

THE HISTORY COLORADO | SPRING / SUMMER 2023

THE COLORADO

MAGAZINE



Changing of the Guard

High Altitude Hits
Fighting the KKK
Colorado's Diversion Dilemmas

1861-1865

THE SAND CREEK MASSACRE

THE BETRAYAL THAT CHANGED CHEYENNE AND ARAPAHO PEOPLE FOREVER



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Stories of Resilience and Determination

If you have spent time with me, then you know I am electric with pride about my roots in southeastern Colorado. While it is a hardscrabble place forever shaped by some of the state's most devastating historic chapters (the Sand Creek Massacre, Ludlow, and Japanese American internment), it is also a place of community care, metaphorical and literal grit, and underappreciated beauty. The people are tough but would drop everything to help a neighbor in need.



My love for this part of the state is just one of the reasons I am so enamored with the history of The Dry, a Black homestead community near Manzanola, founded by two purpose-driven sisters, Josephine and Lenora Rucker. It was the early 1900s, and they dreamed of a community where they could build a life free of racial discrimination. These strong women carved out a special place within the harsh landscape of Colorado's short grass prairie. Despite the bleak water resources that gave the homestead its name, the Rucker sisters and the other Black families they recruited were able to establish roots fed by freedom, community, and resilience.

We recently opened an exhibition on The Dry at the History Colorado Center. This exhibit is only possible because of the steady stewardship of Alice McDonald, the last living resident of The Dry, who has shared her photos and stories with us. While there are no remaining homestead buildings, the Manzanola United Methodist Church was the spiritual home for residents of The Dry and continues to serve their descendants. Locals have been working to preserve this sole surviving structure connected to the homestead community with help from a History Colorado State Historical Fund award of \$250,000 and additional support from the National Trust's African American Cultural Heritage Action Fund.

Preserving Colorado's Black history is essential work. In the face of racism and inequity, Black Americans—in Colorado and beyond—made significant contributions towards the aspirations and ideals of this country. The legacy of The Dry (one of just two Black homesteads in Colorado) demonstrates and inspires hopeful determination. In their honor, our preservation work must move quickly, while we still have elders connected to these legacies and the structures to tell the stories.

Your support of History Colorado enables our fearless and robust work to preserve and interpret all of Colorado's history.

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.

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HISTORY COLORADO

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Above Dapper Denverites showing off their bicycles and enjoying some fine Colorado cycling weather on the Alameda Avenue bridge sometime between 1904 and 1910. *History Colorado. 90.152.199*

On The Cover Colorado's Civil War monument, *On Guard*, was installed in front of the State Capitol in 1909 to commemorate Coloradans who fought with the Union during the war. It stood there until it was toppled in the summer of 2020. *Courtesy of Derek Everett.*

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THE FORUM

We love hearing from you.

A Correction

I read with interest the article “Sanctuary, Refuge, and Shelter” in the most recent issue of *The Colorado Magazine*. I took note of an inaccuracy in this informative article. It stated that Lt. Governor George L. Brown was a featured speaker at a civil rights symposium which occurred in 1970. However, Brown was not elected Lieutenant Governor until 1974. He then served in that office until January 1979. Prior to holding this office he served in the Colorado legislature, as a Representative from 1955 to 1957 and as a Senator from 1957 until he became Lieutenant Governor in 1979. So his participation in the civil rights symposium would have been while he was still a Senator. I would welcome an in-depth article about this extremely interesting man.

—Mark McGoff, via email

History Colorado replies: Thank you for bringing this to our attention. We have corrected the online version of this article and apologize for the misstatement.

Big Ed Johnson's Legacy in Colorado

Governor Edwin Johnson declared martial law in Colorado and closed the state's borders to migrant workers from nearby states in 1936. Johnson and others feared what he called “an invasion” of “alien and indigent persons” who would take jobs away from white Coloradans during the Great Depression. It's a story History Colorado told in the episode “A Line in the Sand” on our Lost Highways podcast.

History Colorado over and over has tried to publicize one incident in “Big Ed” Johnson's amazing career in an effort to brand him (and in similar fashion to brand other great Colorado leaders) as evil people. This is NOT careful, even-handed historical rendering. It is an embarrassment to History Colorado and a stain on its reputation and history. This is not the kind of thing we should be teaching adults and children about our state's history. This type of “historical” research and writing sows

discord and shame rather than thoughtfulness and respect. It's like cherry-picking parts of any book, claiming to have read and deeply considered the whole book, and judging on the basis of those parts. Reprehensible.

—James G.R. Hart, via email

History Colorado replies: We applaud and share your passion for “Big Ed” Johnson's legacy since it's one we share. Governor Johnson's records are part of the History Colorado collection, and we delight in spreading the word that the Johnson tunnel was named for our Governor, not President Johnson—a fact few seem to know! While declaring martial law to block non-white immigrants from entering Colorado was one moment in his long career, it is also indicative of his racially biased decision making, and the racist attitudes of the time. History Colorado is committed to investigating the history of racism in Colorado to better understand how these unacceptable attitudes have shaped—and continue to shape—our state.

Ben's Super Market

Jason L. Hanson's article, “More Than Ephemeral,” (Winter/Spring 2023) is excellent. Allow me to suggest a footnote: About the time the Japanese Americans were released from Amache, a group of influential Coloradans proposed an amendment to the state constitution prohibiting non-citizen immigrants from owning land. Governor Vivian opposed the amendment along with several legislators, and together, they were able to defeat the amendment. Without the work of Governor Vivian and his allies, Ben's Super Market would not have happened.

—Paul Bonnifield, via email

The Colorado Book Review in The Colorado Magazine

I was grateful to see articles from *The Colorado Book Review* appearing in *The Colorado Magazine Online*. For more reviews and information about *The Colorado Book Review*, please visit the Denver Public Library's website at history.denverlibrary.org.

—Tom Noel, via email

Love for The Colorado Magazine

We read each *Colorado Magazine* from cover to cover! The articles are excellent and we will continue to be members just to receive the magazine (if for no other reason).

—June Krantz, via email

Revolt 1680/2180: Runners + Gliders

now on view at the History

Colorado Center

I'm really looking forward to seeing this exhibit! Such an original way to engage with history, native culture, and sci-fi all at once!

—Megan Catherine, via Facebook

On John Fielder's Colorado Catalog Coming to History Colorado

In June, History Colorado announced that famous Colorado nature photographer John Fielder would make than 6,000 of his images permanently available to the public by donating them to the History Colorado collection.

His photos would have been just like [William Henry] Jackson's, but for all the trees that had grown up in the 100 years between them, and the cleaner air during Fielder's photos.

—Dan Smith, via Facebook

What an amazing gift from the amazing photographer John Fielder to all of us in Colorado! On top of his many years of dedication to conserving the beauty and ecology of our state! Thank you John! And History Colorado!

—Rio De La Vista, via Facebook

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SEE 3D

LOOKING BACK AT LOCKDOWN

BY SAM BOCK

An interview with Dr. Ramnik Dhaliwal about the early days of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Around this time three years ago, many of us were just emerging from a months-long lockdown. We were trying to keep ourselves safe from Covid-19, then a largely mysterious and terrifying new disease. Daily life in Colorado and countries around the world was far from normal. Many of us lost loved ones. Many of us worried our lives would never be the same again.

Meanwhile, Dr. Ramnik Dhaliwal was trying to figure out how to keep himself and his family safe while working to save lives. Recently, Dr. Dhaliwal donated his hospital gear from those early days, including his personal protective equipment (PPE), to History Colorado's collection. His donation includes masks and surgical gowns he bought to protect himself and his family at a time of uncertain availability.

He also included candid photos from the emergency departments of several Denver-area hospitals where he was working, video diaries recorded at the hospitals and at home in the first months of the pandemic, and this reflective interview in the hope that future generations will be able to appreciate the sacrifices health care providers and front line workers continue to demonstrate as the world recovers from Covid's upheavals.

We sat down with Dr. Dhaliwal to recall those early days of the pandemic:

What was it like being a doctor in the emergency department three years ago?

At first it was unclear what this was. We knew it was a viral infection, but it was spreading like gangbusters. Practically overnight, we went from normal caseloads and seeing the usual gamut of patients to being fearful of going to work. Very quickly, the question became how do I protect myself? That's when I decided to start buying my own personal protective equipment. I didn't want to trust that it would always be available in the hospital.

Many of us lost our normal daily routines during lockdown. What was it like as you kept going to work to help save lives?

My household consisted of myself, my wife who is a pediatrician, our two young children and their elderly



grandparents. So my ritual was focused on trying to protect them while still treating the people who needed my help. I put on my scrubs, mask, goggles—a uniform that was already different from what I wore before the pandemic. And seeing patients was different too, because we lost a huge amount of that human interaction due to that distance and that fear. Coming home was the ritual in reverse—I'd have to strip down in the garage, sprint across the yard and hop in the shower before I could hug my kids or say hi to my family.

How has Covid changed your job?

One of the biggest lingering challenges didn't necessarily come from Covid, but instead from the political divide the pandemic exacerbated. We still see massive and unfortunately growing mistrust of doctors and the medical profession. People requesting treatments that we knew weren't effective. And a shocking increase in the number of people who posed a physical danger to staff, not just because of the disease they were contagious with. And it has taken a toll on our job. There was a mass-exodus of healthcare workers during the pandemic, and the whole system is still weak. We all had to come to terms with the idea that we could die.

What's your prescription for collective recovery from the pandemic?

I think people need to think—really think—about others more. The pandemic showed us that we're resilient, but also that we're so much more resilient together. If we could come together to support our neighbors and essential workers during the worst of the lockdown, why not in better times too? 🌈

Above: Dr. Ramnik Dhaliwal wearing the protective equipment he bought to protect himself and his family from Covid-19 in the early days of the pandemic. *Courtesy of Dr. Ramnik Dhaliwal.*

Background: Coronavirus Covid-19 3D cell rendering.



Emergency Department staff tried to stay positive in the midst of chaos and "uncertain times" during the early days of the 2020 Covid-19 pandemic. *Courtesy of Dr. Ramnik Dhaliwal.*



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Come Ride With Me

BY BIANCA BARRISKILL

It was the summer of 2021. I was cycling with my supplies stuffed into a waterproof wet-bag strapped onto my bike rack along the steep ridgeline of the Blue Mesa Reservoir near Gunnison, Colorado. Cars swooped by me so fast that their tailwinds pushed me into the roots of the aspens lining the highway. Alone, and on day three of a bikepacking trip from Denver to Delta, I was taking a break at one of the viewpoints when a retired couple from Texas chatted me up. They asked where I cycled from and where I was going. After I explained my route the woman gasped and offered to hitch me to the next town. I was feeling the struggle, and by this time in my life I'd learned to trust help and to be okay with hitchhiking. I took them up on their offer, and as the couple drove me twenty miles closer to my final destination, the man looked back at me through his rearview mirror "You do this alone?"

I met his gaze in the mirror, "Most of the time yeah, I've had good luck with people, most just want to help." I got the impression that he asked because I was a solo female cyclist riding through some of Colorado's most remote terrain. But maybe that was a big leap in thought? Either way, they dropped me off at the next town and shaved two hours off my total time on the bike that day. I was able to pull up to my final destination in time for celebratory Jell-O shots with my awesome Deltoid friends.

Fast-forward to the summer of 2022. I was swapping ideas with my work cohort at History Colorado and looking back fondly at that biking

adventure. I boasted I had just completed a 130 mile round trip bike ride from Denver to Colorado Springs the previous Sunday, and was promptly offered an assignment: write about bikes and relate it to history. While I inadvertently oozed confidence in my cycling capabilities, it turned out this assignment was not low hanging fruit for me. The first couple of full length drafts were scrapped. The assignment morphed from nostalgic weaves of feminism, the mechanical history of

cycling, to trash alley cycling grunge. So I started over. Then I started over again. Turns out I have lived bike experiences that should not be put into print, and apparently needed my editor to look me in the eye and tell me that. But by the time I finished this article, I was officially dubbed the bike expert. This is my bike story. The ride you're about to join me on is intended to give you chuckles and hopefully lend a different perspective on bike history and cycling in Colorado.



Bianca is an avid Colorado cyclist and Koch Fellow at History Colorado. She enjoys researching and reporting on historical and current events. If you see her on the trails, feel free to say hello!

A TRANSPORTATION REVOLUTION

I took for granted, while living in the bicycle mecca of Colorado, that historically speaking, bikes weren't always a common display of aerodynamic finesse. How did bikes become such a part of the urban landscape that they almost blend into peripheral vision for city dwellers like me? Before writing this article, my bike knowledge of weight and frame styles was limited to fairly modern examples. I had little contextual understanding of historic bike frames. I think the tall-wheeled penny farthing frame is probably what came to mind when I'd imagine "older" or "vintage" bikes. Come to find out, my own vintage bikes have a slightly more evolved frame style than those turn of the twentieth century models of my imagination.

I have a twenty-pound, 2001 steel framed, nine speed Talladega Bianchi. Her name is The Princess Bianchi, (yes, each of my bikes has a name). Another of my bikes—a steel-framed fixed gear beauty weighing in at twenty pounds—was my first adult bike. She was my



Cyclists stare down the camera at one of Colorado's top natural wonders, Garden of the Gods. History Colorado Collection, 66.21.44

teeth cutter (but her name is unprintable). Later in an act of personal defiance I purchased a carbon-framed Trek Checkpoint (Rodney) which I built and Frankensteined together myself. He weighs 16 pounds. It's okay if you haven't named your bike yet, there's still time.

According to Margaret Goruff's book, *The Mechanical Horse*, we must rewind back to the seventeenth century famine in Europe to trace bicycle history to its roots. The famine caused a widespread slaughter of horses and prompted the creativity that trying times often do. Horses, at the time, were the standard method of distance travel. In the midst of the horse-meat wholesale slaughter, German inventor Baron Karl Drais, created the bicycle prototype in an effort to replace the horse. It was known as the draisine, its wooden frame was the predecessor to the bicycle. Slowly, advancements were made to include iron parts, better wheels, and later a steel frame.

Early bicycles in the nineteenth century, although increasing in popularity, were still by no means mainstream. Even with their advancements from the early wooden draisine, they were heavy, cumbersome, and lacked technical functions. In the United States, the earliest bike frames positioned riders upright instead of the aerodynamic forward tilt more commonly seen today. Derailleurs, which are the mechanisms on bicycles that switch the chain on sprockets of different sizes, were first used by European cyclists in the early twentieth century. Upright and lacking a way to shift gears, American bikes back then couldn't adjust to hills or long flat roads.

The twentieth century postwar economic boom changed the range of capabilities bikes could offer Americans due to increased global trade. The British economy struggled after World War II. In response, the United States cut tariffs on British bicycles in half, which helped put affordable lightweight bicycles into the hands of many more Americans, and helped

boost the British economy. Two birds, one stone. British imported bicycles came with those fancy European derailleurs and thus opened the range of possibilities of tackling varying topographical terrain for cyclists. The US market responded to the demand by adding gears—initially three seemed like more than enough—to American-made bikes.

By the 1960s, American bike producers were manufacturing eight- and ten-speed models that were more affordable than their imported European counterparts. They were heavy, but offered more diverse land coverage than the clunky single speed cruisers of the era. To help put the evolution of bikes into perspective for modern cyclists like myself who are accustomed to sixteen pound bicycles, the Schwinn Varsity, weighing in at forty pounds, was considered lightweight in the 1960s. Perhaps this is why bicycles from the early twentieth century are either in museums, or decaying in scrap yards, or are collecting dust in garages or personal cabinets of curiosities. I have yet to see one on the road. I digress, but the point here is that bicycles have come so far in terms of frame aspects, weight, and materials for the sake of improving the feel of the ride itself.

A SOCIAL LIFE ON TWO WHEELS

Cycling was historically, and continues to be, a social activity. As much as I pride myself on cycling solo most of the time, in reality, I came back to biking in my adult years so I could ride with friends who loved the sport and wanted to hear my famous one-liners on the road (I'm just kidding, they actually have no choice but to hear my jokes). I may be cheesy, but I'll make you laugh as we crank up a hill together!

Nevertheless, there's still cultural mysticism surrounding the lone cyclist. Epic solo rides have made the news for nearly a hundred years: A young Canadian man, Stanley Mathias, made Denver Post headlines in 1928 when he cycled through Colorado from

Canada—an epic 7,000 mile journey. Averaging between ninety and 100 miles a day, the Royal Gorge, Canon City, Skyline drive, and Garden of the Gods were just a handful of his Colorado stops. Mathias was quoted in the Post, assuring his readers that "Traveling by bicycle is very economical."

His journey drew the press to him at the time, but his assurances of affordability caught my eye. Mathias told reporters that he spent \$150 for his two-and-a-half-month journey in 1928, which amounts to about \$2600 when adjusted for inflation today. Somehow, I spent nearly \$1000 on a week-long ride from Denver to Salt Lake City. Relative to my bikepacking journey (which certainly had some unexpected turns), less than \$3,000 seems affordable for two months on the road. While not cheap in aggregate, breaking costs down day by day keeps cycling a cost-effective alternative to the daily grind. This is true especially in comparison to a week's vacation on a beach or campground. Designer bikes don't need to be the entry point. A bike with gears, good tires, and a fairly comfortable fit will travel long distances and get you where you want to go. After all, protecting one's wallet from bruising is certainly part of making it a comfortable ride.

Mathias was a solo cross continental bike traveler, a fairly new style of adventure in the early twentieth century. Over the course of the 1900s, bikepacking became mainstream in the United States. The famous European Tour De France already existed, having started in 1903, but the United States was still catching on to tour cycling.

But by the 1970s, the craze had taken hold. In Jody Rosen's book, *Two Wheels Good*, he notes that for three straight years: 1972, 1973, and 1974 bicycles outsold cars. In 1976, to commemorate the nation's bicentennial, thousands of those new bicycle buyers came together for an epic journey known as the Bike-Centennial. The ride, which drew cyclists of all abilities, traversed the United States from Oregon to Virginia.



Cycling was, and continues to be, a social sport. History Colorado Collection, 89.451.748

There were two kinds of tickets available for that early BikeCentennial tour: in-camping and out-camping. It was \$8 a day for the outdoor version and just \$4 more for the indoor version (which wasn't luxurious by any means). The indoor cyclists slept in libraries, dorm rooms, churches, and the like while their outcamping counterparts slept in farm fields or parking lots. Keeping in mind the overall expense of the trip for eighty-two days, cyclists would either pay \$656 or \$984 respectively, or about \$3,432 and \$5,148 today.

Reading Rosen's chapter on monumental cross country rides like the Bike-Centennial woke up parts of my brain that recall more socially oriented bike experiences which I had suppressed after being caught up in Colorado's Triple Bypass COVID-19 kerfuffle in 2020. I felt justified in my wariness of group rides after losing out on the ride and my registration fee. (Yes, next time I will get rider insurance!)

The Triple Bypass was the first supported event I had ever signed up to ride. I loved the idea of cycling crews feeding me bagels, peanut butter, and Bobo bars while I cycled around with

a bunch of like-minded bike enthusiasts. And it was a trusted event, dating back to 1988 when a small cycling cohort thought it might be fun to try a wild climb up three mountain passes—Juniper Pass (11,049 feet), Loveland Pass (11,991 feet), and Vail Pass (10,666 feet)—in a single day. The summer of 2023 marks its thirty-fifth anniversary. Thousands of cyclists sign up every year. And it's just one of the cycling events in Colorado each summer that draw cyclists in from all parts of the globe.

Hindsight being 20-20 (pun intended), in the summer of 2020 I should have guessed that the close proximity of cycling in large groups made the Triple Bypass ride impossible to keep open to the public. I remember sitting in the Best Buy parking lot in Lakewood when I got the email that the event was canceled. The cancellation left me wary of big box cycling events, despite their often philanthropic goals. Instead, driven outdoors by the pandemic, I rode my own routes unsupported and alone. But solitude can be wonderful. Bikes, not COVID, taught me that.

That summer, rather than bagging the three peaks of the Triple Bypass, I committed to riding to the summit of Mt. Evans solo. But instead of driving to Idaho Springs and riding up Mt. Evans from there following the route of the annual Bob Cook Mt. Evans Climb, I rode from my front door in Lakewood to the top of the 14,200 foot peak and then back home. At the time it was very important to me that I separated myself from the event cyclists who shuttled down the mountain afterwards for free beer and pizza. Anyone who has ridden Mt. Evans knows the worst part isn't the climb, it's the descent down the treacherous, altitude-worn road that event cyclists avoid by simply shuttling down in a bus. But even that ride wasn't enough. Still looking for escapes during the pandemic, I bike-packed from Denver to Delta, from Denver to Paonia, and from Denver to Salt Lake City, each its own separate journey. Instead of the support of a cycling crew, I chose to support local businesses along my routes. (By the way, Brother's Deli in Idaho Springs is a Colorado treasure that serves up delicious sandwiches to fuel a climb through the high country).

I didn't start cycling till I was thirty. And I wasn't a professional athlete in my twenties either. People I'd seen on the road only strengthened this sentiment. I met a man riding across the dry canyonlands of Maybell on a recumbent bicycle to crowd source funding for his own cancer treatment. He accessed different channels of fundraising for his own health, using his bike to spread the word. I point this anecdote out to my able bodied friends wary of rigorous distance travel. Naturally there will be individuals who can't physically ride a bicycle, but for many there is a way.

Writing this article prompted me to research the history of bikepacking and bike touring in the United States, and it reminded me of the urge to go out with friends, supported by the energy of hundreds of oth-

er riders and complete an epic ride with goals. Maybe this summer I'll consider shelling out three hundred clams to grind up some hills and get my free Bobo bars at the end.

TRANSPORTATION TO TOY

I'm not anti-social even though I often ride alone. I did try to create my own personalized cycling buddy in the form of my now ten-year-old son. I envision grand bikepacking trips with him as he grows into adulthood, but we need to start with a simple overnight bikepacking trip to Bear Creek State Park before I can prime him for a multi-day trip. But I couldn't help myself: I started planting the bikepacking seed three years ago.

In the spring of 2020, with public school shut-downs and while remote working, I set out to finally teach my son to ride the bike I got him for Christmas. It was permanently parked in his closet, but I had hoped that he would catch the cycling bug so we could ride together. Bikes began as an alternative mode of transportation for adults lacking a horse. But at the turn of the twentieth century, just before World War I, bicycle manufacturers began looking to young boys as their new target audience. Automobiles were taking their fathers out of bike saddles and placed them behind the wheels of gas powered machines. It became a symbol of growth into adulthood for children to embark on independent bicycle riding and develop fortitude and strength in the ways that bicycles do. Government officials thought that good cyclists would make healthy soldiers. While I don't feel like the goal of cycling should be to prime my child for military service, I do agree that it establishes healthy independence and increases fine motor skills—abilities that take time to cultivate in awkward young bodies before the finesse of adult physical mobility takes hold.

The youngest cyclist to complete the BikeCentennial trail in 1976 was

Bikes have lived somewhere between toy and transportation for over 100 years. History Colorado Collection, 93.322.587



nine years old. I didn't know children could bike across the country as young as nine years old—but when the pandemic quarantine arrived, I knew seven was the perfect age for my own child to start training. I carefully set up time in between his remote classes during the day to introduce the sport to him. It was a lonely time, but we made the very best of it. I wanted him to use his bike for enjoyment. For fun. Three years later, while I still have some grandiose plans to ride across the country with him in celebration of a national holiday, I would settle for an overnight bikepacking trip.

In trying to create my adventure buddy early on, I set out with the kiddo on three separate bike training sessions in the spring of 2020. I remember assuring my still-learning son that he didn't have to take off on his own, he just had to get used to sitting in the saddle and holding the handlebars even if his feet were planted on the ground. With each attempt, his body learned something new. I reminded him that he was getting used to being on a bike. He didn't have to be perfect right away. Finally after several attempts, on a sunny day in April, I took my son to a little gravel loop park that encircles a goat grazing patch

in Wheat Ridge. I kept running next to him and holding the bike while he pedaled and I could tell that he felt himself handling the bike. I was grateful that bikes were no longer made from forty pounds of steel. I don't think I could have pushed him along if his bike tipped the scales like its predecessors.

I panted as I ran along next to him, lap after lap on the gravel loop, holding his handlebars and steering him so he could feel flight. He finally said to me matter-of-factly, "you can let go now, mom." Although he was probably only talking about his bike, I felt an entire lifecycle of parenting wash over me when I took my hand off the saddle. He took off and pedaled freely around the loop. Witnessing his first experience of personal freedom and his pride brought me straight to a bout of ugly crying. He didn't hear my weepy, smotherly, chortle of happy tears: He was too busy yelling and experiencing physical mobility and speed unlike anything he had likely felt before. The following summer he did his first twenty miles and let me know in his funny string of consciousness "I'm cooking like chicken mom!" The boy can ride and my hope is that I don't over-impose my hobby onto him so he will join me in bike ride bliss. He named his first bike "The Cherry Fixie." Bikes aren't just for kids, but I'm not sure if any demographic of cyclist appreciates it the way a child does—especially that first time they take flight.

CYCLING INTO THE FUTURE

In Colorado, cycling is often praised as an ideal mode of green transportation. But it's still an afterthought to most people with access to a car, just like it was in the early twentieth century. However, broader sales trends indicate that certain bikes are as popular today as they were when they outsold cars in the 1970s. E-bike sales outstripped E-vehicles in

the United States in 2021, so perhaps history doesn't fully repeat itself but it does rhyme. The historical trend indicates that our two-wheeled machines are keeping up with the times. I know first-hand why Colorado is one of the top sports-cycling spots in the country. Our state's epic mountains and famous group rides like the Triple Bypass or Ride the Rockies help confirm that impression. Unsurprisingly, the city of Denver recently ranked in the top ten friendliest bike cities from data sourced from the U.S census bureau, the U.S. Department of Transportation, the U.S. National Centers for Environmental Information, Walk Score, Rails-to-Trails Conservancy, Vision Zero Network, Google Trends, and Yelp. What a mouthful of data.

Writing this article broadened my thinking of what bikes are. They're machines, certainly, but something else exists inside the frame. It's almost like a wavelength carried through from the manufacturer, the excitement from the mechanic who opened the bike box, or the finesse of the last person who polished the frame. Bikes have a

soul. People have adapted their bikes to suit different ideas of what bikes should be and do. They were originally intended to solve a transportation issue, but over time, they became a way to be together or, in the case of long solo tours, to recharge in solitude. For many, they proved to be integral to the early childhood experience of geographical autonomy. Most will learn to cycle before they learn to drive. Bicycles soften our footprint on the planet, make us look goofy, but also sometimes cool. Bikes simply won't be defined by one subculture, one demographic, one frame style, or the many personalities who hop onto the saddle. Bikes are the tool of the user. Beholden to their people. But they still seem to have minds of their own.

From people craving either the solitude or the social connectivity of cycling, to retirees looking to get around town with ease, to adaptive mountain bikers searching for adventure, to those who just want to feel the breeze and see the sights, there is a bike waiting for you to take it home and give it a name. It's not—it's never—too late. 🚲



Smiles for miles on this vintage "steed" at Colorado's Ride the Rockies event in 1991. History Colorado Collection, 93.128.1

HIGH ALTITUDE HITS

SIX INCREDIBLE SONGS RECORDED AT CARIBOU RANCH

Some of the most iconic musicians of the 1970s and '80s came to record among the soaring peaks and high-mountain valleys around Caribou Ranch.

BY MEGAN FRIEDEL

The Colorado high country has a special place in music history. For more than a decade, Caribou Ranch, a recording studio built in an abandoned barn tucked into the foothills above Nederland, Colorado, cranked out some of the most recognizable and most influential records of the 1970s and '80s. Producer Jim Guercio began building the Caribou Ranch recording studio in 1971, on the former Van Vleet Arabian Horse Ranch. Once the studio was completed the following year, it quickly became a premier destination for the best musicians of the era, including Stephen Stills, John Lennon, Elton John, Stevie Wonder, Michael Jackson, and more, who stayed at the ranch both to record and visit the splendor of the Rocky Mountain retreat. In 1985, a fire at the ranch damaged the studio, closing its operations. However, the legacy of Caribou Ranch lives on in the songs and albums recorded there, like the ones below—many of which will be instantaneously recognizable to music lovers in Colorado and beyond.

1. "ROCKY MOUNTAIN WAY," JOE WALSH

In the spring of 1972, guitarist Walsh was the first musician to record at Caribou, while the studio was still under construction. He had just moved to Colorado, where he formed his group, Barnstorm; he later joined the Eagles in 1975. "Rocky Mountain Way" came out on Walsh's second album recorded at the ranch, *The Smoker You Drink, the*

Player You Get. Famed for its talk box vocals, the lyrics reflect Walsh's love for Colorado and the new directions it provided for his music: "Spent the last year / Rocky Mountain way / Couldn't get much higher... 'Cause the Rocky Mountain way / Is better than the way we had."

2. "ROCK AND ROLL, HOOCHIE KOO," RICK DERRINGER

Fans of "Dazed and Confused" and classic rock radio will instantly recognize this emblematic, guitar-driven 1970s rock tune. Though it was first released in 1970 while Derringer was a member of the band Johnny Winter And, it's the Caribou Ranch version that made earworm history, recorded at the studio in 1973 for the musician's first solo album, *All American Boy*. Derringer played nearly all the instruments on this recording: guitar, bass, tambourine, and lead vocals, with only drummer Bobby Caldwell and



CARIBOU RAINBOW
A rainbow stretches over Caribou Ranch in the mid-1970s. Donated to the Denver Public Library by the Rocky Mountain News, RMN-052-4253

STEPHEN STILLS
Singer and songwriter Stephen Stills at Caribou Ranch in the mid-1970s. Donated to the Denver Public Library by the Rocky Mountain News, RMN-052-4249



3. "SOMEONE SAVED MY LIFE TONIGHT," ELTON JOHN

The British musician recorded three albums at Caribou Ranch: *Caribou* (1974); *Captain Fantastic and the Brown Dirt Cowboy* (1975); and *Rock of the Westies* (1975). This highly personal track, arguably the best on the album, details the pianist's suicide attempt in 1968 and was written by John's longtime lyricist Bernie Taupin and recorded at Caribou in August 1974. The song's anthemic chorus features the classic Caribou Ranch sound: high vocals that studio engineers claimed were made possible by the thin air at the ranch's nearly 9,000-foot elevation in the Rocky Mountains. At 6 minutes and 45 seconds, it was not an obvious contender for a hit, yet it charted at No. 4 on the US Billboard Top 100.

4. "GIVE A LITTLE BIT," SUPERTRAMP

The progressive rock-turned-pop band recorded their fifth album, *Even in the Quietest Moments...*, at Caribou Ranch during the winter of 1976–1977. Like many albums recorded at the ranch, the cover reflects the mountain setting: a grand piano topped with snow, photographed at nearby Eldora Mountain ski resort. This track, which became an international hit, opens with a now-iconic acoustic guitar riff recorded in the studio's elevator—and closes suddenly to cut off an inopportune wail by Frank, the studio cat, that was inadvertently caught on the tape.

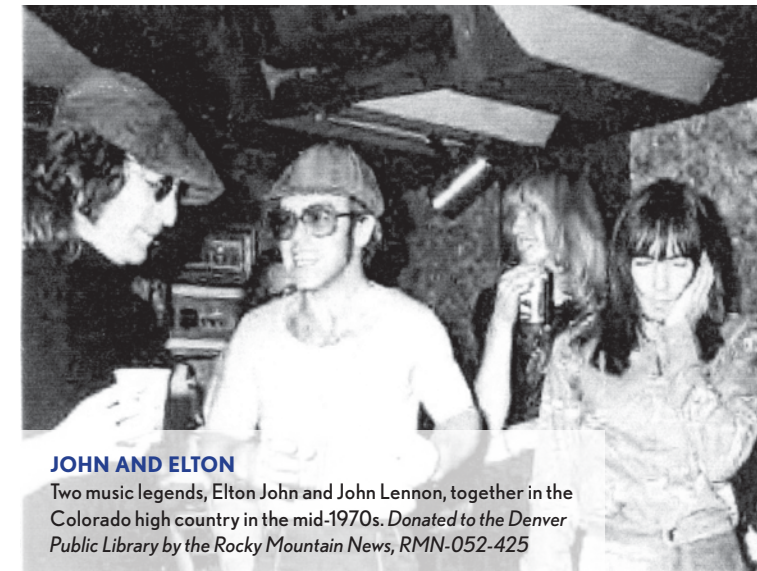
5. "DEVIL'S SWEET," CHICAGO

No Caribou Ranch list would be complete without a shout-out to Chicago, who were produced and managed by studio founder Jim Guercio from 1968 to 1977. "Devil's Sweet" is an unusual deep cut from *Chicago VII*, which was recorded and mixed at Caribou in the fall of 1973 and marked an ambitious turning point for the band, who showcased their jazz influences on the double album. This ten-minute instrumental track, written and led with ferocity by drummer and founding member Danny Seraphine, is a stunner, highlighting Chicago's virtuosity and musicianship, with nary a Peter Cetera vocal in sight.

6. "SHINING STAR," EARTH, WIND & FIRE

Inspired by a walk that singer and songwriter Maurice White took under the night skies at Caribou, this track, co-written by vocalist Philip Bailey and keyboardist Larry Dunn, was indeed a star, charting at number one in the United States. But at the time of White's walk in September 1974, during the band's three-week recording session at the ranch, the soon-to-be soul-funk-R&B superstars had yet to break through to pop radio. The a cappella outro features White and Bailey's classic harmonies, which the pair recorded twenty times and layered to sound like a full chorus of voices. 🌈

MEGAN FRIEDEL is Head of Archives and Collections for University of Colorado Boulder Libraries. She's also a local musician and an expert in Colorado's musical history.



JOHN AND ELTON
Two music legends, Elton John and John Lennon, together in the Colorado high country in the mid-1970s. Donated to the Denver Public Library by the Rocky Mountain News, RMN-052-425



CHICAGO
The band Chicago performed at Caribou Ranch. Donated to the Denver Public Library by the Rocky Mountain News, RMN-052-4250



INSIDE THE STUDIO
The original recording studio at Caribou Ranch. Donated to the Denver Public Library by the Rocky Mountain News, RMN-052-4247

For more Caribou Ranch recordings, check out this [SPOTIFY PLAYLIST](#) (or scan the QR Code) brought to you by the good people at the Colorado Music Hall of Fame!



CHANGING OF THE GUARD

BY JASON L. HANSON

**COLORADO'S TOPPLED
CIVIL WAR MONUMENT AND
A NEW CONVERSATION ABOUT
HOW WE COMMEMORATE THE PAST**

We are a product of history, our lives and our communities shaped by those who came before.

In some cases—and in some places—we choose to spotlight and elevate certain individuals from our collective past to recognize their significant contributions to our communities, so that we may continue to draw inspiration from their example. Whether they are statues cast or carved to stand for generations, the names we give our parks and public buildings, or what we call natural landmarks, every monument is an instrument designed to transmit the stories, knowledge, and perspectives of one generation in a lasting way that we hope will benefit our descendants. In creating monuments, we inscribe our shared history on the landscapes and cultural spaces that provide the setting for our daily lives. But what happens when generational values shift about who, or what, deserves to be commemorated?

This is the question many of us in museums, historical organizations, city governments, and local communities

throughout the nation have confronted with growing urgency over the past decade. In Colorado, it recently took the form of an eight-foot-tall bronze sculpture of a Union cavalry soldier toppled during the protests for racial justice that erupted during the summer of 2020 in the wake of George Floyd's murder. As the monument fell from its pedestal in front of the State Capitol, it raised a number of questions about how we should commemorate our shared history and what we owe to the people of the past who left us their guidance in the form of monuments. Questions that go to the heart of who we want to be.

•••

In 1909, the bronze figure of a dismounted Union cavalry soldier was installed outside the Colorado State Capitol, Colorado's contribution to the nationwide wave of monuments installed to commemorate the aging veterans of the Civil War and advance certain narratives about the meaning of

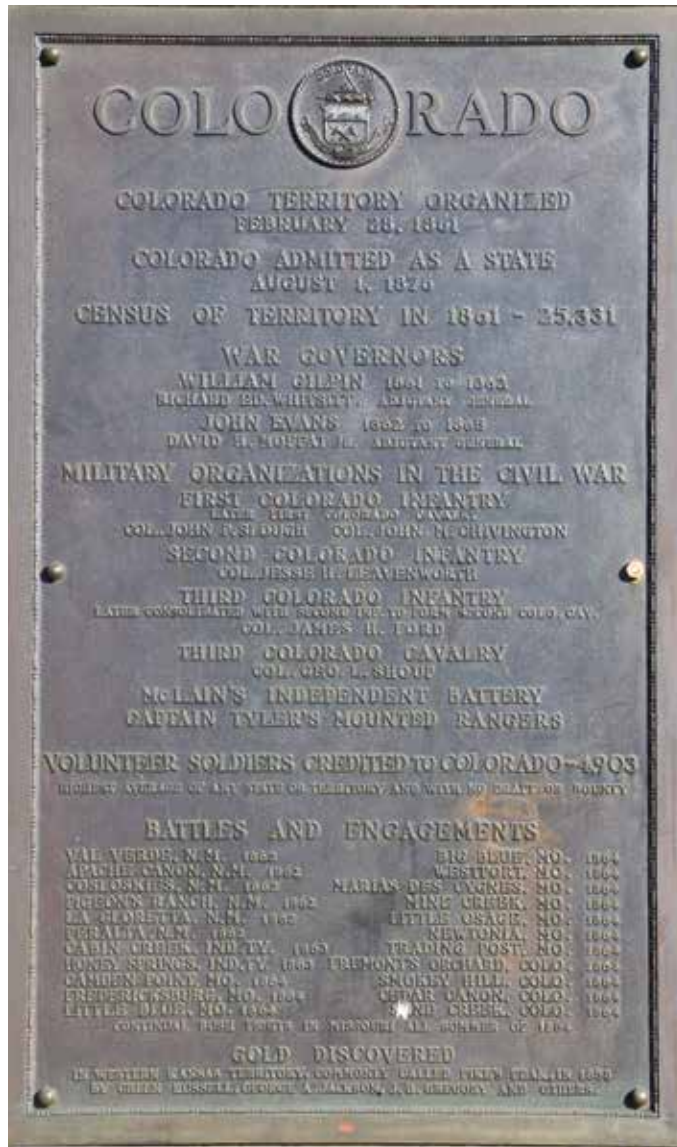
their sacrifice. "On Guard," as the artist John Dare Howland formally designated his work, occupied a place of honor. The bronze soldier stood sentry on the west side of the State Capitol, casting his fixed eyes over the Capitol's "front lawn" in Denver's Civic Center and beyond toward the sun setting over the Rocky Mountains on the horizon. Plaques affixed to the pedestal of the monument listed the engagements Colorado troops had fought in throughout the Colorado Territory and beyond, highlighting the state's role in the national conflict.

And there it stayed, more or less without change, standing silent guard over Civic Center through blizzards (like the

Facing: Colorado's Civil War monument, "On Guard," was installed in front of the State Capitol in 1909 to commemorate Coloradans who fought with the Union during the war. It stood there until it was toppled in the summer of 2020. Courtesy of Derek Everett.

Below: "On Guard" kept watch over Denver's Civic Center for more than a century. Taken from the balcony of the capitol between 1919 and 1923, this photograph shows the monument's expansive view across the city toward the mountains beyond. History Colorado, 99.270.152.





When the monument was installed, its pedestal included a plaque listing all of the “Battles and Engagements” in which Colorado troops fought with the Union during the Civil War, and at the bottom of that list was “Sand Creek.” Courtesy of Derek Everett.

whopper of 1913) and blazing summer days (ever hotter in recent years) for more than a century. Thanks to its location in front of the Capitol, it was a focal point for civic gatherings, protests, and ceremonies over the decades, from Super Bowl and Stanley Cup celebrations to immigration rallies, Occupy protests, women’s marches, anti-mask demonstrations, and more. During the summer of 2020, when Coloradans took to the streets demanding racial justice in the wake of George Floyd’s murder, the marches, rallies, and protests again centered on Civic Center, and “On Guard” stood, as it had so many times before, amid history in the making. Until the overnight hours of June 25, that is, when the monument was toppled by unknown actors.

At first, even some people who were generally supportive of removing offensive monuments were confused by the rage directed at this monument. After all, it honored Colorado soldiers who fought with US forces to preserve the Union and end

the enslavement of Black men and women in the South. Many Americans think of the Civil War as an event that primarily took place east of the Mississippi River while those in the West remained largely separate from the fighting, but in important ways Colorado was born from the conflict. Colorado troops, drawn primarily from local volunteers, fought for the Union Army near and far from home. Most notably, Colorado’s Union forces engaged in the Battle of Glorieta Pass in northern New Mexico, where they played a vital role in protecting western gold fields—and the financial support for the Union war effort they represented—from Confederate takeover.

But Union troops weren’t here only to hold the gold. Amid this wartime context, the US Army used military force to clear Indigenous peoples from their homes and secure the land for American settlement. In the most ignominious episode in that colonial project, on November 29, 1864, US cavalry regiments attacked a peaceful camp of Cheyenne and Arapaho people on Colorado’s eastern plains who had been promised protection by the Army. The soldiers murdered more than 230 women, children, and elders as they tried to run for safety. Upon their return to Denver, the troops paraded in celebration, proudly displaying trophies from the battle—some taken from the bodies of the dead.

The Sand Creek Massacre, as it quickly came to be known, was the bloodiest day in Colorado history. The betrayal of the Cheyenne and Arapaho by the US government touched off decades of violence and warfare across the West that ultimately resulted in the government forcibly removing the region’s Tribes from their homelands and making various efforts to eradicate them completely.

The US Army and Congress both investigated and quickly condemned the attack. Congress’s 1865 “Report of the Joint Committee on the Conduct of the War: Massacre of the Cheyenne Indians” was the first to officially call it a massacre. But many of the people of Denver and in other communities throughout Colorado refused to accept that their relatives and friends had taken part in such a dishonorable action. When the “On Guard” monument was installed, its pedestal included a list of “Battles and Engagements” Colorado troops had fought in during the Civil War. The final entry on the list was “Sand Creek,” an assertion that the killing at Sand Creek was a legitimate battle that belonged among the other worthy actions of Coloradans during the Civil War.

That assertion, set in the legitimacy-conferring patina of weathered bronze, made the monument increasingly contentious in recent decades. At various times the plaque was bathed in blood-red paint, and at one point someone tried to grind the entry for Sand Creek off of the list. By the turn of the century, the Colorado legislature, which oversees the Capitol grounds, was searching for a solution. In 2002, with the input and guidance of the Tribal descendants of those killed at Sand Creek, the legislature approved the addition of a new plaque that was much clearer about the nature of the massacre, explaining that “By des-

Once John Dare Howland’s cavalry soldier was discovered face down in the trampled flowerbed ringing the monument’s granite pedestal, “On Guard” embarked on a new journey. Early that morning, it was unmonumentally laid on a flatbed truck and taken to a top secret warehouse.

ignating Sand Creek as a battle, the monument’s designers mischaracterized the actual events,” and noting that, thanks to the persistent advocacy of Tribal descendants of the attack and others, there was now “widespread recognition of the tragedy as the Sand Creek Massacre.”

But additional plaques—those attempts to augment flawed history with more information or correction—don’t seem to carry the same weight as the original, and it never sat right with some people. To date, we can only guess at the exact motives of those who toppled the monument, but for many observers the action read as an attempt to topple any vestigial apologism or pretense that Sand Creek can be understood as anything but an intentional, brutal, state-sanctioned, massacre of Indigenous people.

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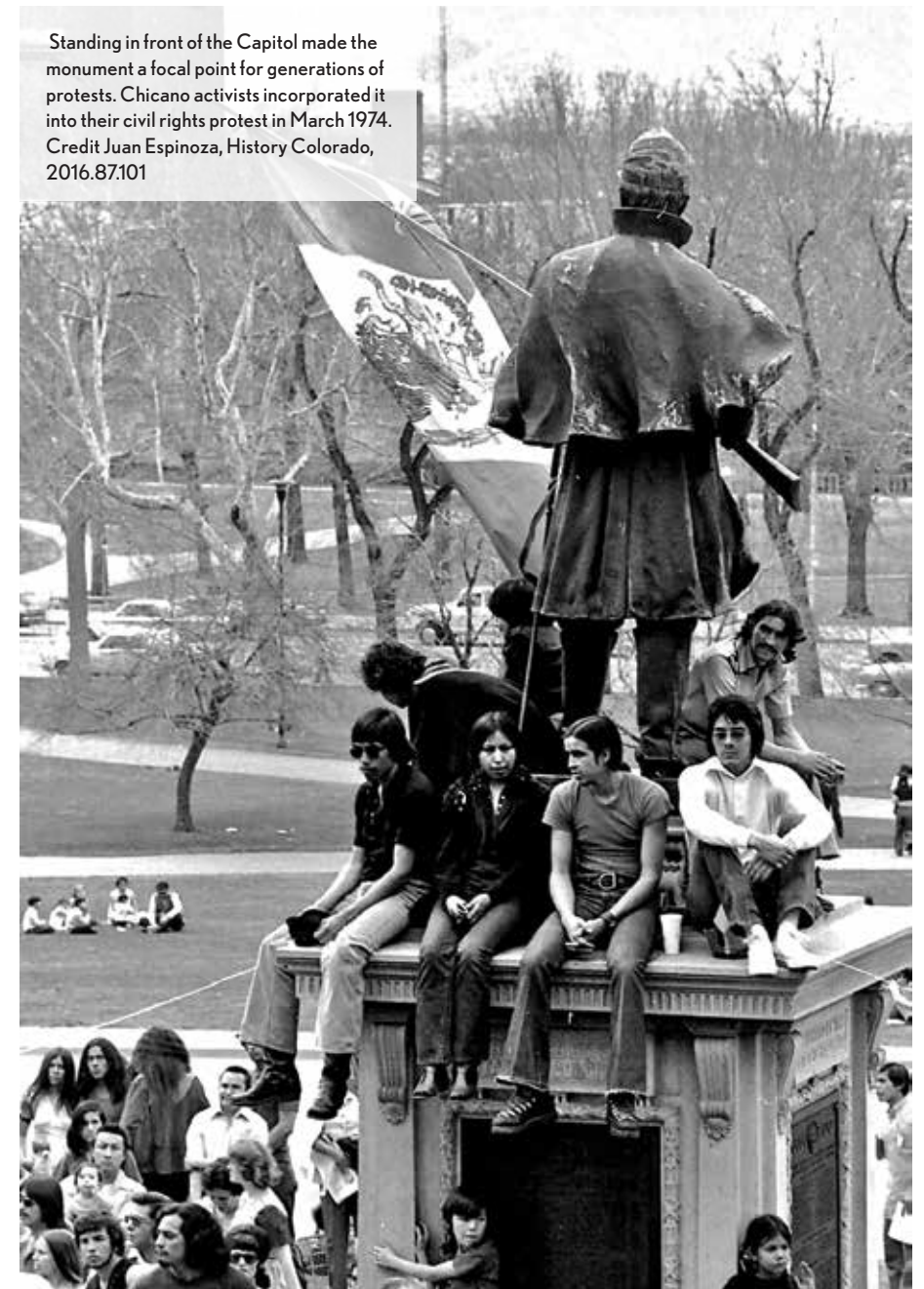
Once John Dare Howland’s cavalry soldier was discovered face down in the trampled flowerbed ringing the monument’s granite pedestal, “On Guard” embarked on a new journey. Early that morning, it was unmonumentally laid on a flatbed truck and taken to a top secret warehouse in the care of the Department of Veteran and Military Affairs under the auspices of the Colorado National Guard.

At History Colorado, we had heard some people saying in the press that “controversial monuments belong in a museum.” Good idea, we thought. Dawn DiPrince, our director, texted me: “Could we bring it to the History Colorado Center?” And so, with the blessing of the Capitol Building Advisory Committee and the amazing

downtown Denver flagship museum in our statewide system.

At the museum, we placed the monument at ground level in the crux of a spiral staircase, so visitors would not be looking up in awe, as we usually do with monuments, but would be able to view it from multiple angles, including eye level and even (my favorite) bird’s eye view. We knew that the monument and the questions swirling around it—why it was toppled, why it wasn’t immediately reinstalled, what would happen to it next—was a sensitive subject for

skill of our Exhibition Development, Collections Access, and Design & Production teams, we did exactly that, installing “On Guard” that October at the History Colorado Center, the



Standing in front of the Capitol made the monument a focal point for generations of protests. Chicano activists incorporated it into their civil rights protest in March 1974. Credit Juan Espinoza, History Colorado, 2016.87101

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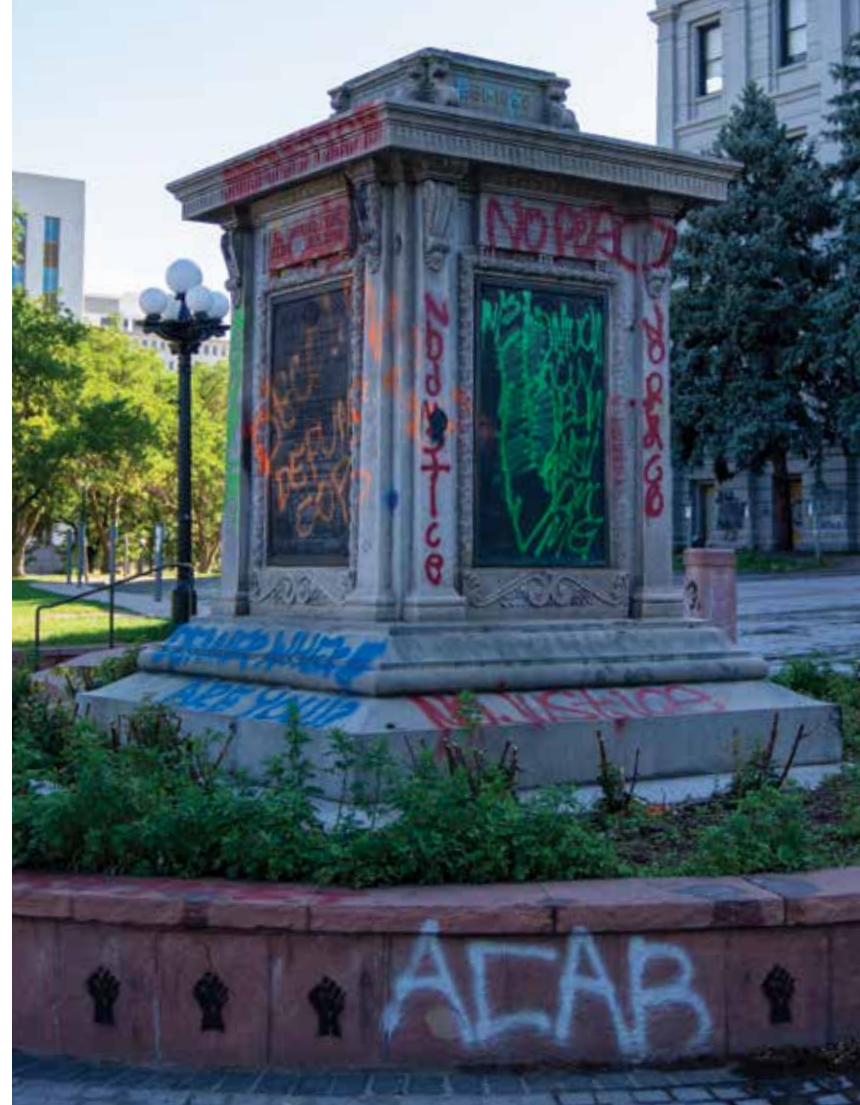
many of our visitors and for people throughout Colorado. In fact, despite all the suggestions that controversial monuments ought to be in museums, we could not find an applicable example to follow from another museum. As far as we could tell, we were the first museum in the nation to attempt it in the aftermath of that summer’s protests for racial justice.

Without established best practices or a playbook to follow, our Exhibition Development team devised a three-part interpretation strategy to present “On Guard” to our visitors and encourage them to consider it from a variety of perspectives. First, we shared some background on the actual events the monument was meant to commemorate. In this case, that meant a brief discussion of the actions of Colorado troops fighting for the Union during the Civil War, including the Sand Creek Massacre and participation in the Indian Wars. Second, we spotlighted the creation of the monument itself. “On Guard” was installed in 1909 after Denver’s city leaders had been embarrassed to realize, while hosting a reunion encampment of the Grand Army of the Republic, that the city did not have a monument honoring the veterans’ sacrifice and victory. Although Civil War monuments are not as common in Colorado as they are in states further east, Colorado joined those states in installing “On Guard” as part of a large wave of Civil War monuments being erected nationwide as the generation who fought in the war was passing away.

Finally, we knew that displaying a toppled monument meant we had to address the meaning of the monument today. We also knew that this was not for us to say. In recent decades, museums have recognized that we exist within spectacularly multifaceted and intersectional communities and can no longer credibly claim or even aspire to be the all-knowing voice of community hegemony anymore. So we solicited statements from multiple stakeholders, including veterans, Tribal representatives, artists, historians, and others, on what the monument meant to them. We heard that it was a

Top right: During the overnight hours on June 25, 2020, “On Guard” was pulled down by unknown actors, leaving an empty pedestal. History Colorado, CBS.2020.0034.

Right: In October 2020, History Colorado installed “On Guard” as an exhibition at the the History Colorado Center, just blocks from where it had been toppled. The statue was surrounded by differing perspectives on what the monument means today. Photo by the author.



tribute to those who have served and sacrificed in the nation’s armed forces, a reminder of atrocities committed against Indigenous peoples, a symbol of white supremacy and injustice, a casualty of destructive lawlessness, and more.

Operating from a fundamental belief that creating space for civil conversation about our different views is part of how we embrace our shared destiny and find our way forward together, we welcomed the public to join the conversation and created space for visitors to share their views. We wanted to give people a chance to think about what history they would like to see in

their public spaces, and what the purpose of such public commemoration should be. We asked visitors to respond, if they felt so moved, to two questions:

1. Do we need monuments?
2. What do you think their purpose should be?

By far the most common sentiment our visitors offered—often in careful handwriting sized to fit complex ideas on the sticky notes we gave them to stick up on a wall facing the monument—was that monuments are critical pieces of social memory. Visitors overwhelm-

ingly agreed that historic statues and other monuments should remind Americans of both the good and bad aspects of our history, and that in remembering, we may build upon the good and avoid repeating bad choices.

Other visitors tackled the question of what society should do with statues honoring values that we no longer agree with, or those commemorating moments most would prefer to forget. Visitors generally wanted these monuments to reside in museums where they can be properly interpreted and put into context. Erasing these monuments entirely from view, they argued, opens society up to repeating the mistakes of the past.

A notable, though small, percentage of commenters disagreed with the idea that we need monuments to remind us of the good and bad in American history. But their disagreements came from very different places. For some, monuments inherently reinforce the dominant culture’s values and version of the past at the expense of underrepresented voices and should therefore all be removed and not replaced. For others, monuments should honor sacrifice and heroism, and should encourage us to reflect on the times in which Americans have lived up to their values and the nation’s promise. Monuments, according to this latter group, should not dwell on the dark moments in the nation’s history or focus on what a few deemed “overly negative” depictions of the past.

...

All of the protest and controversy and discussion about monuments has not stopped us building them. A new monument to Major General Maurice Rose, son of a Denver rabbi, student at Denver’s East High School, the highest ranking Jewish officer in the US Army during World War II and the highest ranking officer killed in combat, and namesake of Rose Hospital was recently installed in Lincoln Veterans Memorial Park in Civic Center. Likewise, the City of



During days of demonstrations, the monument was a target for graffiti and a platform for protestors’ messages. Courtesy of Derek Everett.

We knew that displaying a toppled monument meant we had to address the meaning of the monument today.

Denver recently installed, at the urging of Colorado Asian Pacific United, a new historic marker commemorating the city's historic Chinatown, replacing the white-centric text that had marked the place.

Ideally, to commemorate the actions of our predecessors in a place is to imbue the place with the story of that person or the collective individuals who achieved something worthy of remembrance, recognizing their contributions to and

impact upon our world long after they have passed. But monuments also carry forward the flaws and shortcomings of those imperfect predecessors, and those who admired them, to be confronted by successive generations. In some cases, it may come to seem that those flaws outweigh the accomplishments that merited the honor.

In such cases, residents and city leaders might consider whether the monument is achieving its original purpose or playing a constructive role in creating meaningful landscapes for our daily lives. This is especially important given the historical and current power structures that have prioritized Eurocentric, white, male, straight, abled perspectives in the naming process, to

the exclusion of Indigenous people, people of color, women, LGBTQ+ people, people with disabilities, and other historically marginalized people. When the societal context has changed over time to the extent that there is strong evidence that retaining the name would be detrimental to promoting the values held by a community, it is appropriate to consider giving ourselves new monuments to look up to.

When the Colorado State Historian's Council, which is a group of five esteemed historians from throughout the state convened by History Colorado, was asked by the City of Denver to guide its consideration of how to review and potentially address problematic place names woven into the

city's historic fabric, we developed a set of questions designed to ground and guide these conversations. The following questions were developed along with Nicki Gonzales, Jared Orsi, William Wei, and Ariel Schnee as part of that process. As communities throughout the nation vet the monuments and place names that proclaim historical narratives in their public spaces, we hope that asking these questions will generate a richer evaluation of controversial monuments.

The Scales of Justice:

Which misdeeds overwhelm a person's good deeds? What qualities and achievements do we wish to honor? Which cannot be overlooked or balanced out?

Contributions of the Commemorated:

What was the significance and impact of the person's contribution to the contemporary community? In their failures, those we commemorate were often men and women of their time.

But in their successes, they were often visionaries well ahead of their time in ways that continue to reverberate today.

Beliefs Versus Action:

Did the honored person express their problematic views consistently through action or did they hold their views more privately? Are we prepared or qualified to judge what is in a person's heart, or to judge them for it? Societal Context: How has society changed in our views of who or what is being honored? Judgments about a person's character or the meaning of events can change over successive generations. What deference is due to the people whom our predecessors honored (as one day our choices will be similarly examined)? What obligation do we have to continuously interpret—and when necessary reinterpret—them for new generations?

What's the Harm:

Does keeping the monument harm residents of the community? Honors

bestowed in one age can have different—and sometimes detrimental—effects in subsequent generations. What harms are created, and to whom, by the meaning encapsulated in a monument? What remedies are available?

What Can We Learn:

Does the name provide a learning opportunity that should be valued? Those who originally decided to honor a person or event chose it for a reason. What can we learn from that choice? Does the monument provide an opportunity to confront and reflect upon the complex legacy that brought us to this place and time?

Erasure and Distortion:

Does removing the monument have the effect of erasing history? Does preserving it distort history? Monuments project a view of our shared history. What might be lost in changing them? What is falsely preserved by retaining them?





History Colorado invited visitors to continue the conversation about monuments. Many had a lot to say. Photo by the author.

Current Meaning:

Have current residents created a contemporary meaning for monuments and place names that have positive value, irrespective of the original intent? People make their own meaning for places based on lived experiences. When those meanings are in opposition to one another, or to the name's original significance, how do we determine whose meaning should be given preference?

...

F. Scott Fitzgerald famously concluded *The Great Gatsby*, his tragically all-American tale of striving for wealth and love in the 1920s, by reflecting on the ways in which we are inescapably shaped by history: “So we beat on, boats against the current,” he wrote, “borne back ceaselessly into the past.”

Monuments, attempts by one generation to enshrine certain narratives and values for generations to come, are part of this current. But they have a permanence that human lives do not. Their goal is often perpetuity, perhaps because the creators of monuments know that

nothing—not individuals, the communities they form, nor the nations they build—remains fixed and unchanging for long.

And that’s OK, says Lonnie Bunch III, the Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution, which is the nation’s official and most venerable keeper of our collective knowledge and shared history.

Their goal is often perpetuity, perhaps because the creators of monuments know that nothing remains fixed and unchanging for long.

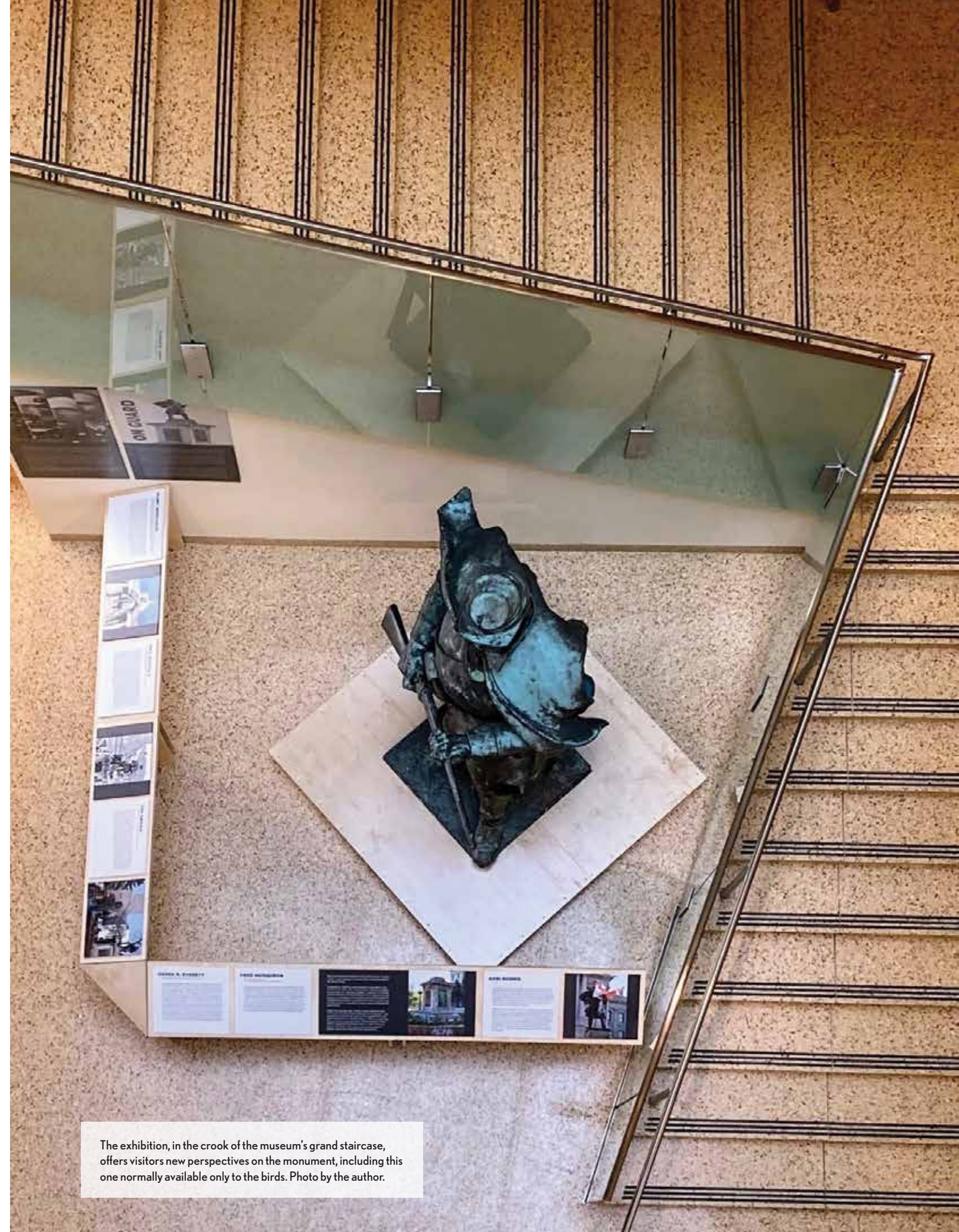
“There is nothing wrong with a country recognizing that its identity is evolving over time,” Bunch told the *New York Times* in 2020, suggesting that some monuments ought to be removed or recontextualized. He added that “as this identity evolves, so does what it remembers. So does what it celebrates.”

How we choose to remember our shared history in our public spaces sometimes raises difficult but important

questions that go to the heart of who we want to be as a community and what sort of place we want to live in. Many of us who practice historical work in public view believe that our shared history can help guide us to a brighter future. But people must be able to draw meaning, inspiration, and lessons from the historic reminders—big and small—that surround them. When that history can no longer serve those purposes, as new insights and interpretations arise and new information is brought to light, the people of a community, who are the keepers of all history, might understandably seek to revise or refresh the stories they call upon for inspiration and guidance. 🇨

Editor’s Note: This article was adapted from an essay in *Controversial Monuments and Memorials: A Guide for Community Leaders* 2nd edition, edited by David B. Allison, forthcoming later this year from Rowman & Littlefield.

JASON L. HANSON is History Colorado’s chief creative officer and director of interpretation and research.



The exhibition, in the crook of the museum’s grand staircase, offers visitors new perspectives on the monument, including this one normally available only to the birds. Photo by the author.

COLORADO'S FORGOTTEN DIVERSION DILEMMA

BY MICHAEL WEEKS

The Colorado-Big Thompson project was at the center of a fierce debate that shaped Americans' relationships to their national parks.

Few visitors to Rocky Mountain National Park will ever visit the East Portal. And why would they? Located just a few miles south of Estes Park, the East Portal contains no views of snow-capped peaks or broad valleys teeming with wildlife. Instead, it is framed by low-lying hills and power lines that draw energy from water flowing out of an odd-looking tunnel and pooling into a nondescript reservoir. It is, compared to some of the area's more

Members of the Colorado Mountain Club looking west towards Grand Lake from on top of the Continental Divide. Many outdoor-oriented activities opposed the C-BT project, fearing environmental damage and the intrusion of commerce into wild Western landscapes. History Colorado Collection, 83.495.317

brehtaking vistas, an unremarkable landscape with seemingly little connection with the one drawing hordes of sightseers and adventurers into nearby Rocky Mountain National Park.

Yet appearances can be deceiving. Even while unsuspecting visitors explore one of the nation's iconic landscapes, the tunnel is redirecting the natural flow of the Colorado River underneath the Rocky Mountains and out the East Portal, en route to users across Northern Colorado. Completed in 1944, the Alva B. Adams Tunnel forms the critical undermountain link in the Colorado-Big Thompson Project (C-BT), a piece of hidden infrastructure that, as you read this, is supplying water to

farms and municipalities across the Northern Front Range.

Despite the C-BT's importance, few Coloradans consider it when they turn on their showers or dig into a plate of seasonal Front Range veggies. But from 1933, when it was proposed, until 1937, when Congress approved the project, the C-BT inspired passionate support and vitriolic opposition from a range of interest groups that Coloradans today would recognize immediately.

The supporters' side included farmers, industrialists, local boosters and scientists. In the midst of a decade characterized by drought and depression, they argued that C-BT water would rescue the region's agricultural economy from



Looking east toward the Alva B. Adams Tunnel at the East Portal in June, 1947. Irrigation Research Papers, CSU Libraries Archives & Special Collections

collapse by the simple act of moving water from a region that possessed it in comparative abundance to one desperately needing it.

On the other side were conservationists and nature-lovers who complained bitterly that the Adams tunnel would desecrate Rocky Mountain National Park. They wrote protest letters, pamphlets, and editorials, and appeared before hearings in Congress and the Department of the Interior. Some complained that the tunnel was a commercial intrusion into a national park. They excoriated the business interests and town developers for wanting to scar a landscape set aside for preservation and the enjoyment of the American people. They worried that it would set a precedent for the exploitation of other national parks. Other conservation-minded opponents argued that the tunnel violated the need to preserve wild places for the sake of wilderness. To remove water from the woods and pump it onto the plains, they said, would be to fundamentally alter fragile western ecosystems. The war of words reached such a fever pitch

that historian Donald Swain says that the C-BT offered one of the most consequential examples of water project opposition in American history.

It's not news that water is central to life, and that's especially true here in arid Colorado. Access to water and the sanctity of public lands—issues that defined the fight over the Colorado-Big Thompson Project—resonate perhaps more than ever as climate change challenges our ability to engineer around aridity. Vitriolic discussions over water use for agriculture, for growing cities, for energy development, and for recreation are happening with just as much ferocity today as they did nine decades ago. Colorado's central urban strip continues attracting residents at a breakneck pace, in part due to the outdoor lifestyle afforded by such close access to public lands. Cities on the Front Range are still buying C-BT water rights from farmers on the Western Slope, even as the oil and gas industry injects some of that same water thousands of feet into the earth to be lost to underground hydraulic fracturing.

No matter what the use, hardly anybody gets to use water in Colorado without a fight. It's as true today as it was in 1933, when the Colorado-Big Thompson project threatened to forever change one of the nation's most prominent protected landscapes: the snowy peaks and verdant valleys of Rocky Mountain National Park.

ORIGINS OF CONFLICT

Ever since gold's discovery near Denver in 1858, Front Range residents have far outnumbered those living in the western half of the state. But eighty percent of the state's precipitation falls west of the Continental Divide, creating a problem for the many urban Front Range residents who live in a much drier climate. So, as Colorado's population grew throughout the late 1800s, it did not take long for the water-starved majority to devise methods for circumventing geographic barriers.

Moving water underneath or around a mountain from one watershed to another—a process called transmountain diversion—was nothing new when the C-BT controversy emerged



A PROTEST

OF CONSERVATION ORGANIZATIONS AGAINST THE EXPLOITATION OF ROCKY MOUNTAIN NATIONAL PARK

Believing that the National Parks, set aside for the use, enjoyment and education of the people of the United States, should be protected from commercial exploitation, we earnestly protest against congressional authorization of a project to dig a thirteen mile tunnel through Rocky Mountain National Park, to transform Grand Lake into a reservoir, and to build some eight thousand feet of covered ditch within the park in order to divert water from the Colorado River watershed into the Platte River watershed.

- We submit that the Grand Lake-Big Thompson Intermountain Diversion project, included by the Senate on March 2 as a rider to the Interior Department Appropriation bill, has not been adequately investigated, has not been approved by the Budget Bureau, and has not been considered by the appropriate committees in either house of Congress.
- Moreover, the Congress by amendment to the Federal Power Act has enunciated the policy that National Parks should be exempt from power projects. The scheme to divert the waters of beautiful Grand Lake and to tunnel through the heart of the Rocky Mountain National Park involves the development of power and the construction of unsightly power lines near the eastern and southern boundaries and across a scenic area which has long been contemplated for addition to the Park.
- In the building of the tunnel the disposition of debris will deface the landscape and leave a scar on the wilderness character of the Park and its environs. We have no faith in promises to maintain the level of Grand Lake if water becomes needed for power or growing crops in dry years.
- We submit that this project violates the most sacred principle of National Parks, namely, freedom from commercial or economic exploitation and that if approved by Congress it will establish a precedent for the commercial invasion of other Parks. We urge that the American people rally to the defense of their National Park system and demand of Congress that this project be stopped.

National Association of Audubon Societies
Izaak Walton League of America
General Federation of Women's Clubs
American Planning and Civic Association
The American Forestry Association
The Garden Club of America
American Wildlife Institute
The National Parks Association
The Society of American Foresters
The American Association of Museums
National Conference on State Parks
Massachusetts Forest and Park Association
The Wilderness Society

THE AMERICAN FORESTRY ASSOCIATION
1713 - K Street, Northwest
WASHINGTON, D. C.

DEPT. OF THE INTERIOR
RECEIVED
MAR 17 1936
390.01
ROCKY MOUNTAIN
LAKE-BIG THOMPSON
INTERMOUNTAIN DIVERSION
TO BUREAU OF RECLAMATION
SECT'S OFF. - DIV. OF CONSERVATION

RECEIVED
MAR 18 1936
BUREAU OF RECLAMATION

C-BT protest pamphlet signed by conservation organizations, March 1936. Courtesy of the National Archives, Denver, CO.

during the 1930s. The largest of these early projects, called the Grand River Ditch, transported water in an unlined ditch and wooden flumes to Fort Collins through an area that would eventually become part of Rocky Mountain National Park. In 1904 the Bureau of Reclamation, with sights set on a much larger diversion, suggested damming Grand Lake and then constructing a twelve-mile tunnel that could fill the ditches of Northern Colorado farmers. However, high construction costs and complex engineering tabled the project.

As water users created precedents for gravity-defying projects, conservationists developed a reputation for opposing them. The most notable example involved San Francisco's 1907 proposal to dam Yosemite's Hetch Hetchy Valley for water and power generation. Though Congress eventually approved San Francisco's application, the project galvanized opposition from conservation organizations such as the Sierra Club. Protesters argued that national parks existed for the beauty and enjoyment of the nation and its people and that commercial development violated those core principles.

Politicians and federal officials took note of this growing tension between water developers and conservationists, spurring them to craft laws and principles for human activities in national parks. When Congress established Rocky Mountain National Park in 1915, Franklin Lane, Secretary of the Interior, sought to ensure the legality of water projects within park boundaries. As a former attorney for the city of San Francisco, Lane played a critical role in the bruising battle over damming Yosemite's Hetch Hetchy Valley. Head of the vast Interior Department, which oversaw both national parks and the water project builders at the Bureau of Reclamation, Lane worried that national park designation might present too many obstacles to water development. So, the wily attorney inserted the following language into Rocky Mountain's found-

ing document: "The United States Reclamation Service may enter upon and utilize for flowage or other purposes any area within said park which may be necessary for the development and maintenance of a Government reclamation project."

That language offered a legal justification for diverting water through the park. However, the following year Congress muddied the waters a bit. In 1916, legislators approved the Organic Act, a lengthy bureaucratic document which, among other things, established the National Park Service. According to the Act, that new agency's mission was to "conserve the scenery and the natural and historic objects and the wildlife therein and to provide for the

When Congress established Rocky Mountain National Park in 1915, Franklin Lane, Secretary of the Interior, sought to ensure the legality of water projects within park boundaries.

enjoyment of the same in such manner and by such means as will leave them unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations." For conservationists and park service employees, the Organic Act was a manifesto for resistance to all kinds of commercial development. Certainly, they reasoned, dynamiting a tunnel through the length of Rocky Mountain National Park would impair the public's enjoyment and break the illusion of standing in an untouched wilderness.

Circumstances brought the potential of a massive hole through the national park into public consciousness during the 1930s as Colorado suffered through drought and economic collapse. As crops dried up, an array of Northern Colorado groups

came together to request that the federal government investigate the feasibility of blasting a tunnel that could divert Colorado River water through Rocky Mountain. These included five counties, all but one member of Colorado's Congressional delegation, editors of each of the region's major newspapers, a majority of local elected officials, and Front Range farmers. In 1934 the Bureau of Reclamation agreed to conduct engineering studies in advance of a project proposal. Reclamation Commissioner John C. Page followed up with a letter to Acting Park Service Director Arthur Demaray requesting entry. Demaray refused.

In a formal letter of denial addressed to Secretary of the Interior Harold Ickes, Demaray penned the opening arguments in the fight over the tunnel. He complained that engineering studies taken in the park would require test drillings, resulting in "scars" and "unsightly debris." According to Demaray, such surveys and any tunnel which might be built required constructing access roads and trails to "places where roads and trails should not rightfully go." Demaray's letter rhetorically transformed a local irrigation project into a national issue, pointing out that conservationists had fought to keep national parks "inviolate from such projects," and that the proposed survey could be "an opening wedge in a hard-won wall of protection which surrounds our park system." In response, Ickes, a noted supporter of national parks, nonetheless authorized the engineering surveys, believing that he was obligated by the fact that water diversion projects were embedded in Rocky Mountain's founding legislation.

CONSERVATIONISTS MAKE THEIR CASE

Following Ickes' approval, conservation forces quickly mobilized in opposition. Organizations such as the Sierra Club and the Wilderness Society mailed flyers to their supporters and

placed ads in newspapers throughout the country. Individuals then sent dozens of protest letters to federal agencies. While some letters appear entirely original, others were variations on templates developed by conservation organizations. Many of these letters are housed at the Broomfield branch of the National Archives. In addition, nationally recognized figures in the National Park Service, directors of conservation organizations, and scientists wrote op-ed pieces in magazines and newspapers.

Their strident opposition came during a period when national parks were drawing patrons in record numbers as many sought escape from the crushing economic collapse of the Great Depression. As the federal government considered the Colorado-Big Thompson Project between 1934 and 1937, annual visitation to Rocky Mountain National Park nearly doubled to 650,000. This was motivated in part by the recently built Trail Ridge Road, which offered stunning views to motorists as they traveled across the Continental Divide between Estes Park and Grand Lake.

The arguments made by conservationists in opposition to the tunnel probably resonate with today's Coloradans

who enjoy recreating in the state's public lands. Letter writers universally expressed concerns that a massive engineering project inside park borders would mar the scenery and set the stage for similar projects in national parks elsewhere. Most protesters extolled the uniqueness of the landscape inside Rocky Mountain National Park, arguing that it was the highest expression of nature and

The arguments made by conservationists in opposition to the tunnel probably resonate with today's Coloradans who enjoy recreating in the state's public lands.

the people of the nation had afforded it the most stringent degree of protection available at the time. Consequently, only development that enhanced the scenery and natural beauty of the parks should be allowed. Many made this distinction clear when they offered support for farmers' need for water, as long as the

conduits that delivered the resource were outside of the park boundaries. Other writers expressed concerns about the declining number of wild places in America, arguing that national parks offered the best opportunity for humans to have unimpaired encounters with wild nature. Finally, many protesters viewed Rocky Mountain through patriotic lenses. They claimed that national parks existed for every American and that a tunnel would prioritize local interests over national ones.

Among the varied written protests, none received more attention than a 1936 pamphlet titled, "A Protest of Conservation Organizations Against the Exploitation of Rocky Mountain National Park." Its signatories included the most notable conservation organizations of the 1930s, including the Wilderness Society, the American Forestry Association, The Izaak Walton League, the Sierra Club, and the National Parks Association. They argued that the tunnel "violates the most sacred principle of National Parks, namely, freedom from commercial or economic exploitation," and that if approved by Congress it would "establish a precedent for the commercial invasion of other parks."



One of Monfort of Colorado's feedlots, ca. 1970. Its pens could hold up to 100,000 steers. Courtesy of Greeley Museum.

The most likely author of that pamphlet, Robert Sterling Yard, took the protest a step further, by arguing that the proposed tunnel was an assault on one among a dwindling number of wild places in America. By the 1930s, Yard was in a strong position to make this claim. As the head of the National Park Service's Educational Division from 1916-1919, he promoted national parks as America's "scenic masterpieces" which, like great art, had the potential to build a more enlightened public. For Yard, irrigation projects in national parks were akin to defacing a Rembrandt painting. So, during the 1920s, he directed much of his energy toward fighting water projects in parks such as Yellowstone, Glacier, and Grand Teton.

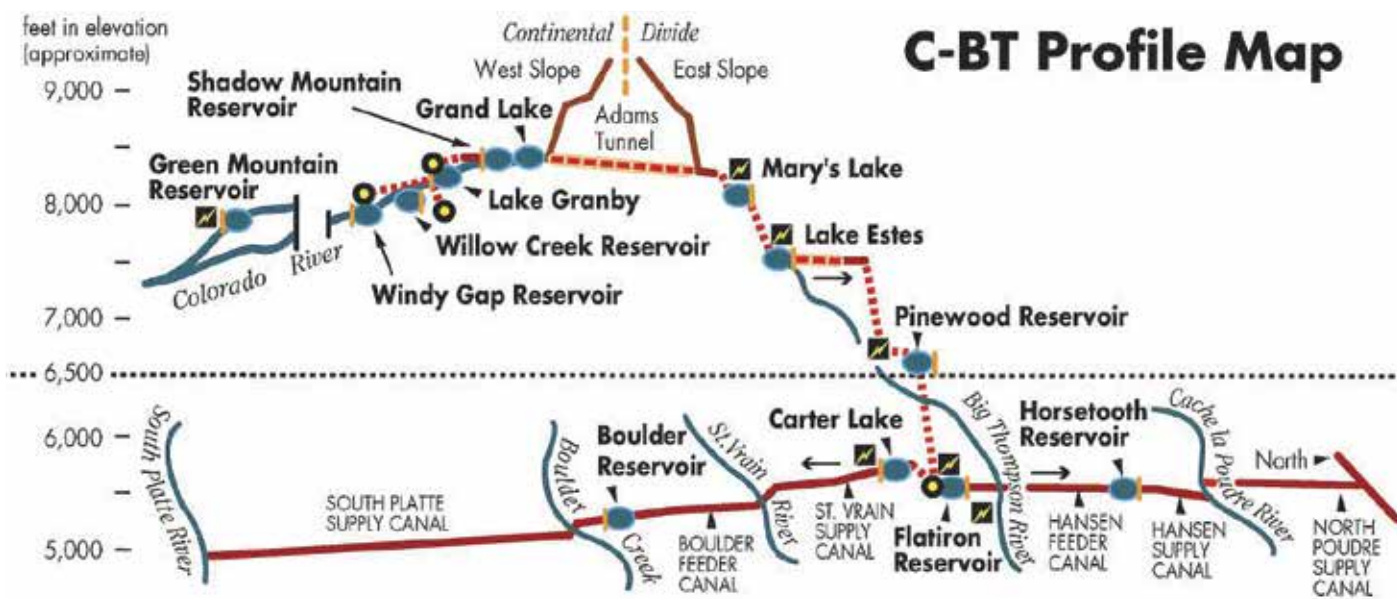
During the same period, Yard became increasingly concerned that parks such as Rocky Mountain were being overrun with tourists who seemed more interested in driving through than in enlightening their minds. Though not the same as boring a hole through the mountain or clearcutting a forest, Yard regarded the assault of asphalt and autos as commercial invasions just the

same, since they encouraged visitors to rapidly consume landscapes while disregarding their geologic or biologic value. For Yard, blasting holes through the park and the proliferation of roads were two sides of the same coin. Both compromised the core mission of national parks.

By 1930, Yard concluded that the best way to preserve the scientific and scenic qualities of the nation's iconic parks was to promote vast roadless tracts called wilderness areas. So, in 1935, even as the first tunnel engineering surveys were getting underway, he helped to form the Wilderness Society. According to the Society's first publication, wilderness areas are "virgin tracts in which human activities have never modified the normal processes of nature. They thus preserve the native vegetation and physiographic conditions which have existed for an inestimable period. They present the culmination of an unbroken series of natural events stretching infinitely into the past, and a richness and beauty beyond description or compare." In short, Yard and his allies argued that the proposed tunnel would do more

than deface park scenery; it would violate the fundamental laws of nature. To restore nature's balance, Rocky Mountain needed less construction and more wilderness.

The most common protest expressed by Robert Sterling Yard and his conservationist allies was that the C-BT prioritized local needs over national ones. Yard's Wilderness Society colleague Bernard Frank expressed that sentiment when he wrote that the national parks were areas "dedicated to the service and enjoyment of the people of the United States as a whole and not to any narrow interests of any particular locality." Frank later emphasized that it would be the "primeval qualities" of the park which would be compromised should local "narrow interests" prevail. Letter writers Laurel and Lincoln Ellison of Montana cited national interests as well, claiming that the country's need for outdoor recreation in "unspoiled nature...should take precedence over such local demands for irrigation and water power." In an editorial in the New York Times, former National Park Service Director Horace Albright chimed



Colorado-Big Thompson Project elevation profile map. Courtesy of Northern Water.

in with similar reasoning. He cited the five million tourists who had visited Rocky Mountain National Park since 1915, the 550,000 travelers who entered the park in 1936, and the seven-and-half million dollars spent by park visitors, arguing that the C-BT would destroy “the natural charm of the landscape.” He concluded that “private interests should give way to the general good.”

The arguments against the tunnel put forth by conservationists resonate in Colorado today. Presently, there are forty-two wilderness areas in the state, most of which have been designated since Congress passed the Wilderness Act in 1964. Each wilderness is intended to minimize human impacts by restricting all forms of mechanized travel. In fact, four of these wilderness areas border Rocky Mountain National Park. Moreover, much of the park has been managed as wilderness since 1974. At the same time, the visitor’s desire to motor through has only increased. It took twenty years for total park visitation to hit the five million mark. Today, nearly that many people tour the park by car annually. These numbers are especially evident when spontaneous traffic jams occur at sites where elk or moose grace the roadside. Whether those scenes support or violate the conservation mission of Rocky Mountain remains the subject of sometimes heated debate.

MAKING THE CASE FOR THE C-BT

Let’s return now for a moment to the East Portal, where Colorado River water flows out of the Alva B. Adams Tunnel and exits Rocky Mountain National Park. From there the water plunges 2,900 feet through twelve reservoirs and over one hundred miles of canals before it is available to farmers, municipalities, and businesses in Northern Colorado. In 1937, the intended beneficiaries of that water needed to address some of the arguments made by conservationists, even

as they directed the debate away from the sanctity of national parks and toward economic benefit. Would the C-BT bring enough benefit to justify its price tag, estimated to be \$44 million in 1937? To gain Congressional support and to counter conservationists’ arguments that the Adams Tunnel would desecrate a national treasure, they had to make the case that the C-BT would bring substantial economic benefit to the nation.

Among the many people clamoring for the C-BT, Ralph Parshall stands out. While Parshall was not the loudest voice in the debate, his arguments and evidence were perhaps the most convincing. A resident of Northern

Parshall went to pains to show how C-BT water would be an affordable and effective solution to the region’s water woes.

Colorado himself, Parshall graduated at the top of his engineering class at Colorado Agricultural College (CAC—the forerunner of Colorado State University) in 1904. After completing a master’s degree at the University of Chicago, he was hired by his alma mater in 1907. As a professor at CAC, Parshall engineered reservoirs, dams, and irrigation canals in Northern Colorado. Then, in 1913, Parshall took a position as an irrigation engineer with the USDA’s Bureau of Agricultural Engineering where he worked for the next forty years. While at the USDA, Parshall’s office and lab remained on the campus of CAC where he collaborated with students and faculty throughout his career.

By the time the C-BT came into public consciousness in the 1930s, Parshall was a well-known figure due to his namesake invention, the Parshall Flume. That innovation made water distribution to agricultural users more

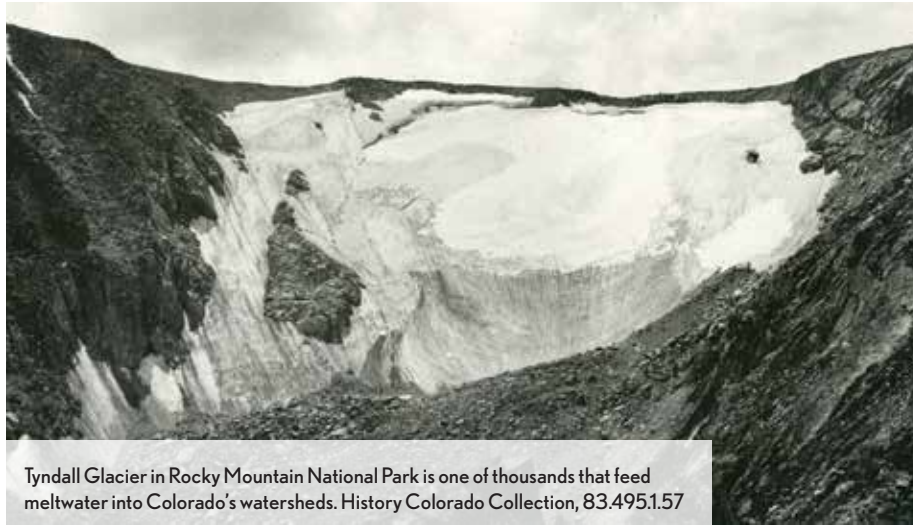
equitable wherever it was installed as it increased measurement accuracy in canals and ditches by up to thirty percent. This helped farmers to know how much water they were receiving and prevented water users from taking more than their allotted shares. By 1935, Parshall had also distinguished himself as a pioneer of snow surveys and for developing devices to remove debris from irrigation canals. Combined, Parshall’s work enabled farmers to plan their operations effectively since they could predict the quantity of water available to them. He also earned the respect of individual farmers since he frequently supervised the design and installation of his inventions on their land. Consequently, when the USDA needed a knowledgeable and well-respected figure to prepare an economic analysis of the C-BT, Parshall was a clear choice. He possessed an unshakable reputation as a skilled irrigation engineer with intimate knowledge of the Northern Colorado landscape.

Parshall’s *Agricultural Economic Summary Relating to the Colorado-Big Thompson Project* came out in January 1937. It contained a dizzying array of economic data collected by Parshall and his team of researchers. They compiled statistics on value, acreage, water rights, and loan status for every irrigated farm in the region. They also collected precipitation records, breaking down the quantity of water available for every irrigation district and mutual irrigation company in the C-BT’s service area. Parshall went to pains to show how C-BT water would be an affordable and effective solution to the region’s water woes.

Even as the data spoke loudly, Parshall’s applied understanding of Northern Colorado’s irrigation-dependent farmers amplified statistics. Aware that a massive Reclamation project might be viewed as a government handout in the midst of the Depression, Parshall characterized the region’s farmers as “hardy, self-reliant American farmers and townspeople” who needed additional water to “stabilize the present economic achieve-



Ralph Parshall checks on one of his flumes. Irrigation Research Papers, CSU Morgan Library Archives and Special Collections.



ment and make secure the possibilities of future progress.” In a nod to popular Depression-era programs, Parshall stated that the guarantee of sufficient water would be like “social security” for existing farmers, enabling them to gain the same security in their later years that working class Americans received. Seeking to demonstrate that the C-BT was a difference maker, Parshall argued that its greatest value would be that its flows would be available late in the growing season, when some water users ran out of water and when an additional application of water to high value crops might make the difference between breaking even and crushing debt. In stark financial terms, Parshall stated that irrigation provided \$64 million worth of property value to Northern Colorado, a region valued at \$200 million. This additional property value resulted in local, state, and federal taxes that could be invested in schools, infrastructure and economic development.

In Parshall’s analysis of the seventy years of irrigation in the region prior to 1935, he concluded that land values were high because of “greater assurance that crops will be produced and the possibility of growing crops of higher value than could be grown without irrigation.” According to Parshall, the economic gains made possible by irrigation were far higher than the C-BT’s estimated \$44 million price tag. But Parshall extended his analysis far beyond the

farm, arguing that prosperous Northern Colorado farmers supported the growth of local businesses, increased railroad traffic, enabled more construction, strengthened financial institutions, and made possible the sort of increased highway traffic that carries with it travelers and tourists eager to spend their money in local businesses.

Knowing that C-BT opponents might argue that the nation was suffering from too much agricultural production, Parshall turned that caution on its head by claiming that more water would shift agricultural production away from crops grown in surplus and toward crops not grown in sufficient quantities. For example, he argued that wheat, whose national supply had far outstripped its demand, was a crop of choice in Northern Colorado only when water was in short supply. By contrast, sugar beets, the most lucrative crop in the region, demanded more water than wheat. Yet, the majority of the nation’s sugar was imported. Consequently, according to Parshall, increasing Northern Colorado’s water supplies would push farmers to grow more beets and less wheat, thus aligning the nation’s agriculture more closely with consumer demand and reducing dependency on foreign sugar. Parshall concluded that the C-BT would support self-reliant, productive Americans who created real economic value that extended to the nation. In short, the C-BT was an overwhelmingly good investment.

No entity agreed more with Parshall’s assessment than Great Western Sugar, the nation’s largest supplier of domestic sugar and Northern Colorado’s most important economic driver. Great Western’s factories depended on the same water as the farmers who sold the company its beets. Moreover, as a late arrival to the region, its junior rights weren’t secure. In fact, during the 1934 refining campaign, the company’s ditches ran dry, and it had to beg local irrigation companies for water to complete its operations. So, the company always craved more water, either by cultivating relationships with its growers or through projects such as the C-BT. To energize local C-BT support, Great Western made liberal use of its grower magazine, *Through the Leaves*. In it the company published reader-friendly versions of scientific articles showing how their beet harvests would increase with just a little more water. In 1936, the company said it more explicitly: C-BT water would result in an average annual income increase of \$400 per grower.

To make the national case for the C-BT, Great Western employed lobbyists in Congress. This was nothing new since the company had always pressured legislators to enact high tariffs against foreign sugar. In 1937, those lobbyists shifted from taxes to water. Great Western also took to the airwaves to make its case. In cooperation with other western beet sugar companies, it paid the National Broadcasting Company (NBC) to do a series of short radio programs titled, “Sugar Beets Tell the World.” The broadcasts emphasized how sugar beets grown in the irrigated regions of the West contributed to the American economy, providing figures on grower income, railroad shipments, resources used in refining beets into sugar, and the varied ways beet sugar was consumed. To hear Great Western tell it, beet sugar was essential to the American economy, and the C-BT was essential to the beet sugar industry.

Ultimately, the arguments made by Ralph Parshall, Great Western Sugar, and supporters of the C-BT proved

successful. After spirited debate in June and July of 1937, Congress passed bills approving the project and authorizing an initial \$900,000 in funding. The following year, prospective water users signed a contract to pay a maximum of \$25 million over the course of forty years for the project, with the remainder of the costs being paid for by hydroelectric power generation. That \$25 million cap turned out to be quite a bargain. When Reclamation finally completed the C-BT in 1957, total costs had soared to over \$160 million.

CONSERVATION, CATTLE, AND WATER


The completion of the C-BT in 1957 heralded shifts in Northern Colorado’s agricultural landscape that would make the region look familiar to the present-day observer. Former Colorado Agricultural Commissioner Don Ament recently reflected on some of these changes while talking about his family’s long history in the region. During the 1930s, Ament’s family emphasized sugar beets on their irrigated lands near Sterling. As Ament transitioned into farming for himself in the 1950s and 1960s, he shifted from sugar beets to corn. As he explains, the C-BT played a critical role in the move to corn, a crop that required more water. More importantly, Ament’s well-watered corn found a ready market in the growing commercial cattle feeding industry. By 1970, Northern Colorado possessed the world’s largest collection of commercially fed cattle, and the region’s farmers cultivated most of their feed. Today, this is still true. As Ament points out: “two-thirds of Colorado’s agricultural output is livestock, primarily cattle.” Most of those animals are fed with corn from farms irrigated by C-BT water.

If the C-BT’s story in the 1960s and 1970s revolved around agricultural possibilities through increased water, the project’s story today is about growing municipal demands for water. During the 1950s, Northern Colorado possessed a population of fewer than

During the early 1950s, Congressional legislators proposed a series of large-scale projects called the Colorado River Storage Plan, to be constructed for irrigation, power, and flood control at various locales along the river.

200,000 mostly rural residents. The 2020 census shows that the region’s population today is well over one million, with the majority concentrated in cities within thirty miles of the Front Range. Each of the cities receives an allocation of C-BT water for residential use. In support of this shift, the Bureau of Reclamation built new storage reservoirs and increased the capacity of existing ones, while extending water supply lines to previously underserved areas. This has led to increased tensions between municipalities and farmers over selling water rights. During the last thirty years, Northern Water—the agency that administers the C-BT—agreed to supply water to cities outside of original C-BT boundaries such as Broomfield, Superior, Lafayette, and Louisville. Other cities, such as Thornton, have been more aggressive. In 1986, to accommodate aggressive growth, it paid \$55 million to buy up more than 20,000 acres of farmland and the associated water rights in Weld and Larimer Counties. All of this adds greater pressure to conserve remaining supplies.

For conservationists, the unsuccessful fight to block the construction of the Alva B. Adams Tunnel through Rocky Mountain National Park turned out to be just the first in many battles over water projects within the Colorado River watershed. During the early 1950s, Congressional legislators proposed a series of large-scale projects

called the Colorado River Storage Plan, to be constructed for irrigation, power, and flood control at various locales along the river. The most controversial piece of the plan involved constructing two dams along the Green River, within the boundaries of Dinosaur National Monument. In opposition, conservationists, led by the Sierra Club, undertook a massive publicity campaign that successfully removed the dams from the bill. However, it came at a cost as conservationists made a deal to withdraw their opposition to another project dam in a little-known area of sandstone cliffs rich in Native American artifacts known as Glen Canyon. In 1963, that dam was completed creating Lake Powell, which dams the Colorado, San Juan, Escalante, and Green Rivers. Presently, drought, climate change, and water demands have reduced Lake Powell to one-quarter of its capacity, prompting some conservationists, scientists, and others to call for tearing down the dam holding it back. If there is a single thread that ties together the water and conservation issues of the 1930s with those of the present, it is that the process of moving and storing water is value-laden. For 1930s farmers in Northern Colorado C-BT water was money, since accessing sufficient water at a reasonable price during the Depression would support increased crop production. For conservationists, the cost of the water was too dear, since it would defile one of the most iconic landscapes in America, setting a precedent for the commercial exploitation of other national parks. Both sides tried to answer questions about the relative value of our natural and scenic resources. Those questions are as pertinent today as they were back then. 

MICHAEL WEEKS is a lecturer in the Department of History and Political Science at Utah Valley University. He is the author of *Cattle Beet Capital: Making Industrial Agriculture in Northern Colorado*

INVISIBLE EMPIRE

How Philip Van Cise took on the KKK and helped end the Klan's reign of terror in Denver.

BY ALAN PRENDERGAST

Elected as Denver's district attorney in 1920, Philip Sidney Van Cise (1884-1969) used electronic surveillance and other cutting-edge investigative methods to expose a corrupt city administration and dismantle a crime ring that had been thriving in Denver for years. He then launched an undercover operation against an even greater threat: the Ku Klux Klan. Originally a white supremacist terrorist group in the Deep South, the KKK was revived in Georgia in 1915 as a fraternal organization and spread across the country after World War I, attracting millions of followers by capitalizing on white Protestant fears about immigrants, Blacks, Jews, and Catholics. Under the leadership of physician John Galen Locke the Colorado Klan grew rapidly; after the 1923 election of Benjamin Stapleton as Denver's mayor, with the secret backing of the Klan, the Colorado KKK became one of the most powerful state chapters in the nation, intent on moving past vigilantism to more sophisticated forms of economic and political warfare. One of the few elected officials to publicly oppose the group, Van Cise was targeted by them in a recall campaign that failed miserably. But he soon found himself in a series of escalating confrontations with the Klan—and in a desperate hunt for allies.

...

They snatched Patrick Walker two blocks from his shop. A 25-year-old optician and active member of the Knights of Columbus, the Catholic fraternal organization, Walker had seen men loitering outside his eyewear store for the better part of a Saturday evening. They were gone when he locked up and walked south on Glenarm Place. But as he approached 21st Street, five men poured out of a car, guns drawn, and hustled him into the vehicle.

They drove north, past Riverside Cemetery, into sparsely populated farmland on the edge of the city. They took him into an isolated shack and asked him questions about his religion. Evidently not happy with the answers, they beat him with the butts of their revolvers, inflicting deep cuts and bruises on his head and shoulders, and told him to leave town. One of the men told Walker that they were KKK and were “looking for a man who had been doing some rotten stuff around town.” Before he lost consciousness, Walker managed to tell the men that he had done nothing wrong.

The police declared themselves baffled by Walker's story. He could not identify any of his assailants, even though only one of them wore a mask. No identification, no arrest.

They snatched Ben Laska outside his house. The son of Russian Jewish immigrants and a former vaudeville artist, the 49-year-old defense attorney was known for performing magic

in and out of the courtroom. Laska amused juries and annoyed judges with his sleight-of-hand routines, but his greatest trick was making the charges against his bootlegger clients disappear. One Friday evening, hours after Laska had gotten yet another rum-runner off with a small fine, he received a phone call at his home. A man who lived a block away on Cook Street was dying, the caller said, and needed a lawyer.

Laska agreed to a deathbed consultation. He was barely out the door when two men approached him. One grabbed him by the throat and slapped a hand over his mouth. The other seized his legs. They carried him to two other men waiting in a car. All four wore masks.

They drove north, past Riverside Cemetery. They dragged him out on a country road and beat him with blackjacks. They told him to stop defending bootleggers, or they would be back. Then they drove off.

Laska told reporters that he believed his attackers were Klansmen, in cahoots with “certain officers of the bootleg squad and officials of Magistrate Henry Bray's court.” The assault on him was payback, he insisted, for being a zealous advocate for his clients.

Denver police chief Rugg Williams scoffed at Laska's charges. So did Sergeant Fred Reed, head of the bootleg squad — and, like most of the squad, a Klansman on the sly. The actions of his men on the night in question were all accounted for, Reed insisted, and

they were “too high-principled” to try to enforce the prohibition law with blackjacks.

The investigation went nowhere. Laska eventually made his own peace with the Klan, a feat as amazing as any of his magic tricks. By 1925 he had become the Grand Dragon's personal attorney.

...

The beatings were anomalies. Grand Dragon Locke understood that the threat of violence was more palatable and often more effective than actual bloodshed. Get physical, and your foes may feel

the need to respond in kind, while your more squeamish followers jump ship. But a well-placed threat, emanating from the unassailable depths of the Invisible Empire, could work wonders. It could instill fear in your enemies and inspire awe in your supporters at the same time.

The intimidation campaign was like the Empire itself, elusive yet ubiquitous. On the night of November 10, 1923, less than two weeks after the assault on Walker, eleven crosses were ignited at locations across the city. One was on the steps of the Capitol building; another, on the threshold of the Black neighbor-

hood known as Five Points; others at parks and green spaces across the metro area. Alarmed city council members demanded an investigation. Mayor Stapleton and police officials downplayed the incident; they said they weren't convinced there had been any crosses and didn't see anything to investigate. A few weeks later, a string of crosses blazed in the foothills west of Denver, visible for miles.

Van Cise was formally awarded a Distinguished Service Medal for his work as an intelligence officer in World War I in a 1922 ceremony, while his wife, Sara, and children Eleanor and Edwin looked on. Courtesy of the Van Cise Family



Caravans of Kluxers drove through west Denver neighborhoods on Friday nights, hooting and honking, mocking Jewish residents and their Sabbath.

Caravans of Kluxers drove through west Denver neighborhoods on Friday nights, hooting and honking, mocking Jewish residents and their Sabbath. Klansmen teamed up with hellfire

Protestant ministers to host lectures on the Catholic menace. The Knights of Columbus were vilified as the advance guard in the Pope's master plan to take over America; a fake Knights of Columbus oath, which bound the initiate to wage war on "all heretics, Protestants and Masons" to the point of annihilation, circulated widely among the credulous.

Possibly because they were more numerous, the harassment seemed to be directed at Catholics more than other groups. A savage KKK missive to the *Denver Catholic Register* declared that while Blacks, socialists, and Jews were bad enough, "the Romanist is worst

of all." The newspaper's young editor, Father Matthew Smith, reported that cars swerved toward him more than once during his daily walks to his office, trying to scare him or injure him.

For the most part, though, the Klan's bullying tended to be more subtle than trying to run down padres on the street. Under the rule of the new Imperial Wizard, Hiram Evans, the national KKK was moving away from street skirmishes to more politically potent measures. The new approach, which Locke heartily supported, emphasized "klannishness" — the concept that Klansmen must support each other in all endeavors. That meant voting for the "right" candidates, regardless of their party affiliation, and patronizing Klan businesses. It also meant shunning businesses that employed or catered to Blacks, Catholics, Jews, and other "wrong" types until they knuckled under or were driven out of business.

In Colorado, Klansmen were encouraged to advertise their businesses at KKK meetings, paying two dollars for the privilege of having a slide with a company logo projected on a screen for a few moments every week for three months. Members also let each other know their shops were Klan-approved by putting signs in the window that proclaimed they were "100% American" or TWK (Trade With Klansmen) — or simply by announcing that they offered "Kwik Kar Kare" or some other KKK-branded service. Extensive lists were drawn up of businesses to be boycotted, including the Neusteter's department store, owned by Jews.

Many prominent businessmen embraced klannishness, including Gano Senter, owner of several restaurants downtown and a grand titan of the KKK. A virulent anti-Catholic, Senter posted signs in his Radio Café announcing, "We serve fish every day — except Friday," and welcoming those in the know to a "Kool Kozy Kafé." His wife, Lorena, was the founder and imperial commander of the Women of the Ku Klux Klan of Colorado, a ladies'

auxiliary devoted mainly to charity work. The Senter's café quickly became a central gathering place for prominent Kluxers, who proudly smoked the special Cyana cigars promoted by Dale Deane, a Denver court clerk. Cyana was an acronym for "Catholics, you are not Americans."

The boycotts typically hurt small businesses more than larger ones. Some were only tepidly supported and weren't effective at all. Yet klannishness tended to boost membership. There may not have been many true believers, like Senter, passionate enough about their racism or religious paranoia to flaunt it publicly. But the inducements and pressures to join the Klan went far beyond ideological appeal. Some joined in the expectation that it would improve business, or at least keep them from showing up on a do-not-trade list. For every rabid nativist or rank opportunist, there were others who joined under duress, afraid of being left at a disadvantage or targeted themselves. Fear wasn't just a weapon to train on the enemy. It was the glue that held the group together.

...

Van Cise kept count. Over the course of three years he was approached thirteen times about joining the Klan — cajoled, urged, pressed, told it was the smart thing to do. The final invitation came from the Grand Dragon himself, and then all hell broke loose.

That the Kluxers tried to enlist the district attorney, after failing to recall him, may say something about the cynicism of the movement. But it was also an acknowledgement that he was fundamentally different from the other outspoken foes of the organization, people like the NAACP's George Gross and Father Smith and attorney Charles Ginsberg, who regularly spent his lunch hour denouncing the Klan from the bed of a pickup truck parked at 16th and Champa downtown, like a deranged prophet. Van Cise was a WASP, a Mason, and a Republican, and

from a certain perspective his views on race and immigration could be considered Klan-friendly. That's not to say that he believed in white supremacy; he took his oath to uphold the Constitution seriously. But he didn't go out of his way to challenge the established order and prevailing prejudices of his time; even in coming to the defense of Ward Gash, a janitor the Klan had threatened, he reportedly referred to Gash — a Black man ten years his senior — as a "good boy." In a speech to a Kiwanis gathering in Fort Collins, he lashed out at Governor William Sweet as a "millionaire Bolshevik" who had recklessly pardoned dangerous criminals, a law-

is our country," he told the Kiwanis, "and no one has a right to come here or live here unless we want him."

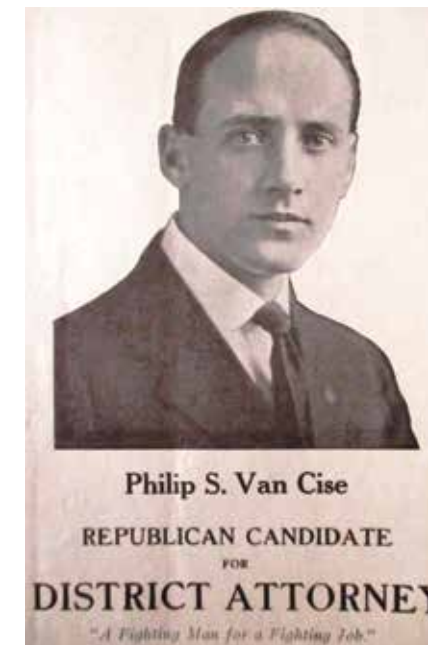
At the same time, he was repelled by just about every aspect of the Klan. Its teachings were ridiculous, a hash of conspiracy theories, cornpone Christianity, and racial fears that only the dimmest of its members seemed to take seriously. The rank and file weren't as gullible, but they were spineless enough to go along with it anyway, hoping to get something in return. The leadership consisted of thugs and con men, hiding under hoods and working a scam. The organization was ruining businesses, dividing people, and profiting off their misery. It was a menace to democracy. "It is injecting into the political and social life of this country a religious issue which has no place in either," he wrote in a draft of a speech that he hoped to deliver someday to an audience much larger than the Kiwanis Club. "It may call itself Klan, but in reality it is a mob."

He knew how to prosecute a criminal conspiracy involving bootlegging or confidence games. But in those cases, the primary goal had always been profit. The Klan's objectives were much more complex — money, sure, but also power, and a purging of anyone and anything the group didn't consider to be 100% American. How do you stamp out a conspiracy that eats away at the very institutions you count on to put things right? In its first year, the Stapleton administration had promoted klannishness in one city agency after another. The result wasn't pretty. It resembled the work of an army of carpenter ants, burrowing its way inside the bole of a maple tree and hollowing it out, leaving behind a pile of sawdust and a stately husk, ready to collapse.

One of Stapleton's first appointments was Rice Means, the manager of safety. An impressive orator who'd failed in several runs for office, Means denied being a Klansman. But Van Cise learned that he had been initiated into the Klan in a ceremony in Pueblo shortly after Stapleton's election and was report-



John Galen Locke, the eccentric Grand Dragon of the Colorado Realm of the Ku Klux Klan, was described by one reporter as "living in the Middle Ages." History Colorado Collection, 86.296.2998



Philip Van Cise pushed his war record in the 1920 race to become Denver's district attorney. Courtesy of the Van Cise family

and-order theme sounded by the Klan as well. He also declared that "southern Italians, southeastern Europeans and Turks made poor citizens." His experiences in the Colorado National Guard during the 1914 coal strike had taught him respect for the immigrant miners he met, but he believed the country was having trouble assimilating so many foreigners from different cultures. "This

edly being groomed for higher things by Locke. Stapleton soon named him as city attorney, filling the manager of safety post with another Klansman, Reuben Hershey.

Over at the police department, Stapleton retained the services of the sitting chief, Rugg Williams, for several months, despite mounting pressure from Locke to replace him with someone of the Grand Dragon's choosing. Williams was a placeholder at best; word was that key decisions about assignments and promotions were being made by subordinates, including a sergeant who boasted that he was the "real" chief. Whoever was in charge, the police seemed to investigate only those crimes that the Klan wanted investigated. The cross burnings remained a bit of

unsolved mischief. After the Capitol Hill neighborhood was papered with Klan posters one night, including some hurled into a Knights of Columbus lodge, street fights erupted between the lodge members and Klansmen; police managed to arrest several of the Knights of Columbus brawlers, while the Klan provocateurs somehow slipped away.

Disturbing as the police takeover was, it was the spread of klannishness in the courts that most alarmed Van Cise — especially the ascension of the Honorable Clarence J. Morley. A former public administrator and school board member, Morley had been elected to a six-year term as a district court judge in 1918. He was a slight man, bespectacled and owlish, who came across more as a taciturn, humorless accoun-

tant than a dynamic jurist. Van Cise had dealt with him rarely. But in 1924 Morley was assigned full-time to the criminal division, and he and Van Cise were soon at war with each other.

Van Cise's inquiries confirmed that Morley was Klan, and pretty high-level Klan at that. The district attorney had five operatives — a mix of volunteers and trained investigators, none of them known to each other — keeping tabs on Klan meetings. They hid in the bushes and wrote down license plates, tried to infiltrate the meetings when possible. Morley spoke regularly at those gatherings. He was a klokann, one of three top advisers to the Grand Dragon. Despite the title, Morley was usually on the receiving end of the advice; he seemed to relish being in Locke's inner circle and doing his bidding.

It was customary to empanel a new grand jury in the criminal division at the start of the year. Morley took a klannish approach to the process. He rejected ten of the twelve names that had been randomly selected for jury duty and issued subpoenas, summoning a Klan-approved squad of replacements. Morley instructed them that they could seek the district attorney's advice if they wanted to, but they could also banish him if they chose.

When Van Cise learned of Morley's instruction, he was livid. Colorado law clearly stated that district attorneys "shall appear in their respective districts at any and all sessions of all grand juries," and that it was their duty to advise the jury and examine witnesses. He went to the grand jury room to explain this to the panel. He had just started to talk when a juror interrupted him.

"We don't need your advice, and you can get out," he said.

Van Cise replied that if it was up to him, he'd be glad to part company with the bunch right now. But the law required his presence. The law expected him or his deputy to question witnesses, not them.

"What do you think about Sgt. Reed?" another juror demanded.

Reed, the head of the bootleg squad, had reportedly fallen out of favor with Locke and was being reassigned. Van Cise responded that he thought Reed was an able officer.

"We don't think so," the second juror snapped. "We're going to indict him."

In a flash, Van Cise saw what Morley was doing. He had assembled a private panel of inquisitors to unleash the powers of the grand jury against the Klan's enemies, alien or internal. To hell with the rule of law, to hell with due process.

"Any such indictment," he said, "will be attacked by the district attorney, and any action of this grand jury will be investigated."

Before departing, he warned the group not to call any witnesses in his absence. For several weeks, he was too busy to bother with Morley's grand jury, preparing for the biggest murder trial of his career. Joe Brindisi, an Italian immigrant and former streetcar conductor, was charged with killing Mrs. Lillian McGlone and Miss Emma Vascovie in McGlone's Denver apartment last summer. Police theorized that McGlone pulled a pistol on Brindisi during a quarrel over romance or money or both, and that Brindisi pried the weapon from her and shot both women in the head. Fearing a lynch mob, Brindisi fled to Mexico, only to be arrested in Detroit months later. Anti-immigrant feeling was running high — the newspapers referred to Brindisi's "swarthy" good looks and dubbed him the "sleek sheik of north Denver's Little Italy" — but Van Cise was determined to get a conviction based on evidence, not hysteria.

The courtroom was packed. Extra guards roamed the halls and kept close watch on the gallery and the defendant. Judge Morley presided. During one of the recesses Morley summoned Van Cise to his chambers and showed him a note from the grand jury. The group had been meeting without Van Cise's knowledge and, since the DA was busy with

a murder trial, requested that a special prosecutor be appointed. Morley had a certain Klan lawyer in mind for the job.

"Morley demanded that this be done and cursed me when I refused to accede to this request," Van Cise wrote in an account of the conversation. "Morley told me that he was doing this to protect me, and I told him that I needed no protection from him or from anyone else, and that he or anyone else, if they desired to make charges against me, could go into open court and do it, and for them to cut out all this secret and childish stuff."

The jury was out thirteen hours, quibbling about whether it was first-degree or second-degree murder. They decided on first-degree.

Van Cise's closing argument in the Brindisi case was a memorable one. He arranged the blood-stained clothes of the two women to show the positions in which their bodies were found and walked the jury through a step-by-step re-enactment of their murders. It was "a seemingly perfect chain of circumstantial evidence — with every link well formed," one reporter observed. The jury was out thirteen hours, quibbling about whether it was first-degree or second-degree murder. They decided on first-degree. Since the prosecution had not sought the death penalty, that meant life in prison for Brindisi.

The accolades for the district attorney poured in. The most unusual plaudit came by Western Union to his home. "Congratulations on your splendid address to the jury and your wonderful victory," the telegram read. "Dr. J.G. Locke."

He had never received such a nice note from someone he hoped to put behind bars.

Two days later, Dr. Locke presented himself at the district attorney's office. He wore a well-cut suit, not the robes he favored for more festive occasions. He once again praised Van Cise for his handling of the Brindisi case. Then he urged the prosecutor to consider running for governor in the fall — with, of course, the backing of a certain group, a group so well-known that there was no need to mention its name. "You know that we have a very strong and influential organization," he said. "And we want to back a man of your type and caliber."

Van Cise declined.

The next day, Mayor Stapleton named a new chief of police, William Candlish. A former state senator and assayer, Candlish had no background in law enforcement and a pile of debts from a failed radium processing venture. Stapleton and Manager of Safety Hershey had differing accounts of how Candlish happened to be selected, but it soon became obvious that he was Locke's man. Candlish got busy with promotions and reassignments, rewarding Klan members on the force with plum positions and banishing Irish Catholic cops to remote beats and night shifts. He devised a chief's uniform that was heavy on gold braid. Noting that the chief seemed to spend a lot of time in soda parlors, which often served as fronts for bootlegging operations, Ray Humphreys of the *Denver Post* dubbed him Coca-Cola Candlish.

For former Stapleton supporters who'd cheered his promises to reform the police department, the Candlish appointment represented one more betrayal. It gave impetus and urgency to a campaign to recall the mayor, launched by attorney Phil Hornbein. The petition didn't mention the Klan influence directly, but among the grounds for the mayor's removal it stated that the police force had become so demoralized that "crime runs rampant in our midst."



June 13, 1925: Accompanied by attorney Ben Laska, Locke reports to the Denver jail to start serving a sentence for contempt in a federal tax case. History Colorado Collection 86.296.3010

Van Cise recognized that the recall process might be the best chance of stopping the Klan in its takeover of city government. A successful criminal prosecution of the group was unlikely — not in Morley’s courtroom, surely, and not on Candlish’s watch. He had to find a way to take the intel he’d gathered on the Klan leadership and deliver it, all neatly tied in a bow, to a higher court: the citizens of Denver.



A public official looking to spill secrets in Denver had many niche publications to choose from, including a Black weekly, a Jewish weekly, and a Catholic weekly. But of the four major dailies in town, only one had shown any appetite for going after the Klan. The *Rocky Mountain News* and the *Denver Times*, both owned by the same company, had Kluxers in management and were largely mute about the organization. The *Denver Post* blew hot and cold; at Klan meetings, Locke bragged of having taken one of the paper’s owners, Harry Tammen, for a ride one night and “made him a Christian.” Another insider account had it that Locke had ordered Tammen’s partner, Frederick Bonfils, to retract an unflattering story and run another one praising the Klan — or else his newspaper building would become “the flattest place on Champa Street.”

With the other newspapers so compromised, that left the runt of the litter, the *Denver Express*. Owned by the Scripps-Howard chain, the paper had a puny circulation and no showcase Sunday edition. It lured working-class readers with celebrity gossip, puzzles and contests. But led by editor Sidney B. Whipple — a short, skinny Dartmouth grad in his mid-thirties, who’d been a foreign correspondent in prewar London and found journalism too exciting a vice to give up — the *Express* did more investigative

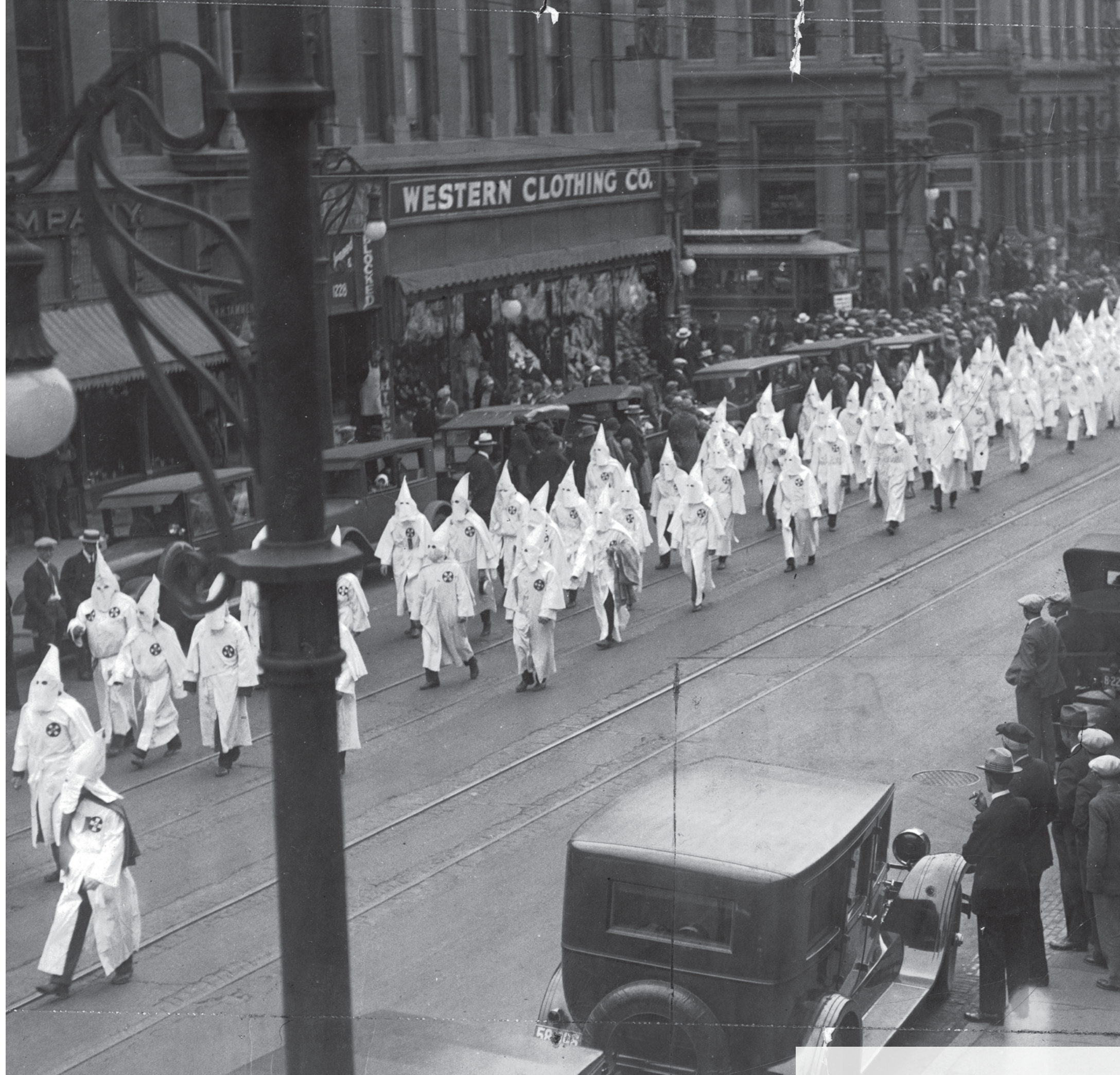
reporting on the Klan than anybody else. Initially an earnest supporter of Stapleton, Whipple had spent considerable time and ink repenting his decision and tracing the mayor’s unsavory connections.

On March 27, 1924, the *Express* dropped a bomb on City Hall — the first installment of a week-long series entitled “Invisible Government.” The exposé peeked under the sheets and named names. Outed as Kluxers: Mayor Stapleton. Manager of Safety Hershey. City Attorney Means. Chief Candlish. Judge Morley. Police magistrates Albert Orahood and Henry Bray. Carl Milliken, Colorado’s Secretary of State. “At least” seven police sergeants and twenty-one patrol officers. And “nearly all, if not all, of the present county grand jury now in session.”

The report didn’t identify its sources, but Van Cise’s fingerprints were all over the piece. Among other giveaways, the article mentioned that Dr. Locke was planning to put a Klansman in the governor’s office, and that the district attorney had been approached about the job and turned Locke down flat. By nightfall the series was the talk of the town — and an emerging crisis for the Klan. If this was the opening salvo, what was in store for the next seven days?

That evening Locke’s office had a steady stream of visitors — mostly men huddled in overcoats with their hats pulled low. At ten o’clock an *Express* reporter confronted Judge Morley as he emerged from the building. Why was a district judge paying a call on the Grand Dragon at such a late hour? Morley said that he’d been feeling ill and decided to consult his physician.

Klan members staged a Memorial Day parade in downtown Denver on May 31, 1926. Tens of thousands were expected to attend; less than 500 showed up. History Colorado Collection, PH.PROP.1743



The next morning two men barged into the *Express* office and demanded to see the editor. They showed Whipple an arrest warrant and told him he was summoned to appear before the grand jury. The panel had been dormant for weeks, but the *Express* series had brought it back to life, for the sole purpose of investigating how Whipple had obtained the information he was publishing. Before they took him away, Whipple told an assistant to call Van Cise and let him know he was being arrested.

Van Cise was waiting at the courthouse when Whipple and his escort arrived. He followed them as they went upstairs to the grand jury room and went inside. Two Klansmen stationed by the door tried to bar the district attorney from entering. He pushed past them and went in. He was succinct. The grand jury, he informed the panel, has no power to arrest anyone. Whipple could sue them all for damages. They couldn't question him unless Van Cise was present. And he was putting an end to this "travesty" right now.

He grabbed the diminutive editor by the arm and walked out. No one followed them.

That was on Friday morning. Over the weekend Morley held more secret sessions with the grand jury while the *Express* series continued to stir the pot. KU KLUX KLAN BOASTS RULE OVER CITY HALL, read one headline. CHIEF CANDLISH GIVES KLUXERS INSIDE JOBS, read another. On Monday Morley directed the district attorney to appear in his courtroom, in the presence of the grand jury, so that he could hear the judge's instructions to the panel and cease his interference. Van Cise came prepared with a motion of his own, asking the judge to correct his instructions and tell the grand jury that the DA must be present at all sessions, other than the jury's actual deliberations. As Van Cise read his motion aloud, delineating the judge's illegal acts, Morley's face reddened with rage.

"There is nothing in that motion," he said. "It's simply a cheap play for notoriety on your part."

Morley embarked on a long tirade. That was fortunate, as Van Cise was stalling for time. Just as the judge seemed to be winding down, deputy DA Kenneth Robinson arrived with a bundle of writs — one for each juror and one for the judge. Van Cise stood up.

In the wake of the *Express* series, eleven of the newspaper's largest advertisers were told to stop doing business with the paper or face a Klan boycott. Several complied, costing the newspaper substantial revenue.

"Notwithstanding what this court has now said," he began, "and notwithstanding the additional erroneous instructions to this hand-picked, so-called grand jury, I now have the pleasure of serving both the court and all the jurors with writs of mandamus from the Supreme Court of Colorado, ordering you to hold no further sessions of this jury without the presence of the district attorney."


The writs were handed out in dead silence. Morley read his copy and turned to his grand jury. "Gentleman of the jury, you are excused for one week," he said. "The court will be in recess."

Morley's attempt to challenge the order was argued in the Supreme Court at the end of the week. The law was on Van Cise's side, the decision unanimous in his favor. By that point the grand jury's term had expired, with no indictments issued against anyone.

In the wake of the *Express* series, eleven of the newspaper's largest advertisers were told to stop doing business with the paper or face a Klan boycott.

Several complied, costing the newspaper substantial revenue. But Whipple kept sticking his nose in the Klan's business and pushing for the mayor's recall, drawing heavily on information provided by a well-informed anonymous source. His dogged coverage made him and his small paper finalists in the reporting category for the 1925 Pulitzer Prize.

Van Cise savored his victory over Morley's grand jury. It showed that the Klan could be beaten; its influence had not yet reached the highest court in the state. But the most important battles were still ahead, the mayoral recall and the statewide elections in November — battles that would be fought in the streets and the voting booth, not in court.

As it turned out, the Invisible Empire had the numbers and the strategy to prevail. Stapleton easily fended off the recall, Rice Means became a U.S. Senator, and Clarence Morley became the governor of Colorado. But that stunning wave of victories was only the prelude to an even more astonishing series of political defeats. Just months after the election, the Colorado Klan's leadership would be mired in scandal and internecine warfare. In his last days in office, Van Cise would make a crucial contribution to the group's rapid collapse, filing felony charges against Grand Dragon Locke and laying the groundwork for other damaging revelations to come. 

Editor's Note: This article is an excerpt from *GANGBUSTER: One Man's Battle Against Crime, Corruption, and the Klan* by Alan Prendergast, a nonfiction account that draws on archival records of Van Cise's war on the Klan.

ALAN PRENDERGAST is a Denver journalist whose stories on the justice system have appeared in numerous local and national publications. His book *Gangbuster* was published in March 2023.

All Aboard!

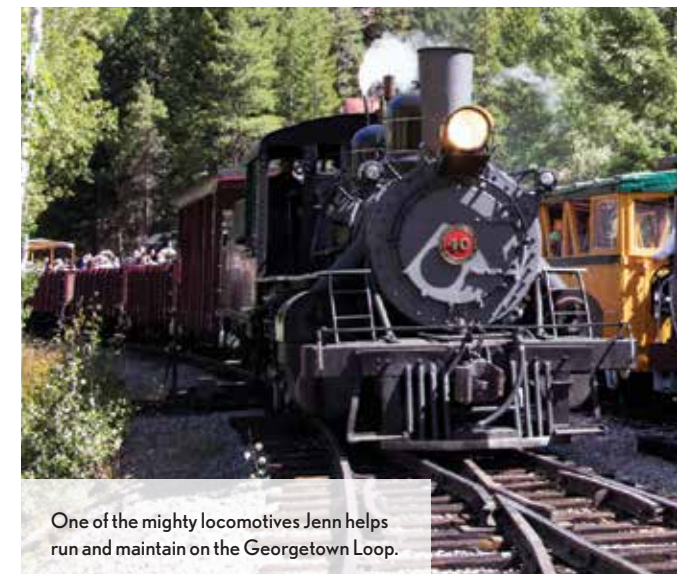
Jenn Jenks is a mighty locomotive engineer for the Georgetown Loop Railroad. And she's one of just a few women in the country qualified to drive both diesel and steam locomotives.

Q: What originally drew you to work on the railroad?

I've been a mechanic since I was 10...some diesel and car mechanics and stuff like that before I started with the trains. This is my seventh season with the Loop. My dad was into steam tractors, and we used to live fifteen miles from the Sumpter Valley Railroad in Oregon. So he went and started volunteering over there, and then I went and volunteered over there, and my mom as well. So it really was a family affair.

Q: The number of women who are certified as steam locomotive engineers is, by best estimates, in the single digits. Why do you think that is?

It's still a field that is definitely male-dominated, and it takes a lot to convince the men that you are capable of doing this right alongside them. Sometimes I even still struggle with that, especially when you get new hires who don't know me or what I do around here. But I have proven myself more than once. And it's a very dirty job as well. I don't mind getting dirty, but I know some people do. My advice is: Do what you want to do. If you love it, don't let anybody tell you you can't do it because you're a female or you're not big enough or whatever. If you want to do it, do it. Don't let anybody tell you no.



One of the mighty locomotives Jenn helps run and maintain on the Georgetown Loop.



Q: What is your position on the train crew?

When we're not running two trains, we have four people on a crew: the engineer, the fireman, the conductor, and the brakeman. From a train standpoint, the conductor is actually in charge. So everybody has to answer to the conductor, unless the conductor is not available. Then, the engineer is in charge. I actually like being the fireman. I love running the train, don't get me wrong, but being a fireman and taking care of the way the steam power is actually made is a relaxing job that I don't get to do very often anymore.

Q: What does a typical day look like for you?

Well for three months we don't run. So from when we shut down in January until we open again in April, I am here in the shop with the rest of the train crew maintaining everything. I'm a machinist, so I actually make a bunch of parts for all of our locomotives. I've made parts for the diesels, and I've made parts for steam engines and cars. So mostly I am machining during the winter season until we get down to crunch time, and then I get to actually go out and help finish what needs to be done on whatever locomotives are going out.

Q: What inspired you to learn machine fabrication?

I like working with my hands and figuring out problems. My dad started me on it, but I've kind of always had the desire to learn how to machine. I like the variety of both working in the shop and running the train so the more we can run trains, the more I can do both. And as much as I like being in the shop, after three months it's like, "Are we running trains yet?" And I think everybody around here feels the same way. We all get tired of doing one thing constantly. The variety keeps it very interesting.



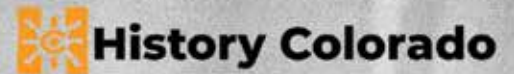
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