up tunes for every poem that they could remember. Grandfather often called on little Amelia to use her bright eyes to watch for antelope, buffalo, and even Indians. Each little girl had her own sewing basket with one needle, a little thimble, and some thread. Grandfather admonished them to be very careful and not to lose their needles as they were all that they had and could not be replaced. The older girls took care of their own clothes and helped with the mending, habits that stayed with them all of their lives.

There were several things that happened in Denver that made an impression on the family. One was the birth of another son, George, at the time of the Cherry Creek flood in May 1864.¹⁰ Some men put grandmother, the baby, and little Edward in a wagon bed and pulled them to safety. Grandfather carried Rachel and Emma and the older girls clung to his coat. They saw houses and animals, including deer, being carried down the stream. It was several days before they could return home, where they found a small kitten swimming around in the cellar full of water. They rescued the kitten and were grieved when their efforts failed to keep it alive. President Abraham Lincoln was assassinated,¹¹ and a coffin containing his effigy laid in state in the People's Theater.¹² Mother was sure it was Mr. Lincoln himself. All of the men wore black arm bands for days to show their respect and sorrow.

it had become architecturally more substantial as brick buildings replaced frame ones.

¹⁰ On 20 May 1864, after several days of rain, Cherry Creek turned into a vicious torrent that carried away substantial amounts of property and caused the death of several people. This event caught the town by surprise because Cherry Creek seldom had more than a trickle.

¹¹ The assassination at Ford's Theater, Washington, D.C. — occurred on the evening of 14 April 1865, and President Lincoln died the next day.

¹² The People's Theater was located on Larimer Street between E and F streets (since 1873 known respectively as Fourteenth and Fifteenth streets).

Another event that the girls wished they could forget was the time two men were hanged for some offense.¹³ Leon and Amelia slipped away from home to see it, but they never wanted to witness another lynching. Besides the fright they suffered, Aunt Leon was locked in her room on a diet of bread and water. Mother, being younger, got off with a severe scolding and the memory of men hanging from a scaffold was punishment enough. The girls were not supposed to look when the "girls in yellow" paraded by. Once mother dared to glance up, and one of the girls gave her such a sweet smile that it always remained a treasured memory.

Amelia was about twelve when she stayed with Mr. and Mrs. Henry Rogers to be a companion to their little girl, Kitty. Mr. Rogers was connected with the First National Bank, organized in 1865.¹⁴ The family treated her with kindness, and she always remembered them fondly.

One time the family ferried across the South Platte River to eat dinner with friends.¹⁵ The girls especially remembered the rice pudding with raisins, which was quite a treat. They also remembered having their pictures taken at the Chamberlain Gallery¹⁶ and buying shoes at William Barth's store.¹⁷

Grandfather again had a "store" wagon and was away from home trading with the settlers when he was not working in partnership with "Buckskin Jimmy."¹⁸ They had a shop where they made fringed leather garments, gloves, and "gold sacks" to sell to the prospectors. Grandfather had a gold claim near Idaho Springs but only found enough to make two gold rings, one of which he gave to grandmother and the other to Amelia, my mother. At one time he traded a yoke of oxen for land where the Civic Center is located and ran sheep where



Amelia Frances and Merry Leon, ages twelve and fourteen, posed for this 1866 portrait at Chamberlain's Photographic Gallery (above), which was located at the corner of Larimer and F (now Fifteenth) streets in Denver.

¹³ This lynching cannot be documented.

¹⁴ Henry J. Rogers was a native of New York who came to Colorado in 1859. In 1860 he ran a successful livery and livestock business. From 1861 to 1863 he and P.P. Wilcox issued fractional paper currency in Denver. He was an organizer and first vice-president of the First National Bank of Denver from 1865 to 1868, and from 1867 to 1868 he served concurrently as the treasurer of Denver. He later became a banker in Wyoming and a midwestern businessman. For additional information, see Robert S. Pulcifer "We Propose to Make This One of the Permanent Institutions of Colorado": A Thesis and History of the First National Bank of Denver. Its Officers and Directors, 1858 to 1915 (Denver: First National Bank of Denver, c. 1971).

¹⁵ This ferry trip may have been on Thomas Warren's ferry that began to operate in 1859 at the foot of Ferry Street (now known as Eleventh Street).

¹⁶ W.B. Chamberlain in 1866 had his photographic studio at the corner of Larimer and F (now Fifteenth) streets.

¹⁷ William Barth's boot and shoe store in 1866 was located between Blake and Holladay (now Market) streets on F (now Fifteenth) Street.

¹⁸ James Thomas was known as Buckskin Jimmy, however the 1866 edition of J.E. Wharton's *History of the City of Denver from Its Earliest Settlement to the Present Time, to Which Is Added a Full and Complete Business Directory of the City by D.O. Wilhelm* (Denver: Byers & Dailey, 1866) does not list Strange under either "Merchant Tailors" or "Glovers and Fur Dealers." Page 168 of that directory does list H. Strange, Restaurant, Blake, between E (now Fourteenth Street) and F (Fifteenth Street). On page 112 the International Restaurant is listed at this location.

the Capitol now stands. Evidently he was never given a deed to any property as none was ever recorded.

There was one brick building in Denver belonging to Major Fillmore,¹⁹ and it was located in the center of town. Whenever Indians were nearby or on the "warpath," all of the women and children were hurried to that building. One time, about midnight, a man knocked at the Strange door and shouted that the Indians were coming and to get to the brick house as quickly as possible. Grandfather was away at the time so the man picked up little Emma, which frightened Aunt Leon so she hung on to his coat until he dropped the little girl. Grandmother quieted the children and they all ran to the "brick" in time. Mother remembered the anxious looks on the faces of the women and the fear that was felt by all. A song they often sang was, "Betty be nimble. Betty be quick. Grab your children and run for the brick."²⁰

We have a letter written by our Great-Grandmother Hart in England to her daughter, "Susan" Strange, in Denver, Colorado Territory, 1863. She told how grieved they were to be so far away from their daughter and her family. She wrote, "I think Fathers and Mothers are thought very little of now." Times really have not changed very much, as parents often think the same thing today.

While still in Denver the Strange family was joined by Claudius Victor Spencer Hart, Susannah's youngest brother, who came from Lowestoft, England, to Saint Joseph, Missouri. Finding the family gone and lacking the necessary funds to travel by stage, an obliging freighter agreed to convey him to Denver as a parcel of merchandise at a nominal charge. Claudius herded sheep for grandfather and later came to Huerfano County with the family. He later bought a ranch on the Apishapa River east of Aguilar and made his home there with his wife, Annie Veetch, and children, Thomas, Corinne, Claude, and Henry.

Grandfather took Leon and Amelia to see the first furrows plowed for the railroad into Denver in 1868. Mother said she thought one of the plow handles was held by Annette Clark, niece of Major Fillmore, but she was not sure.²¹

The Strange family decided civilization was getting too close so they moved to Huerfano County in the southern part of the territory in 1868. This time they had three wagons drawn by horses. They went

first to Butte Valley Station on the Huerfano River where grandfather had one room of their house for a store. He also had a wagon equipped with supplies for the settlers. We have letters addressed to "Miss Amelia Strange, Butte Valley, Huerfano County, Colorado Territory." Some of them are decorated with pen and ink drawings of birds, feathers, and flowers. In 1867-68 the Butte Valley Stage station was operated by Antoine Labrie, a French Canadian who had come to Colorado in 1857. Labrie was later to become a member of the Strange family.²²

In 1870 grandfather bought some land on Apache Creek and moved his family there.²³ They had some milk cows that the girls helped to milk, and butter was taken to Pueblo in tubs lined with leaves and wet cloths. The trip took two days and whoever drove the wagon usually camped one night on the Saint Charles near the present-day crossing.

There were a good many Indians around, but they never seemed to bother the Strange family. One time Ouray and his band of about four hundred braves camped near the home on Apache Creek. During their stay they drank the well dry. Grandfather was away at the time, but the Indians did not cause any trouble. However, grandmother did not take any chances. She kept the door bolted and sat close by with an ax on her lap. She did not need the ax then but found a use for it later. There was a fireplace in the house that smoked and grandfather kept promising to fix it sometime. He came home one day to find grandmother putting the finishing touches to a heap of stones and dirt on the floor, which was the remains of the fireplace. She had used the ax to get grandfather's attention, and after that he was quick to meet her requests.

Another time when grandfather was away the family was alarmed by a queer, moaning sound that they thought must surely be Indians signaling to one another. Grandmother, again armed with an ax, sat by the door all night. In the morning they got up enough courage to investigate and found the noise was made by the wind blowing in an empty jug that hung on the corner of the house.

Mother taught school for a few months at Butte Valley, riding horseback the ten miles from her home on the Apache. She often laughed and said some of the pupils knew more than she did.²⁴ Several different times Amelia, Rachel, Emma, and the two boys, Edward and George, stayed in Pueblo and attended school there. At one time they

¹⁹ Major John S. Fillmore was a native of New York State who was stationed as paymaster in the army at headquarters, District of Colorado. He died on 25 December 1864. After the "Great Fire" on 19 April 1863, the reconstruction of the city was carried out largely in brick.

²⁰ The great fear of Indian attack in Denver during and immediately after the Civil War was based more on imagined than on real threats, but that fear was fueled by sporadic conflict outside the city.

²¹ The first furrows were plowed on 17 May 1868 for the Denver Pacific Railway. According to the *Denver Rocky Mountain News* Miss Nettie Clark was on one handle of the plow, and Mrs. F. J. Stanton was on the other.

²² Antoine Labrie was one of the employees of William Bent when Bent's Old Fort, on the Arkansas River, was a prominent trading post in the Southwest. He married Miss Leon Strange (newspaper clipping, c. 1916, possession of author).

²³ Apache Creek is a few miles south of present-day Colorado City.

²⁴ At this time Amelia Strange was seventeen or eighteen.

stayed with the Bigneys who had lived in Walsenburg where Major T.O. Bigney had been editor of the *Huerfano Independent*.²⁵ At another time Lucinda Bigney Kammerling stayed at the Strange home on the Apache as governess for the young people.

In the spring of 1876 they were attending school in Pueblo and on 15 March Rachel Strange and Isaac Henry Lewis were married at Saint Peters Episcopal Church, where Rachel, Amelia, Emma, Edward, and George had been confirmed. Amelia was Rachel's bridesmaid. The young couple lived for a short time at Cucharas, a small station east of Walsenburg. Later they moved to La Veta where they owned a meat market.²⁶

My father, Samuel John Capps, was born in Lowestoft in Suffolk, England, which was not very far from Norwich, and possibly the two families had been acquainted.²⁷ His father, my Grandfather Capps, owned several fishing boats or "Drifters" as they were called, and when Samuel was eleven-years-old he went to sea as his father's "cabin boy." He followed the sea, being apprenticed to two other boats, until 1862 when, at the age of eighteen, he came to America. He sailed on the Great Lakes to Chicago until August 1863 at which time he joined the Union navy.²⁸ He was sent to the recruiting ship at Cairo, Illinois, and from there to the gunboat *Forest Rose* number 9, where he served until the close of the Civil War under the command of Admiral Porter.²⁹ After his discharge he worked on the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad for awhile, and then, when he decided to come West, he worked for the Union Pacific to Julesburg.³⁰ He guarded the horses and mules for the work teams and also freighted between Fort Laramie and Julesburg.³¹

He told us of many skirmishes with the Indians and how he never slept at night without his rifle by his side and a revolver on his

²⁵ The *Huerfano Independent* was a four-page, 22x32 inch, weekly that was published on Saturday between 11 December 1875 and September 1876. In 1871 Bigney had been the editor and publisher of the *Rocky Mountain Directory and Colorado Gazetteer for 1871: Comprising a Brief History of Colorado, and a Condensed but Comprehensive Account of Her Mining, Agricultural, Commercial and Manufacturing Interests, Climatology, Inhabitants, Advantages and Industries, Together with a Complete and Accurate Directory of Denver, Golden City, Black Hawk, Central City, Nevada, Idaho, Georgetown, Boulder, Greeley, Colorado City, Pueblo, Trinidad, Etc.* (Denver: S.S. Wallihan & Company, 1870).

²⁶ Henry Lewis came to Denver in 1863 from Antioch, Pennsylvania. He was in Central City at the time of President Lincoln's assassination. In 1936 Henry and Rachel Lewis celebrated their sixtieth wedding anniversary at their home in Canon City. Amelia Capps was present for the celebration.

²⁷ He was born in 1844.

²⁸ In 1860 all of the Great Lakes were served by some 1,459 ships of which 335 were steam-driven. In 1862 the first commercial iron ship was launched at Buffalo. For further information see Milo M. Quaife's *Lake Michigan* (New York: Bobbs-Merrill Co., 1944).

²⁹ Capps enlisted in the navy and served as a gunner in the Mississippi and Red River campaigns. He was twice cited for bravery, and he was commander of the Grand Army of the Republic in the Department of Colorado and Wyoming in 1923. The G.A.R. was a powerful veterans' organization.

³⁰ The Union Pacific reached Julesburg, Colorado Territory, on 24 June 1867, and as a construction railroad it became a minor metropolis, which was replaced by Cheyenne in November 1867.

³¹ Fort Laramie, northwest of Julesburg, should not be confused with present-day Laramie, Wyoming.

pillow.³² His pillow was usually his sea bag of sailor's clothing that he carried for years because he always expected to return to the sea.

On one freighting trip he was accompanied by a half-breed Indian who was to help guard the cargo. About midway on the return trip my father suddenly felt the pressure of a gun barrel between his shoulder blades. Without turning his head or giving sign of fear he drove on to his destination. When he felt the pressure of the gun relaxed he turned to the half-breed and asked why he had not pulled the trigger. The fellow replied, "I just wanted to see if the little Johnny Bull would be frightened."

Another time he had a bunch of horses out grazing. It was getting dusk, but he could see what looked like the tail feathers of a bird on the brow of a hill silhouetted against the sky. He kept watching it and became suspicious when it did not move. Creeping up closer he surprised an Indian who was waiting to kill him and take the horses.

He worked from Grand Island, Nebraska, to Julesburg, Colorado, and on to Green River, Wyoming, and in April 1870 he left his work along the Union Pacific at Sherman, Wyoming, and set out for Denver.³³ Driving a six-mule team with a "jerk line," he arrived there on 5 May. From there he went down to Riverbend, Kansas, on the Smoky Hill Route of the Kansas Pacific Railway and worked that summer doing construction and night-herding the work teams. Here again he had several sharp fights with the Indians, just saving his horses by the "skin of his teeth"—in his words.

After the completion of the Kansas Pacific into Denver,³⁴ he punched cows for Reef and Rhodes Cattle Company,³⁵ living on Cherry Creek south of Denver. This company was supplying beef for the workers on the Denver and Rio Grande between Denver and Pueblo.³⁶

In November 1872 Samuel John Capps came to Huerfano County, Colorado Territory. He told how he stopped at Butte Valley on the Huerfano and met people there who were to become his life-long friends. He bought supplies in Plaza de los Leones³⁷ and then drove on

³² In the fall and winter of 1866 the Indian problem along the Union Pacific route began to worsen. By spring of 1867 the Sioux and the Cheyenne were stepping up their depredations, and lives were lost as harassment increased. Hundreds of animals were driven off. The 2d Cavalry and the 21st, 30th, and 36th regiments of infantry were used to protect the construction work.

³³ The Union Pacific and the Central Pacific railroads had completed construction of their transcontinental railroad system on 10 May 1869, when they joined their tracks at Promontory Point, Utah.

³⁴ The last rails of the Kansas Pacific railroad line into Denver were laid on 15 August 1870.

³⁵ Joseph S. Reef died in 1922 at age seventy-five in Berkeley, California. Originally coming from Illinois, he served in the Civil War, herded cattle in Kansas, and obtained contracts to supply cattle to the construction crews of both the Kansas Pacific Railway and the Denver and Rio Grande Railway. Beginning in 1879, he lived in Leadville where he founded the Carbonate National Bank.

³⁶ The Denver and Rio Grande Railway was completed into Pueblo from Denver on 15 June 1872.

³⁷ Plaza de los Leones was an early name of present-day Walsenburg.

to the Santa Clara.³⁸ He later filed on a homestead on that creek, which was to become part of the Capps Ranch,³⁹ still operated by his grandson, and it is one of the outstanding ranches in southern Colorado.

In 1873 he worked for Frank Duhme,⁴⁰ a rich easterner who had a ranch on the Santa Clara where he raised cattle, Merino sheep, and fine horses from Kentucky. The Duhme Ranch included the beautiful mountain meadow still called the "Duhme Meadow" and nearby was the race track where Samuel Capps trained the race horses. Later he was foreman for Fred Walsen⁴¹ and ran cattle for him on shares. At that time he also began taking part in civic affairs being chosen to serve as justice of the peace and soon as a member of the local school board. Both of these offices he held for many years.

In 1875 he joined the Masonic Lodge, Huerfano No. 27 A.F.&A.M., which meant a horseback ride of nearly twenty miles each way to attend meetings. When he rode into Walsenburg he went to the stable where he could feed and leave his horse for the night. Then he went to Mr. Levy's store, where he helped himself to crackers from the barrel and cut a wedge of cheese from the big wheel on the counter.⁴² After the meeting he went back to the store, rolled himself in a blanket from the shelf, and spent the rest of the night on the counter, leaving before daybreak for the ranch.⁴³

It seems strange indeed that a boy brought up on the sea could come to a new country, fight in that country's war, work on pioneer railroads, fight Indians, punch cows, train race horses, homestead, hold public office, and take an interest in public affairs—all of which were totally different from his early training. Merry Leon Strange and Antoine Labrie had been married in Trinidad in 1869 and at this time were living on their ranch near Pryor on the Santa Clara River.⁴⁴ It

³⁸ Santa Clara Creek is just east of the Spanish Peaks.

³⁹ As early as 1897 Capps formed a partnership with his two sons known as "S.J. Capps and Sons, Breeders of Hereford Cattle, Rouse, Colorado." At his death in 1923 Capps was the president of the Santa Clara Land and Cattle Company, and the ranch he and his sons built up was one of the largest in the state.

⁴⁰ Frank Duhme was born in Cincinnati in 1854, and when he moved to Huerfano County in 1873 he brought thoroughbred trotting horses to his ranch.

⁴¹ Fred Walsen was born in Westphalia, Germany, in 1839. He migrated to the United States via New Orleans and moved up the Mississippi River to Saint Louis. He served in the First Missouri Volunteer Cavalry during the Civil War, and after the war he became an early settler in Saguache County in the San Luis Valley. He moved to the Walsenburg area in 1870, and soon thereafter he was instrumental in founding the town. He eventually became an active railroad contractor for the Denver and Rio Grande Railway, the Mexican Central Railway, the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe, and others. He was also associated with Otto Mears and was vice-president of the Denver Packing Company. In 1882 he was elected treasurer of the State of Colorado. At his death in 1906 he was a resident of Denver.

⁴² A. Levy was, for a time prior to early 1879, in partnership with Fred Walsen in a store in Walsenburg.

⁴³ At Pueblo in 1920, Samuel John Capps was elected president of the Charter Class, Southern Colorado Consistory, Scottish Rite, then the largest class of its kind in the world. He was also a member of the Al Kaly Shrine Club.

⁴⁴ Pryor is about twelve miles east of the Spanish Peaks (south and slightly east of Walsenburg) and was a coal mining community.



Merry Leon Strange married Antoine Labrie in Trinidad in 1869. They owned a ranch on the Santa Clara River, where Amelia Strange met Samuel John Capps.

was there that Amelia Strange and Samuel John Capps met for the first time. This in itself was a strange coincidence as they had both crossed the ocean and were far away from their native country.

On Christmas Day 1876 this friendship culminated in marriage and the Walsenburg paper carried this announcement: "Married: Capps—Strange on Christmas Day at the residence of the bride's father on



Amelia Frances Strange (1876)



Samuel John Capps (1876)

Apache Creek, by B.M. Whitman, Esq., Justice of the Peace, Mr. Samuel J. Capps and Miss Amelia Strange. We cheerfully congratulate the newly married couple. May their pathway through life be one of unalloyed happiness."

In the year 1880 Henry J. Strange and his family moved to a small settlement on the Apishapa River. According to a newspaper clipping the plaza was a cluster of adobe buildings about the Catholic church, the store, and the schoolhouse. When Grandfather Strange owned it, it was known as the "Strange Post Office."⁴⁵ He had a store there and was also in the lumber business with his brother-in-law Claudius Hart and a friend Firmer Spencer.

In about 1884, the Strange family moved back to Walsenburg where grandfather built the first, two-story, stone building to be erected in that community. There was a little, frame house next door in which the family lived. Both buildings are still in use today.

A quiet street in Walsenburg in the early 1900s.



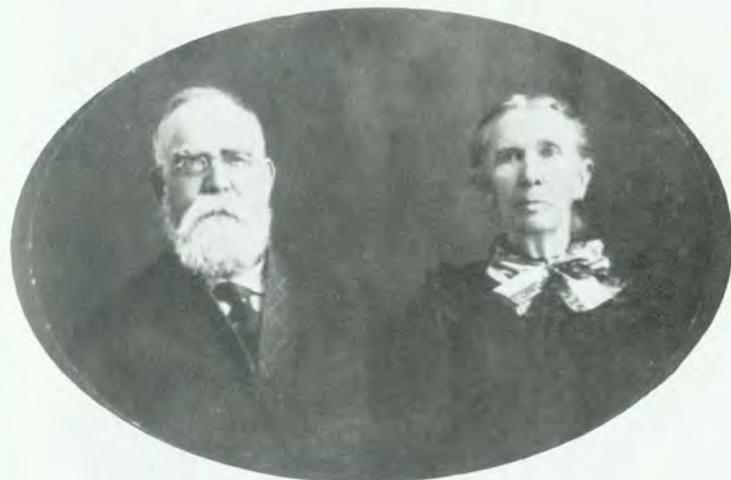
After savoring "many" bottles of wine, representative men of Walsenburg do their "glassy-eyed" best for the photographer. Seated left to right are: Alec Campbell, Charlie Mazzone, Isaac Dailey, Henry Strange, Frank Duhme, John Brown, and August Sporleder. Standing left to right are Captain Thompson, John Chappel, Johnny Albert, Fred Walsen (founder of the town), and Truman Creeseey.

⁴⁵ Now known as Aguilar. In 1882 and 1883 there was a post office at "Strange Post Office." In 1884 there was no post office and the population was about twenty-five.

The final move of the Strange family was in 1886 when grandfather went to Dodge City, Kansas, and established a dry goods store in partnership with J.J. Summersby. Grandmother stayed in Walsenburg to settle the business there and later she, their daughter Emma, and the two boys Edward and George joined grandfather in Dodge. They called the store The Bee Hive and that symbol was used later on a letterhead. It was very similar to a replica of a bee hive that stood on a small platform near the store and that fascinated all of us when we visited there.



Visiting at the H.J. Strange house in Dodge City, Kansas, in 1896 were the Strange, Capps, and Labrie families. Strange entered into a partnership in a Dodge City dry goods store, which had a bee hive replica on the front platform.



Henry and Susannah Strange

In 1902 grandfather bought Mr. Summersby's interest in the store and George T. Martin took Summersby's place. This partnership lasted four years, when failing eyesight caused grandfather to sell the business and lease the Bee Hive to Mr. Martin in 1906.

Grandfather Strange died in Denver at the home of Antoine Labrie in 1908 and grandmother died in Dodge City in 1912. They are buried in the Masonic Cemetery in Walsenburg, Colorado, their final resting place, ending a long adventurous life of wandering to and fro in a new and strange country. They left an exemplary record of courage and integrity for us who follow after them.

A native Coloradoan, EVALYN CAPPS WALKER attended high school at La Veta and Walsenburg. Following her graduation from the State Teachers' College in Greeley, she taught and served as principal at the schools in Rouse and Walsen and the Ritter School near La Veta. The recipient of a Colorado honorary life teaching certificate in 1930, Walker has served for twenty-seven years on the school board of La Veta Public Schools. She is active in numerous organizations and is a member of the Colorado Historical Society.

