

THE

HISTORY COLORADO | SUMMER/FALL 2022

# COLORADO

MAGAZINE

## The Nearly Forgotten Fight for School Desegregation

Brewing the New West / Daddy Bruce's Secret Sauce / Race to the Clouds



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# Colorado's Agricultural Legacy

**M**y dad told me a story about picking acres of onions and bushels of chile when he was in 4th grade. The only way his family could earn money from their Pueblo County crops that year was if the family—his mom, dad, and older brother—harvested the acres themselves. I am always touched and motivated by this story. It is about history, family, food, and most importantly, the deep sacrifices and hard work that created the life and opportunities that I have today.



I am thinking about my personal Colorado agricultural ancestry within the context of our 36th year of Centennial Farms and Ranches—a celebration of Colorado farms and ranches that have worked the same land for more than a hundred years. Century-long survival in agriculture requires an alchemy of past and future, generational intuition plus innovation, ancestral land practices combined with technology.

This year, we have expanded Centennial Farms and Ranches to also recognize enduring agricultural practices, businesses, individuals and cultures that have shaped and redefined Colorado agriculture. Most noteworthy, we have expanded how we define *agricultural heritage* in Colorado beyond land ownership, making space to include ag families with at least a 100-year tradition of working the land, who—for economic, political and discriminatory reasons—haven't owned the land.

For example, the Hirakata family, recognized this year and known for their world-famous Rocky Ford cantaloupes and melon, has been farming in Otero County since 1915, after Tatsunosuke Hirakata immigrated to the US from Japan. It wasn't until the passage of the 1952 Immigration and Nationality Act enabled Issei (or Japanese American immigrants) to become citizens that the Hirakata family purchased their first thirty acres of farmland. The legacy and continued operation and leadership of Hirakata Farms is important to Colorado's history and economy.

For millennia, people inhabiting the place we now call Colorado have fed their families and sustained communities from the land. And still today, Colorado continues to be shaped by the rich agricultural legacies and land practices of families and communities that existed on this land long before we became a state. We can draw strength from these histories of endurance, persistence, perseverance and resilience in the face of momentous change and challenge, as we face new challenges of climate change and significantly shrinking water supply.

Every single human on earth has agricultural ancestors. In Colorado, we are lucky to have them so close in our collective genealogy. Let's celebrate and learn our Colorado agricultural legacy, as we relish the sweet harvests of this season.

Dawn DiPrince  
Executive Director

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

### HISTORY COLORADO

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# THE COLORADO MAGAZINE

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Women and men of the Colorado Mountain Club standing on the summit of Longs Peak at 4:30 am on August 21, 1913. The group started their ascent after dinner and climbed in the moonlight. *History Colorado*. 83.495.1139.

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ON THE COVER / Artist Katie Dokson created this collage to commemorate the 1914 Maestas decision striking down racial segregation in Alamosa schools.

# THE FORUM

## We love hearing from you.



### Lion in Winter

*The cover story of our Winter issue, "Lion in Winter" has continued to generate responses from many of you.*

Jason L. Hanson does a superb job of combining a lively travelog with a solid historical overview from the prehistoric creation of coal to the Redstone Castle's current return to being a private residence. As a fan of the town, the inn, and the castle (where I stayed when it was a B&B), I was heartened to find it saved from subdivision and beautifully restored. Stacie and Jason Hanson's crackerjack winter photos were icing on the cake. —Tom Noel, via email

I believe placing Jason Hanson's article on Redstone's Cleveholm Manor and John Cleveland Osgood after Dexter Nelson's essay on Lincoln Hills was a mistake. Although Hanson attempts to give both sides of the conundrum faced when examining historical events, his article's rhetoric about the beauty of the Manor and aggrandizement of Osgood

is the very essence of the white supremacy that caused the need for an "oasis" like Lincoln Hills.

Gushing about men like Osgood disregards the abuses of the Gilded age, including that these "robber barons" made their millions on the backs of "low-status immigrants," supported offensive Supreme Court cases like *Plessy v. Ferguson*, and joined the abusive treatment of African-Americans with lynching, Jim Crow laws, and convict leasing. It is no surprise that articles about, and pictures of, places like Cleveholm Manor and men like Osgood continue to stab the heart and souls of people of color. —Christopher C. Cross, via post

As a busy college professor it took me a while to read Jason Hanson's essay on Osgood and Redstone, but it is one of the best ever published in *The Colorado Magazine*. I loved every word of it and how Hanson wove in history, personal experience, the Progressive Era, welfare capitalists, etc. What a fine essay!

I started my teaching career in 1976 in Silt and we'd drive into the Crystal Valley a few times a year. He really captured its essence and the personal contradictions of Osgood.

The fact that Osgood's papers were burned only adds to the difficulty of historians to get at the truth of his business perspectives. Hanson did an excellent job of looking both backwards and forwards in time and I appreciate that. —Andrew Gulliford, via email

Thanks for the excellent article on the town of Redstone and Cleveholm Manor in the winter edition of *The Colorado Magazine*. Jason Hanson's explanation of the people, economics, and social forces

that came together to create Redstone was fascinating. His reflections on how we experience and interpret these relics of the past today was prose at its best. —Art Cutler, via email

### Free Admission for Kids

*Since we announced that visitors 18 years or younger are now free at all of our museums, many of you have shared your appreciation.*

This is awesome and very welcomed news! I will definitely be checking out all the museums this summer with my kiddo. Please tell whoever crafted this idea and if a donor was involved, THANK YOU! History needs to be accessible to be remembered, and hopefully often not repeated. —Katherine Newell, via email

Fantastic—kids should always be encouraged to visit museums. —Haoie Zhu, via email

## THE COLORADO MAGAZINE

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### **When Kim Kardashian Wore Marilyn Monroe**

*In May, The Colorado Magazine online shared a curatorial view of Kim Kardashian wearing Marilyn Monroe's iconic dress on the red carpet at the Met Gala. And then many of you shared your own thoughts with us on social media.*

I appreciate this article. I saw mention of Monroe's dress being worn on the red carpet, and it flabbergasted me—that seemed like a horrible decision that endangered an historic artifact. But I suppose there are differing curatorial

standards and perspectives between an agency like History Colorado, a not-for-profit charged with preserving treasures of a community, and a for-profit organization like Ripley's that could use the attention from the media to get paying customers in the door. But please don't loan out Baby Doe's wedding dress for the next gala event at DCPA!

—Derek Everett, via Facebook

### **Touring Queer Capitol Hill**

*In conjunction with the Rainbows & Revolutions exhibition at the History Colorado Center, comic artist and*

*historian B. Erin Cole's art exhibition is taking visitors on a tour of LGBTQ+ history in Denver's Capitol Hill neighborhood.*

Thank you for including ALL of Colorado's history!

—Rachel Gamblin, via Facebook

### **Centennial Farms and Ranches**

Great job, History Colorado at the CO State Fair! Thank you for your recognition of the agricultural community.

—Joyce Lohse, via Facebook



# HISTORY COLORADO HANDS-ON HISTORY

## **HISTORY EDUCATION HAS THE POWER TO TRANSFORM LIVES AND STRENGTHEN COMMUNITIES**

During these challenging times, History Colorado offers a variety of engaging in-person and online learning opportunities for all ages.

**FOR SCHOOLS:** Aligned to academic standards and anchored in meaningful discourse, virtual field trips and artifact kits provide school students with rich primary sources and critical thinking.

**FOR FAMILIES:** Our Hands-On History programs and camps throughout the state provide safe, educational child care for working families when students are not in school.

**visit [h-co.org/programs-education](https://h-co.org/programs-education) for more information**

# Sidesaddle Sanctuary

## Florence Kistler's Equestrian Oasis

Nestled in Cherry Hills Village along the High Line Canal trail, a unique stable connects the past of women's sports to the present.

Listed in the Colorado State Register of Historic Properties in 2022, the Village Club—formerly the Kistler Stables—stands out immediately for its beautiful but unusual buildings. The river-rock stable and outdoor kitchen incorporate Spanish Revival style elements but with a playful twist. The buildings use horseshoe and collar shapes to evoke their purpose. This oasis was the brainchild of Florence Hughes Kistler, who envisioned a secluded place for her daughters and the young women of Denver to compete in equestrian sports.

Born Florence Hughes in Illinois in 1879, Florence grew up on her family's

ranch raising chickens and riding horses. In 1903 she married gas executive Frank Kistler, with whom she had four children. The family moved to Denver in 1917, and Frank's fortunes blossomed. Soon the family owned a Denver home on High Street, a mansion in Douglas County that formerly belonged to oil executive Waite Phillips, and a prized ranch in Estes Park. At the family's mountain retreat, Florence had a chance to indulge her love of horseback riding. But in January 1929, when Frank filed for divorce from Florence and two weeks later married Leana Antonides, Florence Kistler suddenly found herself raising their three

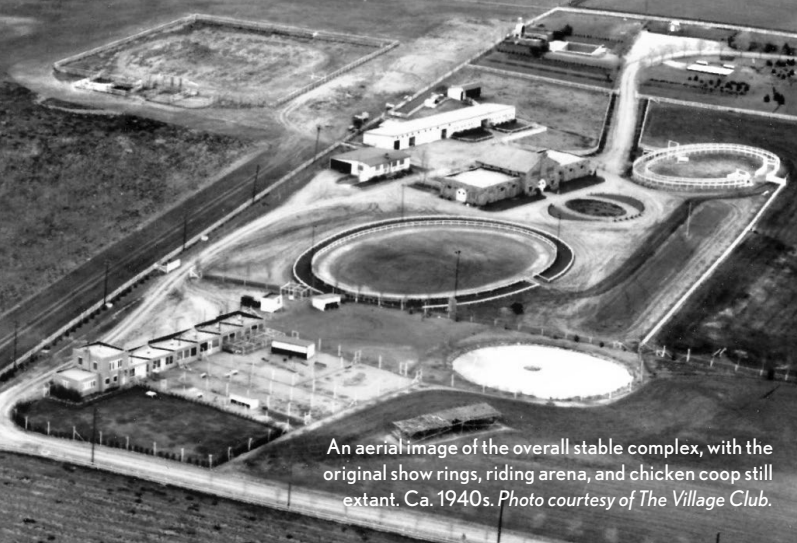
youngest children—all teenage daughters—on her own.

Despite major shakeups to their home life, Kistler and her daughters maintained their love of horses, and gained attention for their outstanding equestrianism. Daughters Florence and Frances made headlines for showing horses many times in the 1930s. Taking things to the next level, Florence Kistler purchased acreage in Cherry Hills in 1935 to build a boarding and showing facility. She hired Denver architect Temple Buell, himself an equestrian who kept horses in the Cherry Hills area. Together, they planned a gracefully

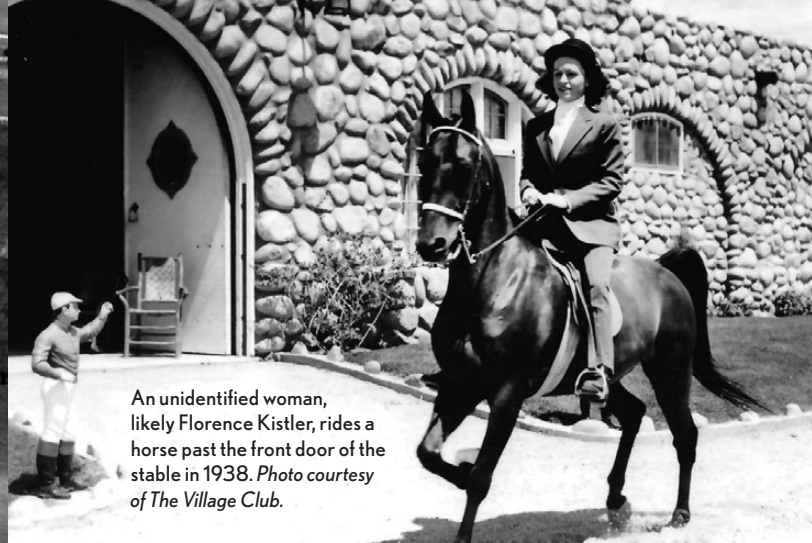
Exterior of the main stable building, summer 2021.  
Photo courtesy Erika Warzel, Clerestory Preservation.







An aerial image of the overall stable complex, with the original show rings, riding arena, and chicken coop still extant. Ca. 1940s. Photo courtesy of The Village Club.



An unidentified woman, likely Florence Kistler, rides a horse past the front door of the stable in 1938. Photo courtesy of The Village Club.

appointed club with cobblestone stables, arenas, a large chicken coop, gardens, and a show-stopping horseshoe shaped outdoor kitchen. The facility opened for business in January of 1937 with a grand “Midnight Feast” to mark the occasion.

Women have not always been welcomed in competitive sports spaces, and Colorado—a place well-known for its outdoor recreation culture today—was no exception when Florence Kistler built her stables. While Denver’s female equestrians in the 1930s might have found places for pleasure riding, few arenas offered them the chance to show their animals and their skills. The Kistler Stables were one of the few places where women could compete. They have also served as headquarters for several women’s and girl’s riding clubs,

including the Denver Equestrian Association and the Bit and Spur, Picadero, Hunt, and Chevy Chase Riding Clubs. In fact, Florence Kistler managed the Chevy Chase club’s annual show at the stables in 1937, and her daughter Frances Kistler personally sponsored the Bit and Spur club after 1948. The facility hosted other events including a charity rodeo to benefit the Red Cross during World War II, and put on horse shows judged by the Kistler daughters.

By the 1950s, with Kistler in her seventies and none of her children in a position to take on the facility, she sold the property. While managed by Florence and her daughters, the

Kistler Stables were unique as a woman-owned and operated oasis for female competitors. Although the stables catered to women of privilege, they supported women’s clubs and organizations, and helped change the landscape of female equestrian competition in Colorado.

**POPPIE GULLETT** is the National and State Register Historian at History Colorado, where she helps tell the stories of Colorado’s most important places.

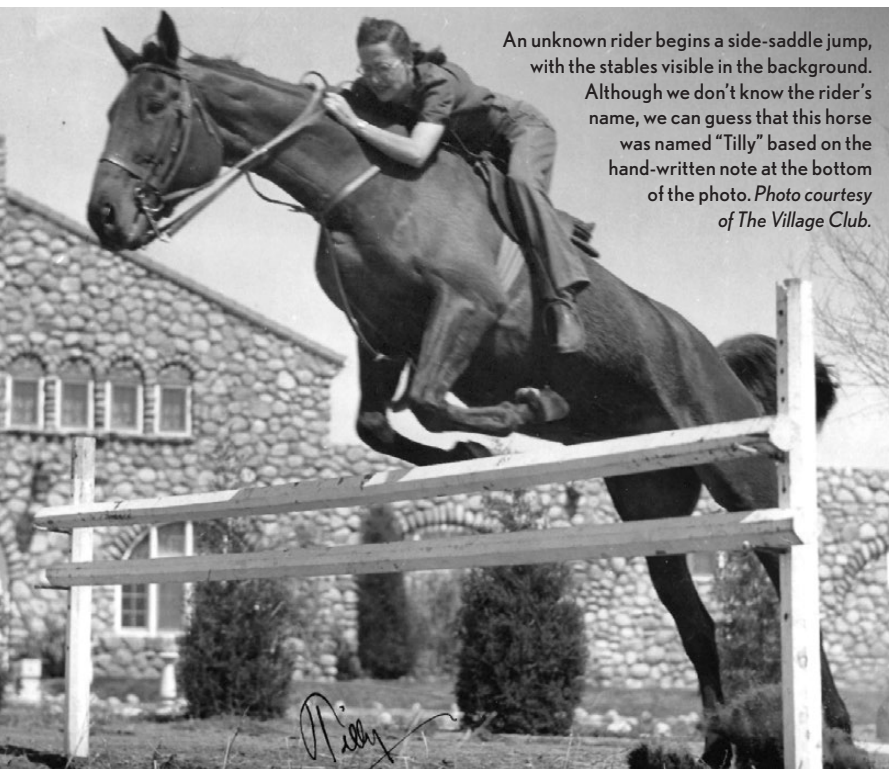
## WOMEN & GIRLS OUTDOORS

For more sites that celebrate and preserve the history of women and girls in the great outdoors, visit one of these beautiful spaces:

**Camp Nizhoni, Gilpin County.** Founded as an answer to segregation within the YWCA, Camp Nizhoni was the first camp for African American girls in Colorado. Camp Nizhoni provided a safe place for Black youth to enjoy and learn about the outdoors.

**Beatrice Willard Alpine Tundra Plots, Rocky Mountain National Park.** Dr. Beatrice Willard was an internationally recognized ecologist who made significant contributions to environmental policy. She installed two alpine tundra research plots in Rocky Mountain National Park in 1959, where she made important discoveries in the fragility of tundra ecosystems.

**Camp Dunraven, Estes Park.** Camp Dunraven was the first permanent summer camp for the Camp-fire Girls in the Estes Park valley. The camp offered activities such as hiking, sports, horseback riding, handcrafts, and performing arts.



An unknown rider begins a side-saddle jump, with the stables visible in the background. Although we don’t know the rider’s name, we can guess that this horse was named “Tilly” based on the hand-written note at the bottom of the photo. Photo courtesy of The Village Club.

# A Mile-High Life in Barbecue

**Colorado's most prominent pitmaster of the twentieth century, "Daddy" Bruce Randolph Sr., was as famous for his generosity as he was for his sauce.**

BY ADRIAN MILLER

**"A** man up the river had 200 to 300 head of hogs settin' on his place. I'd buy one, butcher it, barbecue it, cut a piece of meat off and put it twixt two slices of bread, then sell it for 10 cents a sandwich." That's how Bruce Randolph, Sr., one of Colorado's great barbecue men, described his first foray into barbecue entrepreneurship when he was eighteen years old.

Randolph was born in Pastoria, Arkansas, on February 15, 1900, and grew up as part of a large family. Randolph quit school after the third grade, and spent the next decade doing a number of odd jobs. He picked cotton, worked in a mine, and eventually did some work for his uncle, Dr. M.M. McBeth. McBeth, whom Randolph called "Doc," was a strong influence, and Doc really believed in Randolph. He put him to work collecting bills for his medical practice. It turned out that he was very effective, probably because of his charm.

Randolph credited his formerly enslaved paternal grandmother, Laura

Hart, for teaching him the barbecue craft. All of that time under Hart's tutelage lit Randolph's smoldering desire to make money from making barbecue. It took a while because Randolph's years as a young man were pretty peripatetic. After flirting with dance hall businesses in Arkansas, running multiple restaurants, a hotel, and a taxicab business in Pampa, Texas, Randolph prospered, but he was financially drained after a bad divorce. "I just went and married the wrong woman," Randolph said in his soft Arkansas drawl to a newspaper reporter. "When her lawyers got through with me, I was just about busted again." He ventured to Tucson, Arizona, and started another barbecue business. Yet, the seasonal nature of running a business in a college town wasn't profitable enough. He arrived in Denver in 1960, following his son, Bruce Randolph, Jr., who had moved to the Mile High City years earlier and ran a barber shop. It was his son who called him "Daddy Bruce" instead of just "Daddy," and the nickname stuck. For the next

few years, Randolph did a series of odd jobs to survive. But, barbecue kept calling his name.

Starting a barbecue business at that time in his life was a daunting proposition. Randolph certainly had the skill and the experience, but he was sixty-three years old and did not have the money to start another barbecue restaurant. Then something unusual happened. As noted in a biography of his life: "Randolph convinced an Englewood bank to loan him \$1,000 on his signature. He used the money for a down-payment on a portable barbecue oven. Together with his son, Daddy Bruce towed the 'barbecue pit on wheels' to company picnics and parties all over Denver." He earned enough money to open a permanent restaurant, Daddy Bruce's Bar-B-Q, at the corner of 34th Avenue and Gilpin Street in Five Points, Denver's historically Black neighborhood. As word of his barbecue skills spread, people flocked to his restaurant. His menu featured barbecue standards like beef, chicken, hot link sausages, and pork spareribs.



"Daddy" Bruce Randolph in about 1980. *Denver Public Library Special Collections, Z-10556.*

He also served soul food specialties like chitterlings (pork intestines), fried fish, and sweet potato pies for dessert. Just to prove that there was little Randolph couldn't do, he smoked wild game by customer request.

Randolph's reputation in the community grew to the point that he later became the official caterer of the Denver

Broncos football team. That's a position that he relished. He once told a *Los Angeles Times* reporter that "His passions are the Lord, people, and the Denver Broncos, in that order." When the Broncos went to the Super Bowl in 1978, Randolph flew down after them with a "bunch of ribs, four hams, and five big briskets." Broncos assistant public

relations director Dave Frei had a hotel room and a bottle of champagne waiting for him, and then Daddy Bruce was escorted to the kitchen where employees were told "fix everything like I wanted it. My biggest job was keeping them cats in the kitchen from eating it all up."

Randolph owed more than his barbecue acumen to his paternal grandmother. Under her guidance, Randolph became a deeply spiritual man. Later in life, after success in the restaurant business, Randolph was inspired by the Biblical story of Jesus feeding five thousand people. He wanted to do the same. Instead of fish and bread, he served barbecue. For Randolph, any holiday was an opportunity to help someone. He hosted an Easter egg hunt, Fourth of July barbecues, and Thanksgiving dinner. Still, Randolph didn't reserve his generosity solely for the holidays. As one Randolph biographer noted: "Even the 'street people' and the gamblers who haunt Five Points shine parlors and taverns know that Randolph will serve up a plate of ribs, beans and 'slaw on credit with no questions asked."

His generosity was legendary, and free Thanksgiving dinners are the thing for which Randolph is most known. That tradition began in 1967 with Randolph giving away a truckload of food, and continued gaining momentum during the 1970s. As the word spread, more and more people showed up for Randolph's Thanksgiving meal. Randolph took it up a notch in 1980 with his personal goal to feed 5,000 people "turkey, ribs, potatoes, beans, bread, and assorted other treats . . ." After that, the number of meals served grew exponentially to 8,000 the next year, then 15,000 the year after that. Some claim that the number got as high as 50,000 during the 1980s. During several Februaries, he would travel back to Pine Bluff, Arkansas to feed thousands of people *on his own birthday!*

As for that sauce, Randolph has always credited his grandmother, whom he deeply loved, for his beloved recipe. Though I grew up in Denver, I never ate at Daddy Bruce's, so I have no personal

memories of the sauce. Most accounts described it as “pungent,” and many have told me that it was very vinegary. When I asked about the sauce’s secret ingredient, Ron Mitchell, one of Randolph’s first cousins and a longtime manager at the restaurant said, “Just a lot of tender loving care. You could put all the ingredients in it, but without that, it wouldn’t taste the same.” Bruce was a little more forthcoming when he was asked a decade earlier. In a 1984 newspaper article, an *Arkansas Gazette* reporter noted, “His Grandmother’s sauce recipe has served him well for six decades. Pungent with catsup, Worcestershire, Tabasco, vinegar, garlic, sugar and salt, it’s the sauce that

makes the difference, he said, not the wood smoke.”

Randolph died in 1994 at ninety-four years of age. One measure of a man is the legacy that he leaves behind. With Daddy Bruce, one must speak of legacies in the plural. His son, Bruce Randolph, Jr. followed in his father’s footsteps, learning the barbecue craft and running a beloved barbecue restaurant in Boulder. Coincidentally, he also died at ninety-four years of age. Randolph helped others learn the barbecue business, even if they could be potential competitors. He mentored Football Hall of Fame nominee Winston Hill—a former offensive lineman for the New York Jets and

Los Angeles Rams—who went on to run several successful barbecue restaurants in the Denver area.

The street where his restaurant once stood was officially named after him in 1985. He’s also the subject of numerous newspaper articles, a book (*Daddy Bruce Randolph: The Pied Piper of Denver*), and he even once got a shout-out in a rap song. In his 2011 State of the Union Address, President Barack Obama touted the academic achievement at a Denver Public School named after Randolph:

“Take a school like Bruce Randolph in Denver. Three years ago, it was rated one of the worst schools in

Daddy Bruce and Mayor Peña among others at a ceremony renaming a street in honor of Bruce’s philanthropy in the mid 1980s. *Denver Public Library Special Collections, ARL-229.*



Daddy Bruce kicking off his annual Thanksgiving Day dinner for those in need in 1986. Donated to the Denver Public Library by the Rocky Mountain News, RMN-027-8524.



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Colorado; located on turf between two rival gangs. But last May, 97% of the seniors received their diploma. Most will be the first in their family to go to college. And after the first year of the school's transformation, the principal who made it possible wiped away tears when a student said, "Thank you, Mrs. Waters, for showing ... that we are smart, and we can make it."

In 2021, the school's website boasted that one hundred percent of its senior class is college-bound. Undoubtedly, Randolph would be proud that so many young people have an opportunity to follow their dreams.

In 2002, inspired by Randolph's example, Rev. Ronald Wooding created the Bruce Randolph Legacy Foundation to further Randolph's community and humanitarian work. The foundation hosts an annual job fair, bestows a media excellence award, secured proclamations from key political figures in Colorado, and created a film documentary titled *Keep a Light in Your Window*. The

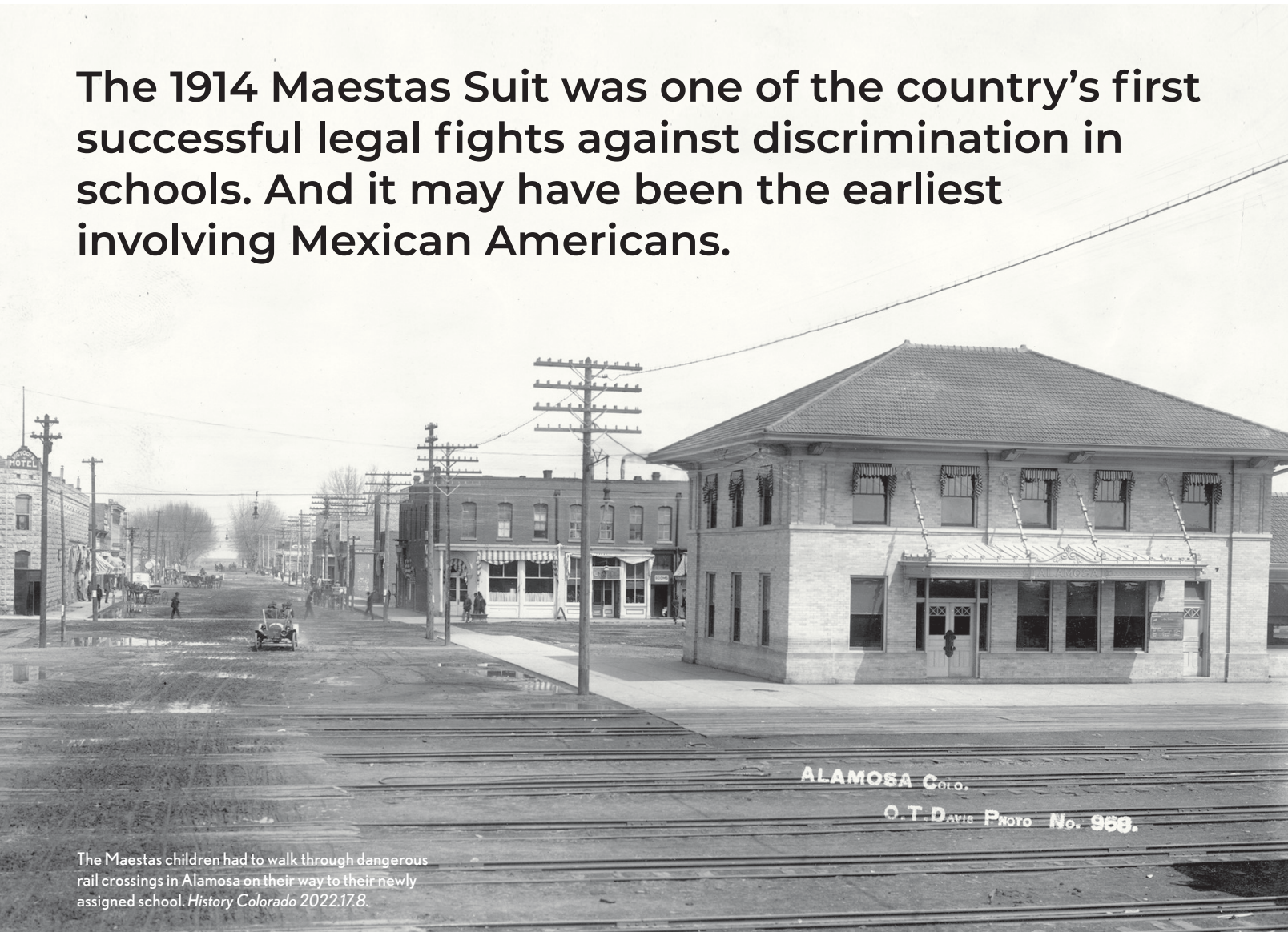
foundation, in concert with Pastor King Harris of the Epworth Foundation, created the "Denver Feed-A-Family" program which coordinates a score of faith leaders, volunteers, and corporate sponsors to come together, in Randolph's name, to continue the Thanksgiving community meal tradition. Randolph had a saying that adorned a billboard on his truck, and it was also right smack in the middle of his menu. As well as a motivating principle for his life, he thought it was the secret to his success. "Just say, God loves you and so does Daddy Bruce." ●

*This essay is based on material that originally appeared in Adrian Miller's James Beard Award-nominated book Black Smoke: African Americans and the United States of Barbecue, University of North Carolina Press (2021).*

**ADRIAN MILLER** is a Denver author, James Beard Award winner, attorney, and certified barbecue judge. Miller's food writing includes two award-winning books on American cooking.

# The Nearly Forgotten Fight for School

The 1914 Maestas Suit was one of the country's first successful legal fights against discrimination in schools. And it may have been the earliest involving Mexican Americans.



The Maestas children had to walk through dangerous rail crossings in Alamosa on their way to their newly assigned school. *History Colorado* 2022.17.8.

**F**our decades before the landmark *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka* decision made integrated schools the law of the land, a little-known lawsuit successfully challenged school segregation in Alamosa, Colorado. *Maestas vs. Shone* was part of a fight against discrimination that set the stage

for modern-day civil rights campaigns in Colorado. And, until recently, it was largely unknown.

Alamosa is the biggest town in the biggest alpine valley in the world. The San Luis Valley, straddling southern Colorado and northern New Mexico, boasts eleven mountain peaks exceeding

fourteen thousand feet. It is sixty-five miles east to west, and stretches 125 miles north to south, making it larger than the state of Connecticut. The Valley, as it is commonly called, is home to Great Sand Dunes National Park and Preserve and serves as the headwaters of the Rio Grande.

# DESEGREGATION

The Valley was home to Puebloan cultures as well as the Ute, Diné, Apache, and other Indigenous peoples before it became a part of Spain's colonial empire in North America. Mexico gained its independence from Spain in 1821, and permanent Hispano agricultural communities spread north from Taos into the southern part of the Valley. This land became part of the United States following the Mexican-American War, which ended in 1848 with the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo.

Although the treaty included guarantees to protect the rights and property of residents who “watched the border cross them” as Mexico ceded territory, it quickly became apparent to Hispano residents of the Valley that there would not be a smooth transition from Mexican to American administration. The treaty guaranteed residents of the region “the enjoyment of all the rights of citizens of the United States, according to the principles of the Constitution.” However, many of the Americans coming into the area did not embrace this commitment to equality. On November 9, 1866, shortly after the US Congress added the Valley to the recently created Colorado Territory, *The Rocky Mountain News* reflected many of the newcomers’ racist attitudes towards the Hispano settlements: “The counties of Conejos and Costilla are settled, principally, by New Mexicans, a mongrel race, half Spanish and half Indian.”

In the face of such discrimination, in the late 1800s and early 1900s, many of the area’s Hispano residents banded together to create mutual aid societies. With support from their communities, they fought against discriminatory

attitudes toward wage laborers, resisted illegal and immoral actions by land barons, and stood up to acquisitive mine owners and the railroad operators. One group in particular, La Sociedad Pro-tección Mutua de Trabajadores Unidos

## The communities of the Valley quickly realized how important their support organizations would be.

(SPMDTU), founded in 1900 in the town of Antonito about thirty miles south of Alamosa, became (and continues to be) a force for community support in the Valley.

The communities of the Valley quickly realized how important that support would be. In 1908, the Alamosa School board purchased land on the south side of town, on “the Mexican side of the tracks,” to build a “Mexican school.” The initial idea for the school was to provide language support for Spanish-speaking students before assimilating them into an English language school. That intention, however genuine, was soon abandoned, and the district enacted a new policy under which all students with Spanish surnames were compelled to attend the school for Hispano students, regardless of their English proficiency.

Many of those experiencing this discrimination were American citizens and felt that their rights were being violated.

Some parents attempted to enroll their children in the English speaking schools despite the policy. When denied, the outraged parents organized as a collective voice calling themselves the Spanish American Union. This support organization drafted a resolution to challenge their exclusion and argued the school was discriminating based on race, not language. They took their challenge to the Alamosa School Board of Education, but were rebuffed and turned away. When they appealed to the Alamosa school district superintendent, George H. Shone, they were denied again. They then appealed to the Colorado State Board of Education, and to the Colorado State Superintendent of Public Instruction, who were unable or unwilling to address the issue.

The parents, in hopes of showing their determination, pulled their students from the school in a boycott. In spite of the protest, the Alamosa School Board of Education still wouldn’t budge, and went so far as to accuse the parents of neglecting their children’s education. Members of the Spanish American Union had previously consulted local lawyers, who advised them not to take the case to court as it would be too expensive and would not stand a chance of winning, even if they could find a lawyer to accept the case.

Becoming more desperate, Alamosa’s Hispano parents formed a second committee focused on raising money to secure legal counsel. A member of this committee, a Catholic priest named Father Montell, suggested a young lawyer in Denver, Raymond Sullivan, who agreed to represent the Hispano families.



Miguel Maestas, pictured here at age 12, was one of the children at the center of the suit.  
Courtesy of Tony Sandoval and Dr. Ronald W. Maestas.

Sullivan filed suit in 1913 on behalf of several Hispano families, but Francisco Maestas was the lead plaintiff. The injustice his young son Miguel faced was particularly acute: He had to walk past the English-speaking North Side School on his way to the Spanish language

school, crossing several dangerous railroad tracks along the way. Sullivan argued in court that, in denying the children access to the closest school, school officials were making a “distinction and classification of pupils in the public schools on account of race or color contrary

to Article IX, Section 8 of the Colorado Constitution.” This article stated (then as now) that “no sectarian tenets or doctrines shall ever be taught in the public schools, nor shall any distinction and classification of pupils be made on account of race or color.” Sullivan asked the court to order that the district “admit the said child of plaintiff to the North Side School or the most convenient of the public schools of said city to which he has the right of admission without any distinction or classification on account of his race or color.”

Countering Sullivan and the SPMDTU claim, the Alamosa School Board argued that Miguel Maestas and other Mexican American children were not being discriminated against because of their race, proposing that the Hispano children were in fact “Caucasian.” Lawyers defending the school district argued that the children needed to attend a Spanish language school because they were deficient in English. But Raymond Sullivan saw through this ploy. Contesting their characterization of the children’s language proficiency, he had the children testify in court. The court provided an interpreter for the children, but the children proved that they didn’t need one by answering every question in English before the translator started speaking.

District Court Judge Charles Holbrook ruled in favor of the plaintiffs in 1914: “In the opinion of the court ... the only way to destroy this feeling of discontent and bitterness which has recently grown up, is to allow all children so prepared, to attend the school nearest them.”

The Hispano families of Alamosa were vindicated and victorious. But victory didn’t bring an end to discrimination. Struggles continued, and the Maestas decision, which the school board did not appeal, faded from memory. Even the school board lost all records of the case. In fact, the case was so forgotten that it was not cited in future cases of a similar nature. Nearly six more decades would pass before *Keyes v. School District 1* in



Denver reaffirmed that segregation was illegal in Colorado schools—a decision that did not even reference the Maestas or their victory in the Valley.

Nearly a century after the Maestas case was decided, Dr. Gonzalo Guzmán, a professor of educational studies at Macalester College in Minnesota, came across a reference to it in an archived newspaper. He was stunned that the Maestas case wasn't more widely known, so he reached out to colleagues Dr. Rubén Donato, an educational historian at the University of Colorado Boulder, and Dr. Jarod Hanson, a former lawyer and senior instructor at the University of Colorado Denver. They contacted Colorado's 12th District Court Judge Martín Gonzales, who found the original court documents. Together, the group began researching and writing, and in 2017, the professors published their findings in the *Journal of Latinos in Education*.

The published paper was a great accomplishment, offering a foundation to build upon as scholars continue studying how Southern Colorado communities successfully asserted their rights in the early twentieth century. But the story still isn't as well known in the community of Alamosa or in the greater San Luis Valley as one might expect for a legal precedent of such significance. To spread greater awareness about this significant moment in Colorado history, Judge Gonzales organized the Maestas Commemoration Committee, which includes academics, descendants of the Maestas family, members of the still-active SPMDTU, and Alamosa community members.

Efforts at commemoration and public awareness are ongoing. A traveling exhibition commemorating the Maestas case began a tour of Colorado at the Capitol building, and will be on display in History Colorado's museums and on university campuses throughout 2022

and 2023. Additionally, a community celebration took place on October 1 this year in Alamosa, where a life-sized bronze relief honoring the case will be permanently installed in the courthouse's entrance.

Though they didn't know it at the time, the Maestas family and those involved with the suit were setting an early precedent for educational justice. The almost-forgotten case that started just over 100 years ago as a local group fighting for their children stands today as a lesson in the fickleness of public memory and a reminder of the long crusade for racial equality in Colorado. In many ways this movement is still ongoing. It would have been easier for the Maestas family to simply buckle in the face of overwhelming systemic inequity. But

like so many others since Francisco and Miguel Maestas crossed those dangerous train tracks in Alamosa, the family fought for their rights and won.

Let it be a reminder to us all to never give up the fight. ●

**KATIE DOKSON** is seventh generation in the San Luis Valley and serves on the Maestas Commemoration Committee.

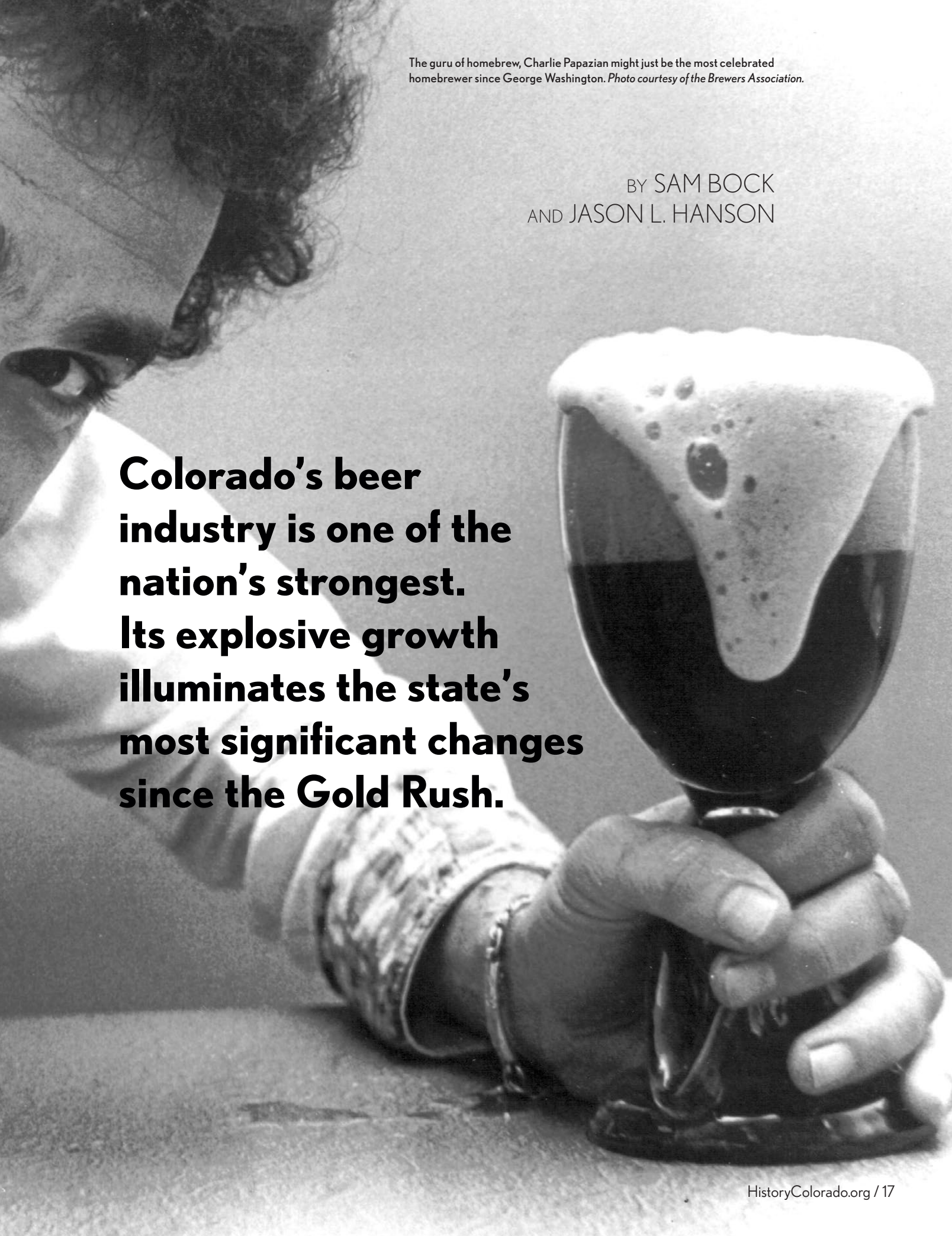
*Members of the Maestas Case Commemoration Committee include Colorado 12th District Court Judge Martín Gonzales, Dr. Gonzalo Guzmán, Dr. Rubén Donato, Dr. Jarrod Hanson, Dr. Ronald W. Maestas, Dr. Antonio Esquibel, Judge Jason Kelly, Atty. Ronnie Mondragon Jr., Tony Sandoval and Katie Dokson*



Artist Reynaldo "Sonny" Rivera poses with his bronze sculpture commemorating the 1914 victory over school segregation. The relief was created to hang in the Alamosa Municipal Courthouse in 2022.  
*Courtesy of Katie Dokson.*



# Brewing the New West



The guru of homebrew, Charlie Papazian might just be the most celebrated homebrewer since George Washington. *Photo courtesy of the Brewers Association.*

BY SAM BOCK  
AND JASON L. HANSON

**Colorado's beer industry is one of the nation's strongest. Its explosive growth illuminates the state's most significant changes since the Gold Rush.**

**B**oulder in the 1970s wasn't exactly a button-down kind of town. So it raised eyebrows when a man in a dress shirt and tie signed up for Charlie Papazian's homebrewing class. "I was forewarned that a suspicious-looking character had registered for my class," Papazian recalled decades later. "And, sure enough, he showed up, in the mid-'70s, to my class wearing a white button-down shirt with black tie—the only guy in Boulder, probably, in a white shirt and a black tie."

Papazian figured the man was an agent with the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms (ATF), the agency charged with enforcing the federal prohibition against homebrewing. But he went ahead with the class anyway, recalling:

I introduced the people in the class and gave them my normal spiel that [homebrewing is] illegal but don't sell it and you probably won't get hassled. He rolled up his sleeves and helped with a few batches of beer that we made. I think he came to two or three classes and then I never heard from him again.

Whether the dapper gent was a federal agent or just a curious citizen with a formal sense of fashion, Papazian continued teaching the homebrewing course for a decade—on the wrong side of state and federal law all the while.

The easygoing atmosphere that had a well-dressed dude looking out of place in Boulder came in part from the city's growing counterculture ethos. In Boulder, as in other "crunchy" granola-loving hippie towns at the time, a reaction against the mass-produced culture of the previous generation was taking hold. Chefs like Alice Waters at Chez Panisse restaurant in Berkeley, California, praised locally sourced seasonal vegetables over their canned counterparts. Lifestyle purveyors like Stewart Brand assembled the *Whole Earth Catalog*, offering items made by small-scale producers that would be impossible to find at Sears. Down in

southern Colorado, Gene and JoAnn Bernofsky, Richard Kalweitt, and Clark Richert were building geodesic dome homes from abandoned car roofs at the art colony they called "Drop City."

Homebrewed beer paired well with this emerging do-it-yourself vibe across the countercultural West, offering not only the chance to subvert the big corporate brewers dominating the market with industrially brewed American lagers, but also the experience of enjoying novel flavors in the bargain. From Berkeley to Boulder to Drop City, homebrewing was an expression of a larger cultural shift towards valuing local things made in your own home or community, and many took to homebrewing believing that mass-produced American beers reflected the blandness of large-scale industrial brewing.

Charlie Papazian in his Boulder kitchen—wooden beer spoon in hand, watching over the contents of a brew kettle—embodied the era's DIY culture. Over hundreds of batches of homebrew, he explored a new world of styles and flavors that most American beer drinkers had long forgotten thanks to Prohibition. Homebrewing, at first simply a hobby and a way to make quality beer, became a lifetime career. Today, more than fifty years after he moved to Colorado, his beer spoon is at the Smithsonian and he's known around the world as a brewing guru. A household name for any beer nerd worth their carboy, Charlie Papazian might just be the most celebrated American homebrewer since George Washington jotted down his recipe for "small beer" around 1757.

And for good reason. Papazian's long list of accomplishments contains notable highlights: cofounder of the American Homebrewers Association; driving force behind the Great American Beer Festival (which turned forty this year); author of *The Complete Joy of Homebrewing*, arguably the most influential homebrewing manual ever; and cofounder of the Brewers Association, today's craft brewing industry trade group. His infectious love of good friends, good times,

and good beer brought about a homebrew revolution that launched Colorado's craft beer industry.

Boulder and similar locales were not alone in having growing economies and appealingly progressive cultures. Charlie and other footloose homeseekers could have chosen anywhere to live. But the lifestyle was the key, and it's tough to beat Colorado for close proximity to natural amenities and ample opportunities to play in the Rockies.

Since the 1859 Gold Rush, American settlers have set course for Colorado hoping to seize the economic opportunities created by extractive industries like mining, ranching, agriculture, and logging. For most of that time, Coloradans came to labor and then made their homes where they worked. The homebrewers who sparked Colorado's craft beer industry in the 1970s flipped that model on its head: They came for the lifestyle and figured out how to support themselves once they arrived.

Throughout the West, and certainly in Colorado, this shift totally reconfigured the social, economic, and natural landscapes of the region. The effects of the transformation were so impactful that they begged historians to come up with a name to describe them. The term they landed on was the "New West."

## Rocky Mountain High

**S**horthand for the transition from an economy that relied on extractive industries to one supported equally by tourism and outdoor recreation, the "New West" has been as much a process as a place. It was an economic revolution that happened all across the western United States, but here's how it happened in the Centennial State: In the decades following World War II, Cold War spending, a cultural shift promoting a mythologized Western past, and Colorado's emerging outdoor industry combined to drive a sustained economic boom in the Rocky Mountains. But in contrast to the mineral and grazing bonanzas that characterized other rushes, this one wasn't aimed at extracting

Charlie Papazian pressurizes a keg in the late 1970s. Photo courtesy of Charlie Papazian.



and selling natural resources. Instead, it generated wealth from homeseekers and tourists eager to get outside and into nature. New Westerners—most of whom were white and thus not held back by racially discriminatory policies like redlining and the GI Bill—started paying top dollar for homes in and near the mountains in the mythic Rocky Mountain West.

Once word got out about the lifestyle, New Westerners moved here in droves. By the mid-1970s Colorado's high country was *the* place to find that "Rocky Mountain high." John Denver, a New Westerner himself, came to Colorado to revel in the mountains. In fact, he sang about them with such

conviction that he topped the charts in 1972 and '73. These years of popularity for "Rocky Mountain High" correspond to the state's largest population growth since the 1859 Gold Rush. Former mining towns that had been mired in decades of decline were being transformed into glittering resorts. What had once been tiny outposts on the verge of economic collapse a few decades before—towns like Aspen, Breckenridge, Winter Park, Frisco, and Steamboat Springs—suddenly found themselves transformed by the lure of federally designated public lands and carloads of tourist dollars.

In less than half a century, Colorado grew from a "flyover state" into

one of the most desirable places in the country to live and vacation. And, not by coincidence, it became one of the best places in the country to grab a pint. For a particular subset of beer-loving westerners—whether new arrivals drawn by the region's amenities or Colorado-born residents who cherished the same things—enjoying more flavorful beer was an expression of the higher quality of life that was defining the New Western lifestyle. Sharing a homebrewed and "microbrewed" beer, with its subtle notes of authenticity, status, and quality, was an activity well suited to sitting around a campfire, taking in the vista from a mountain peak, or relaxing après-ski and reveling in the good fortune of calling

Charlie Papazian's homebrew hobby turned into a career. He has been supporting and teaching aspiring homebrewers for over fifty years. *Photo courtesy of Charlie Papazian.*



such a place home. And for one New Westerner in particular, it was just this kind of lifestyle that made Colorado so alluring that he packed up his newly minted nuclear engineering degree and moved across the country.

### **“Relax. Don’t Worry. Have a Homebrew.”**

**C**harlie Papazian might just be the quintessential New Westerner. Born in New Jersey, he grew up walking rural roads in dairy country. It was an upbringing that instilled a lifelong love of time outdoors. When Charlie was studying nuclear engineering and education at the University of Virginia in Charlottesville, a neighbor introduced him to homebrewing by way of a rough recipe involving a can of malt extract, some sugar, water, and a little bread yeast. The concoction tasted better to Papazian than anything he could buy commercially, and homebrew had the added advantage of being less expensive than the pre-made stuff. Charlie started reading up on homebrewing methods, and by the time he moved to Colorado he was producing (then-illegal) homebrewed beer with his friends.

Arriving in Boulder in 1972, he soon found a job at a local school. While teaching children was his day job, he also taught adults the art of homebrewing in the classes he offered at Boulder’s Community Free School. It was there that he met his friend and future brewing partner, Charlie Matzen. Over the next several years, the Charlies developed a dedicated corps of fellow homebrewers and friends, and in December 1978 they cofounded the American Homebrewers Association (AHA). “We thought about it for an entire year because we realized it would be a pretty good commitment on our time to found an organization like that,” Papazian recollected. “And then we decided to publish our first magazine.”

As they pasted together page proofs with rubber cement, the pair were unaware of the legislative effort to legalize homebrewing being undertaken by Senator Alan Cranston at the

same time. “We founded the American Homebrewers Association in complete ignorance that the law was going to be changed. We had no clue. It was something that we were not connected to,” explained Papazian. But their timing couldn’t have been better and couldn’t have seemed more intentional. Papazian and Matzen published the inaugural issue of the homebrewing magazine *Zymurgy* (a reference to the study of yeast fermentation) just months before President Jimmy Carter signed off on legal homebrewing.

The magazine and the AHA grew quickly as homebrewers all over the United States (and Canada) came out of the legal shadows clamoring for recipes, tips, and tricks to improve their homebrew. Initially stunned by the popularity of their publication, Matzen and Papazian quickly realized that their tiny, Boulder-based AHA was tapping into a deep vein of popular interest. *Zymurgy* spawned a network of people making their own brews and created a body of knowledge that would ferment a national passion for great-tasting beer. Homebrewers across the country started clamoring for new ingredients and uncovering forgotten styles. A kaleidoscope of flavors Americans had lost touch with flowed out of kitchens across the country, sparking a new awareness of the uniformity that was mass-produced American lager.

Rejecting the bland beers on offer from large breweries, *Zymurgy* contributor Alan Toby captured the popular sentiment of the times by announcing 1983 that the rise of home and small-scale brewers meant leaving behind the “thin and watery stuff in a carbonated can.” And in her classic work *Ambitious Brew*, beer historian Maureen Ogle quotes a homebrewer who vehemently expressed the anti-corporate ethos driving some of the more extreme DIY brewers: “[N]ow that growing your own (food, dope, hair, younameit) is hip,” one widely reprinted pamphlet proclaimed in 1971, “it’s time to resurrect the Dope of the Depression—Homebrew.” The pamphlet’s author extolled homebrewing as

an “exercise of craft” that offered “good vibes from using something you make yourself, plus an improvement in quality” over the products sold by “Augustus [*sic*] Busch and the other fascist pigs who [were] ripping off the Common Man.”

Not everyone making their own in the 1970s was quite so angry at big beer. Papazian and Matzen’s love for homebrewing grew from a genuine enthusiasm for the art of brewing and a connection to the community they were forging around homemade beer in Boulder. But that enthusiasm, and their knowledge, was infectious, and once people understood the array of flavors homebrew could offer, going back to buying bland beer was just a lot less appealing.

Over the next few years, the duo gathered a dedicated following of fellow homebrewers. Between formally organized homebrewing classes and informal parties, the Charlies were at the epicenter of an ever-growing Colorado movement emanating from Boulder and drawing together like-minded brewers. While interest in homebrewing came from all across the nation, in the 1970s and early 1980s, the largest concentration of carboys—the large, typically glass containers homebrewers use for fermentation—was out West. It was where Papazian and his fellow brewers lived, not necessarily because it was where they had to be for their jobs, but because it was where they wanted to spend their time off.

For Papazian and Matzen, some of those opportunities to play outside came in the form of huge “Beer & Steer” parties the duo threw near Boulder. The first was in 1975 on private land in the foothills of Boulder County. By 1979, it had migrated to a ranch that is now open-space land north of town. The party combined Matzen’s love of good food, Papazian’s brewing expertise, and the pair’s shared love of convivial good times. It featured pit-roasted meat, local music, and lots and lots of homebrewed beer stored in a hand-built ice chest packed with snow lugged down from higher elevations. The one-hundred-or-so

attendees of the first Beer & Steer were mostly acquaintances of Papazian and Matzen, or were Papazian's homebrewing students at the Community Free School. Despite a small mishap with an overpowered spit-turner lobbing hunks of meat, Beer & Steer was wildly successful and spawned a yearly tradition. In fact, in 1982, the third Beer & Steer drew more than 400 participants from all over Colorado's Front Range.

For many early revelers already familiar with the burgeoning craft beer movement through their association with Papazian and Matzen, Beer & Steer parties were more than simply excuses to drink beer with friends in the woods outside of Boulder. When word of the gatherings spread through the community, annual attendance became a marker of insider status. Recounting stories of partying inside the frigid cloud that engulfed Beer & Steer II or talking about the brewers who parachuted into Beer & Steer IV were a powerful means of self-identification that transformed an impromptu gathering of people with shared interests into an extremely popular social event. By the time of Beer & Steer

IV, it was such a big deal that one of the organizers overheard a ticketless would-be reveler remark that he was "going to show up anyway," despite increasing attempts to control attendance.

For Papazian and Matzen, like so many other New Westerners, collective enjoyment of beer paired naturally with outdoor recreation. Beer & Steer parties came to shape beer culture around the country as *Zymurgy* readers were treated to annual accounts of Beer & Steer hijinks. In this way, Colorado homebrewers not only became accustomed to enjoying their brews against a mountain backdrop, but also began to associate beer drinking with the culture of outdoor recreation that was emerging around this time on the Front Range. They learned what beer drinkers across Colorado know instinctively today: Beer pairs well with playing outside.

Since it was founded within sight of the Flatirons (the striking red sandstone formations that serve so well as a backdrop for Boulder), it's understandable that a certain appreciation of the great outdoors would permeate the culture at the growing American Homebrewers

Association. It was certainly an attitude that seeped into their early publications. In the fall 1979 issue of *Zymurgy*, Papazian penned a column he called "Traveling with Homebrew." Full of tongue-in-cheek quips like, "If you plan to backpack, remember that alcohol is lighter than water," and "Homebrew is also terrific for repelling/forgetting centipedes, scorpions, rattlesnakes, cockroaches, ants, wind, rain, snow and flat tires," the article was entirely focused on traveling in the wilderness and on foot.

Hanging out at Beer & Steer IV. What started as a group of friends gathering in the woods to enjoy homebrew quickly became the premier event in Colorado beer. Photos courtesy of Charlie Papazian.



Papazian's assertion that "it's not only EASY but practical to take homebrew along—even to remote areas" suggests that *Zymurgy* readers in the late 1970s were becoming more familiar with outdoor recreation as a means of escaping demanding post-industrial confines like fluorescent-lit offices and gridlocked commutes. Dialing back his witticisms for just a moment, Papazian declares, "Most of us need some time for our nervous systems to leave the working world worries behind." The addition of homebrew to a backpacking trip would "keep your mind off of those worries until the moment you must return."





Attendees enjoying the very first Great American Beer Festival held in Boulder in 1982. *Photo courtesy of the Brewers Association.*

Americans with enough wealth and privilege in the 1970s were increasingly taking to the outdoors to deal with the stress of modern life. With the introduction of the Wilderness Act of 1964, the federal government codified the notion that there are some places with such natural splendor (a fair few in Colorado) that they should be left untouched in perpetuity—“untrammelled by man,” to use the parlance of Congress. Along with major advances in outdoor recreation equipment like the invention of nylon tents, lightweight waterproof clothing, and synthetic insulation in

later decades, it was quickly becoming easier, cheaper, and more comfortable to make prolonged trips into the woods. And, thanks to Papazian, homebrewed beer was increasingly coming along for the ride.

### **The Great American Beer Festival**

**T**he Beer & Steer parties cultivated a devoted community of homebrewing enthusiasts who sustained the annual celebration of drinking beer in the woods. But as the community of homebrewers grew into an industry

in the 1980s and '90s, its innovative beer makers needed an accessible, open, and larger event than Beer & Steer to keep pace with the thirst for the new generation of American beers they were brewing. Recognizing the evolving need, Charlie Papazian established the Great American Beer Festival (GABF) in 1982 to do just that, and the GABF quickly supplanted Beer & Steer as the premier event in Colorado brewing.

Following a 1982 visit to the Brewers Association of America's annual gathering where he met brewers and executives from bigger regional breweries, Papazian

started to think about what it would take for homebrewers to turn pro. He was determined to expand demand for craft brews and to begin building connections among small-batch brewers. To that end, the AHA decided to aim its annual homebrewing competition at a wider audience, and the Great American Beer Festival was born. Merging their fourth annual homebrewing competition with the GABF, Papazian and Matzen printed announcements in *Zymurgy*, inviting guests from all over the country to come to Boulder on June 4, 1982. That first year, about 850 people took them up on the invitation.

To bring some consistency to how they discussed the diverse and unfamiliar styles of beer being poured at that first GABF, the program offered instructions on how to taste and talk about various styles of ale and lager. The program for the “American Homebrewers Association’s Fourth Annual National Homebrew/Microbrewery Conference and National Homebrew Competition” offers insight into the still-nascent language of beer connoisseurship.

By 1982, homebrewers and craft beer drinkers were accumulating experience with different kinds of ales and lagers, but they didn’t have a common method of identifying or communicating about the tastes that defined those various styles. Characterizations of beers as light, bitter, or sweet *almost* fit the bill, but were too broad to convey the special qualities of a truly innovative beer or to adequately differentiate between beers of similar styles. And so, the GABF’s organizers drew on existing beer knowledge and the established language of food and wine tasting to describe the distinct flavors that characterized each beer. They appropriated words like “flowery” to describe the bitter, hoppy scent and flavor of pale ales, and coined “malty” to convey the sweet, earthy flavor of darker brown ales, porters, and stouts. *Zymurgy* published tasting notes in an effort to expand the community of educated and appreciative beer lovers at a time when the craft brewing industry was

struggling to get off the ground and every beer counted.

For many would-be professional brewers, economic capital was front and center. Budding brewers learned fast that the GABF offered a chance to rub elbows with others from around the country. But it was also an opportunity to get help from larger regional breweries like Coors, which welcomed craft brewers to the industry and offered a helping hand (and, occasionally, ingredients in a pinch) to many in those early days. Over the next decade, the GABF would expand to include dozens more

## Just like it did in the 1880s, betting on beer paid off, one bottle at a time.

breweries, necessitating a move to more spacious accommodations in Denver. But its most important contribution to the rise of craft brewing was in putting homebrewers in touch with beer industry professionals who often generously helped the upstarts work out the issues involved in scaling from small-batch home systems into commercial enterprises. By picking brains and making personal connections, homebrewers at the GABF learned how to make beer in large batches while maintaining quality and freshness.

By the late 1980s, more and more Colorado homebrewers were honing their craft and felt confident in taking the next step: seeking startup capital and making the leap from amateur to professional. By the end of the decade, trailblazing hobbyists were opening microbreweries all across the country. But Colorado was on the leading edge of that burgeoning craft beer movement. Back then, breweries that are now household names across the state—Odell, Wynkoop, Ska, Great Divide, New Belgium, Avery, Oskar Blues—made

the same uncertain bet on Colorado’s future as early brewers like Philip Zang and Adolph Coors had made 100 years before. Just like it did in the 1880s, betting on beer paid off, one bottle at a time.

### Microbrewed Beer Booms

In the late ’70s, Rudolph Ware and David Hummer were physics PhDs at the University of Colorado’s Joint Institute for Laboratory Astrophysics. Using a hodgepodge of makeshift equipment, Ware and Hummer had been experimenting with the recipes they found in *Zymurgy* and with their own homebrewed concoctions. As the story goes, after a faculty party featuring Ware and Hummer’s homebrew, a coworker asked the physicists if there was anything left of the beer. When it turned out that the brew was gone, folks started asking when more would be available and whether they could buy it. And thus, in 1979, a brewery was born.

Initially housed in a goat shed outside the town of Hygiene, Colorado, Boulder Brewing Company would gain fame for winning one of the first gold medals in the porter beer category at the 1982 GABF. Ware, Hummer, and their third partner, Al Nelson, certainly were not the first American homebrewers to make the leap into craft brewing, but they were the first to do so in Colorado. And they snapped up just the forty-third brewing license in the United States at the time. More importantly, they were the first microbrewery to take off outside the West Coast. Drawing on ale brewing traditions that were undergoing their own revival across the pond thanks to British brewing pioneer Michael Jackson (think less moonwalk and more beer talk), Boulder Beer introduced many Coloradans to stouts, porters, pale ales, and barleywine—beers that came out of an English beer tradition. Ale, which had been largely erased from America’s brewing industry and beer palate after Prohibition, was suddenly making a return to prominence. Dark, roasty, and handmade with care, Boulder

Beer's porter was a revelation to the small but growing cadre of microbrew enthusiasts.

Boulder Beer's ascent to prominence and the rapid expansion of its brewing capacity paved the way for the hundreds of breweries that would follow in its sudsy footsteps. Within the next two decades, a proliferation of new breweries offered thirsty Coloradans a chance to identify with a local product and distinguish themselves as members of what was then an exclusive club. Boulder Brewing Company's success was obviously the result of a variety of factors, but in this case, the factors that made for a successful brewing operation converged at a specific place and time in western history. In other words, the fact that the Denver metro area became home to some of the vanguards of craft brewing was due in part to the area's qualities as a hub of the New West, and in part to the culture of connoisseurism that Papazian and the AHA had helped launch at the GABF.

But as appealing as beer bottled in a goat shed might have been to Colorado quaffers, some early GABF attendees realized that professional-scale bottling and distributing were capital-intensive operations that required a great deal of specialized knowledge. So some would-be bottlers shied away from packaging altogether when they discovered that *brewpubs* could be another means of getting beer into consumers' hands and stomachs.

America's first brewpubs opened on the West Coast, and it wasn't long before Denver and the rest of the state caught on. Brewpubs were still illegal in Colorado in the early 1980s thanks to the convoluted laws Prohibition left behind. But small-batch beer's growing statewide popularity drew the attention of restaurateurs eager to cash in on the phenomenon. Lobbying did its job, and

by the late 1980s the law was changed and the race was on to open Colorado's first brewpub.

Jim and Bill Carver—brothers who grew up working in Milwaukee bakeries—weren't strangers to hard work or the science of fermentation. Like so many others, the pair moved out to Colorado in the '80s to take advantage of the high-country lifestyle. Their Winter Park bakery kept itself afloat selling massive cinnamon rolls and scratch-made meals to tourists visiting the ever-expanding ski resort cut into the national forest just a few miles up US-40. But Winter

Park sits in a high-mountain valley that gets frigidly cold in the winter, and their tourist-dependent business dried up in the summer months. So the Carvers went looking for warmer weather and a more year-round economy. After selling their namesake bakery in 1986, the two moved southward to a sleepy college community tucked beneath the San Juan Mountains.

In the midst of a nationwide recession, Durango was a different kind of town back then. The brothers recall boarded-up shops in a community that had yet to experience the population influx and



John Hickenlooper, along with his partners Jerry Williams, Mark Schiffler, and Russell Schehrer, opened Wynkoop Brewing in 1988 before "LoDo" was part of every Denverite's vocabulary. Photo courtesy of Wynkoop Brewing Company.

*These early harbingers of homebrewing helped bring the hobby back to the United States meeting at Boulder Beer to share a brew in 1981. Photo courtesy of The Brewers Association.*

*Front Row (left to right): Michael Jackson (British Beer Authority), Otto Zavatone (Brewmaster, Boulder Beer), Fred Eckhardt (Homebrew Journalist).*

*Second Row (left to right): Charlie Papazian (Founder, American Homebrewers Association), Al Nelson (Co-Founder, Boulder Beer), Al Andrews (famed California homebrewer), Tom Burns (Cartwright Brewing Co).*

*Back Row (left to right): Steve Gering (Homebrewer), Lee Damkoehler (Homebrewer).*



economic benefits of Colorado's outdoor recreation boom. Luckily for Durango, Carver Brothers Bakery was an instant hit. Fresh bread baked daily and handmade preserves imparted an air of local authenticity, but it was the quality of the food that made the place a must-stop breakfast and lunch spot for visitors and Durangans alike. Because they built their success on homemade offerings, when the brothers contemplated expanding into dinner service in 1988 they knew that having a handmade product on the menu was essential. Homemade burger buns wouldn't be enough, but small-batch beers might just fit the bill.

Buying some old brewing equipment from a burned-out Milwaukee brewery, the Carvers' crew started experimenting with new recipes. They had some expertise with bread yeast, but buying brewer's yeast wasn't easy yet in Durango. So the brothers had to culture their own. With microbrew on the menu, Carver's cemented its status as a local hub as well as a critical stop for the ever-growing numbers of outdoor enthusiasts. Durango became a preferred destination for hiking, skiing, fishing, and mountain biking in the storied San Juans, and even famed outdoor adventure writer Edward Abbey stopped by Carver's in

1988. He'd never heard of small-batch beer, but when the brothers gave him some samples of their still-fermenting brew, Abbey apparently loved them all and said that he thought brewing beer that way was a "damn-fine idea."

At the same time that the Carver brothers were helping revitalize downtown Durango, another group of entrepreneurs was looking to do the same for a neglected neighborhood in downtown Denver. Lower Downtown in the '80s—before "LoDo" was part of every Denverite's vocabulary—wasn't a popular destination on a Friday or Saturday night. A two-decade trend of white flight and corresponding discriminatory lending practices meant that most of Colorado's white middle class stuck to the suburbs while opportunities for people living in Denver's urban core were severely limited. The term "inner city" was a kind of code for the problems that came with a lack of public or private investment in racially segregated neighborhoods.

John Hickenlooper recalls the effects of these policies, noting that in 1988 you could see tumbleweeds blowing down Wynkoop Street on a Friday evening. The famously unemployed-geologist-turned-entrepreneur-turned-mayor-turned-governor-turned-senator,

Hickenlooper had visited what was then the handful of brewpubs around the country (mostly concentrated in the West) and figured that Colorado's emerging microbrewed beer scene would help support a new restaurant pouring its own beer. After scraping together as many dollars as they could, Hickenlooper and his partners Jerry Williams, Mark Schiffler, and Russell Schehrer opened the state's first brewpub. They beat the Carvers in Durango by only about two months, thanks to a suddenly available rafting permit that allowed the Carvers a long-sought-after chance to boat the Grand Canyon.

According to Hickenlooper, Wynkoop Brewing Company's opening night was almost a fiasco as hundreds of thirsty patrons rushed to the bar to buy pints for only twenty-five cents. The new brewery ran out of beer before eleven o'clock, selling more than 6,000 plastic cups of fine English-inspired ales. Following hard on the heels of Wynkoop's success, dozens of other brewpubs popped up in growing Colorado towns over the next five years. Some still-familiar names include the likes of Boulder's Mountain Sun Pub & Brewery, Fort Collins' Coopersmith's Pub & Brewing, and Breckenridge Brewery. But even among

these fast-evolving towns, the transformation of Denver's LoDo neighborhood was notable.

Wynkoop's opening came at the onset of a gentrifying transformation that reconfigured downtown Denver into one of the most desirable and expensive places in the country to live. The brewpub's ales, named for iconic places and industries from Colorado history, evoked a sense of place for the new influx of homeseekers pushing out longtime residents in Denver's glitzy new urban core. Wynkoop's success compounded growing investment from other entrepreneurs, and business surged through the early 1990s as wealthy investors capitalized on "Imagine a Great City" programs launched by Mayor Federico Peña and continued by the Wellington Webb administration that followed. Beer was already leading the way in LoDo, but its status as the liquid hallmark of the times was confirmed with the arrival of the Colorado Rockies baseball franchise and their home field bearing the Coors name. Alongside trendy restaurants, ball games, and revitalized nightlife, taprooms were vital amenities popping up for urbanites in the 1990s. In the span of just a few decades, longstanding demographic trends were turned on their heads as the new, wealthy, and generally speaking, white residents reshaped what had been predominantly Black and Hispano neighborhoods. Breweries, not wanting to miss out on the economic opportunity of a lifetime, opened at a dizzying pace. They helped drive a period of rapid economic growth in the city's core, as well as the familiar corollary effect of forcing out long-established communities of color.

As downtown kept expanding, so did its beer offerings. Great Divide Brewing Company opened a brewery, taproom, and bottling house just a few blocks away from Coors Field in 1994, joining the ranks of already established brewers like Odell Brewing in Fort Collins, Avery Brewing Company in Boulder, Phantom Canyon in Colorado Springs, and Flying Dog in Aspen. Soon, mash tuns were also

busy brewing a craft boom in high-alpine recreation hotspots like Breckenridge. By the late 1990s, glass bottles of flavorful microbrews commanding unheard-of prices could be found in liquor stores across Colorado, while craft styles like India pale ale flowed from taps in nearly every corner of the state. Even Coors was getting in on the craft beer game, hiring brewmaster Keith Villa to create the company's now-famous Blue Moon Belgian White ale in its brewery at Coors Field.

By the time Coloradans started worrying about the Y2K bug, microbrewed local beer had become *the* go-to adult beverage for New Westerners. The challenging bitter flavors of India Pale Ale or the unique richness of stout were in high demand among those who wanted to demonstrate their sophistication, but who also just wanted something cold, relaxing, and delicious to enjoy after work or after playing outside. What was known in the early 2000s as microbrewed beer was a kind of liquid cachet that paired perfectly with a vision of Colorado as the home of the outdoor-oriented, amenity-rich good life. In other words, a knowledge of microbrewed beer and the palate to appreciate it became, alongside fancy mountain bikes and expensive ski gear, a marker of status and of the lifestyle New Westerners were seeking in Colorado.

Beer and biking, brews and bootlaces: They were all part of a new culture emerging in the West, and they signified one of Colorado's longest-lasting periods of economic growth.

### Crafting the Can

**R**estaurateur Dale Katechis was struggling to make payroll. Like so many other New Westerners in the late 1990s, Katechis came to Colorado to bike and brew near some of the Rockies' best trails. Katechis opened Oskar Blues restaurant and pub in 1997 in the small town of Lyons where, like Carver Brewing Company in Durango, it became a staple for locals and tourists alike. In the summertime, Dale managed to sell enough

barbeque and beer to keep the doors open and the lights on. But when the snowflakes started to fly in nearby Rocky Mountain National Park, the tourists stopped coming. The winter months were lean at the restaurant, and on more than one occasion Katechis was forced to sell his pickup truck on a Friday and then buy it back on a Monday just so he could pay his staff.

Searching for a more stable all-season source of income, Katechis and his colleagues decided to try packaging their beer for sale beyond the restaurant. Tapping into Colorado's already-competitive craft beer market in 2002 was going to be tough. New Belgium in Fort Collins was, even then, a comparatively giant operation. But Oskar Blues' decision to eschew the usual bottles and put Dale's Pale Ale into cans helped set the beer apart. By 2005, Oskar Blues was drawing national attention. In a *New York Times* taste test, Dale's Pale Ale won out over several other beers, in part because the can it came in preserved the beer's freshness.

Writing about the novelty of drinking craft beer from a can, *Times* journalist Eric Asimov said, "Not long ago, cans represented all that was wrong with the assembly-line American beer industry. No craft brewer worth a copper brew kettle would even consider putting his precious ale in a can. But times have changed, and some brewers say that cans are lighter and easier to recycle than bottles, and offer complete protection against light." As longtime Oskar Blues Marketing Director Chad Melis said of the article, "It was a well-respected third party with massive reach reinforcing everything we were saying. It fueled our fire to keep loading up the van and going to bike events, kayak events, music festivals, anywhere we could reach people one beer at a time."

Today, canned beer is anything but a novelty. Most packaged beer is available in cans, and thirty-two-ounce "crawlers"—a portmanteau of *can* and *growler*—make tap-fresh brews available for patrons to take home from almost

any brewery, thanks to an affordable bartop can sealer invented at Oskar Blues. In short, breweries around the state are discovering what Bill Coors learned when he helped bring the first mass-produced aluminum beer can to market in 1959: Aluminum cans are lighter, cheaper, and more recyclable than any other packaging material for beer. But what made the can really exciting for Colorado's consumers in the early 2000s was the chance to update Charlie Papazian's guidelines for enjoying good beer while backpacking by tossing one or two of their favorite flavor-packed pale ales into a backpack to enjoy mid-mountain, an option that glass bottles' fragility and heft had always made impractical.

Even as Colorado's craft beer scene blossomed in the late 1990s, Colorado craft brewers stuck with bottles. Glass—the stuff of fine wine and liquor bottles for centuries—imparted an air of permanence and attention to quality. Despite advances in manufacturing that rendered cans inert, some consumers insisted that canned beer tasted like the metal it came in. Still others believed that bottlers cared more about their craft, in contrast to the canned stuff that journalist Mike Royko said “tasted like the secret brewing process involved running it through a horse.” So when Dale Katechis started packaging his beer, he was well aware that aluminum cans carried a lowbrow stigma associated with mass-produced lagers.

For these reasons, in the early years of the new millennium, convincing craft beer consumers to drink out of cans was a hard row to hoe. So Oskar Blues set out to purchase bottling equipment. But before it committed itself, the brewery received what Chad Melis called a “spam fax” from a company offering a one-at-a-time canning line. “At first,” Melis says, “like everybody else we laughed, it was pretty much a joke at that time.”

But a twinge of curiosity kept gnawing at the brewing team, and with Ball Corporation's can manufacturing plant just down the road, Katechis and his coworkers decided to go see whether cans were a viable packaging option for a small

brewery. As things turned out, Ball was willing to manufacture cans for Dale's Pale Ale in small enough batches to make economic and logistical sense. When the minds behind Oskar Blues realized that cans are better for the brewery's bottom line while being better for the beer and better for the environment, the decision to put their beer in cans was what Melis called “kind of a no-brainer.”

The can was an obvious point of departure from the ubiquitous bottle, and it eventually helped set the brewery apart by giving it a reputation for



In 2002, Oskar Blues launched the first commercially available craft beer in a can. Finally, outdoor-oriented New Westerners could take brews on adventures without worrying about shattered glass. *History Colorado* 2019.26.1.

commitment to quality and for supporting local businesses. But in 2002, with the stigma against canned beer still firmly entrenched among most craft beer drinkers, the Lyons-based brewery needed to educate its consumers about the can's potential benefits.

Oskar Blues employees figured they needed to hit the road. Long days and nights of travel took Dale's Pale Ale and its blue can, emblazoned with an idyllic mountain backdrop, anywhere beer connoisseurs congregated. Most often, this entailed loading up the van and heading out to mountain bike races, kayaking exhibitions, and other outdoor

events in order to show people that cans made it possible to play outside while enjoying great beer.

As word about Oskar Blues and its canned craft beer got around, the folks at the brewery saw that cans and the outdoor-oriented culture they promoted were appealing strongly to the same growing market of New Westerners that was buying Boulder Beer's Singletrack ale or New Belgium's Fat Tire. Chad Melis says that consumers told the Oskar Blues team how appreciative they were to finally have a craft beer they could take with them when they went biking, skiing, hiking, or camping. Despite Charlie Papazian's valiant efforts in that 1979 *Zymurgy* article to convince beerlovers that they could take their favorite brew into the woods, two decades of lugging heavy, clinking backpacks and mourning tragically shattered bottles left recreationists longing for their favorite beer in cans. The new mobility cans offered, along with their eco-friendly recyclability, gave Oskar Blues a competitive advantage with New Westerners whose purchasing habits reflected a commodification of outdoor recreation and a desire for products that minimized environmental impact.

For these New Westerners, who spent good coin on top-flight equipment for their outdoor exploits, consuming craft beer while playing outside dovetailed with purchases of material markers of economic status on offer from outdoor outfitters like Patagonia or REI. The aluminum can's infinite recyclability allowed consumers to feel that they were reducing their ecological impact by directing their dollars away from resource-intensive glass. Thus, for Oskar Blues, the choice to put high-quality beer in cans happened at the perfect cultural moment. Riding a wave of outdoor-oriented green consumerism, Oskar Blues was able to make craft beer in cans a prominent icon of the amenity-driven economy of the twenty-first century West. As Melis put it, “we wanted to have a can—a clearly identifiable can—on everything. Whether you see an Oskar Blues tap handle, an Oskar Blues poster, or cans

on the shelf at the liquor store, you see a lot of consistency in the cans. For us, that can was a symbol of a couple of different things: of quality craft beer; of environmentalism; and that active lifestyle that brought us all together in Lyons.”

Beer marketing continues to play on this synergy of environmentalism and active outdoor lifestyles despite the fact that neither outdoor recreation nor beer brewing are particularly environmentally friendly industries. Nevertheless, the nature motif on Oskar Blues cans is part of a culture of using mountain scenes to promote sales, and it reflects craft brewing’s roots in eco-oriented amenity towns. This new marketing was an expression of eco-conscious, amenity-driven consumerism, and it grew up around gear and beer in the American West.

### Lessons from the Craftsplosion

**W**ith roots stretching back to the late ’70s, Colorado’s craft beer boom seems like it was a long time coming. But in reality, the explosion of craft brewing is a fairly recent phenomenon driven by the taproom boom. Brewpubs were popular, but, increasingly, what became known as the “taproom” is rising to prominence. Taprooms like the Copper Club in Fruita started opening around the state in the early 2000s, and tourism is supporting breweries far from the Front Range. In the wake of the hopefully receding Covid-19 pandemic, new breweries are still opening in mountain towns across the state. Even the tiny community of Fraser, population 1,300 in 2020, has three thriving craft breweries. And Ouray, nestled into its box canyon beneath the San Juan peaks, boasts four breweries for its 1,046 residents. For many of these small mountain brewers, their popularity and their marketing is explicitly tied to the idea that they are places for visitors and locals alike to gather with good friends after hiking a fourteener, swishing down the slopes, riding the rapids, or slaying some

singletrack. They are anchors of the New Western lifestyle in communities that a generation or two earlier were on the wrong side of the state’s economic boom-and-bust cycles.

All across Colorado, New Western dollars have been a lifeline. Communities long neglected because of racism or simply because they were out of the way saw trendy taprooms boom. But the negative side effects that came with an influx of tourists and urban amenity seekers weren’t borne equally. Gentrification and out-of-reach housing are problems both city and mountain communities are desperate to solve.

In modern Colorado, craft breweries are simultaneously centers of growing community identity and drivers of inequity. And brewing as an industry is still striving to address its exclusion problem, despite years of efforts to be more accessible to brewers and beer-lovers of color. Latino-owned breweries like Raices and Dos Luces in Denver represent welcoming community hubs in an industry that is slowly grappling with its legacy of exclusion. Raices owner Jose Beteta, a champion of getting the word out about Latino beer culture, founded Suave Fest—a festival featuring Latino brewers—in Denver in 2019. Similarly, the industry is opening up to women, and Colorado is a national leader. Woman-owned breweries like Holidaily, helmed by Karen Hertz in Golden, and Lady Justice, founded by a group of bold women in Aurora, are forging a new path for female brewers.

As the state’s brewing industry embraces these advances and continues working toward crafting a community for all Coloradans, beer and outdoor recreation remain world-renowned hallmarks of the Colorado lifestyle. And the story of the state’s brewing industry reflects the change and growth the phenomenon of the New West has entailed.

With more than 400 breweries operating at the end of 2021, and more opening all the time, the craft beer sector contributes more to Colorado’s

economy per capita than it does in any other state, according to the Brewers Association. Denver hosts the fortieth anniversary of the Great American Beer Festival in October of 2022, and Golden is still home to (though it’s no longer the headquarters of) the Coors brewery—the largest single-site brewery in North America. Thanks in part to Charlie Papa-zian and the craft beer revolution he started with his homebrew crew, it’s the rare ski area café or mountain restaurant that has no local ale on offer, and brewery meetups are an integral part of local culture for many communities all across the state. Homebrewing—an activity started as a fringe hobby and a response to a lack of beer options among a select segment of comfortably wealthy and white New Westerners—now includes increasingly diverse communities of brewers and drinkers. From La Junta to Grand Junction, and from Fort Collins to Trinidad, beer is more than a quirky local commodity or a pleasant way to pass an afternoon. It’s an integral part of many people’s Colorado lifestyles.

The story of how Colorado became one of the best places in the world to grab a pint is more than just a tale of ale. It’s also an index for how Colorado has changed in the last half century. It’s an amber (or pale yellow, or malty black) lens through which we can better understand how today’s Colorado came to be. ●

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#### EDITOR’S NOTE:

This article is another in our series exploring Colorado history over a glass of beer. Portions of it originally appeared in the Spring 2016 issue of *Journal of the West*.

**O**n a late summer day in 1922, the sun peeks through towering trees at the base of Pikes Peak. The breeze is chilly and gray cumulus clouds tease nearby. With luck, the dry weather will hold out just a bit longer. The smells of gasoline and pine mix in the air as a bright yellow vehicle rumbles, raring to run like a stocky mechanized racehorse and chomping at the bit to GO! With the wave of the green flag, the Yellow Devil is ready to use its frenetic horsepower to break away from the starting line.

Today, the Pikes Peak International Hill Climb (PPIHC) is as riveting as it was in its infancy, when Spencer “Speck” Penrose’s Pierce-Arrow touring car—nicknamed the “Yellow Devil”—blasted up the gravel road to ascend Pikes Peak in search of the summit and soon became a Hill Climb icon. Many elements have changed since those first motor races to the top of “America’s Mountain,” but the competition is still on the bucket lists of many a car and motorcycle racer, mechanic, and spectator, all hoping to have their own rip-roaring experience 14,000 feet above sea level.

This year, when the race ran for the 100th time, more stories were added to the history of this thrilling, often heart-stopping, event. For instance, there is rookie Levi Shirley’s chatter-worthy tumble over the side of the hill—his vehicle in a full roll—only to land on all four wheels and press onward up the mountain, completing his ascent in under fourteen minutes to the relief and admiration of onlookers. But as we press on, this milestone race offers us the opportunity to also look at some moment’s from the race’s past and present in ways that help us understand how one person’s savvy marketing idea turned into a sensational international event.

The rugged terrain surrounding the race course is evident as race driver and vehicle speed past a hairpin turn and continue their ascent.  
*Photo courtesy of PPIHC Archives.*

# Race to







# the Clouds

At the 100th running of the Broadmoor Pikes Peak International Hill Climb, we took a closer look at the famous road race's history.

BY LORI BAILEY

## **Rugged Beginnings**

Beginning as a toll road to offset the cost of construction, the Pikes Peak Highway offered drivers a way to traverse the scenic

passage from Cascade to the summit and back for \$2.50 per person when it opened on August 1, 1916. Spencer Penrose, the philanthropist and businessman

behind many of Colorado Springs's well-established amenities (including The Broadmoor hotel), dreamt up the car race as a way to advertise his new

highway. The first running of the event, soon known as the “Race to the Clouds,” was on August 10–12, 1916, and was covered by more than 650 news outlets nationwide. Driver Lea Rentz won with a run that clocked in just under twenty-one minutes and sent him back home to Spokane, Washington, with \$2,000 in his pocket.

Keen to be a part of the action, Penrose had his personal luxury car modified into a race vehicle and the hand-painted lettering on the side of the car spelled out “The Broadmoor Special.” Easily recognizable in its bold livery, between 1922 and 1932 the Yellow Devil made eight lively attempts to win, but never placed higher than fourth in the Open Class category.

While Penrose was clearly a fan, he never drove the car himself: His chauffeur Harry McMillan, along with Broadmoor master mechanic Angelo Cimino, took turns speeding full-on up the winding curves and switchbacks of the mountain. Although neither racer ever managed to run fastest and thereby earn the coveted King of the Mountain title, the fact that they came in fourth place on two occasions in the heavy, not-designed-to-be-raced vehicle is rather remarkable. And so it has been since the famous race’s inception: Machines, not necessarily designed to be pushed this hard at high altitude and gasping in the thin air, battle to reach the crest, with and against humans who are in an epic endeavor to do the same.

### Perilous Climbing

If you have ever driven the road to the summit of Pikes Peak, then you can no doubt imagine how speeding (literally) to the top may not be without significant risks. The highway’s own website offers a guideline for safe driving tips when navigating one of the highest roads in the United States and the maximum speed limit on the road is thirty miles per hour. And as anyone who has spent time in Colorado can attest, the weather can change from pleasant to perilous in a matter of minutes. Now visualize

doing all of this above tree line as you try to stick to the road around hairpin turns and blind corners, blazing the straightaways at well over 100 miles per hour—a single vehicle in a race against the clock and the conditions to make it to the top.

While the Hill Climb has always been a hair-raising endeavor, it has actually become more dangerous for drivers in recent years, borne out of the need to better protect the environment. In 1998, the Sierra Club sued the city of Colorado Springs, which was awarded the responsibility of maintaining the Pikes Peak Highway upon Penrose’s passing in 1939. The lawsuit alleged that erosion of the dirt highway was leaving inches of gravel on adjacent forest floors and polluting nearby water sources, which violated the Clean Water Act.

A settlement was reached between the city of Colorado Springs and the Sierra Club, and the solution was to pave the entirety of the Pikes Peak Highway. The work began in 2002 and, section by section, over the next ten years the dirt was replaced with tarmac in time to make the Pikes Peak International Hill Climb (PPIHC) of 2012 the first to be run on an all-pavement road.

Fortunately, this seems to have improved environmental conditions, but drivers—especially Hill Climb racers—need to be more aware of road conditions than ever before. The tarmac is a faster surface than dirt, which creates obvious challenges on a road with no guard rails. In addition, moisture on the tarmac creates a more slippery surface; the top portion of the track is above tree line and extremely susceptible to adverse weather. These days, race crews at the starting line try to assist in generating as much tire grip as possible by wrapping vehicle tires in warming blankets just before the race, but that cannot account for every condition change a driver will encounter during the twelve-mile quest to reach the top unscathed.

Rea Lentz and his Romano Special in 1916, his one and only—and victorious—attempt at the motor race.  
*Photo courtesy of PPIHC Archives.*

### Speed Racer

A sleek red car, emblazoned with the number “62” on its nose, speeds around a corner as a cloud of dust is kicked up behind it. Purple mountain majesties watch from the horizon. The driver sits upright in the open vehicle, laser-focused on the narrow track wrapping around the rocky brown hillside ahead as the road falls away (as in, *down*) on his right. His gear—white helmet, jacket, face mask, black goggles—are obvious in front of the single roll bar as the camera captures the scene.

This captivating Hill Climb image is one of the first color photos to appear inside an issue of *Hot Rod* magazine, the oldest magazine about hot rod car culture, first published in January 1948 and still in print today. The image so aptly captures the dirt track, the speed, the colors, and no doubt the imagination of many race admirers. And according to William Taylor, president of the automotive and motor sport library Auto-Archives, the image is a story unto itself. The photo was actually taken the year before it appeared in the September 1962 issue, because at that time, it took too long to process color images for



them to be included in the next month's publication. "In those days, they had to do color separations....So they did this real early, and we didn't know they were even doing it," chuckles Frank Peterson, who drove that car when the historical photo was captured, and who lives in Lakewood today. Both car and driver did indeed compete again in the race the following year, which coincided with the color photo's debut in the magazine.

Frank Peterson and his wife, Kaye, have become practically synonymous with racing around Colorado. Now in their eighties, the Petersons still work full time at their workshop, Lakewood Manufacturing, near Morrison. I visited the Petersons to learn more about the Hill Climb, cars, and other races, like those at Bandimere Speedway (which they can see—and hear!—from their front door). Frank told me more about that color photo, and the red rocket he was zipping up the track with. It was a Bocar Stiletto, designed by Bob Carnes.

Some twenty-three Bocars are said to have been hand-built by Carnes at his shop that used to be in Lakewood, near Fourteenth Avenue and Harlan Street, until a fire decimated the shop and,

not long after, the company. Local lore suggests that at the time of the fire, there were several outstanding orders for the unique fiberglass cars, including from the likes of Augie Pabst, race car driver and member of the Pabst Brewing family, and Lee Iacocca, who became the CEO of the Chrysler Corporation.

Through it all, the Petersons said that the Hill Climb built community. As Frank put it: "Oh, we used to share tools, and parts too. If someone's car broke, then we would give them a part, or they'd lend one to us." Kaye added, smiling: "All of the wives used to play together, and the kids too."

### **Racing Right Through the Glass Ceiling**

The first woman to compete in the PPIHC was Joyce Thompson in her Austin-Healey (Sports Car division) in 1960. While she didn't win that event, she was the first of numerous women over the years to race, joining a legion of even more female crew members, inspectors, marshals, and organizers. Kaye Peterson, who operates Lakewood Manufacturing with her husband Frank, has been a mainstay at all of the races her family

has participated in, often serving as a welding inspector or some other type of volunteer. She says that although Frank always encouraged her to try her hand at driving, she really enjoys taking part in all of the other aspects of fabrication.

In the century of Hill Climb races, more than fifty women have driven or ridden to the checkered flag. The first female to win her class was French driver Michèle Mouton in her Audi Quattro in 1985 (Rally division), becoming the first woman to be crowned Queen of the Mountain (the winner with the overall quickest time of any class). According to Sarah Woods, Curator of Historic Properties & Archives for the El Pomar Foundation, several women drivers raced for the title again this year, including Loni Unser, the newest—and second female—member of the stellar Unser racing family to vie for the title.

Other past notable women competitors include Katy Endicott, who became the first woman to race an electric car up Pikes Peak in the race's inaugural Electric Car class, and German motorcycle racer Lucy Glöckner, who became the first female to finish in under ten minutes, which earned her the title of the fastest woman on Pikes Peak. Yet she was not the first woman to race up the peak on a motorcycle. That honor belongs to Annie Brokar, who did so in 1997 at sixty-one years of age.

### **Winners In High and Low Tech**

Pikes Peak has made a name for itself as a proving ground for many new technologies in the transportation industry (including when General Electric conducted testing of airplane engines on the mountain). It is little wonder that, considering the challenging environs on offer at any given moment, "America's Mountain" provides excellent opportunities to put new ideas to the test—especially when running full-throttle against the elements and the clock.

Perhaps surprisingly, beyond the rapid-fire thinking and reaction times of the drivers, the race itself also relies on very human-powered technologies.



The twelve-mile challenge may be inherently dangerous, but safety is and always has been a crucial consideration. It takes more than 100 volunteer race officials and another 100 volunteers in other positions to run the motor race. And one role is that of a “corner watcher,” which is far more important than it sounds. Although the highway does have cameras lining the road, corner watchers at every one of the 156 corners along the route notify race control immediately of weather changes, stationary vehicles, spectators—or even wildlife—that can pose a danger to race participants.

Another job that makes this gripping race run efficiently? Those who are in charge of timing the race. Sure, the cars have electronic transponders which mark competitors’ times, but there are also hand timers who provide backup in the case of electronic malfunctions, which could mean the difference between winning and losing. The volunteer hand timers at the Hill Climb are incredibly accurate. Alex Feedback, Event Coordinator and Competitor Liaison for the PPIHC, explained that after the 2021 race, they decided to compare the times noted by hand timers with the telemetry data provided by the electronic transponders. As it turns out, the hand timers were an astonishing 99.9% accurate when comparing the data side by side!

### Believe and Drive Fast

The tremendous efforts to ensure safety and accuracy for the race mean that its participants can train and come to the mountain prepared to compete to the very best of their abilities, pushing their vehicles, and themselves, to the limit. It is a special breed of racer who receives the coveted invitation to race in the PPIHC, let alone to return to compete year after year, and even generation after generation. Legacy friendships and legacy families are as much a part of racing to the clouds as the cars—perhaps even more so.

The Vahscholtzs, Dallenbachs, and Donners are familiar names to PPIHC fans. And folks will have been watching for Rod and Rhys Millen: Father and son competed this year individually in their classes, each of them already holding King of the Mountain titles. The Indianapolis 500 and the PPIHC are the oldest and second-oldest motorsport competitions in the US, respectively, and racing families like the Unserers have been mainstays of both events since practically the beginning. This year, the Unser family rallied around PPIHC rookie Loni Unser, the 26-year-old daughter of Johnny Unser who was climbing the mountain in her 2019 Porsche GT4 Clubsport.

While other drivers may not have famous names in motorsport or hold the crown for the fastest time, being a bucket list event means that there are other drivers out there competing for

things besides sponsorship or family titles. I learned from Alex Feedback that invitees from all over the world make up the fifty to sixty competitors (about seventy all together when motorcycles are racing) who come each year and put the “International” in PPIHC—and that over 40 percent of drivers invited to compete in this year’s 100th Running are Colorado residents, maintaining that “local race” feel.

The centennial running of the race featured many talented (or, shall we say, driven?) entrants, including father and son Dan and Trevor Aweida of Boulder, who found enough replacement parts to piece their cars back together after being affected by the Marshall Fire, and Ralph Murdock, who turned eighty-two in May and was committed to competing for the title in the 1991 Chevrolet IROC Camaro which was driven in last year’s Hill Climb by his son Kevin.

With so many familiar and local people involved, it is a special thing that this race, which occurs practically in our backyards, has such a broad following. I can only imagine how Spencer Penrose would feel about his racing enterprise now. As Nobihuro “Monster” Tajima, the first racer to break the ten-minute barrier said, “That’s the only secret—believe and drive fast. There is nothing else.”

Which brings us back around full circle to the origins of the Pikes Peak International Hill Climb. While Spencer Penrose’s Yellow Devil was one of the



Motorcycle competitor David Korth races past spectators at the 1976 Pikes Peak International Hill Climb. *Photo courtesy of El Pomar Foundation Archives.*



Spencer Penrose’s 1918 Broadmoor Special, nicknamed the “Yellow Devil,” on display indowntown Colorado Springs, 1926. *Photo courtesy of El Pomar Foundation Archives.*



Al Rogers races his Coniff Special toward the checkered flag during the 1949 Pikes Peak International Hill Climb. *Photo courtesy of El Pomar Foundation Archives.*



King of the Mountain is the title bestowed upon the fastest driver in the Hill Climb each year, and Bobby Unser earned that crown an impressive ten times—more than any competitor in nearly 100 years of racing on Pikes Peak. *Photo courtesy of PPIHC Archives.*

original race vehicles to establish the thrills, spills, and pageantry of this unique event early on, the race itself has continued to inspire participants of all sorts ever since. Racers like the Unsers, who built their cars at home using parts they found in the local junk yard and managed to create a family racing dynasty, to racers like Rea Lentz, who won their first and only race, and never raced again. Then there is the Yellow Devil, whose image helped to catapult the race into the history books, and whose legacy is kept alive by many

dedicated custodians including the Penrose Heritage Museum, celebrating its eightieth anniversary this year, and the likes of Frank Peterson, who oversaw the restoration of the Yellow Devil to working order in 2015.

One man's lofty dream, plus the combination of unpredictable weather conditions, fierce acceleration and braking, twists and turns that challenge vehicle handling and tire viability, and the thin air of the peak's altitude have, over 100 years, created breathtaking practice grounds for car and other manufacturers,

as well as the perfect setting for competitors to pit themselves against machine, against nature, and against time—always at the mercy of the mountain. But to me, the enduring charm of the Hill Climb lives in the stories of the many people who have brought this endeavor to life, and continue to inhale the challenge and exhale the adrenaline that keeps it going. ●

**LORI BAILEY** is the managing editor of History Colorado's *Weekly Digest* newsletter.



# Collecting

608. PIKE'S PEAK.



The work of a nineteenth-century  
botanist is helping us understand  
today's rapidly changing landscape.

BY JOHN BRADLEY

# Colorado

Celebrated western photographer William Henry Jackson captured this image of Pikes Peak and the Garden of the Gods in the 1880s, shortly after Marcus Eugene Jones made his second collecting trips through the area. *History Colorado 86.200.154.*

As his west-bound train crossed the Colorado border, the twenty-six-year-old teacher from Iowa recognized that his long journey across the prairies was nearing its end. He sat in the rumbling coach, his eyes probably scanning the horizon for the first glimpse of the mountains that lay ahead. It was May 1, 1878, just a few weeks after he received a master's degree from Iowa College and concluded the Latin classes he had been teaching, and not quite two years since Colorado had become the Centennial State. For Marcus Eugene Jones, the first of two life-changing summers in the Front Range of Colorado's Southern Rocky Mountains had just begun. By the time they were over, Jones would have assembled a record of the region's plant life that continues to allow scientists to study the Western ecosystem and how it is changing.

Born in northeastern Ohio in 1852 as the oldest child in a farm family, Jones was raised in humble circumstances and with a love of nature, especially for plant life. When he was barely into his teens his family moved to a small farm near Grinnell, in central Iowa, where Jones worked the fields beside his brothers and helped his father run a sawmill. After attending a local academy, Jones entered Iowa [now Grinnell] College with its classical curriculum. Because he excelled at Latin, Jones began to anticipate becoming either a Latin teacher or a school principal, occupations his two degrees prepared him for.

While Caesar and Cicero occupied his academic world, Jones also found time to indulge his interest in nature by reading texts on botany and geology. In his college and graduate school days he began to wander nearby fields to gather plant specimens, both for his own collection and to sell to schools and museums, and to professional botanists and amateur collectors who shared his appreciation for this popular scientific hobby. Exhausting Iowa's botanical offerings, Jones began to ponder a search for new areas to explore, and before long he

determined upon a location that would combine his twin interests in geology and botany: the newly-created state of Colorado.

Colorado beckoned for other reasons as well. Jones began to realize that a life as a Latin teacher no longer had the same appeal, and he may have been looking for an outdoor adventure after spending seven years in the classroom. Colorado was experiencing a tourist boom now that railroad connections had made the

**While Caesar and Cicero occupied his academic world, Jones also found time to indulge his interest in nature by reading texts on botany and geology.**

scenic beauty of the state accessible to Eastern visitors. Jones was plagued by headaches, and he may have reasoned that Colorado's invigorating climate would provide a cure. Jones also planned to write a narrative of his explorations, an exercise he looked forward to with relish. So, prepared for a combination of scientific excursion, wilderness adventure, journey for health, and journalistic exercise—and having no commitments for the next several months—Jones set off for the Rocky Mountains.

Colorado was a place in transition. Jones wrote of his anticipation of seeing bison herds rumble across the plains, although he certainly knew that the days of such sights had long passed. What had not changed about Colorado was its magnificent landscape. It was the promise of seeing long-awaited mountains that kept Jones alert as the train chugged toward Pueblo. As they got closer, Jones and his fellow passengers climbed onto outside running boards,

braving the elements and the shower of ashes from the locomotive as they stared in vain in the direction of cloud-covered Pikes Peak. Disappointed at missing this landmark, Jones soon consoled himself when the Spanish Peaks and the Sangre de Cristo Mountains came into view.

At Pueblo, Jones switched trains to the narrow-gauge Denver and Rio Grande Railway for the ride to Colorado Springs and the end of his 800-mile journey. Although thrilled with the mountains looming overhead, the Midwesterner felt some disappointment with the plant life he observed, writing of the “naked and devastated soil of the plains.” Colorado Springs, a carefully designed new city of 4,200 people, boasted exclusive resort hotels, sanatoria for tuberculosis patients, parks, newspapers, churches, and libraries. Avoiding the tourist facilities, Jones made his way to the home of friends from Grinnell. It was from this house that he set off on his first solitary hike into the wilderness, crossing the cold swift current of Fountain Creek (known then as Fontaine qui Bouille, a holdover from the days when French trappers were reinscribing the landscape with non-Indigenous names) and heading west into Cheyenne Canyon.

Traveling without companion or map, Jones was delighted to soon find appealing samples of Colorado plant life, such as pasque flower (*Pulsatilla patens*), bear's grape (*Arctostaphylos uva-ursi*) and Fendler's false-cloak fern (*Argyrochosma fendleri*). As the day progressed, the cylindrical specimen case, or vasculum, which Jones slung over his shoulder, was beginning to fill, and he realized that he had greatly underestimated the distance he had walked. An early May snowstorm surprised him as he trod along mesas which soared above the 6,000-foot altitude of Colorado Springs, a mile higher than the elevation of his Iowa home, and he marveled at the pinkish-red alpenglow that momentarily lit the peaks at sundown.

With darkness falling and his energy waning, Jones suddenly found himself trapped at the top of a twenty-five-foot





Marcus Eugene Jones in 1882 at age thirty, four years after earning his degree and boarding a train bound for Colorado. Photo courtesy of the University and Jepson Herbaria Archives, University of California, Berkeley.

waterfall with no way to go except straight down. Tentatively feeling for hand- and toe-holds in the cliff face, he took the only available option, which was inching his way down the slippery rocks and losing his knapsack and vasculum to the force of gravity along the way. Completing the treacherous descent, Jones eventually arrived at the bottom, wet and muddy, battered and bruised, tired and hungry, but exhilarated by the adventure and eager to explore more of Colorado's natural offerings.

Indigenous peoples had been studying Colorado's flora and fauna since time immemorial. And Jones knew from his studies that European and American botanists had identified more than 3,300 species of plants in Colorado, including ferns, grasses, wildflowers, shrubs, and trees, many of them unique to their locales. So, he was far from the first botanist to investigate the state's flora, and he probably did not expect to find varieties unknown to Western science. However, Jones did hope to gather examples of as many of the species as possible and to find some in places where they had not previously been seen. He was

not specializing in any particular plant species but was instead an omnivorous collector, motivated by his code to "never pass by a plant."

With his appetite for exploring whetted by the Cheyenne Canyon excursion, Jones spent the next several weeks adventuring by horse and buckboard wagon in the Colorado Springs region, going first to Manitou Springs, which then proclaimed itself the "Saratoga of the West." Although still suffering from aches and bruises from the scramble down the falls, he did not relax in one of the town's curative warm baths or sample any of Manitou's healing mineral waters. Throughout the summer, Jones did not participate in the pleasures and luxuries of the tourist locales, for he was not on vacation but on a scientific expedition (although one augmented by commercial endeavors). He was accumulating specimens to sell and also wholesaling albums of dried plants to a dealer in Denver.

Jones was excited at Manitou by finding a plant he had never seen before, an Indian milkvetch (*Astragalus australis*), an example of the botanical genus he would study throughout his life. Next came the rock formations of Glen Eyrie—"one of the most beautiful sites in the West," thought Jones—and the magnificent vistas of the Garden of the Gods, where he indulged his love of geology by examining the colorful and spectacular sandstone and limestone mountainous structures of the site.

Denver beckoned next, or rather it was the countryside in that area, for Jones seems to have been fundamentally disinterested in cities: He ignored urban amenities throughout his trip, preferring instead to study unspoiled nature. On his way to the capital city, Jones experienced a terrifying thunderstorm as he passed through Palmer Divide, the point of separation of the Arkansas

and South Platte River basins. On this northbound journey he also noticed how the change of latitude affected plant life. He found little of interest in the vegetation of Denver, agreeing with his contemporary Isabella Bird that the city was "brown and treeless upon the brown and treeless plain."

As soon as he could, Jones headed west through Clear Creek Canyon past Golden toward the "Silver Queen" of Georgetown, a prosperous mining center with hotels and theaters, bakeries, jewelry stores, and an ice cream parlor—none of which appealed to him. He did find Georgetown to be a fertile ground for producing botanical specimens, although he was also greatly distressed by the environmental destruction that mining and smelting were causing in the area.

Pressing westward, Jones traveled through Argentine Pass toward the Continental Divide, passing numerous mining towns and pausing to climb Grays Peak, a mountain the new settlers named for Asa Gray, the most prominent botanist of Jones's era. Gray, a professor at Harvard College, was one of the experts Jones consulted in the quest to identify plants he had collected during his Colorado summer. (In this era botanists frequently exchanged specimens and assisted one another to determine the identities of plants in a collaborative effort to advance botanical knowledge.)

The trek up Grays Peak took Jones through forests of firs and pines followed by fields of colorful flowers—Rocky Mountain columbines (*Aquilegia caerulea*), longleaf phlox (*Phlox longifolia*), and Alpine bluebells (*Mertensia tweedyi*)—along a zigzag path until he reached the treeless summit at 14,278 feet atop the Continental Divide. He noted how plant life changed markedly as he emerged from one zone of altitude into the next. From this clear spot Jones stared in awe at the landscape that lay below him, marveling that "the vastness of the country, seen from this height, is really indescribable."



Columbines (*Aquilegia caerulea*), the Colorado State flower, were one of the marvels of Colorado's flora Jones collected in his western sojourns. *History Colorado 86.200.1507.*



*Nuphar polysepala*, or the great yellow pond-lily, captured by early color photography. Jones was enamored with the unique ecology of the West, but overlooked the connection between the flora and the Native inhabitants for whom the edible seeds of pond-lilies were a vital source of carbohydrates. *History Colorado 87.558.748www.*



*Castilleja miniata*, also known as prairie fire or Indian paintbrush, photographed here in autochrome by Clark Blickensderfer, was among the plants that captured Jones's imagination. *History Colorado 87.558.747.*

An 1886 lithograph depicting Pikes Peak and Colorado City, which later became part of Colorado Springs. Jones found the mountains and red rock formations stunning, but was even more taken with the region's diversity of plant life. *History Colorado 83.125.22.*



Lith. by J. BRES, N. Y.

Entered according to Act of Congress, in the year 1886, by A. E. MATHEWS, in the Clerk's Office of the District Court of the United States for the Southern District of New York.

A. E. MATHEWS, Del.

Jones preferred to explore Colorado alone, facing the challenges and the quiet—“all nature seemed awed into perpetual silence in these mountains”—of the state. On his travels in the mountains he often lived off the land, enjoying meals of prairie chickens and hares. Focused on his botanical collecting, Jones worked long hours daily, although he never worked on Sundays when he attended worship services if he could locate a nearby church. He needed no recreation and avoided social gatherings on this trip, although he was by nature a quick-witted, garrulous man who enjoyed verbal sparring and could be contentious at times.

Descending Mount Gray, Jones ambled into the open stretches of South Park passing by Fairplay where a blustery September snowstorm surprised him. Along the way, Jones found prime samples of big sagebrush (*Artemisia tridentata*), an aromatic plant which provides food and cover for birds and animals. The cold weather stymied his collecting plans by ending the season's plant growth. Continuing on this loop Jones passed by Cañon

City and made his way back to Pueblo, where he caught the train for the long ride back to Iowa.

Now began the work of classifying the specimens he had obtained in Colorado, writing accounts of his explorations there, and preparing sets of preserved plants for sale. From the penciled annotations and markings in his personal copy of Porter and Coulter's 1874 *Synopsis of the Flora of Colorado*, it is apparent that Jones relied heavily on the work of botanists who had preceded him. Additionally, when he encountered plants he was unable to identify, Jones requested the aid of experienced botanists, sending specimens to them and usually receiving helpful replies by return mail. In promotional literature for the plant sets he was selling—priced at \$50 for a complete set of 800 or ten cents apiece—Jones also cited these older colleagues as authorities supporting the accuracy of his descriptions.

After a winter of study, Jones determined that he had gathered examples of 1,100 plant species during his Colorado summer, during which

he had traveled about 10 percent of the state's area. This season of reflection also gave him time to reminisce about “the beauty of Argentine Gorge [Pass], the grandeur of Mount Lincoln, the majesty of Grays Peak, and the sublimity of the region,” and to begin preparation for an article that would eventually appear in a horticultural journal. For Jones, this daily scrutiny of the plant specimens and the chance to write about them in detail surely intensified his interest in botany and prompted him to return to Colorado again the following summer.

In the spring of 1879 Jones was serving as a fill-in botany instructor in Grinnell when he received an offer to take a similar position for the summer at Colorado College, then only four years old. No sooner did he conclude the term at Iowa College than he boarded the train for a return to the Rockies, traveling lightly; the frugal Jones was able to make a meal out of a lemon, a pack of crackers, and a cup of coffee, all for twenty-five cents. On May 17, he arrived in Colorado Springs, spent two days in preparation for his classes, and

began to teach a general botany class and a second entitled “How Plants Grow.”

In Cheyenne Canyon, scene of the previous summer’s losing encounter with the waterfall, Jones was excited to find several examples of fungus such as rusts and smuts, then considered to belong to the plant kingdom and thus fair game for a botanist. He spotted examples of grasses near Manitou, a fine sky-blue larkspur (*Delphinium azureum*) along the Bear River, and a silvery lupine (*Lupinus argenteus*) near Colorado Springs. In Glen Eyrie, a spot he had admired so much for its rock formations the year before, Jones enjoyed snacking on pinyon pine nuts, and beside a stream he was surprised to find an odorless carrion flower (*Smilax herbacea*), a plant so called because of its corpse-like smell. In his off hours from teaching Jones busied himself assembling souvenir packets of dried plants, and he made a specific search for loco weed (species of *Oxytropis* or *Astragalus*), and other poisonous plants which are dangerous to livestock.

In contrast to his solitary explorations of the previous summer, in 1879 Jones participated in several outings with colleagues and students from the college. One of these was to the popular tourist destination of Monument Park north of Colorado Springs where the group camped overnight, Jones apparently finding few plant specimens, or anything else, to interest him. “Monument Park is a humbug”—Jones-speak and common slang of the period for a fraud or a sham, reads the entry in his diary for the day of the visit.

Ever since he first caught sight of Pikes Peak on his first day in Colorado in 1878, Jones was transfixed by the towering formation which he referred to variously as “the old grizzled monarch of the plains” or “the grand old mountain.” He seemed to feel the pink granite dome of the peak beckon to him, so finally, on June 27th of his second summer in the Rockies, Jones, accompanied by a fellow botany enthusiast and

an experienced guide, began the ascent. Mounting burros, the group set off in the late afternoon to avoid the heat of the day and in hopes of timing their arrival at the mountaintop for dawn. Jones wondered at first about the slow pace of the burros, but soon reasoned that the diminutive but sturdy animals needed to conserve their strength for the long climb that lay ahead.

Jones enjoyed the antics of the inhabitants of a prairie dog town, marveled at the twisting trail that led them through canyons, across streams, and over mesas, and was smitten by the color changes in the sky as dusk approached. He was awe-struck by the expansive views of the landscape that lay below him just before dark, and before long was transfixed by the light from a glowing moon and twinkling stars “set out like diamonds.” Despite the cooling drop in temperature, a growing thirst and hunger, and the realization that burros did not provide the most comfortable seats, Jones was eager to press on despite the guide’s call for a brief rest on the mountainside. And after an hour spent lying on spruce boughs before a blazing campfire, the group was back on the trail, eager to cover the remaining distance before daybreak. Abandoning their exhausted mounts, the trio slowly picked their way to the top and was rewarded with the discovery that they were now above clouds turned red and gold by the rising sun. The view was spectacular, as was the clear crisp air of 14,259 feet above sea level.

After a brief visit to the US Army Signal Service weather station atop the mountain, the group began its descent with the increasing daylight giving Jones the chance to observe more plants than he had spotted on the way up. He was able to record alpine clover (*Trifolium alpinum*) and wooly thistles (*Cirsium eriophorum*), among others, all thriving in open meadows located above the timberline. Thus, the trek up Pikes Peak combined two of Jones’s favorite activities: exploring the mountains and searching for plant specimens; and the

adventure further cemented his desire to become a western botanist.

Over the next two weeks Jones finished his teaching duties at Colorado College, prepared specimens for shipment back to Iowa, and contemplated his plans for the remainder of the summer. He squeezed into the narrow gauge for a trip to Denver, transferring there to a west-bound train which took him across the unvarying plains of Wyoming. As his ride plunged southward into Utah, however, Jones had to marvel at the new landscape of narrow canyons and craggy peaks that formed his entrance into Salt Lake City, which would be his base for the next several weeks. Drawing upon his Colorado experiences, Jones explored eastward into the Wasatch Mountains, finding some familiar plants and some that were new to him.

After six busy weeks in Utah, Jones returned to Iowa to begin the task of classifying his summer’s haul of plants. He also began to work in earnest on a manuscript destined for publication in Belgium, a scholarly activity that enabled him to relive his adventures as a naturalist over the past two summers. This included such highlights as the exotic beauty of the Garden of the Gods and the spectacular view from the summit of Grays Peak. Dangerous situations came to mind too, such as the time in Argentine Pass when a broken harness caused his horse to buck, nearly overturning the wagon, or the hasty descent down the waterfall in Cheyenne Canyon. Above all in Jones’s memory was the magnificence of the overwhelming mountains and the thrill he had in climbing and exploring, as well as the excitement at finding unexpected plants as he roamed Colorado’s landscape.

As he analyzed examples of 1,100 species obtained during that second summer Jones also polished his travel account, completing it in late 1879 and sending it off to Liège, where it was translated into French and published as *Une Excursion Botanique au Colorado et Dans le Far West* (“le Far West” signifying Utah).

Jones's account received faint praise in European journals, but only minimal attention from American press. Likely its appearance in French limited its appeal to an audience of general readers here. There is no copy of an English version of the manuscript of *Une Excursion Botanique* among Jones's collected papers, and an English translation of the pamphlet was never issued in the United States. Today the French original is available in digital form on the Biodiversity Heritage Library website, and a translation can be found on the Library page of the website of California Botanic Garden.

**A**nna Richardson, a teacher who had also studied at Iowa College, assisted Jones as he studied and classified what he collected. Identifying and mounting samples of dried plants together led their friendship to deepen, with the result that this unconventional courtship led to their marriage in February 1880. Immediately the young couple took the westbound train to Utah for an equally unusual honeymoon of botanical exploration, which had to be cut short when Marcus was offered a position teaching science at an academy in Salt Lake City. When this temporary assignment turned into full-time employment, the Joneses decided to stay in Utah.

Having tasted the freedom of the free-ranging botanist, it did not take long for Jones to rebel against the daily grind of classroom teaching, and he soon left that position. Anna operated her own school, the Jones Kindergarten, and she took in boarders in the large house they rented, while Marcus earned income by continuing to sell botanical specimens and doing freelance writing. He also put his studies of geology to good use by working as a consultant to railroads, as a self-taught mining engineer, and as a partner in several small mining operations. The deeply religious Jones served several small congregations as a lay pastor, and for a short time he worked as a librarian. But primarily Jones continued his botanical explorations.

During the years that followed, Jones explored the remote corners of Utah, Nevada, Idaho, Montana, and Washington as well as in Texas, Arizona, California, and northern Mexico. Jones remained an active collector until his death in 1934.

Jones amassed a huge herbarium (a compilation of preserved plant specimens) of 100,000 specimens that he sold to California's Pomona College in 1923, which led to his move to Claremont, near Los Angeles. The Jones Herbarium has been merged into the collection at California Botanic Garden (formerly Rancho Santa Ana Botanic Garden), and it contains numerous Colorado specimens from the 1878 and 1879 explorations. As a record of plant life from an earlier era, when industrialized resource extraction was just beginning to reshape parts of the West to power the industrialization of the nation's economy, historic herbariums such as those Jones assembled, along with his writings precisely describing the ecosystems he encountered, today have become a resource for scientists seeking to peer back into the past and understand how climate change is having an impact on the natural world.

Other institutions holding materials from Jones's first summers in the west include Colorado State and Utah State Universities, and the New York and Missouri Botanical Gardens. At California Botanic Garden a digitization project designed to make Jones's specimens more readily available to the public is largely complete. His writings were also extensive, numbering more than 250 articles, pamphlets, and book-length studies that provide a descriptive companion to the specimens he preserved. In addition to botanical discoveries, Jones published on climate, minerals, wildlife, and religion. His major studies dealt with western ferns, willow trees, Loosweed (*Astragalus*), the plant he studied most extensively.

A man who could be blunt and disputatious, extremely self-confident and

critical of others, Jones was viewed with distaste by some other botanists. But an appraisal of Marcus E. Jones begins with the acknowledgement that throughout his career of more than fifty years he was an outstanding field botanist. His biographer Lee Lenz reports that Jones saw more plants in their native habitats than any other plant scientist of his era. Lenz adds that Jones described more than 700 plants that were new to Euro-American botanists from his explorations of the western United States. An early promoter of the concept of ecology, Jones warned about the dangers of industrialization was causing to Nature. He is an important transitional figure between the traditional natural history approach of the nineteenth century, which featured widespread collecting and classifying, and the more scientific, laboratory-based "New Botany" of the twentieth.

Those two summer sojourns in Colorado helped transform Marcus Jones from a young man uncertain of his future into an individual committed to the study of botany and willing to make science the nucleus of his life. Colorado's varied plant life and its invigorating climate, strikingly different from that of his native Iowa, drew Jones to the region. His explorations of Colorado's mountains, which he likened to "immense tumbled stones built on the tomb of [flowers] dying at their feet" as well as its plains, canyons, and mesas, and the opportunities to write about them, convinced Jones that he was destined to become a Western botanist. Today, as the record of Western plant life he created gains additional significance as a benchmark to help scientists studying the effects of climate change understand how it is impacting the Rocky Mountain ecosystem, those two summers may prove consequential not just in shaping the rest of Jones's life, but in shaping ours as well. ●

**JOHN BRADLEY** is a retired history teacher and a volunteer at California Botanic Gardens, where Jones's papers are housed.

# STEM for the Ages

We caught up with Liz Cook, lead exhibit developer for History Colorado's exhibition *Written on the Land: Ute Voices, Ute History* and coordinator for the Ute STEM project, to learn more about Colorado's original residents.



## Q Who are the Ute people?

**Liz Cook:** The Ute people are some of Colorado's oldest continuous residents. Their long history in Colorado, Utah, New Mexico, and Arizona was shaped by interaction with their environment and their neighbors. Like many Indigenous peoples, Utes call themselves "the people"—Nuuchuu or Nuu'ciuu—in their own language. Their Indigenous neighbors called them by other names, and Spanish explorers adopted versions of those names—Yutas, Uticas, or Utacas—to talk about Ute people.

Today, there are three federally recognized Ute Tribes: the Southern Ute Indian Tribe; the Ute Mountain Ute Tribe; and the Ute Indian Tribe of the Uintah and Ouray Reservation in Utah.

## Q How are Ute Tribes, scientists, and History Colorado working together to preserve and share Ute knowledge?

**Liz Cook:** In 2016, History Colorado initiated the Ute STEM Project—a collaboration between History Colorado, Tribal experts, and scientists—to study and share Ute traditional ecological knowledge. Ute elders have been passing their understanding of their homelands to the next generation through story, song, teaching, and art since time immemorial. More recently, cultural experts have created partnerships with land managers, archaeologists, anthropologists and ethnobotanists. They are documenting significant sites and preserving cultural landscapes across Colorado so that important Ute traditional knowledge is preserved in many different ways.

## Q Why did Ute people want to work with History Colorado?

**Liz Cook:** "Really emotional...amazing," are just a few ways that seventeen-year-old Jazmin Carmenoros described her experience participating in field work activities on the Ute STEM project. She was one of five young people from the Southern Ute Indian Tribe who was on the team working in Colorado's San Luis Valley in 2018. After hiking to an historic Ute encampment in Carnero Canyon, Jazmin found herself getting emotional: "You can totally feel our ancestors there and you can feel it in how much they loved that spot. It felt amazing...you felt them. It made me feel stronger about the Ute woman I am."

## Q What are some of the specific ways Ute people used their knowledge and technology to thrive in Colorado?

**Liz Cook:** Utes used profound and systematic knowledge of their territory—the plants, animals, weather patterns, and seasonal changes of the Rocky Mountain West—to live in this rugged and diverse landscape. Ute families moved their homes with the seasons, and traveled within a specific territory, returning to the same areas each year. As Ute people traveled through to high elevations in the summer, they made temporary shelters from broken timber and brush as protection from the weather. Most of the shelters have faded away with time, but cultural experts and archaeologists have documented over 300 such structures that still survive in Colorado. Ute people still know about important places for gathering seeds, and sites for grinding piñon nuts—a delicacy still widely enjoyed across Colorado and the Rocky Mountain West.

## Q Where can I learn more about Ute life in Colorado?

**Liz Cook:** The Ute STEM Project website [www.historycolorado.org/ute-stem](http://www.historycolorado.org/ute-stem) has links to the short videos of the field work, information on sites, and links to education resources for educators.

Also, we highly recommend a trip to the Ute Indian Museum in Montrose, a visit to *Written on the Land: Ute Voices, Ute History* exhibit at the History Colorado Center in Denver, or the Southern Ute Museum and Cultural Center in Ignacio, Colorado.



Curtis Martin explains the finer points of a wikiup structure, the brush and log shelter that housed Ute people in Colorado for generations. Photo courtesy of Liz Cook.



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