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THE COLORADO MAGAZINE

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The Owl Club / Market Street Madams / Coors at 150

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REMEMBERING JOHN FIELDER

John Fielder, Colorado's photographer, passed away on August 11, 2023. Just a few weeks earlier, we were celebrating with John at the opening of his History Colorado Center exhibition *Revealed: John Fielder's Favorite Place*. We didn't know if he would be well enough to attend, but he rallied to be there. As usual, his energy was electric—buzzing from the excitement of hundreds of his cheerleaders and strengthened by his zeal for protecting Colorado's wild places.

I've been a fan of John's work for decades, but I didn't really know him until last November when he made the enormous offer to donate his photos and belongings to History Colorado. He wanted us to be the caretakers of his life's work so that he could share it with the world and so our collective descendants would be able to witness Colorado as he saw it. We, of course, enthusiastically said yes to his gift, and the next day he overnighted us a hard drive with thousands of his photos.

When we first met, he confidentially shared that he was sick. Knowing his time was uncertain and possibly short, we quickly mobilized to process his thousands of photographs to make them publicly accessible from our web site and to plan a summer exhibition. Time was fleeting. I wanted to ensure that John could experience as much joy as possible from the impact of his generous gift while he was still with us. And, we hoped he could feel the support of Coloradans as he attempted his "one-hundred-and-first self-rescue," which is how he described his battle with cancer.

The July night of his exhibition opening at History Colorado Center had a magic to it. He could see in the hundreds of faces how much he meant to people. His message of environmental stewardship reverberated in people's hearts. And, there were several times I looked over to see how he was doing, and he mouthed back the words "thank you."

Thank *you*, John. We are lucky that you made Colorado your home, that you had the courage to quit your day job and devote your life to photography and the outdoors, that you have accomplished so much to protect our magnificent home, and that we get to gaze at the beauty of Colorado through the lens of your camera for generations upon generations.

Dawn DiPrince
President/CEO

We acknowledge that the land currently known as Colorado has been the traditional homelands of Indigenous peoples since time immemorial. We are grateful to work in partnership with the forty-eight sovereign nations who continue to call this land home. Together, we plan exhibits; collect, preserve, and interpret artifacts; do archaeological work; and create educational programs to share the history of Colorado.

THE COLORADO MAGAZINE

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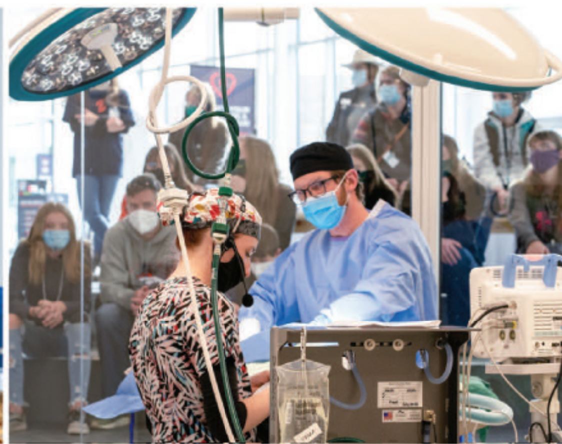

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Above John Fielder captured this sunrise on Storm King Peak in the Grenadier Range on an eventful trip through the Weminuche Wilderness in the early 2000s. *History Colorado. 2023.1.6853*

On The Cover Jagged Mountain, Jagged Basin, Needle Mountains, Weminuche Wilderness. *History Colorado. 2023.1.1759*

THE FORUM

WE LOVE HEARING FROM YOU. Drop us a line at publications@state.co.us

Displaced Aurarians

Thousands of politically disenfranchised Denverites, many from families with Latino heritage, were removed from their homes to make way for what is today the Auraria campus site. History Colorado recently completed a memory project with members of that community who were forcibly displaced.

The Auraria Higher Education Center was not created by greedy developers but overseen by a volunteer board with the intention of providing an education center in the heart of downtown. What a huge success and benefit to the community, economy, and each student who attends, as well as employees who work there. Of course, it is regrettable that people had to be displaced, and their stories should be told! Often in life, there are tradeoffs, and both sides of the story should be told.
—Ellen Fisher, via email

History Colorado replies: *Thank you for sharing this perspective. The displacement of these people is a story that hasn't been widely shared, and many from this community still bear the historical trauma that came from being forced from their homes. History Colorado is committed to sharing the stories of all Coloradans.*

Three Cheers for the *Weekly Digest*

Kudos to you for the *Weekly Digest*. We as Coloradoans need to be more aware of our history. You do a fine job of highlighting important aspects (and for providing the links to the full articles or source of information).
—Glenda Prosser, via email

We so enjoy your *Weekly Digest* even though we live in New Mexico. It is fun to read, and thank you for making history come alive. We look forward to each entry!
—Mary Kay Sein, via email

History Colorado replies: *Thank you for your kind words! Sign up to get a historical take on Colorado news delivered to your inbox every Tuesday at historycolorado.org/stay-in-touch*

Pancratia Hall Renovation

Pancratia Hall, which is listed in the National Register of Historic Places, formerly housed classrooms and dormitory buildings on the Loretto Heights campus in Denver. Using state and federal tax credits, it was recently transformed into seventy-four units of affordable housing for families.

This is awesome on so many levels! Bravo to those who imagined the historic space as much-needed affordable housing and to the many who made it happen.
—Cyndi Webster, via Instagram

About "Mesa Verde of the Mysteries"

History Colorado's podcast series Lost Highways: Dispatches from the Shadows of the Rocky Mountains *shares stories from Colorado history that you can't believe you've never heard. Our most recent episode explored the history of Mesa Verde. You can subscribe at historycolorado.org/losthighways or in any podcatcher app.*

I love *Lost Highways!* Y'all share such incredible stories and they have inspired my own curiosity about this beautiful state.
—Shelby.sku, via Instagram

As someone who works with the park and with Tribal communities, we don't use the terms mystery or abandoned. Not good messaging!
—scarlettengle, via Instagram

History Colorado replies: *Thanks for drawing our attention to questions of terminology. The episode tackles some of the problematic assumptions historians and archaeologists have made about Mesa Verde and discusses why these terms might not be the best way to describe the site or its peoples. And, as it points out, we are not immune from falling into some of the same pitfalls that archaeologists and historians in previous generations struggled with.*

A Correction

I want to draw your attention to a significant error in the essay "Sanctuary, Refuge and Shelter" by Eric Newcombe, published in the Winter/Spring edition of *The Colorado Magazine*. In the first sentence of the article, the church in question is referred to as First American Methodist Episcopal church. This is incorrect. AME stands for African Methodist Episcopal, which is the oldest independent Protestant denomination in the US founded by Black people. Developed in the late eighteenth century by freed and enslaved African Americans, the AME denomination has a powerful abolitionist and social justice history. First AME Church in Pueblo Colorado is part of this tradition.
—Rachel Harding, via email

History Colorado replies: *Thank you for bringing this regrettable error to our attention. We apologize for the mistake and have also corrected the online version of the article.*

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SEE 3D

WHO'S HOO?

The Owl Club's debutante debuts set the stage for many prestigious African Americans in the Mile High City

BY TYLER ALLEN

"You guys are nothin' but a bunch of night owls." For eight hardworking railroad pullman, waiters, and businessmen, 2538 Marion Street, was the perfect home for late-night weekend functions. At times, young Charles "CT" Smith would sneak down to the basement, and watch his father play cards and spread laughter and fellowship with friends. Little did he know that this group of gentlemen was in the process of changing African American history and culture in the heart of Denver forever.

In 1941, Ferris Cassius Sr., Dillard Collins, Howard Denton, James R. Gross, C. Columbus Johnson, Ralph D. Mason, Dee Smith, and Carl Terrell had been spending most of their Saturday nights together. But one night, the group set their cards aside to start thinking about how to create a social club. As the idea evolved, these founders determined that their club's main mission would be to recognize the academic excellence of young African American women of Denver's Five Points, Whittier, and Park Hill neighborhoods. They were all a bunch of night owls, so the group decided that The Owl Club would be the only appropriate name. Since receiving its state charter on March 24, 1949 as a nonprofit organization, The Owl Club has presented approximately 1,600 (and counting) young African American women as Debutantes of Denver.

Skip Riley (Left) and Charles "CT" Smith (right) smile brightly for the cameras while attending the 56th annual Owl Club of Denver Debutante Ball, hosted at Marriott City Center. *Denver Public Library,* Rocky Mountain News *Photograph Collection. RMN-038-5835*

The first presentation and debutante ball took place in 1951, debuting ten young women from East and Manual High School. The following year, Owlette Ernestine Smith, wife of Owl George W. Smith Jr., choreographed the Owl Club's signature dance, "Waltz of the Bells," one of the many traditions of the cotillion. In 1960, the founding members took the money they collected (some from all of those card-playing nights) and purchased the current Owl Club House located at 2815 Madison Street.

DEBUTANTE DENVER

Class, elegance, grace, poise, and beauty define debutante and cotillion culture. In European and Western culture, the presentation and ball, otherwise known as the cotillion, represents the social debut of young women who were eligible for marriage and their introduction to high society. Debutante culture came to the United States early in the nation's history, with the first African American debutante announcement appearing in New York newspapers in 1778. Known at the time

as the Ethiopian Ball, the wives of free Black men serving in the Royal Ethiopian Regiment mingled with the wives of other British officers, representing one of the few avenues of interracial social interaction available at the time.

Debutante clubs maintained their importance throughout American history, and in African American communities, they became spaces created to defy stereotypes placed on Black people and their culture. African American debutantes, rather than preparing women for marriage or acceptance into high society, were prepped in professional development, networking, and getting accustomed to being in spaces outside of their protected and familiar communities. The balls strove to showcase women who defined varying standards of beauty, academic achievement, and the continuation of education beyond high school. Their history shows us the presence of fathers, uncles, brothers, and other male role models, and debunks the misconception that Black men are not present in their families' day-to-day lives.

The Owl Club of Denver is part of this long tradition, and is the oldest practicing African American debutante organization in the city. They have redefined the meaning of a debutante and helped create representations of beauty, academic achievement, and acceptance for a community that's often been misrepresented and forgotten. Owl Club members have actively supported thousands of members beyond their debutante presentations.

In 1964 and 1965, for example, former Owl Club member Omar Blair formed the Owl Club Youth Incentive, Athletic & Scholarship Association. This initiative was intended to help youth in East Denver hone their football skills for high school games. The committee was able to bring the NBA to play two pre-season games in the Mile High City before Denver joined the association. The proceeds from the event financed the Owls Little League football team. In 1979, member William Kirk founded the Owl Club Scholarship Fund, which was later chartered in 1994 by members Skip Riley and Penfield Tate III. The donated funds provided academic scholarships to the young ladies who become debutantes. During the Covid-19 pandemic, thirty-one debutantes were honored virtually for the sixty-ninth and seventieth presentations.

The inaugural 1951 Debutantes of East and Manual High School gather for a group photo during their Debutante Ball. *History Colorado. 2022.155.1*

Young boys and players on the Owl Club's Little League Football team gather in a gymnasium to suit up for a game. They are assisted by members of the Owl Club. *Denver Public Library, Burnis McCloud photographs and papers. MCD-197*

The Owl Club's Little League Football team, wearing white helmets, take to the field against another little league team for a game. *Denver Public Library, Burnis McCloud photographs and papers. MCD-198*

AN IMPORTANT FOUNDATION

Beyond their impact in Denver, Owl Club members and debutantes have gone on to achieve great things. Famed Tuskegee Airman Captain and World War II veteran Omar Blair was very active in the community after moving to Denver in 1951. In 1968, he served as Commissioner of the Denver Urban Renewal Authority and helped initiate the Sixteenth Street Mall Project. In 1972, he was elected as the first African American President of the Denver Board of Education. During his two-term post, he fought to desegregate schools and organized bussing initiatives to ensure that all students had access to resources, textbooks, and learning environments.

Elvin Caldwell, also a World War II veteran and Owl Club member, fought for many of the same causes as his good friend Omar Blair. Recognized as "one of the most significant African American policymakers in Colorado history," Caldwell accomplished a lot during the Civil Rights Movement. From 1950 to 1955, he was elected to the Colorado House of Representatives and served in the state legislature. In 1952, he was also a delegate to the Democratic National Convention. In 1955, he was elected to the Denver City Council and became the first African American man to serve in a seat west of the Mississippi. Of his seven terms served, five of them were as president of the council. Under his leadership, Caldwell was able to fund the Skyline Urban Renewal Project, the Denver General Hospital Facility (now Denver Health), and oversee the implementation of Colorado's first Fair Employment Practices Act. In 2003, the Blair-Caldwell African American Research Library was named in honor of the duo's work and commitment to African American communities in Denver.

Above Right Former Owls gather for a group photo in the Owl Club House office. *Denver Public Library, Burnis McCloud photographs and papers. MCD-215*

Right Owlettes gather and mingle over cocktails while in attendance for an event at the Owl Club House. *Denver Public Library, Burnis McCloud photographs and papers. MCD-203*

Owl Club member Charles "CT" Smith would go on to join the Denver Police Department in 1959, where he would become the fourth African American division chief in DPD history. In his service of thirty-six years, Smith would connect with prominent African American leaders such as Martin Luther King Jr. and created Denver's Crime Stoppers program. His initiatives were aimed at making Denver safer and aid in crime prevention.

Condoleezza Rice, a 1971 Owl Club debutante, fit the Owl Club's debutante image from an early age. Noted as a child prodigy, Condoleezza Rice took an interest in music, and was able to read sheet music before learning to read words. Her intellect was apparent as she carried on through her education, where her first major accomplishment was graduating high school at the age of sixteen. She initially enrolled in college as a music major with hopes of becoming a concert pianist, but changed course after taking a class on international politics. At the age of nineteen, she graduated cum laude from the University of Denver with a Bachelor of Arts in political science.

By twenty-six, Dr. Rice held a PhD in political science, also from the University of Denver. She went on to be a political science professor at Stanford University, and would later become the first woman, the youngest, and the first African American Provost in the university's history. During her political career, Condoleezza Rice would become the first female African American Secretary of State and woman to serve as national security advisor. In 2022, Condoleezza Rice became a part-owner of the Denver Broncos, becoming one of the very small percentage of non-white owners within the National Football League.

In a 2023 oral history now housed at History Colorado, current Owl Club members Alonzo E. Butler, Robert B. Pratt III, Maurice Goodgaine, Derris Newman, Maurice Dismukes, Jeffrey T. Smith, Theron G. Labrie, Marvin Pierce, Ronald Washington, Skip Riley, and Charles T. Smith recalled that the organization's mission to foster community development, create professional connections, and provide mentors are the elements that make the Owl Club so critical to Denver's history.

Founded in a time when African Americans were constantly seeking safe spaces to belong and celebrate one another, member Maurice Goodgaine is proud of the organization's "dedication to excellence," and a life lived without barriers. Today, the Owl Club continues to uplift the African American community through its twin missions of fostering academic excellence and social and civic engagement.

The 1971 Owl Club Debutantes gather for their group photo. Former US Secretary of State, Condoleezza Rice, is featured standing in the back row, fourth from the left. *History Colorado. 1971 OC Debs*

In the BACKCOUNTRY WITH JOHN FIELDER

BY JOHN FIELDER

John Fielder saw dozens of mountain goats in the wild, but could never imagine having such a close encounter with a 250-pound male. He said it was among the most memorable experiences of his life.

Like most Colorado mountain ranges, "The Needles" are oriented north to south. On their east side, snowmelt and monsoonal summer rain drains through canyons and meadows into Vallecito Creek and the Animas River. Both eventually deliver water to the San Juan. With three peaks over 14,000 feet, and dozens above 13,000 feet, the range is high, remote, and extremely rugged—in my opinion the most rugged in Colorado. Peaks made of pink Eolus granite have been carved into serrated spires and blades by glaciers, wind, and water over the past sixty-five million years. Creeks plunge down almost-impassable canyons. Developed trails for humans are few, though game trails blazed by elk, deer, and bear are ubiquitous.

The Needles are part of the Weminuche Wilderness. At over 500,000 acres in size, it's Colorado's largest designated wilderness. Eighty miles of the Continental Divide bisects the Weminuche (a word originating from the Ute language) into the headwaters of the Rio Grande and San Juan–Colorado River drainages. Over the years I have conducted two llama pack trips through the wilderness along this mostly mellow stretch of the Continental Divide Trail during which one remains above 12,000 feet in elevation for all but a few miles. The Needle Mountains lie in the wilderness to the west of the CDT and provide an entirely different modus operandi.

The trip on which I met my friend the mountain goat was the first of two traverses I've made of the entire range. This trip took us from north to south along the east side of the range's crest, the other along the west side about a year later in 2006. Though the range is twelve miles long as the crow flies, we hiked a forty-mile circuitous route weaving our way around peaks and in and out of drainages, starting and ending at the same place—what I call a loop trip. For nine days we picked and scrambled our way by day through the detritus of aging mountains—talus boulders, down timber, boggy tundra—and for eight nights we camped at an average elevation of 12,950 feet on soft tundra amidst Rocky Mountain alpine wildflowers.

We were in some of the most rugged and most challenging terrain Colorado has to offer, and faced plan-altering challenges almost from the trip's very beginning. We captured some of the most stunning photos of my career, but what I really remember was the twenty-four hours I spent in the company of a 250-pound male mountain goat. This is the story of that trip and of that encounter.

ADAPTING AT ALTITUDE

Our hiking began and ended well above 12,000 feet at Kite Lake. We parked the four-wheel drive Chevy Suburban at the lake hoping to return to it in nine days if all went

Above Pink Eolus Granite Pink Eolus granite near Upper Windom Peak Lake, Sunlight Basin, Needle Mountains, Weminuche Wilderness. *History Colorado. 2023.1.1780*

Facing Billy goat below the Trinity Alps, Needle Mountains, Weminuche Wilderness. *History Colorado. USE.259.187*

according to plan. But nothing on this trip went according to plan except the photography, which I am happy to say was sublime. By the second day I had lost the help of two of five porters. Seventeen-year-old Craig was a high school student in Grand Junction, Colorado who had spent the first five weeks of his summer at a National Outdoor Leadership School (NOLS) wilderness course in the Wind River Mountains of Wyoming. By the time he got to me in Colorado, he had been out in the backcountry for a month, and having backpacked and camped at over 12,000 vertical feet the entire time, was in superb physical condition. Our first night we camped and photographed just below 13,000 feet near Eldorado Lake. The setting sun backlit tundra that was made Irish green by the summer monsoon. The charcoal-colored clouds of a thunderstorm simultaneously reflected in the lake and dissected the rays of the sun, creating a landscape of alternating green highlights and shadows.

Our first sunrise never happened—clouds remained from the day before and blocked the sun at the horizon. Worse yet, when I woke up, I could hear someone in a neighboring tent with a loud hacking cough. It was Craig and he was coughing up yellow phlegm. He was still coughing after breakfast two hours later, forcing me to decide whether to allow him to continue with us on what I knew would be one of the most demanding and remote backpack trips of my life. I diagnosed his condition to be some sort of flu and told him that he would have to discontinue the trip. This would require hiking back down to my vehicle, then another several miles to his car, which we had parked at a lower elevation below the four-wheel drive stretch. I was uncomfortable with him going back alone in his condition and recruited another of our party, Eric, to escort Craig out. Knowing that I would lose the help of both young men for the balance of the trip, now three people would have to carry the load that previously was distributed among five—food, tents, and sleeping bags for the remaining four of us. So regretfully we said our goodbyes.

Life got better quickly. The plan for day three was to camp on a finger-shaped ridge at 13,100 feet and surrounded on all sides by thousand-foot cliffs that I had studied on my topographic maps and coveted as a potential photography location for ten years. I had always suspected that from the ridge two of Colorado's most beautiful peaks, Vestal and Arrow, both just a few feet below "fourteener" status, would be "in our face" a half-mile to the south and only separated from us by the chasm of the Vestal Creek drainage. I had tried to get there on a llama pack trip years before but was turned back by a single rocky slope not negotiable by soft-footed llamas. Now without livestock in tow we had a pretty good chance of success.

A steep descent into Elk Creek followed by an equally precipitous climb up the rugged drainage I had once marked on my map as the "secret" route took us straight to the ridge. It was flat and covered in alpine tundra. As we casually ridge-walked south, suddenly the twin pencil-pointed peaks appeared in front of us, their half-mile distance reduced to what seemed like only yards. The moment and the perspective were incredible. It was very much like the scene in the 1970s cult movie *Close Encounters of the Third Kind* when Richard Dryfus's character crests the Wyoming hill in his car and sees Devil's Tower for the first time! My first task at any new photo location is to find a sublime place to set up camp, but at the same time not allow tents and gear to get in the way of any possible scenic image. It is a pleasing task and an acquired skill that has produced some remarkable campsites over the past thirty-five years. I had no idea how remarkable this one would turn out to be, for as soon as the tents were pitched, the most beautiful mountain billy goat I have ever seen approached our camp.

Billy goat in front of Vestal Peak. *History Colorado. 2023.1.1802*

CLOSE ENCOUNTER

Though mountain goats are not thought to be native to Colorado (they were transplanted here beginning in 1948), they sure seem to fit in visually, if not biologically. A couple of thousand are estimated to populate at least ten Colorado mountain ranges. They live year-round in high-alpine environments and are most remarkable for their ability to dance along inches-wide rock ledges with ease. A solitary male "billy" had chosen to investigate us humans in a place he had probably not seen people before. But, the speed with which he began licking our freshly deposited pee confirmed that he had been around backpackers who spewed very yellow urine after long waterless hikes. All mammals need salt in their diet and yellow urine is very salty. To be honest, I've always known this, and I do pee "strategically" in the high country. In other words, I urinate where goats and bighorn sheep might

congregate in a compositionally-correct manner—in this case with goat in the foreground and mountain peaks in the background. (No joke!)

Mountain goats are naturally curious animals and not intimidated by people. But that doesn't mean anyone reading this should follow my example. This was not the first time in my life that goats had arrived soon after me, but it was the first time that a solitary male, and most likely the dominant male in the entire Needle Mountains herd, showed up. I had never seen a goat so beautiful: It had a very large body, perhaps weighing more than 250 pounds, pure white wool cropped short and devoid of any of winter's coat, a tiny waist and massive thorax, and an elongated skull as solid as the granite of his mountains. His head was decorated with two pointed black horns framed by pointy ears. He stood still and stared at us with a complacency that could only have derived from his knowing that he was the baddest dude in the wilderness. Having always been a scientist at heart and trained in scientific inquiry by fifty years of experimentation on my many pet cats (never injurious nor fatal!) seen by some as "teasing," I decided it was time to experiment with a wild goat. With my crew standing behind me as witnesses, I was determined to ascertain who was the baddest in the wilderness, me or the goat.

I stood facing the motionless goat with the two of us staring into each other's eyes. I looked back over my shoulder at my friends, smiled, then walked two steps forward. He did not move except to shake his head from side to side about three times and become still again. I looked back at my friends once more and smiled, then stepped cautiously closer. Continuing to stay put, he shook his head and simultaneously snorted loudly for a few seconds, then became still again. Clearly, his gestures had been warnings. Also staying put, I turned my shoulders slowly and smiled at the crew. They did not smile back. I think they were imagining how difficult it would be to carry my injured body from a remote wilderness to the nearest hospital. Of course, I took another step closer to the goat. As soon as my right foot landed on tundra, he raised himself upright, acrobatically balancing on his hind legs with front legs towering above all six feet–three inches of me. As quickly as I could, I turned and ran back to my companions, by which time the goat was back on all fours, motionless and staring at me as before. End of experiment.

The next morning I climbed 200 yards from camp to the south edge of the ridge in order to photograph Vestal and Arrow Peaks. Byron and I had arisen, as always, before dawn in order to be in position to photograph our remarkable venue progressively during each stage of sunrise. In the dark it appeared to be partly cloudy around the peaks, but it was anyone's guess what might be happening on the eastern horizon not visible to us from where we stood. Clouds there could block the sun and deny us a sunrise. At about the predicted time, however, what turned out to be benign clouds behind Arrow and Vestal turned pink (so far so good) and with the telephoto lens I isolated their jagged silhouettes against the colorful sky. If my luck continued, the tops of the two symmetrical mountains would light up. One minute later, the rising sun cast its first light—progressing in color from red to orange to yellow—on the peak-tips. I couldn't believe what I was seeing.

I knew it was likely that the next photograph would be of the sunlit tundra just in front of me with the mountains as the backdrop. As I began to replace the telephoto lens with a wide angle one, I heard the sound of hooves clomp, clomp, clomping behind me. I turned to see my favorite Needle Mountains' adversary, the billy goat, walking slowly behind me on his way to the edge of the ridge. He laid down in the middle of the exact place that was to be the foreground of my photograph. I couldn't believe it— the goat was back and about to ruin the most coveted image of the place I'd not only backpacked many miles to reach but dreamed about for years! I reconsidered the situation and said to Byron, "This day I will be a 'large format' wildlife photographer." With the wide-angle lens in place I hurried to compose the goat in the foreground of the scene and three mountains called the Trinity Alps (immediately to the east of Vestal and Arrow) in the background. This had the potential to be one of the best mountain goat images ever made anywhere on Earth if he would only remain still. It's very rare to make wildlife photographs with a large format camera—by the time you get the complex camera set up the creature is usually long-gone. Yet I seemed to have made a friend during my "experiment" the day before. Small apertures, in this case *f45*, bring everything in focus from foreground to background. However, a small aperture requires a long shutter speed, in this case one-half of a second, in order to properly expose the film. So the goat would have to hold perfectly still if he was to be sharp and without blur in the photograph. And he did. He snoozed with droopy eyes and remained motionless for the next ten minutes as the sun crested the ridge behind me and lighted the fur of his back and neck with yellow light. I was able to expose a dozen sheets of film of a finely focused and stationary goat.

MY FRIEND THE GOAT

During the following half-hour I made a dozen more photographs of the goat from other directions. He eventually stood up but remained still on the ridge to be photographed. We descended to camp and breakfast. Thereafter I proceeded to wander over the top of a nearby hill to "do my duty" while the crew packed up camp. Cresting the hill, I spied the goat fifty yards away, laying in the soft tundra and again snoozing. I (foolishly again) decided that it was time to find out just how genuine our friendship was.

He was not intimidated and continued to ignore me. I began to talk to him. For the next twenty-five minutes I enjoyed the most remarkable wildlife encounter of my life. I spoke to him all the while, making statements and asking

Sunrise on Windom and Sunlight Peaks, Weminuche Wilderness.
History Colorado. 2023.1.1775

him questions. I asked him about living throughout the year above the trees in one of the most beautiful places on Earth. I asked him about life with a harem of "nannies" all to himself. I told him about my life as a nature photographer, and my appreciation for his place and all things wild and natural. The entire while he slumbered by my side, this 250-pound miracle of a creature, not once looking at me, not once answering a question (fortunately, for I would have later needed counseling). I can only assume that my voice soothed him and that my presence and proximity was acceptable. I left the goat and headed back to camp. We hefted our packs and headed south towards our next camp two drainages away. It would be a long-but-scenic day meandering in and around the heads of drainages and the bases of the highest peaks of the Needle Mountains, pretty much what I suspected the whole nine days would be like.

Despite the loss of two porters, the trip was manageable and very successful, and the scenery and photography were extraordinary. Without a doubt, these were the most dramatic mountains in the Colorado portion of the Rocky Mountains, no mean feat given the twenty-eight distinct ranges in the state. We had camped night after night at elevations no less than 12,800 feet and navigated drainages named Elk and

We had camped night after night at elevations no less than 12,800 feet.

Vestal, Trinity and Leviathan, and finally Sunlight Creek. In fact, our last and eighth evening was spent in the most remote part of this geologically complex cirque below fourteeners Sunlight and Windom next to what I believe is the highest lake in the entire Weminuche Wilderness. It lies nameless at 13,100 feet immediately below Windom Peak. Yet there was a price to be paid for the loftiness and remoteness of this particular place: Day nine, our last, would require an arduous hike down from the lake to Vallecito Creek at 9,600 feet, then up the creek to Hunchback Pass at 12,500 feet, and finally down to our starting point Kite Lake. Sounds easy, right? Add to the massive elevation loss and gain fifteen miles of hiking with, in my case, a camera pack still weighing sixty-five pounds, and to that add the fact that we'd been doing this for eight days, maybe it's a little easier to understand why none of us were looking forward to our last day.

Then the rain came and added to the misery. After eight days of fine high-pressure weather, that night the inevitable August monsoon rolled in from Arizona. We awoke before sunrise to a drenching rain made worse by the fact that it was thirty-three degrees outside. Our dreaded last day's hike would be a wet and cold one. With no time nor sun to dry out tents and other sundry wet gear, we packed up a soaked camp and headed down to the forest through dangerous slippery talus boulders. Once on the trail, I commanded a forced march for the next thirteen miles over no one's objections—we all wanted to get back to the warmth of a heated Chevy Suburban as quickly as possible. Nevertheless, strong packers can only hike three miles an hour going down and on the flat, two uphill at best, so we knew there'd be no salvation for at least five hours. Except for a ten-minute break for lunch of cheese and sardines, we did not stop the entire way. The cresting of Hunchback Pass left only a rock field's worth of descent to the vehicle, which we reached shortly after 1:00 P.M.

THE ORDEAL WASN'T OVER

The journey to Kite Lake is on my top five Colorado most difficult and rugged drives-to-a-trailhead list. From Lake City (the nearest town), it's thirty circuitous highway miles over two passes, then another fifteen miles on improved Forest Service dirt roads, then fifteen more miles on narrow, eroded, creek bed-like, four-wheel drive road. It's an unimproved, unmaintained, and unloved (except by crazy-ass motor heads) dangerous nineteenth-century mining road. Most people won't do it in a Jeep—I do it reluctantly in a 6,000-pound Suburban. The drive time for the sixty total miles is not under three hours. That's how we got to Kite Lake nine days before.

Wet, cold, and tired, the five of us tossed soggy packs in the back and dove into the seats. I extracted the ignition key from my pack's ditty bag and got the motor going—soon there'd be heat! I engaged the transmission in *Drive* and commenced the converse version of the drive up to Kite Lake from Hell. I drove fifty yards and the vehicle suddenly stopped running. I turned the key in the ignition a dozen times to no avail each time—no juice, no gas. With a freezing-cold crew still inside, I got out and popped the hood. In forty years of dealing with vehicle breakdowns in the middle of nowhere, not once have I popped the hood expecting to find a solution to the problem. I am not a mechanic. Everything looked fine in the engine compartment except for a fraying of the fireproof fabric that lines the inside of the hood. No matter—just wear and tear. Otherwise, the exhausted five of us were stranded at Kite Lake, a place too remote to attract many visitors, so nobody else was parked at the lake.

We discussed our predicament and decided that two volunteers would walk down the road for as long as it took to hitch a ride to Lake City to get help. That could be as many as fifteen more hiking miles to get to the more heavily traveled Rio Grande National Forest road that follows the Rio Grande river. Just as I was about to appoint the "volunteers," we heard the rumble of another vehicle. With eyes wide, we watched a pickup truck scramble up the hill towards us. Since

Facing Lower Sunlight Lake reflection, Needle Mountains, Weminuche Wilderness. *History Colorado. 2023.1.1746*

Jagged Mountain, Jagged Basin, Needle Mountains, Weminuche Wilderness. *History Colorado. 2023.1.1759*

we were blocking the road, it stopped in front of us, and four people got out. They were college kids who had just graduated in June from Oberlin College in Ohio and had journeyed to Colorado to celebrate with a week-long backpack into the Weminuche Wilderness. They too looked under my hood, and they too had no solution for the dead Suburban. I noticed the North Carolina (my home state) license plate on the pickup and struck up a conversation with the young man who owned it. This culminated in asking him if he would loan us his truck to get back to Lake City and help. He generously agreed, asking only that we return it to Kite Lake by the time they completed their hike a week later. We pushed the Suburban to the side of the road and headed down to Lake City.

Three hours later, the still-exhausted and wet five of us pulled up to the Cinnamon Inn Bed & Breakfast looking for a couple of rooms. The owners had become friends of mine a couple of years before when I was writing my travel guide *John Fielder's Best of Colorado.* All of us enjoyed no less than the finest showers of our lives in the last two available rooms—lucky for us given that this was the peak of tourist season! The owners recommended the Lake City Texaco for help with the stranded Suburban, so off we went to seek help.

After describing the vehicle's resting place and situation, owner Pete agreed to take the job. As it turned out, Pete was famous in this part of Colorado's San Juan Mountains, which contain thousands of miles of nineteenth-century roads, for rescuing people and their vehicles from predicaments like mine. He said that he would drive his pickup-sized tow truck up to Kite Lake, followed by another man who would drive the loaner pickup that needed to be returned to the college kids. Given the roughness of that last fifteen miles of road, I couldn't imagine how a Suburban could be towed down, but I put my faith in Pete. However, there was a remaining loose end: What and how long would be required to repair the Suburban which would not start? Having been away from my family and publishing business for nine days, I needed to return immediately to Denver, and so did the crew.

That evening, after the obligatory and mind-blowing steak dinner following eight nights of instant dinners on the trail, I called friend Dennis in Crested Butte about parts two and three of the rescue. Would he be willing to drive the next day to Lake City, pick us all up and return us to Denver? Including getting back to Crested Butte, Dennis's total drive time would be about twelve hours. Would he also be available

Colorado columbine wildflowers, Needle Mountains, Weminuche Wilderness. *History Colorado. USE.259.12*

Sunset over the Needle Mountains, Weminuche Wilderness. *History Colorado. 2023.1.1683*

to return another day to Lake City to pick up the repaired Suburban and drive it to Denver for me—another twelve hours! Dennis agreed to all of the above. After the best night of sleep I'd ever had and a good greasy breakfast at the inn, Dennis arrived to get us home on day ten.

As soon as I arrived back in Denver I called Craig, the porter with the hacking cough, in Grand Junction to make certain that he had returned home safely eight days before and to discover more about his malady. In fact, he had acquired pulmonary edema, an illness often acquired by mountain climbers at high altitudes. It is deadly and can kill its victim within 72 hours of onset. The only cure is for the victim to return to lower elevations. If I had not sent Craig down on day two of the trip, he could have easily died with us. Two weeks later, a young man from inner city Chicago died from pulmonary edema while on a Colorado wilderness challenge course—and just like me, his counselors did not recognize the symptoms. As it happened, after leaving us at Eldorado Lake, Craig and Eric spent the next night at Kite Lake next to the Suburban. His condition had deteriorated by then. The next day they proceeded down the road and were picked up by four doctors fresh out of the wilderness. They immediately diagnosed the pulmonary edema, took him to his car at 11,000 feet, and told him to get down to Lake City immediately. Craig found a doctor there who also diagnosed the malady and told him that he would recover in a few days at home in Grand Junction, which he did. Though Craig had spent four weeks in the Wind River Range of Wyoming well above 12,000 feet on the NOLS course prior to hiking with me, apparently that was no guarantee of immunity to the disease. His father, a Grand Junction physician, speculated that Craig's descent to Grand Junction at 5,000 feet for a week in between high-altitude trips, might have been the catalyst for the pulmonary edema. This affair was a valuable lesson for me learned about wilderness medicine.

Pete called the day after we got home to tell me about the vehicle rescue. He too had noticed the frayed fabric under the hood at Kite Lake. When he inspected the spark plug wires hidden in a remote area behind the engine, he discovered that one of them had been chewed in half—most likely by a marmot, a furry denizen of the alpine zone with an affection for rubber and nylon products. The marmot had apparently crawled into the engine compartment while we were on the trail and sampled this delicacy. One tiny wire was still intact when I had started down the hill, but the bumpy road must have been enough to pull it completely apart—hence when it broke after fifty yards of driving. The marmots had sampled the fireproof fabric under the hood, too!

Pete and his helper twisted the broken wires together, which was enough to power the Suburban on its own down to Lake City—so it never had to be towed after all. Pete ordered new spark plug wires from Denver, and within a week Dennis had delivered the Suburban back to me at my home. The repair bill wasn't much, but how about the rescue bill and Dennis's twenty-four hours of shuttling? The whole affair cost me no time (a minor miracle considering the original predicament) but $2,000 to solve my problem. Would you believe that the "Comprehensive" section of my auto insurance policy covered most of this?

In the end, I was very little worse for wear—not bad when it comes to being stranded in the middle of nowhere. But the photos I made and the encounter with the goat were things I would never forget. They were just a few of my best memories from a life spent in the out-of-doors.

***Editor's note:** John Fielder passed away on August 11, 2023. He left behind this essay along with thousands of his photographs, most of which are now a permanent part of the History Colorado Collection. He wished for them to be freely available for all Coloradans.

THE WOMEN OF MARKET STREET

A Glimpse into the Lives of Denver's Nineteenth-Century Sex Workers

BY ANN SNEESBY-KOCH

Denver's red-light district was the worst-kept secret in town, and the women who plied their trade there lived on the margins of society. Their stories reveal pain and violence, but also hope and sisterhood at a time when few had anywhere else to turn.

"Essentially mean, dishonest, low characters not deserving immortality" were the words *Denver Post* book editor Stanton Peckham chose to describe Denver's early sex workers. His bile was aimed at the women filling the pages of Caroline Bancroft's book, *Six Racy Madams of Colorado*. In his rather narrow review of the book first published in 1965, he questioned whether "these women" were worthy of Bancroft's painstaking research, engaged as they were in the "indispensable vocation" (read: sex work) along Market Street in today's LoDo area of Denver.

Also known as The Row, Market Street between Eighteenth and Twenty-Third Streets teemed with opulent parlor houses, common brothels, and lowly cribs where women sold companionship in the later half of the 1800s and into the early 1900s. For these women living on society's margins, the nature of the work mingled with repressive and moralizing Victorian sensibilities, leaving them vulnerable to all kinds of predatory behaviors. Violence, sexual assault, suicide, addiction, and financial insecurity were common in the lives of women who worked Denver's Row. But they also found camaraderie, agency, and a degree of financial independence—avenues for personal fulfillment that were often unattainable for women in more socially acceptable roles. What Peckham and others missed as they enunciated their low opinions was that, for many women in the burgeoning American West, "the life" was the most promising way to better their financial circumstances, escape lives of drudgery, or find the means to simply exist.

What follows is a reflection on the nature of life in Market Street's red-light district, a detailed observation of the lives of the women who worked there, and an investigation into a side of history that is often overlooked. Revealed are stories about the dangers and difficulties these women faced in the lives they built—but also moments of compassion, of humor, and of humanity. However judged or overlooked, these women's lives are an important part of Denver's history. They are stories about people who, one way or another, were seeking a better life.

The "well-upholstered" Mattie Silks, "Queen" of Denver's Row. *Fred M. Mazzulla Collection. History Colorado. 2022.57.8677*

SISTERHOOD OF SOILED DOVES

Soiled doves, ladies of the evening, frail sisters, nymphs du pave, cyprians—the women of The Row went by many names. Their reasons for taking up sex work were as varied as the common euphemisms polite society came up with for their jobs, reflecting the clandestine and hushed nature of the way Victorian-era society marginalized these women. Denver's nineteenth-century sex workers were ostracized and segregated from a society that viewed them as a social—albeit necessary—evil. Sex workers in Denver and beyond developed close-knit bonds with their fellow workers, which was important because living on the margins meant dangers and opportunities in equal measure.

Although never legalized, sex work was tolerated as long as it was hidden and contained within the confines of the red-light district. Parlor houses and brothels served as private communities where women in the profession ate, slept, confided in each other, fought with one another, stole from each other, and were provided a degree of comfort and familiarity in a hostile city.

In a society that devalued women generally, and specifically those who worked in the sex trade, the so-called frail sisterhood offered a way for women to adapt to and function within the profession. Lacking much in the way of safety nets, women in turn-of-the-century Colorado were often left with only extremely limited choices if they fell on hard times. Historian Ruth Rosen describes the soiled dove sorority as a subculture offering belonging, support, and human validation. Especially at that time, divorce, desertion, or death of a wage-earning father or husband could throw a woman's economic security into disarray. Women with no occupation, education, or training might turn to sex work as a last resort. Given the ease of making a living selling companionship to lonely miners, ranchers, and businessmen coming to Denver, the majority of women who chose sex work did so because they needed to pay rent, buy food, and support themselves or their families.

Subsistence wages for "respectable work" were much lower that what women could make working the red-light district, and sex work certainly had less of the drudgery of working as seamstress, laundress, shop girl, or domestic servant—some of the limited options available to working women at the time. Lillian "Lil" Powers, later the proprietress of The Cupolo at 1947 Market Street, was known as "The Laundry Queen," having left that line of work for the oldest profession. She recalled working in a laundry in her early years in Denver:

> I got a job in a laundry and if you think that was easy, my God!...it was almost as bad as the farm and my pay was one dollar a week. My room cost me fifty cents a week—there wasn't much left for all the fancy folderols I thought I could buy when I went to the city.

A view of the 2100 block of Market Street in Denver between 1880 -1910. *Fred M. Mazzulla Collection. History Colorado. 2022.57.8520*

Some women like Powers came to Denver for the excitement and glamor of the city. The allure of Denver was the idea that women could make easy money and achieve a measure of financial or personal independence not available in the more rural parts of the state. In fact, one of Colorado's most notorious madams, Laura Evans, said in an interview, "I didn't know anything about this business in Denver. But I fell very readily into it…the money's so fast…and everything…excitement." The interviewer asked, "You say a girl could get seventy-five dollars a night?" Evans answered, "Oooh! That wasn't anything.…Paydays make a couple hundred…you just helped yourself to what they had. You let a miner go back up the mountain with any money, they'd think you were crazy." Or simply put, from the letters of a working girl in New Orleans's Storyville: "I just cannot be moral enough to see where drudgery is better than a life of easy vice."

But the life of vice wasn't always so easy. The business of sex work was hard and often physically threatening or economically precarious. Poverty, violence, drug overdoses, and suicide were constant companions for women on The Row. And a dove's death, from any cause, didn't result in the traditional funeral arrangements. According to Anne Butler in her book *Daughters of Joy, Sisters of Misery,* sudden deaths required quick burials, and many women lacked family who could, or would want to, take care of the final arrangements. Often their fellow "sisters-in-shame" willingly stepped up and managed the proceedings. From raising subscriptions to pay for funeral accoutrement to acting as pallbearers and mourners, the women of the frail sisterhood took care of their own until the end. The following, published in the *Rocky Mountain News* on March 3, 1881, described the memorial service for Mattie Woods who died in a parlor house at 500 Holladay Street (which later became Market Street), run by Mattie Silks.

Laundry Queen, Lillian Powers (top left) and other women.
Fred M. Mazzulla Collection. History Colorado. 2022.57.8590

> All that was mortal of Mattie Woods, the poor cyprian who ended her life on last Monday night, was laid away to rest in quiet, peaceful Riverside yesterday afternoon. The obsequies were conducted from Brown's undertaking rooms on Lawrence Street, and were of a simple and unostentatious nature. The rooms were thronged with friends who had known the dead woman during life, and there were many kind words of love and pity spoken. Cheeks which have long forgotten a virtuous blush were tear-stained and many painted lips were parted in silent prayer for the repose of their erring sister's soul. Twenty women in all were present, and their sincere grief seemed to soften and lessen their social sins to the few spectators who had been attracted to the scene through curiosity. The coffin stood near the center of the room and bore a burden of floral offerings. At the head was a large wreath and cross of sweet immortelles and bouquets were arranged

> about for the foot. Within, the tired body rested, and the face looked pure and almost saintly. The burial robes were of a rich and appropriate texture and in fit keeping with the perfect arrangements for the last sad rites so commendably prepared by the women who provided them.

The article's moralizing tone and the tinge of spectacle epitomized the press' attitude of scorn and sentimentality when it came to the lives and deaths of women who lived outside the pale of polite society. Yet the care these women took with burying their dead seemed a way to express their sincere sorrow and grief while showing a modicum of virtuousness; a chance to thumb their noses at respectable folk through lavish displays of wealth (however ephemeral), simultaneously showing solidarity among their class and profession.

But camaraderie among the women of The Row had its limits. Violence among the women was common and the newspapers gleefully pounced on such incidents, taking the opportunity to provide social commentary about the type of women who lived among Denver's demimonde—even as they reveled in the gruesome details of the attack. Following an incident in which a confrontation led to a woman being stabbed nine times by a fellow worker in June 1898, *The Denver Post* editorialized:

> All these women are more than ordinarily disreputable and are said to be quarreling all the time with anybody who will quarrel with them. Like all other women of their class they have many names under which they live. Very little is known about where they came from or who they were once.

Suicide, too, was tragically common. The papers reported as many as two to three attempts at suicide every week. Unfortunately, many appear to have been successful. Morphine, laudanum, carbolic acid, and "Rough on Rats" (arsenic) were among the preferred methods for women who sought to take their own lives. One study of women working in brothels found eleven percent had attempted suicide at least one time. Isolation from family, hard living, addiction, money and legal woes, and untenable despair preyed on the women of The Row. A passage from *The Denver Post* of May 1915 captures this bleak outlook.

> "Life is just one d[amned] thing after another and I'm tired of it all. It's no use trying to be good. I've tried to kill myself twice with poison and couldn't make it"…. Eleanor Dacola, 21, inmate of a resort at 1923 Market Street, unburdened herself of the above sentiments this

Three brick parlor houses or brothels along Market Street in Denver, sometime between 1880–1890. *Fred M. Mazzulla Collection. History Colorado. 2022.57.8533*

morning…. "I've tried to break away from the life I've been leading," she said, "but it seems like it's no use trying to be good. I went to business college last summer, with the intention of fitting myself to make a living in a decent way, but someone discovered that I had been living in a Market Street resort and that was the end of things. I'm discouraged, that's all, and I don't care what happens or when it happens."

Women working in the sex profession were, in their daily lives, vastly different from the way they were perceived and stereotyped.

Sex workers sitting together at a table. *Fred M. Mazzulla Collection. History Colorado. 2022.57.8066*

Substance abuse was common among the women who worked along The Row, especially those who had fallen to the bottom and ended their careers and lives working in cribs or on the street. Laudanum and morphine were cheap, legal, and available in drugstores. Opium was easily found in the nearby alley between Market and Blake Streets, between Nineteenth and Twentieth Streets—an area known by the derogatory nickname of Hop Alley. Drugs and alcohol offered a quick fix and a distraction from a dismal and often tedious life in the brothels, cribs, and streets.

Women working in the sex profession were, in their daily lives, vastly different from the way they were perceived and stereotyped, both at the time and more recently. From a poem titled, "On the Town," the excerpt below is typical of the popular press' fixation on the "wayward woman." It was printed in Livingston, Montana's *Daily Enterprise* in 1883:

> Hated and shunned I walk the street,
> Hunting–for what? For my prey, 'tis said;
> I look at it, though, in a different light;
> For this night's shame is my daily bread;
> My food, my shelter, the clothes I wear!
> Only for this I might starve or drown,
> The world has disowned me—what can I do
> But live and die on the town?

Newspaper accounts have always reflected and promoted the attitudes of the societies, and poems like this one reveal common assumptions about those working in the sex trade, casting them as objects of mockery, pity, intrigue, and tragedy. Reporters across the West commonly traded in stories that sensationalized, moralized, and vilified the experiences of women living in the shadows of polite society. Historians studying these important-but-marginalized women have almost always needed to rely on biased newspaper accounts to understand anything at all about the not-so-hidden world of sex workers.

A 1902 *Denver Pos*t headline blared "STRUGGLE FOR TWO CHILDREN: Mrs. Nina Moore Confesses to Leading a Life of Shame to Educate Her Children in Purity." Nina Moore was deserted by her husband in Kansas City after he lit out for Telluride. Having therefore sued him for divorce on the grounds of desertion and cruelty, she was awarded custody of their two daughters. When she later arrived in Denver, she needed to support her children and her husband, Alexander, who eventually made his way to Denver and back into Nina's life.

> Her evenings she would spend in the said house on Market Street, and every evening the said Alexander T. Moore would take her over to the said house and leave her there, from which place she would return in the morning, in the early hours to her said home, and contribute her earnings thereby to the support of the said Alexander T. Moore and of their two children.

> After so living in this manner for about five weeks, the said Nina E. Moore became worn out, and the struggle was too hard for her to keep up. During all of this

time the said Alexander T. Moore had not procured any work, nor was he contributing anything to the support of either himself or her said children. Had he contributed anything to her support or the support of her children she would not have led the life she did lead, she was compelled to lead.

Nina's story—of a woman's life rocked by the economic disruption of desertion, in a tenuous position to care for her family—illustrates why some women turned to sex work for survival. These stories played out time and again in Denver's parlor houses, brothels, and cribs. Nina represents just one of the many women whose lives had been marginalized and ignored, yet who were an integral part of Denver in the late 1800s and early 1900s.

SPACES OF VICE

Peering into the parlor houses and brothels of Denver, we gain a better sense of what life was like for the women within the different classes of the profession.

Parlor houses were distinctive for their generous, typically first-floor rooms, used for greetings and conversation before women and their guests would retire to bedrooms on the second and third floors. Some houses were elegantly and richly appointed, featuring banquet and billiard rooms, music and dance halls, and even ballrooms. An 1896 auction advertisement in the *Rocky Mountain News* describes the furnishings of a parlor house at 2148 Market Street, with its superb parlor suites upholstered in silk brocatelle and satin damask; a rich-toned upright piano; a fine music box; costly onyx and brass stands; brass easels and an elegant collection of paintings, etchings, and steels; and an elegant quarter-oak Windsor folding bed.

A parlor house could employ as many as twenty women, who were expected to be talented and attractive, and to lend an air of civility and class to the establishment. Houses would also employ servants, musicians, and a bouncer—sometimes himself a musician, referred to as "The Professor," who was both entertainment and security. Wealthy patrons paid from thirty to one hundred dollars or more a night, and could expect well-dressed women in the latest styles ordered from the East or sewn by hired dressmakers.

Patrons were discerning, and would also expect good liquor. In *Brides of the Multitude*, historian Jeremy Agnew notes that spirits, fine wine, and champagne were crucial to parlor house profits and they were sold at huge mark-ups—as much as five or six times the wholesale cost. He describes champagne being sold at as much as thirty dollars per bottle, in a time when a miner only made three dollars per day and cowboys were making less than a dollar per day.

Dancing with plenty of high-kicks and leg shows, or music and singing by the women of the house would

A group photograph of sex workers known as "Mamie's Darlings" that worked at 1959 Market Street in Denver. *Fred M. Mazzulla Collection. History Colorado. 2022.57.8546*

provide suitable entertainment for clients. Minnie Clifford kept a parlor house at 512 Holladay Street where the cancan show was so infamous that it was featured in the *National Police Gazette*, a national tabloid newspaper, in 1880.

> In this beautiful city of the West the devil is fast gaining ground. Drunkenness and prostitution are becoming alarmingly prevalent, and if not checked, will make Denver on a par with the worst cities in the Union in vice. The neighborhood of Halliday [*sic*] Street is the stronghold of sin. The stranger, no matter where he comes from, if his tendencies are evil, gravitates toward this locality as naturally as a duck takes to water. On this street are located the fashionable palaces of sin, the most notorious of which is presided over by Madam Minnie Clifford, who takes pride in saying that she is the only Madam in Denver in whose house the infamous dance known as the "Can Can" [*sic*] is performed. She openly boasts that her best patrons are married men, many of them bald-headed and grey, who frequently remain till three o'clock in the morning…Those who have seen these dances say that they excel in lewdness anything ever witnessed in this city. They are orgies which would delight the basest tastes.

Madams like Minnie Clifford paid all the expenses of running the house. They billed themselves as "landladies" who ran "female boarding houses" for propriety's sake. The rooms were kept by the boarders who paid upwards of half their earnings back to the house, which covered room and board (possibly including the cost of their uniforms), laundry, security, and other domestic necessities. As such, they were perpetually in debt to the house's madam. On the upside, unlike working on the street, parlor houses afforded women a relatively safe place to work where they didn't have to dodge the police, thanks to madams who kept the law at bay with bribes and the means to pay off fines. In some of the better houses, women were

Madam Anna "Gouldie" Gould's boarders lined up in front of a tapestry. *Fred M. Mazzulla Collection. History Colorado. 2022.57.8060*

paid a flat salary, in the neighborhood one hundred fifty dollars to two hundred fifty dollars per week, compared to the twenty-four dollars a month one might make as a seamstress. Madams were seen as shrewd business women who conducted financial transactions, negotiated legal agreements, hired and paid house staff, and were responsible for the overall management of the house.

Advertising the entertainments of the house was also part of the madam's job. She might pass out business cards and formal invitations to private events, in addition to arranging horse races, water fights, and public pillow fights between her boarders. Hiring marching bands to promote their houses, driving horse-drawn buggies to show off the newest boarders (always dressed in their finest), and hosting discount nights were other popular marketing events designed to spark interest in her business—in spite of ordinances prohibiting sex workers from driving, riding, or making an appearance on the city's principal streets.

Though many may have preferred that the industry market itself more quietly, the spectacles were designed to be nearly impossible to miss. For example, in 1892, five enterprising madams were advertising the amenities of their establishments in *A Reliable Directory of the Pleasure Resorts of Denver*, also known as the *Denver Red Book*. Published to correspond with the national Knights Templar conclave held in Denver and the opening of the Brown Palace Hotel, it was a handy, pocket-sized guidebook to Market Street's many diversions. At 2015 Market Street, Jennie Holmes offered twenty-three rooms, three parlors, two ballrooms, fifteen boarders, and assured potential customers that they would find "everything correct." Down the block at 1952 Market Street, Belle Birnard advertised twelve boarders, fourteen rooms, two parlors, and boasted that everything in her establishment was "strictly first class in every respect." And next door, Minnie A. Hall's house at 1950 Market Street boasted an impressive thirty rooms, five parlors, a Mikado Parlor (a room lavishly decorated in the Japanese style made popular by the Gilbert and Sullivan opera *Mikado*), twenty boarders, and bid a "cordial welcome to strangers."

Historian Jeremy Agnew noted that madams were not usually active sex workers themselves, but were more often independent business women who owned and operated one or several houses—sometimes in partnership with investors. Mattie Silks maintained houses on Market Street for forty years. Friends described Mattie as "well-upholstered and an accomplished hell-raiser," according to Clark Secrest's *Hell's Belles*. In a 1928 interview with a reporter from the *Rocky Mountain News*, Mattie said "I went into the sporting life for business reasons and for no other. It was a way for a woman in those days to make money, and I made it. I considered myself then and I do now—as a business woman."

The allures of Market Street certainly attracted tourists and their money to the city. But madams themselves played a vital role in supporting the local economy through liquor and food purchases, as well as all of the other goods and services that came with running a well-appointed house. Profits from the sex trade also lined the city's coffers with money for liquor licenses and fines in violation of running a disorderly house—while bribes to policemen and politicians helped keep their doors open. "Commercial sex was good for both the city and legitimate businesses," Clark Secrest writes. He notes that economically, sex work was a source of income to the police, procurers, madams, doctors, politicians, and liquor interests, and goes on to say that the madams of Market Street maintained intimate and influential relationships with city fathers and municipal leaders. Whenever churches, schools, and other civic institutions found themselves in need, madams delivered their share of funding, considering it the cost of doing business.

But not all women on The Row worked in the luxurious surroundings afforded by madams like the "Queen" of Market Street, Mattie Silks. For every woman who worked in a parlor house, dozens more worked in the sometimes-seedy environs of a Market Street brothel.

"Brothel" is the general term for places where at least two gals hung out their shingles, indicating they were open for business. In the 1870s, the morally upright ladies of East Denver deemed the shingles so lewd that they attempted to eliminate such signs along Market Street. But according to local lore, the women of The Row responded with placards reading "Men Taken In and Done For."

"Meretricious displays" were apparently quite effective at enticing customers along The Row, and newspapers teemed with reports of living window advertisements. Two French women, Miss Bertha and Miss Sarah, were arrested for making tawdry displays from the windows of their houses. In mid-March 1884, six women were charged with undue solicitation and meretricious display; the *Rocky Mountain News* reported that "Their offense consisted in keeping the curtains of the windows in front of their premises constantly raised and showing themselves gaudily dressed, after being repeatedly warned against the practices." While the *Denver Republican* described a Market Street habitue arrested for the very dramatic meretricious display of wearing a "flaming red silk dress, red hat, red shoes and stockings, carrying a red fan and leading a poodle having been dyed red on a red leash." French poodles were very popular with the Market Street set according to Clark Secrest, and were so identified with the filles de joie that no respectable woman would own one.

While the high-end parlor houses offered cozy companionship to erudite clientele, low-end brothels were more concerned with customer volume. According to historian Ruth Rosen, although descriptions are rare, middle-class brothels were common and were kept by women who represented the local population and served the average working man. She describes the women as having been born in

America and "who had come from broken down farms and small ranches, some [of whom] had been deserted by railroad brakemen or boss carpenters who moved on, leaving them with no rent, money, or food."

Such brothels were shabby and might charge by the quarter hour. Others used prepaid tokens or brass checks purchased from the lady of the house and then exchanged for services. Jeremy Agnew notes that much of the sex work in the West took place in these common brothels and cribs. Cribs were small one-or two-room shacks, sometimes squeezed in between larger establishments with the front door opening directly onto the street. Unlike working in a parlor house or brothel where the rent was paid by the proprietress of the house, albeit out of the wages of the women who worked there, women working in cribs were personally responsible for raising and paying rent directly to the owner of the crib. Although often squalid, crib rents were around fifteen to twenty-five dollars a week. In *Denver's Disorderly Women*, historian Cheryl Siebert estimates that between 1870 and 1900 there were about six hundred women working as crib girls.

Dressed in low-necked, knee-length spangled dresses or loose-fitting, easily removed white Mother Hubbard gowns, crib girls would call from their doorways, "Come on in, dearie." If that wasn't enough enticement, they might snatch a gent's hat and throw it into their crib, snagging a customer as he went in to fetch it. Women there sold companionship from twenty-five cents to two dollars an encounter—with an average of twenty or thirty customers a day. On a busy day, like payday for miners or cowhands who thronged to Denver to "see the elephant" in the slang of the day, a crib girl might have as many as fifty customers. Profit lay in volume and efficiency. Men lined up outside of cribs with their money in one hand and their hat in the other. Boots were kept on.

About ten percent of Denver's sex workers were women of color. The Row was largely segregated, and the red-light district was home to brothels and "two-bit" houses that employed Black women who catered to both Black and white clientele. However, parlor houses and brothels in the white sections of the tenderloin did employ Black women as boarders and domestic workers. The red-light district, heartbreakingly, was also home to Chinese women whose families unwittingly contracted them to traffickers thinking they were sending their daughters to better lives and opportunities in the United States. Forced into indentured sex work, they were expected to sign contracts promising to sell their bodies until they paid off their debt for the cost of passage and boarding. Any days they couldn't work—sick days, days of their menstrual cycles, and even pregnancy—were tacked on to their obligation.

Commercial sex work offered many women a means of survival and better wages than that of menial factory work or other low-wage occupations, but it also exposed them to physical risk and emotional strain. Brutality at the hands of customers was frequent, as was police harassment. Crib girls and low-end brothel workers were also more susceptible to illnesses like tuberculosis and malnutrition. Ruth Rosen points out that the squalor of their surroundings, combined with the quantity of customers women served, made working in common brothels and cribs an intolerable and debilitating experience. "Getting burned," the slang for contracting a venereal infection, and pregnancy were risks of the profession. To avoid infection and pregnancy, women would cleanse themselves between customers with mercuric cyanide, carbolic acid, or bichloride of mercury, all of which we now know to be highly toxic.

CLEANING UP THE ROW

The Row on Market Street would have been quite the scene in the late 1800s. The smell of stale booze and opium smoke wafted about, while the sounds of piano music, fighting, and gunshots echoed around the streets and alleyways. Scantily clad women called down to prospective customers—shocking passersby and affronting those trying to live on the straight and narrow path.

For the merchants, businesses, respectable boarding houses, and even family residences existing alongside the parlor houses, brothels, and cribs of Market Street, the sense of lawlessness led to demands to crack down on The Row. In fits and spurts, responding to public pressure, the city began attempting to impose some kind of order. Raids and mass arrests in houses of ill-repute began in the 1880s, but fines were a more common (and more lucrative) recourse. The City of Denver made more than a thousand dollars in January 1880 alone, much of that coming from the women keeping "lewd houses" and those who violated liquor licenses.

By the 1890s, at the urging of the city's so-called respectable ladies, Denver issued an edict urging the women of The Row to wear yellow ribbons on their arms, lest they be mistaken for polite society's women of upstanding moral virtue. In response, the madams and their girls dressed head to toe in eye-catching yellow costumes. And in an act of unity, they defiantly marched into restaurants and other public places where "respectable" folk gathered. The protest was effective and the rule was eventually repealed.

By the turn of the century, in March of 1908, District Attorney Stidger had enough of the brothels, and launched a raid on the cribs of The Row. As the *Rocky Mountain News* reported:

> Wherever these fallen women and their masters go in Denver he [Stidger] will have them hunted down and arrested on the charge of vagrancy. If they seek refuge in lodging houses, the lodging houses giving them shelter will be treated as houses of prostitution, declares Stidger. As soon as anyone notifies him that women or men fleeing from the redlight district have taken refuge in other portions of the community, he will arrest them. And the town will be made so warm for them that they will be glad to leave.

Some women flocked to neighboring hotels. Some left town, going to ranches owned by friends, to Pueblo, or to Salt Lake—but many of the women were left penniless and without shelter when the cribs closed. Curious onlookers thronged Market Street to see the dispossessed women of the red-light district leave their homes and livelihood behind.

But the ladies of The Row wouldn't be so easily displaced. It came as little surprise that the demand for sex workers was still as strong as ever, so it wasn't long before many of the closed cribs and brothels came back or were reopened. Madam Mattie Silks purchased and operated the House of Mirrors in 1911, the most opulent of Market Street parlor houses, even while Denver Mayor Robert Speer was under pressure to do something about the cribs. In 1912, the Mayor ordered the cribs along The Row torn down. Some sources say that The Row was "effectively" closed between 1914 and 1915, and in 1918 the US Army was brought in to completely shutter Market Street. Most of the parlor houses, brothels, and saloons were razed or repurposed as warehouses,and nearly 300 women found themselves without means of support. Perhaps it comes as little surprise that, as reform movements gained momentum, the circumstances that led women to choose sex work over the limited choices of more respectable occupations were not magically resolved. Sex work in Denver never was eradicated; it just moved to other areas of the city, operating clandestinely out of private homes and hotels or openly along other thoroughfares of the city.

STORIES ECHOING FROM THE PAST

The women of Denver's Row represent a microcosm of nineteenth-century American society. It flourished with its own values, class structure, political economy, and cultural and social relations. While violence, dispair, and death stalked the women of The Row, sex work afforded them a chance at financial and personal independence when few options or opportunities existed.

Although hidden in the shadows of Western history, their stories are no less important than those more popularly documented. In the women of The Row, we recognize struggle, empathy, and humanity resonating across the divides of class and time. Looking back at their lives, we see people who helped build the city and create its character. Their marginalization and relative silence in the historical record tells us as much about the times they lived in as those who have dismissed their stories as unimportant or sensational ever since. But by recognizing their humanity and understanding their circumstances free from the moralizing judgements that have been levied against them, we find these women of Denver, and their stories, worthy of remembrance.

Bird's-eye view of Denver from the northwest looking southeast, 1874.
History Colorado. G4314.D4A3 1874.G5a

Coors Country: How Colorado's Golden Brewery Grew Up with Its Home State

BY SAM BOCK AND JASON L. HANSON

150 years after its founding in 1873, we're taking a look back at how Coors Brewing Company led the way out of Prohibition and helped create modern Colorado.

The city of Golden bubbled with activity day and night through the first week of April 1933. The Coors Brewery —where Prohibition had prevented production of anything stronger than malted milk since 1916—was finally and once again making its "fine light beer." Locomotives delivered loads of empty bottles to the brewery (more than 750,000 arrived that week alone) while 125 men worked around the clock in badly needed Great-Depression-era jobs.

At a minute past midnight on Friday, April 7, a special train pulling twenty-one refrigerated cars chugged out of the brewery with more than 18,000 cases of Coors beer destined for thirsty cities across Colorado. At the same time, a fleet of more than seventy fully-loaded delivery trucks drove out of the brewery gates. A special patrol from the Jefferson County Sheriff met them, stationed along the route to keep roads clear and protect the shipments from anyone tempted to theft. After more than eighteen years of illegality, beer was once again available to residents of the Centennial State. Or at least to those who could get their hands on one of the coveted cases.

Of the state's forty-four pre-Prohibition breweries, only four survived the dry times. And only Coors continued making beer through the rest of the twentieth century. Trinidad's P.H. Schneider struggled on under several different names and owners until the brewery doors shut for good in 1957. Tivoli in Denver darkened its canning line in 1969, marking the (fortunately temporary) end of the second-oldest continuously operating brewery in the United States. And the beloved-by-many Walter Brewing Company in Pueblo turned off its brew kettles in 1975 (though the brand has since been revived).

As its competitors fell away, Coors continued to thrive. Throughout the late twentieth century, its marketing and the mystique born of its rarity outside the seven states where it was sold made Coors beer practically synonymous with the Rocky Mountain West. By the 2000s, Coors was near the top of its popularity, regularly outselling offerings from bigger volume brewers like Budweiser and Miller. Even with the rise of craft beer, Coors maintained its mystique and enjoyed a massive sales lead over all of the most popular of Colorado's craft competitors.

A young Adolph Coors, one of the many German immigrants who arrived here in the late 1800s bringing their beer and beer culture to Colorado. *Courtesy of Coors*

Its path to prominence was bumpy. It survived the long dry years of Prohibition, bounced between scandals, and successfully weathered the many controversies stemming from the Coors family's divisive politics to come out on top. Amid shifting tastes and changing economics that transformed Colorado in the decades after the repeal of Prohibition, Coors remained the Golden brewery with the Midas touch. The story of Colorado's largest brewery in the twentieth century and the eponymous family that built it offers a window—a golden, effervescent window—into the forces that shaped modern Colorado. Coors was there for it all, and in many ways, the Coors story is the story of Colorado beer—and of Colorado—for most of the twentieth century.

TASTE THE HIGH COUNTRY

American beer palates shifted lighter after Prohibition. The kaleidoscope of flavorful ales and different styles of lager Coloradans enjoyed in the early 1900s pretty much went extinct by 1933, leaving behind only the most popular pre-Prohibition style beers. That's why the vast majority of the beers being poured after Prohibition were lighter lagers, which were also by far the most popular in the country before they were outlawed nationwide in 1920. So by and large, when Americans thought about drinking a nice cold beer as Prohibition drew to a close, they were overwhelmingly thinking about the light effervescent lagers German immigrants like Adolph Coors brought to the US in the latter half of the 1800s.

Always known for its light flavor, Coors Banquet Beer was exactly what many Americans were looking for after Prohibition's repeal in 1933. Light, drinkable, and not too bitter, it was appealing to a nation of aspiring drinkers who had lost their taste for the more complex brews enjoyed by pre-Prohibition aficionados. Ready on the first day of legal sales, Coors flowed from all the taps the brewery could supply as its midnight convoys fanned out around the state and the Rocky Mountain West. Its ubiquity in Denver and along the Front Range allowed the Banquet Beer to quickly dominate the home market. But unlike the Midwestern brewers that would become its main competitors after World War II, it wasn't marketing that made Coors a household name in the decades after Repeal. By all indications, its popularity was (at least initially) a genuine reflection of how much people liked the beer.

The Coors family had never done much advertising for their product before Prohibition, relying mostly on consumer demand and a growing population throughout the West to drive expansion. Whereas the nation's other industrial brewers devoted up to three dollars of the cost of every barrel they made to marketing, Coors only spent around seventy cents per barrel. Anheuser-Busch, Schlitz, Miller, and Pabst grew their distribution networks to become national brands shipping coast to coast, but Coors focused on selling its beer in only a select number of western states. While most American brewers were embracing pasteurization to make their beers shelf-stable and chemical agents to age them, Coors relied on old-fashioned methods to ensure the quality remained. As competitors filled the market with a variety of beers designed to satisfy every niche, Coors abandoned styles like light, bock, and amber lagers in order to focus on its flagship original recipe.

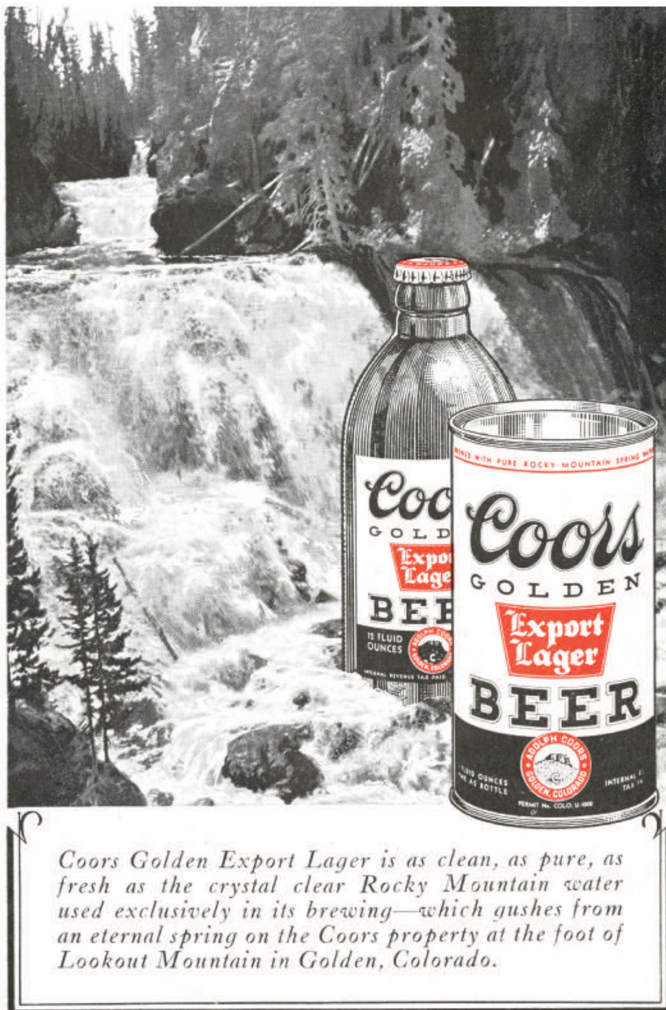
Always known for its light flavor, Coors Banquet Beer was exactly what many Americans were looking for after Prohibition's repeal in 1933.

The company even shelved its new "Coors Light" offering in the early 1940s after only a year of brewing it, keeping the brand locked in the archives until it was reborn as the Silver Bullet in 1978.

In these ways, Coors set itself apart from other large regional breweries and bucked the trends that transformed the brewing landscape all around it. Like Colorado brewers before Prohibition, the family-run brewery in Golden was selling all of the beer it could make, and didn't bother worrying about things like market share or competition from brewers with larger distribution networks. According to company lore, the quality of their crisp light lager and a robust regional network of distributors kept sales strong, and for more than a century the Coors family found success in doing what they had always done—brewing a "fine light beer."

By the late 1950s, Coors was the top seller in all eleven states west of the Mississippi in which it was distributed. Brewery chairman Bill Coors—a trained engineer and the third generation of the Coors family to run the company—insisted that the product should speak for itself and reinvested in quality. To ensure it delivered the experience consumers had come to expect,

A watercolor depicting the Coors brewery as it looked in 1884, about a decade after Adolph Coors and Jacob Schueler repurposed an old tannery along the banks of Clear Creek in Golden, Colorado. *Courtesy of Coors.*



This 1936 ad was part of a long Coors marketing tradition of convincing customers that its beer was special because of the natural splendor of the Colorado high country. *Courtesy of Coors.*

Coors developed a cold-filtering process as an alternative to pasteurization that kept packaged beer cold and sterile, rather than subjecting it to flavor-damaging heat. Cold filtering, the company said, allowed customers to bring home keg-quality beer—something that was impossible with pasteurized beers in cans or bottles. But cold-filtering came at a price. It meant Coors beer needed to be continually refrigerated from brewery to backyard, a fact that layered logistical constraints on the company's predilection to keep distribution close to home.

Cold filtering and (depending on whom you asked) the taste of the beer itself distinguished Coors from its competition during the 1960s, and enhanced the company's reputation for putting product quality above expanding sales. Of course, eschewing marketing was itself an especially potent form of marketing in the 1960s and '70s as customers turned away from industrialized food and beverage production and toward niche products that came with a regional identity.

By the late-1970s, Coors had taken on a legendary quality among American beer drinkers. The Golden brewery had climbed the industry's ranks to become the fourth-largest brewery in America, even though its beer was still sold (legally) in only thirteen western states. Luminaries throughout the 1970s (including actor Paul Newman and President Gerald Ford) were known to raise a glass. And the *New York Times* observed that Coors had "won a reputation as the elixir of beers, the brew of Presidents, a prize to be smuggled into the East." The author of one popular treatise on beer at the time gushed that "Coors has gone all the way for quality… it must be handled almost like milk." *Time* magazine called it the "Chateau Haut-Brion of American Beers," putting it on a footing with France's most legendary wines. Even Hollywood offered a cinematic toast to Coors's mystique with *Smokey and the Bandit*, a 1977 box office hit that chronicled Burt Reynolds's highway hijinks as he bootlegged a truckload of Coors from Texas (the farthest east it was legally sold) to Georgia, winning a bet and Sally Field's heart in the process. Off screen, bootleg cases of Banquet Beer smuggled to the East Coast in the early 1970s fetched many times their retail price, often for beer spoiled by poor climate control.

Even in 1978 as Coors began, slowly and sometimes reluctantly, to expand its marketing budget and its distribution outside the West, it held on to its Rocky Mountain mystique. What little marketing the company did usually traded on the mythic purity and beauty of the place where it was brewed. The slogan "brewed with Rocky Mountain spring water" dates to the 1930s, and was featured in the company's first-ever television spots. Though many brewers touted their water as the special ingredient that set their beer apart from others, Coors advertising leaned heavily on Colorado's snowy high-country reputation to show (rather than tell) consumers what made its beer different. In one of the company's early forays into the world of television marketing, an advertisement from the 1950s describes how the purity of snowmelt from Colorado's granite peaks accumulates in tiny crystal pools, and that the water's purity is echoed in the "clean, refreshing taste of Coors—a product of the high country."

Subsequent advertising spanning more than seven decades repeatedly drew a connection between the beauty of the Rocky Mountain scenery and the quality of Coors beer. The messaging stuck, and as Coors expanded its distribution and its marketing budget, the idea that Colorado was a special place with special beer went out across the nation—branding not only the beer, but the Centennial State along with it.

"This is the reason there is only one Coors brewery in the world," college-football-star-turned-actor Mark Harmon explained to the nation's television watchers in 1985 as he hiked along a snowy creek near Guanella Pass in the mountains west of Denver. Ducking under a snow-laden branch, Harmon got to the point: "When this snow melts, it'll flow through miles of porous rock and sand. This natural filtration helps create a clarity, a purity that's so remarkable, Coors doesn't have to do a thing to their water. Rocky Mountain spring water. Helps give Coors a difference worth tasting."

Another 1985 spot had Harmon standing in a field of golden barley, the silhouette of mountains on the horizon behind him, explaining that "most brewers buy their barley, but one's different. One brewer grows all its own barley, and has for over forty years." If Rocky Mountain spring water gave Coors its purity, "high country barley" grown with that water in the shadow of mountain peaks gave it its richness.

Advertising that extolled the virtues of Rocky Mountain spring water and high country barley made it clear that the allure of scarcity, the sheen of celebrity endorsements, and the beer's fine light flavor were not the only things that made Coors popular with its customers. As the company more fully embraced advertising in the late 1970s, it continued relying on this association, linking its beer to Colorado's extraordinary landscapes and the rugged individualism of the mythic West.

Colorado was a good brand to be associated with during the 1970s and '80s. As John Denver's ode to the "Rocky Mountain High" topped the charts in 1972 and '73, the state experienced its largest spike in population growth since the decades of gold and silver rushes a century before. Many of the new residents came for the benefits of living in the Rocky Mountains—the starry skies John Denver sang about on the radio and the snow-clad peaks Mark Harmon extolled on television. By portraying Coors as a uniquely Colorado product, memorable advertisements added to the mystique by reinforcing the notion that the beer was special because of its place of origin. And it didn't hurt that commercials featuring Harmon hiking in the snow or pulling a Coors out of a crystal-clear mountain lake also encouraged beer drinkers to bring a cold can of Coors along when they headed outside to enjoy the West's natural beauty, encouraging the easy-to-embrace habit of Coloradans bringing a cold can of beer into the backcountry with each outdoor activity.

CASH FOR CANS

More than simply cheering outdoor recreation, Coors also heralded the era's growing environmental ethos by developing the beverage industry's first aluminum cans. Searching for an alternative to steel cans, which were expensive and liable to leak and to produce off-flavors in beer, Coors debuted the nation's first mass-produced two-piece aluminum beer cans in 1959. The new two-piece aluminum cans sealed better than the three-piece steel cans brewers used throughout the early twentieth century, so the new cans better protected the beer's flavor. As a bonus, aluminum's infinite recyclability meant that if the brewery collected enough used cans, it could stop purchasing aluminum slugs and begin manufacturing its own from recycled materials. Recycling would cut costs and allow the company to simultaneously boost its image as stewards of Colorado's spectacular environment (especially that Rocky Mountain spring water) by instituting a can buy-back program—a public relations perk touted as a design element that the *Denver Post* later called a "salvage feature aimed at cutting down litter."

Cutting down litter was important, as empty beer cans had become such a common sight littering the nation's highways and scenic places that they were often invoked as a symbol of America's wasteful consumer culture. In Colorado, caretakers at mountain parks along the Front Range complained of the piles of empties left behind by outdoor partygoers, residents of mountain towns worried that beer cans and other trash along the road would hurt tourism, and the state's chief highway engineer lamented how much time maintenance crews wasted repairing flat tires popped by shrapnel when their mowers ran over another beer can.

Discarded beer cans were emblematic of a society with so much material wealth that consumers did not give a second thought to the problem of waste.

By the 1940s, Coors had invested in a fleet of refrigerated trucks like this one to ensure its unpasteurized beer stayed cold and fresh from brewery to backyard. *Denver Public Library Special Collections. X-10018*

Beer cans were such a symbol of the litter problem that a popular 1961 book about the issue was titled *The Beer Can by the Highway: Essays on What's American About America*. The author, Barnard College Professor John A. Kouwenhoven, drew national attention to the litter problem, and particularly to the beer can's contribution to mounting garbage, arguing that discarded beer cans were emblematic of a society with so much material wealth that consumers did not give a second thought to the problem of waste. The book tapped into a growing number of Americans' fears about pollution, concerns that were propelling the American environmental movement toward political prominence.

Bill Coors acknowledged the bad optics of so many beer cans—often emblazoned with his family name—littering otherwise pristine-looking western places he enjoyed visiting himself: "Beer cans along the highways, in the parks and at picnic grounds have become a major public relations problem for the brewing industry," he explained to Denver's *Rocky Mountain News* in 1955. "We think the answer may lie in returnable aluminum cans," he continued, outlining the company's efforts to develop a better beer can.

When the company introduced the aluminum beer can a few years later in 1959, news reports relayed the company's hope that the can's recyclability—and the incentive of a penny per can to those returning them—"will help reduce litter on highways and picnic grounds."

His hope was quickly realized, and by 1965, Coors was boasting that it had brought home sixty million empties after consumers had enjoyed their contents. In Colorado and Wyoming, the heart of Coors Country, more than eighty-five percent of the company's cans were being returned. "For our part we regard it as an investment in preserving the native beauty of our country," a company spokesperson told the *Rocky Mountain News*. "We're proud you seldom find a Coors aluminum can along the roadside or marring the approaches to a trout stream."

In 1970, as more and more brewers and other beverage makers adopted Coors's aluminum can design, the company expanded its recycling efforts. Coors launched a "Cash for Cans" program that paid consumers to return their used aluminum cans regardless of who had made them, giving all consumers an incentive beyond environmentalism to stop tossing empties to the side of the road. Speaking to the *Rocky Mountain News* in January 1970, Bill Coors explained that "aluminum is the best possible answer to litter because it is salvageable."

Not only that: By recycling aluminum rather than buying new supplies, the company could save on the cost of raw materials. Thanks in large part to Coors's efforts, by 1985 Colorado led the nation in aluminum can recycling. Touting the company's leadership in the "full-scale effort to keep America clean and inviting," Coors bolstered its bottom line and its brand at the same time, ensuring its appeal to a growing segment of the middle class falling in love with the outdoors and justifiably concerned about ecological legacies. Coors's strong identity as a uniquely Colorado company fit well with this environmental ethos. By the same token, Coors advertising showcased an appealing version of the Rocky Mountain lifestyle and cultivated a western cachet that helped establish Colorado's brand in the minds of Americans throughout the country during the second half of the twentieth century.

The contours of the state we know today echo the Colorado that appeared on television and the radio thanks to Coors (and John Denver). With state and federal investment in highways providing unprecedented access to alpine amenities, it was easier than ever for tourists and homeseekers alike to enjoy a taste of the Rockies. Half a million people liked Colorado so much that they decided to move here in the 1960s and '70s, increasing the state's population by twenty-five percent in just ten years. By the 1980s, the word was out: Colorado was a great place to live, and to drink beer. And Americans flocked to Coors Country en masse.

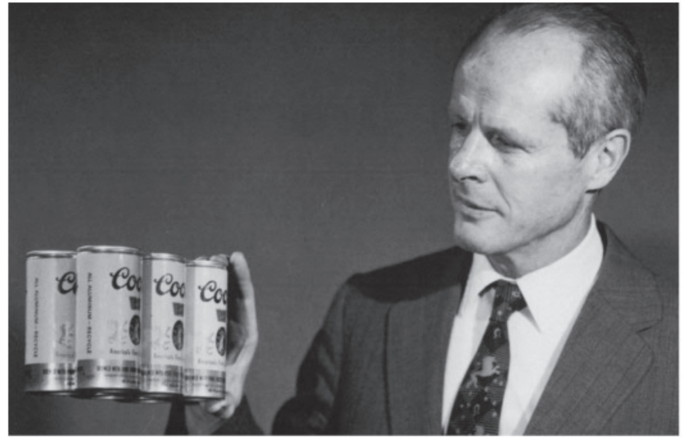
Between 1945 and 1956, the "Beer Belongs" series (also known as "Home Life in America") created over 100 advertisements featuring Americans enjoying beer in a variety of familiar settings. *Courtesy of The Beer Institute*

BEER IN THE 'BURBS

As Americans entered the decades of optimism and prosperity that followed years of economic depression and World War II, pent-up demand for new housing and cars fueled suburban construction booms across the country. For millions of Americans, (particularly white military veterans supported by the GI Bill, government mortgage programs, and other financial benefits not extended to Black soldiers), the American dream of homeownership was suddenly within reach. But whereas railroad and streetcar lines had shaped growing cities during earlier generations, highways drove post-war growth—literally. The individualized mobility long-range automobiles afforded some families allowed them to purchase homes far from the city center, fueling demand for single-family dwellings, but also fueling white flight and disinvestment in communities of color that were left behind.

In Colorado, a significant portion of the economic growth underpinning suburban expansion was fueled by federal government spending related to countering the perceived threat of Communism during the Cold War. Particularly along the Front Range, the US government expanded military installations like the Fort Carson Army Base in Colorado Springs, the Pueblo Ordnance Depot, and the Rocky Mountain Arsenal near Denver. The feds also built new facilities such as the Air Force Academy and the Air Defense Command in Colorado Springs, the Rocky Flats nuclear plant between Golden and Boulder, and the Federal Center in Lakewood (on the site of the old Denver Ordnance Plant). Scientific labs were established near Boulder, including the National Center for Atmospheric Research and a branch of the National Bureau of Standards. These agencies took advantage of the brainpower concentrated at the nearby University of Colorado, which also flourished with each new grant. In all, federal defense and research spending accounted for more than twenty percent of Colorado's revenue between 1952 and 1962. That figure was amplified by the arrival of defense and technology companies, and by federally funded projects like the construction of interstate highways.

Colorado's population surged alongside all of this investment, and good-paying jobs weren't the only thing bringing people here. A growing appreciation for the state's natural amenities helped attract a rush of new residents during the Cold War decades. In the twenty years between 1950 and 1970, the number of Coloradans grew from 1.3 million to 2.2 million. Most of the new residents settled near Denver. Suburban communities expanded from what had been small farming or mining settlements, or simply emerged as new intentionally planned towns, as folks found their own slice of the American dream in the vast tracts of single-family homes built in places with names like Thornton, Aurora, Lakewood, Westminster, and Littleton. These suburbs added nearly 560,000 new residents during that period, while the population of Denver proper increased by fewer than



Brewery Chairman Bill Coors, with the seven-ounce aluminum beer cans he helped pioneer in 1959. It was the nation's first large-scale aluminum beer canning operation. *Donated to the Denver Public Library by* The Rocky Mountain News.

100,000— a demographic shift that fundamentally re-shaped the character of Colorado's Front Range and revealed the racial boundaries these new suburbs intentionally drew around their communities.

White communities on every side of Denver, which the real estate industry's redlining practices ensured were out of reach to most people of color, expanded dramatically outward while a growing network of highways linked them into an interconnected metropolitan area. When the Denver-Boulder Turnpike opened in 1952, Boulder was a sleepy university town of just over 20,000 residents, including University of Colorado students. By 1970, however, the highway had linked it conveniently with the burgeoning metropolitan area, and Boulder's population more than tripled to 66,870. Nearly 14,000 travelers each day were paying the twenty-five-cent toll to go back and forth on the turnpike between Denver and Boulder. All across the new metropolitan area, suburbs appeared offering three- and four-bedroom homes with around 1,000 square feet for about thirteen thousand dollars. But the combination of high prices (for that time) and racist real estate practices discouraged (and sometimes actively prevented) non-white people from moving there.

As people in Colorado and throughout the country headed out to the suburbs, beer followed them home. In 1945, a trade group of brewers calling themselves the United States Brewers Foundation launched an advertising campaign aimed at depicting the ways in which "Beer Belongs" at home. Between 1945 and 1956, the "Beer Belongs" series (also known as "Home Life in America") created over 100 advertisements featuring Americans enjoying beer in a variety of familiar settings like backyard barbecues, family gatherings, gameday parties, and vacation spots.

Created by some of the best commercial artists and illustrators of the day, the ads ran in popular magazines such as *Time*, *The Saturday Evening Post*, *Collier's*, *U.S. News*, and more. Each idyllic vignette featured white middle-class men and women enjoying leisure time and beers together, and

most featured larger groups of smiling friends and family with even numbers of men and women. Prohibition had only been over for a little more than two decades, and every ad insisted that "Beer Belongs," often appealing to patriotism and the hunky-dory post-war optimism flooding the country: "In this friendly, freedom-loving land of ours—beer belongs. . . enjoy it!" Many also reminded viewers, emphatically, that beer is "America's Beverage of Moderation."

Advertisements with longer copy extolled beer's role in the good life at home in America:

> "In this home-loving land of ours. . . in this America of kindliness, of friendship, of good-humored tolerance. . . perhaps no beverages are more 'at home' on more occasions than good American beer and ale. For beer and ale are the kind of beverages Americans like. They belong—to pleasant living, to good fellowship, to sensible moderation. And our right to enjoy it, this too belongs—to our own American heritage of personal freedom."

Themes of domesticity, freedom, and patriotism were especially resonant during the Cold War years, and the strategy worked spectacularly well. In 1940, fewer than half of American families had been in the habit of bringing beer home to drink. But by 1950—five years into the "Beer Belongs" campaign—that the share had risen to two-thirds of the nation's households. And in beer's new domestic setting, women were enjoying it along with men. By 1954, the Brewers Foundation was reporting that four in ten women nationwide drank beer, accounting for twenty-two percent of all beer consumers.

The Brown Berets marching in Denver during the boycott against Coors in 1973. They were protesting racially-biased hiring and promotion practices at the Golden brewery. *Photo by Juan Espanosa, History Colorado. 2016.87.16*

The basic strategies and trends established after Repeal were carried forward and amplified through the 1950s, '60s, and '70s, as sales of bottles and cans climbed to eighty percent of all beer. But people of color were notably absent from the "Beer Belongs" ads. Out of more than 100 unique advertisements, not one features a person of color. The implicit message from the brewing industry was that, even though non-white people may have been able to buy beer, the ability to drink it in the backyard of their own homes was going to continue to be out of reach for many. Coors was not part of the "Beer Belongs" campaign, but the decision other brewers made to market to an audience of white Americans who were abandoning city centers for highway-connected suburbs reflected very real racial tensions that would come to a head in Colorado during the 1960s and '70s, and in many ways persist to this very day.

As Colorado entered the latter half of the twentieth century, many of its residents were riding high on what seemed to be an unprecedented wave of optimism and prosperity in comfortable suburban homes. People of color may not have been so lucky—for many in Colorado's non-white communities, beer advertisements were yet another reminder of the discrimination they faced in choosing where to live and work. So even while beer was held up as a great way to celebrate the good life, it had also become a symbol of the ways the American Dream wasn't available to all.

"CHICANOS STOP BUYING COORS!"

Coors may have been a darling of the beer world during the 1960s and '70s, but not everyone was in love. In the late 1960s, activists in Colorado's Chicano Civil Rights Movement, known as *El Movimiento*, were calling for a boycott of Coors to protest unfair hiring and promotion practices at the brewery. Labor unions, gay and lesbian groups, the NAACP, and other civil rights organizations in Colorado and around the nation joined the boycott, all citing unfair or discriminatory treatment. By the 1990s, running skirmishes with unions and a change in the brewery's leadership brought about a major shift in company policies that reflected a reorientation of the relationship between consumers and companies. With social consciousness on the rise and in vogue during the era's push to expand civil rights to all Americans, consumers took to voting with their wallets, making clear their expectations that companies commit to supporting racial equity. Corporations large and small across the country found themselves subjected to boycotts because of discriminatory labor policies, and some of these boycotts—like the one targeting Coors—would live on for decades.

The protests of the 1960s and '70s were by no means the first time Coors found itself at the center of controversy. Notoriously unfriendly to the cause of organized labor, the Coors Brewing Company had long tangled with strikers: What was an initially irksome labor dispute over worker pay grew into a full-blown strike in 1890 when the company initially refused to meet its workers' demands. Crisis was averted and workers were back on the production line the next day after the company grudgingly agreed to a thirty-cent raise and a guaranteed ten-hour workday. But the specter of labor unrest had risen, and would continue looming over the Golden brewery for the next half-century. Negotiations with workers devolved into strikes with some regularity over the years, and the brewery's management grew increasingly impatient with each disruption. "For years we have been harassed by the union," remarked Grover C. Coors in a 1916 quote to the *Colorado Transcript* summarizing his family's continuing frustrations with organized labor.

Historians of the company regard the dry years as a watershed moment for the Coors family in that it crystallized the dangers of government regulation and organized labor to their company's survival. Some form of labor organization was almost certainly present in the brewery early on, and may have been imported from brewers guilds in Europe. But either way, recurring strikes indicate that Coors resisted labor demands from the very beginning. Following Prohibition's repeal and the return to beer sales, the Coors family, and Joe Coors in particular, took on a personal role in ensuring that the government would be restrained in its power to take away the family's livelihood and that unions would never again threaten the brewery's bottom line.

After a botched kidnapping took the life of Adolph Coors III in 1960, his brother Bill Coors took over day-to-day management at the brewery. With Bill focused on maintaining quality and rolling out his new aluminum cans, the third brother, Joe Coors, waded into the nation's increasingly fractious politics just as the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s was reorienting American politics.

Racial divides—for so long the central question at the heart of American politics—were reset with the Civil Rights Act's passage in 1964. Suddenly, reliably Democratic blue states turned Republican-red as the GOP became a haven for those who saw the Civil Rights Act turning the country in an uncomfortable direction and anti-war protestors as Communist sympathizers.

This political reorientation unfolded rapidly from the ground up as a grassroots movement, but business leaders who argued that governments at all levels had amassed too much power gave it further momentum. By the 1970s, America's political system had almost completely turned on its head. The Republican party shied away from promoting progressive values, while Democratic politicians—historically conservative and supportive of racist policies like the Jim Crow laws throughout the South—embraced racial equality and liberal fiscal policies. Contemporaries and historians dubbed these parties "The New Right" and "The New Left."

For Joe Coors, a believer in the values expressed by The New Right, the threat of Communism and a sense that government regulations were strangling American entrepreneurs set him in motion. When a seat on the University of Colorado's Board of Regents opened up in 1966, Joe threw his hat in the ring. His campaign focused on combating Communism (which he argued was on the rise within the University's left-leaning academic community) and on ensuring that conservative voices were not being sidelined at CU. Joe won the seat in 1967 and quickly moved to enact anti-Communist policies. Joe pushed the university to start mandating faculty loyalty oaths, but his fellow Regents and some faculty members weren't so eager to take such a strong stand. Some complained to the press that he was using his position to "propagandize right-wing extremism" when he distributed anti-United Nations materials from the John Birch Society, a conservative organization that advocated strict limits on government interference with private enterprise.

The following year, Joe played a leading role in banning the influential Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) organizing group from campus, and brought a rising conservative luminary, California's Governor Ronald Reagan, to speak in Boulder. Taking on an ever-more-prominent role in the conservative movement, both in Colorado and on the national stage, Joe became somewhat of a figurehead for the social flashpoints of his home state after a fiery commencement address given to graduates of the Colorado School of Mines in 1969. To a surprised audience, Joe railed against welfare recipients, hippies, and "pleasure-loving parasites" who are "satisfied to live off the state dole and handouts in a carefree existence."

Joe's tenure as Regent lasted six years, and proved an important springboard for his growing political activism. The contacts he established as Regent—most notably a personal and financial relationship with soon-to-be President Reagan—lent him a megaphone through which he would advance his political philosophy within state politics. And Joe certainly found receptive audiences for his messaging in Colorado, a state where, at the time, the majority of voters were dependably conservative. But his last name was Coors, and with the brewery's rising prominence in the beer industry, it was clear that the Coors family and its brewing company were being dragged together into a fight over the state's political future.

Among those gearing up to offer a competing political and social vision were brewery workers from the Latino community who confronted discriminatory hiring and promotion practices long in place at Coors. Around the same time that Joe Coors was standing up for the conservative social values he felt were under threat at CU, a new civil rights movement was gaining ground in Colorado. El Movimiento grew out of rising cultural pride in Chicano

identity in the 1960s and '70s, and directly tackled entrenched racial discrimination against people of Latino descent across the state. In Denver, local boxing legend and poet Rodolfo "Corky" Gonzales became an outspoken leader who helped catalyze widespread protests. In 1967, Gonzales and others helped found The Crusade for Justice—an organization that joined the fight against discriminatory employment policies among other injustices by taking aim squarely at the Coors Brewing Company.

The complaint against Coors alleged that, like many other large companies in the state, the brewery discriminated against Latino workers by hiring them primarily for unskilled or low-paying positions. The company's workforce was overwhelmingly white and male well into the 1970s (it had hired its first African American employee only in 1962), and despite Latino workers making up about thirteen percent of the local labor pool, only two percent of Coors's workforce came from Latino families. Many Colorado companies, then and now, have struggled to address their discriminatory hiring and promotion practices, but unlike less-iconic Colorado companies, Coors made a popular and easily-recognizable product with an outspoken leader representing the forces that many believed maintained the discriminatory status quo. Joining with a coalition of allies including local unions, the Crusade for Justice allied with groups like the GI Forum to kick off a boycott of Coors beer calling for equitable employment practices and more opportunity for Latino workers at the Golden brewery.

Protests spread out from Denver and Golden in the late 1960s until the choice of beer became a signal for a person's political leanings throughout the state. Public protests weren't limited to the Golden brewery: Forty-three students at Southern Colorado State College (now Colorado State University Pueblo) joined hands around the campus pub to protest the sale of Coors in 1967, adding their voices to a rising chorus of anti-Coors sentiment. Taking place against the backdrop of Cesar Chavez's California lettuce and grape boycotts, the Coors protests shone a national spotlight on discrimination in Colorado's businesses and on the Coors family itself. That spotlight was intensified in 1977 when the American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL–CIO) called for its member unions to join the boycott in support of yet another labor strike at the brewery.

The Coors Brewery's influence over its unions grew through the early part of the century, and the company used a combination of generous perks and active dissuasion to erode labor organizing in the brewery. Labor action was seldom successful, and more often than achieving concessions, strikes resulted in dissolution. In spite of all of the pressures on the company, the 1977 strike ended in a spectacular victory for Coors. The family deftly played its cards, going on a charm offensive with a spot on the TV news program "60 Minutes" while hiring strikebreakers who forced its union to vote for decertification. The upshot was that, while the boycott was still in effect, the Coors Brewing Company achieved a century-spanning dream—it was finally free from the ever-present irritation of organized labor.

Though the original movement to boycott Coors officially ended in 1987 when the AFL-CIO came to an agreement with Joe's son and newly-minted company chairman Peter Coors, it lives on in the hearts of many who cannot forgive the company for its initial refusal to address racially discriminatory practices. For others who still refuse to drink Coors beer, it's impossible to ignore the family's role in the rise of The New Right and in advancing a political philosophy at odds with their own. Ultimately, the long-running boycott did not produce any clear-cut victories for the activists, but it did tarnish the company's mystique. By the late 1980s, a new generation of leadership embodied by Peter Coors (and eventually mergers with international beer brands Molson and Miller) made amends with some of the communities the company had offended. More recently, the company has been noted for its corporate citizenship, particularly in its support of gay and lesbian consumers and employees: In the early 1990s, it was among the first large American corporations to extend spousal benefits to same-sex couples.

The boycotts and labor problems at Coors represent a fundamental shift in the relationship between consumers and corporations in America, and through the social turmoil of the 1960s and '70s, Colorado was playing an ever-growing role in national political conversations. During these decades the Centennial State, long known for the natural resources its mountains, mesas, and plains supplied to manufacturers throughout the country, became more fully knitted into the social and economic fabric of the nation, as the state's explosive population growth and quality of life put Denver on the map as one of the best places in the country to live, work, and drink beer.

HOMEGROWN

Even though sales at the brewery slowed somewhat as a result of the boycott and strikes, the 1960s and '70s represented Coors Brewing Company's most significant period of growth. Brewing enough Coors beer at the Golden brewery to satisfy its clamoring devotees required a large and ever-increasing amount of barley and hops, and like Colorado brewers of the past, Coors was faced with challenges in securing adequate and reliable supplies of its key ingredients. In response, the company sought to ensure quality and control cost by bringing as many aspects of the brewing process as possible in-house. As Coors expanded, quality and price control through vertical integration of the various aspects of the brewing business would become one of the company's hallmarks.

This was particularly true of barley. Company President Bill Coors often summed up the brewery's appreciation for barley by saying that "barley is to beer as grapes are to wine. You cannot make a good wine out of bad grapes and you can't

make a good beer out of bad barley. You can make a terrible beer out of good barley. That's easy to do. But at least start right." For the Coors family, barley was second in importance only to the pure Rocky Mountain spring water the company had touted in its advertisements since 1937.

Like other brewers before Prohibition, Aldoph Sr. offered seed and incentives to Colorado growers in order to ensure a supply of quality barley for his operation. During the 1898 planting season, he ran advertisements proclaiming that "I would like to see more barley raised in our country and offer nice, clean, four-rowed Scotch seed barley at $1.00 per 100 lbs. I am willing to contract for No. 1, clean barley raised from this seed at $1.00 per 100 lbs. delivered at brewery. Screenings returned. A. COORS." In a fashion characteristic of Adolph's conviction that others couldn't attend to the beer's quality in the same way he would, the barley was malted at the brewery, avoiding out-of-state distributors and the potential for any unscrupulous character to mess up the product.

After Repeal, when large breweries increasingly outsourced their supply chains to expand capacity and cut costs, Coors doubled down on its in-house barley program. The initiative began in 1937 when Coors received a small packet of extra seeds in that year's two-row Moravian barley crop. The packet was included with an order of malt from R. Karsten Ltd in Prague. Coors gave the seeds to a gardener in Golden to test their suitability to Colorado's climate, and when the barley grew well, the company began working with more growers to scale up over the next few years until it was ready to be malted and tested in the beer. The result was good, and 1945 consumers were able to enjoy the first Coors lager made with locally-grown barley for the first time.

Coors scaled up the barley program quickly, enhancing the vertical integration of its operations and further tightening its control over the entire supply chain. A breeding program at the experimental farm the company created in 1949 in the San Luis Valley developed improved high-altitude varieties from the original seed stock (using Mendelian methods—Coors says that it does not genetically engineer its barley). Grain storage facilities were built beginning in the 1950s near Loveland, and in Monte Vista in the San Luis Valley, collecting barley directly from the farmers and storing it until it was needed at the brewery in Golden, where a large new custom-designed malthouse was completed in 1957.

By the mid-1950s, the locally grown high country barley had joined the famous Rocky Mountain spring water as another uniquely regional asset to the brand. A pamphlet prepared for barley growers touted "this climate and our certified seed strain" as the reasons for its "superior malting barley." The company billed itself as "Makers of Coors, America's Fine Light Beer. . . Produced from Moravian Malting Barley Grown by Colorado Farmers."

The first Colorado farmers to grow Coors barley were concentrated in the San Luis Valley and in northwest Colorado, but as demand for Coors continued to grow, and particularly as the company began expanding its distribution area in the 1970s, the need for barley grew in concert. Coors began working with farmers outside of Colorado, expanding into the Northern Rockies to develop growing areas in Wyoming, Idaho, and Montana. By 1971, the company had contracts with more than 500 farmers in several Rocky Mountain states for six million bushels of barley, for which Coors paid $2.01 per bushel at the elevator. The company's expansion plans called for more than doubling the harvest to 12.5 million bushels by the end of the decade.

Since the days when Adolph Coors Sr. offered to return "screenings," which was maltster language for barley kernels that were not up to his standards, the brewery had always imposed strict quality requirements on its barley growers. As the barley growing program expanded during the latter half of the twentieth century, Coors dictated increasingly rigorous specifications in its contracts for the barley it would accept. Dealing in ever-larger scales of production amplified the need for such rigorous quality standards. A slight increase in the protein level of barley can reduce the final volume of beer it produces, and even small percentage reductions mean significant shortfalls when amplified across tens of millions of barrels of production annually.

In the pursuit of higher quality and more reliable supply, the company even tried to impose stricter specs on nature in order to insulate its supply chain against crop shortfalls and price shocks. Ever the engineer, in 1972 Bill Coors launched a cloud seeding program in the San Luis Valley in an attempt to suppress hail and optimize the weather for barley growing, thus enhancing the reliability of the barley supply. When ranchers and other growers in the valley balked at the idea of manipulating the climate just to make more beer, the company threatened to terminate contracts with twenty percent of its growers each year until they valley was supplying only ten percent rather than sixty percent of Coors's barley needs or the growers brought their fellow citizens around to a weather management program. Noting that the company had developed other options, Bill Coors explained that "ten percent is the maximum amount we are prepared to place at the mercy of the natural elements which in our experience will give us a good quality crop once in twenty years."

Valley residents never agreed to the weather modification program, but at least the company did not fully follow through on Bill Coors's threat to marginalize the region. A preference to contract with irrigated operations has mitigated some of the vagaries of the weather and expansion in other areas has reduced the company's reliance on the San Luis Valley, but farmers there still grow a significant portion of Coors's unique strain of Moravian two-row barley.

The company's insistence on only buying the highest-quality barley from local growers established an early and strong market for the brewer's grain in Colorado. Modern malt

houses flourishing around the region supplying the barley that fermented the craft beer boom owe much of that success to the Coors barley program. Since the end of World War II, Coors has been brewing massive volumes of beer, and the barley needed to meet the brewery's demand has been one of the biggest markets for brewing barley in the West, and many of Colorado's craft breweries found a ready-supply of brewing ingredients homegrown in the Centennial State thanks to Coors and its barley program.

Colorado probably would have become a great place to drink beer and enjoy the great outdoors with or without Coors. But the company was willing to share both its expertise and ingredients with Colorado's craft brewing pioneers, insulating the risky early startups of the craft brewing world from some of the problems that starting a new industry completely from scratch would have imposed.

LAST SIP

Coors came of age alongside its home state. As Colorado grew and transformed itself over the course of the twentieth century, Coors was along for the bumpy ride. The Adolph Coors Brewing Company was shoulder-to-shoulder with Schlitz, Budweiser, and Miller—the last giants standing tall as the Era of the American Behemoth Brewer reached its zenith in the 1970s. Fine light flavor and "drinkability" paired well with Coors's high-country marketing, and Colorado's brand soared to new heights with every Banquet Beer and Silver Bullet sold.

But for a growing number of Coloradans, the glitzy ads masked growing pains. The company's star dimmed in the face of racist employment practices, labor strife, and a wide-ranging boycott. As Coloradans came to grips with a long history of racial discrimination that has yet to be fully addressed, Coors became a focal point in the era's political clashes. For some, the Coors family and their brewery stood for all of the regressive racial attitudes and divisive politics of the age. By the late 1980s, a new generation of leadership at Coors was making amends with communities it had offended and working to move past (or some would say obscure and whitewash) its discriminatory and controversial history. Today the company is noted in some circles for its corporate citizenship, particularly in its commitment to LGBTQ+ employees and their families.

Coors marketing, inextricably tied as it was with its home state's reputation, deftly promoted a vision of the good life in Colorado that drinkers could capture one can at a time. As the company ramped up its marketing efforts starting in the 1970s, cold cans of Coors became synonymous with the things many Coloradans loved: hiking trails, ski runs, and, starting in 1995 with the inaugural games and bespoke Blue Moon beer at Coors Field, major league baseball.

With its malting programs and deep know-how established by generations of brewers, Coors set the stage for Colorado's craft beer boom. Brewmaster Keith Villa, creator of Blue Moon Belgian White, recalls helping the then-tiny New Belgium Brewing Company get its yeast strain right, and even Holidaily—the tiny niche all-gluten-free brewery just a few miles up the road from Coors in Golden—sourced its know-how from former Coors employees who left the megabrewer to start their own breweries. New Terrain Brewing Company (another Golden favorite) draws hordes of bikers and hikers from the nearby trails in much the same way that Coors lured in thirsty folks from around Denver and Golden to drink beer in a scene of dramatic natural beauty.

Head Brewer for New Terrain, Dave Johnson, thinks about this connection as he ponders the future of beer in Colorado. For him and many of the more than 400 craft brewers that have sprung up in Colorado, the connection Coors forged in the 1970s between beer and time outside helped set the stage for the microbrew movement of the 1990s as well as the state's strong beer industry today. New Terrain's popular brewery looks out across Clear Creek at what was once the Coors brewery's beer garden and grove. The thirsty bikers and trail runners who congregate at New Terrain gather there for the same reason Coloradans flocked to banks of Clear Creek in the late 1800s—to enjoy a refreshing beverage and to cool off amid the natural beauty of Colorado's Front Range.

Without Coors's pioneering innovations in mass-market aluminum beverage cans, Oskar Blues would not have been able to find a way to put Dale's Pale Ale in an aluminum can (the first craft beer to come in such a vessel). Today, aluminum cans are the gold standard for beer packaging, and many of the more than 400 breweries Colorado boasts in 2023 are able to send their beer home to consumers thanks to the "crowler"—a large, bartop-fillable aluminum can that's become ubiquitous across the state thanks to innovations at Oskar Blues. It's an innovation that owes its existence to Coors.

Today, international mega-mergers and consolidation in the mass-market beer industry have taken most of the Coors company out of Golden. By 2024, the Molson-Coors company's headquarters will be in a high-rise tower in Chicago—a midwestern city Adolph Coors saw as an oversaturated market when he chose Colorado as the place to found his brewery in 1873. The classic Coors Banquet Beer is still made only at the company's original brewery site tucked between the dramatic mesas that define Golden, Colorado. But even with its corporate HQ far away, Coors is still synonymous with its home state, and its rocky history mirrors Colorado's own turbulent ups and downs.

Whether you are still boycotting Coors or it's your go-to beverage for sipping at Coors Field, the beer's story can show us much about ourselves and how our version of Colorado came to be.

*__Editor's note__: This is the next installment of our series investigating what Colorado's beer industry can show us about our state's history and ourselves. The rest of the series can be accessed online at HistoryColorado.org/Colorado-magazine.

A REVOLUTIONARY History of the FUTURE

We caught up with artist Virgil Ortiz of the Cochiti Pueblo, New Mexico. Virgil was the artist behind the new History Colorado Center exhibition *REVOLT: 1680 / 2180*, a radical reinterpretation of the 1680 Pueblo revolt through the lens of Indigenous futurism.

Q How do you think about your lineage as an artist?

I've been creating with clay since I was six years old. I grew up in Cochiti and was born into a family of potters on my mother's, Sefarina Ortiz, side of the family. When I'm working, I think a lot about the people who have passed, all the spirits that are all communicating. And that's why I always say that it's not my talent that you see in the artwork because I'm a conduit, always asking for guidance from our spirits that have been family members who have passed. I feel like they're speaking through me.

Q Why is it so important to keep the Cochiti ceramic techniques alive?

I was lucky to learn about them when I was a kid because it's a lot of work! It takes a whole year to prepare, so it's hard to dedicate that much time to going to dig the clay, collect all of the materials, harvest the plants to make our black paint or to go to another part of the pueblo to collect the timber we mix with the clay. And now a lot of the old masters are passing away, so I feel like I've been put here on this Earth in this time to make sure that the ceramic traditions continue to that next generation, that they don't die with me.

Q What made you want to create a history museum exhibit about the future?

Lots of cultures think about time in non-linear ways, and both the old and new ceramics in the exhibition connect us to once-living people and the people who are yet to exist. The hands of people in the past made what we're seeing, and in that way, they're still alive. I wanted visitors to experience that connection between past, present, and future and to engage with that idea through art. Being able to use artwork to give life and voice back to the clay is my way of getting that started, of contributing to the ways we spread the knowledge that's been handed down.

Q How does it make you feel to see a museum collection like History Colorado's that contains so much work from your ancestors?

Knowing that it's in a safe place, that it's being cared for makes me feel good. I wish, though, that more families got to keep their gifts from their grandmothers, their mothers. There are a ton of treasures like that in each home.

Q Why was it important to you that more people learn about the Pueblo Revolt?

It's not taught in schools. It's not really in our history books. Most Americans don't know anything about it. When we do shows like in Paris or Prague or Amsterdam, all the Europeans know exactly what I'm talking about, but here we get blank looks. Even people in Santa Fe where most of the revolt took place don't know anything about what happened. It's a really important part of our history. Pueblo people joined together, and if they didn't do that, if they didn't come together to fight, we wouldn't have the living, creating, thriving culture we have now.

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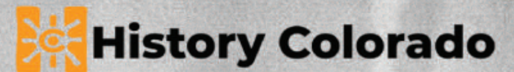
buffalo soldiers: reVision



Fine art, history & place combine to explore the complicated legacy of the all Black Army regiments of the west.

On view starting June 24, 2023

Fort Garland Museum & Cultural Center

Nationally Honored Museum

Get Details: h-co.org/2revision