

THE

HISTORY COLORADO | WINTER 2022

# COLORADO

MAGAZINE

## LION in WINTER

Travel to Redstone  
to uncover the past

Hope and Rebuilding:  
Two Years of Covid

Wildfire Reading List

Witness to History:  
What Moment Would  
You Want to See?

# the power of **HORSES**

Through May 8, 2022 at the History Colorado Center



*Photo courtesy Mckenzie Brill*



**History Colorado**

# PRESERVATION AND INTEGRITY

Integrity is an interesting word. As a human trait, it conveys honesty and moral behavior and character. In the realm of preservation, it refers to a historic site's physicality and architecture based on wholeness and cohesion. I was struck by Rebecca Solnit's explanation in her book *Orwell's Roses*, "From the same root as *integrity* comes the word *disintegration*, literally the loss of the integrity that holds things together."



As historians, preservationists, and lovers of Colorado, we work to prevent the disintegration of Colorado communities. However, we must acknowledge that this work of preservation has not traditionally been done equitably. The ideal and the practice of preservation integrity has been exclusive—shockingly so. The statistics tell the bleakness of this story.

Of Colorado historic sites in the National Register of Historic Places, only 5 percent of those sites relate to Black and Indigenous histories, communities of color, and/or women. In Colorado's State Register of Historic Places, the statistics are even worse: 3.6 percent relate to Black and Indigenous histories, communities of color, and/or women. And, most of those sites were added only in the past five years.

History Colorado is working to ensure a historic register that authentically reflects the rich and diverse history of Colorado. This is not just symbolic. We have witnessed the social and economic benefit of preservation. (Since the inception of the State Historical Fund, Colorado has seen nearly \$3 billion in economic impact from preservation.) We want all communities to access the benefits of preservation.

History Colorado is committing resources and labor to building an accessible and inclusive preservation program. Honest goal setting requires that we recognize this commitment publicly so that we can better hold ourselves accountable. We will be sharing our progress, case studies, and our work along the way.

We are eager to build a historic register that is a comprehensive expression of Colorado's history.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Dawn DiPrince".

Dawn DiPrince  
Executive Director

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

## THE COLORADO MAGAZINE

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# THE COLORADO MAGAZINE

4 **The Forum** / 5 **Looking Back** by Natasha Gardner / 6 **On Reflection** by Teddy Scott / 8 **A Rocky Mountain Dream** by Dexter Nelson II / 11 **Readings for a Too-Long Fire Season** by Sam Bock / 12 **Lion in Winter** by Jason L. Hanson / 26 **Las Voces de Covid** Photos by Sarahy Plazola / 34 **A Moment in Time** Edited by Natasha Gardner / 40 **Golden Dreams to Silver Screens** by Devin Flores / 44 **Drawing Board**



The sun sets over History Colorado's Ute Indian Museum in Montrose on a chilly winter day.  
See Gregg Deal's *Merciless Indian Savages* at the museum, on exhibit until May 2022. *Photo by Amerson Woodie.*

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ON THE COVER / The Crystal River, near Redstone, in winter. *Photo by Stacie Hanson ; photo editing by Andy Bell.*

# THE FORUM

## We love hearing from you.

### Sweet Memories

*On National Hard Candy Day in December, we posted images from our collections, including one of a Jolly Rancher billboard, which elicited plenty of remembrances.*

I grew up knowing what flavor Jolly Rancher was making every day because I could smell it on my walk to school!  
—Pam Erthal, via Facebook

We used to go trick or treating at the plant/store. They would give out handfuls of kisses and a couple of full-size sticks.  
—Janet Graham, via Facebook

### Alfred versus Alferd

*We launched Season Three of our award-winning Lost Highways podcast in January with a special episode on Alfred Packer, which led to more than one query about the spelling of his first name. While many sources say that “Alferd” is correct, State Historian’s Council member Tom Noel says that “Alfred” is the definitive spelling, citing that Packer’s tombstone in Littleton and his military record both list “Alfred.”*

### “Shroud, Destruction, and Neglect”

I am a long-time member of History Colorado, and a Denver native. I have checked this matter with my parents, also Denver natives, ages 92 and 93.

In the article by Lucha Martínez de Luna [Fall 2021], there is one statement that I would like to see verified, and footnoted for her source. This is on page 18. She is discussing the Chicano activism of the late 1960s, the West High walkout of 1969, and activism through art. Note the bold and italics below.

She says, “One of the early opportunities for this activism through art came at the Lincoln Park pool. **At that time, many public swimming pools throughout**

**the state were not accessible to people of color. In Denver, specific days were designated for “Blacks only” or “Hispanics only” to swim.**

As children, my brothers and I took swimming lessons at Barnum Park pool for many years in the 1960s. My parents, their friends and relatives also took us to swim at Congress Park pool and at Columbus Park pool (now La Raza Park) even before 1960. We NEVER saw anything indicating that certain days were reserved for an ethnic group or racial group.

This seems a serious problem for History Colorado, to have a statement in your publication without any reference to where the author found this information.  
—Catherine Wanstrath, via email

*History Colorado replies:*

*Thank you for shining a light on the important topic of segregation in recreational spaces. In this case, the sentences you noted were meant to indicate the period that had precipitated this activism. We appreciate you pointing out that this was not as clear as it could have been. It is important to recognize that, like schools and the housing market, the efforts to desegregate recreational spaces in Denver was not an overnight occurrence, and segregation sometimes persisted in a variety of ways even after it was outlawed.*

*To start, let’s take a step back: As in many other areas of the country, public swimming facilities in Denver and the surrounding area were openly segregated in the early twentieth century. In 1932, a violent protest erupted against efforts to desegregate a popular swimming beach in Denver’s Washington Park. Lafayette filled in their new public pool in the mid-1930s rather than allow Latino residents to swim in it.*

*However, even when segregation was legally prohibited it persisted. When he was*

*elected in 1955, City Councilperson Elvin Caldwell found that segregation persisted at many Denver pools. For example, in addition to the interviews with community members that Lucha Martínez de Luna has conducted, State Historian Nicki Gonzales shared a story about her father experiencing segregation at a Denver pool in the 1950s and 1960s on a recent episode of our Lost Highways podcast. Caldwell helped desegregate pools during his time on the council, an effort he discussed in the 2007 Rebels Remembered documentary by Dick Alweis. On Denver’s border, notably, the pool at Lakeside remained segregated (even as the rest of the park was integrated) until it closed in the 1960s.*

*In these practices, Colorado communities were not exceptional—it’s well documented that many cities around the country embraced similar practices with varying degrees of officialness and formality. So much so that, in 1969, Mister Rogers felt compelled to speak out about the topic by inviting a Black police officer on his show to share a pool.*

*Knowing how popular recreation is with Coloradans, this question has inspired us to learn more about how segregation impacted recreational facilities in the state. Readers: If you have a story to share or information on this topic, please email us at [publications@state.co.us](mailto:publications@state.co.us).*

## THE COLORADO MAGAZINE

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# Looking Back

An autochrome pays homage to one of Colorado's most important assets.



Photo by Fred Payne Clatworthy.  
*History Colorado. 96.174.368*

If you've lived in Colorado for more than a few months, you know that snowfall can happen at the most unexpected times. And it is in this important winter season that Colorado gathers one of its most vital resources: water, in the form of snow.

But we've also come to rely on our famously light Rocky Mountain powder for much more than sustenance. It helps fuel our tourism industry and gives us plenty of reasons to strap on snowshoes, pull a sled up a hill, or click into skis.

That's why this image in our collection caught our attention. Created by

Fred Payne Clatworthy in the 1920s, it captures the playfulness and delight many Coloradans find in a snowy winter setting.

Clatworthy spent decades capturing images like this in the Centennial State. Originally from Ohio, he pedaled through Colorado on a cross-country bike trip in 1898, and returned to make the state his home in 1902. He eventually settled in Estes Park, where he ran a photography business and other endeavors (including a short-lived laundry service).

As a photographer, Clatworthy was well known for producing autochromes,

an early process for creating color images by coating a glass plate with dyed potato starches to filter light. The resulting photographs (like the one above) have an ethereal quality because the process didn't create a natural color, but an approximation. Clatworthy's autochromes were featured in *National Geographic* magazine, and an exhibition of his images helped make the case to the US Senate for expanding Rocky Mountain National Park in 1917.

—Natasha Gardner

# On Reflection

There's more than meets the eye with this stained glass art piece, a recent addition to the History Colorado Gill Foundation LGBTQ+ Archive.

When Vicki Piotter and Peg Hickox Rapp opened Denver's first feminist book collective in 1975, the Woman to Woman Feminist Bookcenter, lesbians had been vulnerable to both legal and social retribution on the grounds of their sexuality in the US, including arrest for wearing male attire, being fired, and even losing custody of their children. What's more, FBI investigations into what J. Edgar Hoover called the "subversive ramifications" of the Women's Liberation Movement generated a social air of distrust regarding the dissemination of feminist literature. So, when they opened their doors at 2023 East Colfax Avenue, it took grit and a great deal of bravery.

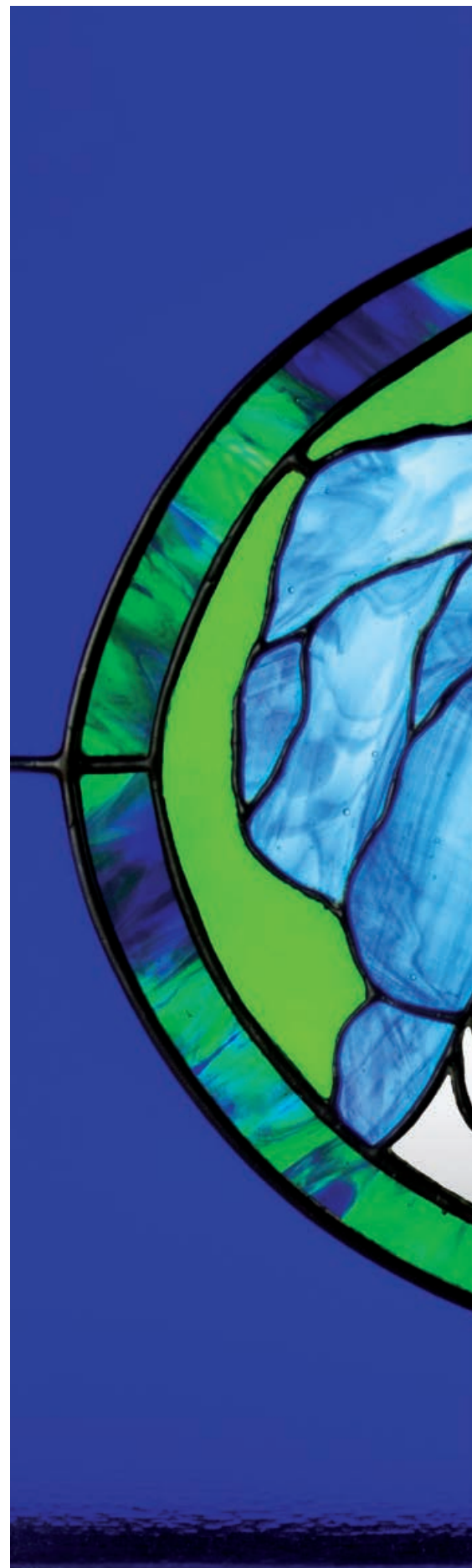
But "courage," according to Piotter, "was found in the strength of numbers." Women from different backgrounds found a place of safety, enlightenment,

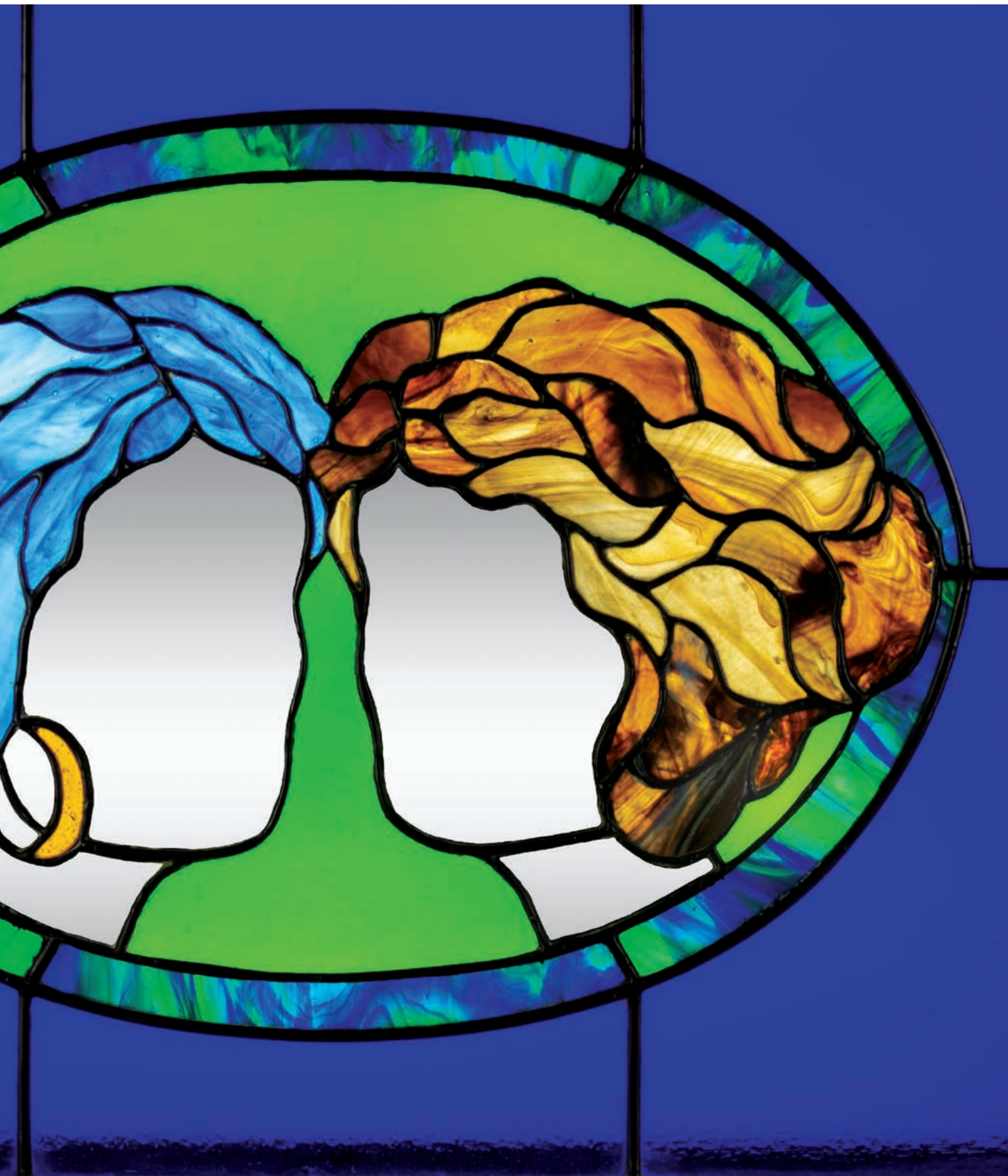
and compassion. To welcome visitors into the collective, Piotter and Rapp commissioned two stained glass pieces from local artist Mattie Sue Athan to hang in the windows. They both depicted two women facing each other, their faces made of mirrored glass so that every woman who entered would see her own face within the images.

Though the collective closed its doors in 1983, Woman to Woman Feminist Bookcenter provided invaluable services and resources for lesbians and other women in Denver for the better part of a decade, including a community meeting space, classes for women, access to queer and feminist literature, and social services recommendations. And—perhaps most importantly—it gave all women a place to see themselves and their experiences reflected in the world around them.

—*Teddy Scott*

*Photo by Aaron Marcus.*





# A Rocky Mountain Dream

The promise of Lincoln Hills still resonates today.

A servant's bell, a cabin resort in the mountains, and a Black utopia. These terms are not usually associated with each other, and definitely not associated with each other in 1920s America. E.C. Regnier and Roger Ewalt sought to change that when they established the Lincoln Hills Development Company one hundred years ago, in 1922.

Their dream was to have a resort created by and for African Americans—a safe place where people who looked like me could find leisure and joy without the fear of racial persecution and violence. They began building in 1925 in Gilpin County, and the result was the only resort of its kind west of the Mississippi River. Lincoln Hills eventually included over 100 acres, which were originally sold in 25-by-100-foot lots.

Lincoln Hills served as a bastion of hope in a land dominated by white supremacy. This mountain resort—and its social hub, Winks Lodge—was a vacation home for many Denver locals. The lodge operated from 1928 to 1965, but the late 1960s marked the end of an era at Lincoln Hills. With the approval of new civil rights legislation, African Americans had more travel options opened to them besides Lincoln Hills, and it ultimately closed.

Today, several cabins and buildings remain at Lincoln Hills. The site is still used by outdoor educational and recreational group Lincoln Hills Cares, as well as a fly-fishing group and cabin owners who often have historic ties to their residences. Lincoln Hills is an

important part of Black history because it is a story of Black joy in an otherwise racially tumultuous time period: Within a few years, the United States experienced the Red Summer of 1919 and the Tulsa Race Massacre of 1921, but also the creation of Lincoln Hills.

During a recent trip to the site, I was fortunate enough to visit Winks Lodge. The building, which is also known as Winks Panorama, was built by Obrey “Winks” Wendell Hamlet in 1928. It hosted various book readings, dances, and other festivities. Some of the notable guests of Winks Lodge included jazz musicians Duke Ellington and Count Basie, as well as authors Langston Hughes and Zora Neale Hurston.

I came across several small hand bells along a table on a balcony that overlooked the forest while I was touring the building. It was empowering to envision Black people sitting on the balcony enjoying some leisure time in the summer as opposed to the stereotypical images of Black people as servants, which are too common in our society.

It was a privilege and honor to visit Winks Lodge at Lincoln Hills and one that I will not soon forget. Thankfully, there are groups like Lincoln Hills Cares who share that understanding and are working to both preserve and promote Lincoln Hills. Next time I come across a hand bell, I won't think of racial or socioeconomic servitude—I will instead envision the leisure activities enjoyed by my people in the oasis that was Lincoln Hills.

BY DEXTER NELSON II



Camp Nizhoni (a summer camp for girls held at Lincoln Hills) participants in 1937.  
*Denver Public Library Special Collections.*



## STEP BY STEP

For the centennial birthday of the Lincoln Hills resort, we look back at some of the preservation efforts at one of its most well-known buildings: Winks Lodge.

*By Poppie Gullett*

**1980:** Winks Panorama, also known as Winks Lodge, is listed in the National Register of Historic Places due in large part to the efforts of Bertha Calloway, a Black historian who had purchased the property with her husband James in 1978. Winks Panorama is the third resource associated with African American heritage added to the National Register in Colorado.

**1985:** Winks Panorama changes hands to new owners, who maintain the property but only gradually learn from visitors of the significance of the lodge.

**2006:** The Colorado State Historical Fund provides a grant to the James P. Beckwourth Mountain Club, which

helps the group purchase Winks Panorama. The club focuses on educating the public about the contributions of people of color to the West.

**2007:** The James P. Beckwourth Mountain Club receives a second grant from the Colorado State Historical Fund to assess the condition of Winks' historic buildings and structures and help prioritize work needed to protect and repair the lodge.

**2013:** The Colorado Historical Foundation acquires a preservation easement on the property, a legally binding covenant that will help protect the defining historic characteristics of Winks in perpetuity.

**2014:** The National Register nomination for Winks Panorama is amended to expand the boundaries of the listing to include buildings formerly owned by the United States Forest Service. The new nomination argues that Winks Panorama has national, not just state-level, significance for its role in the history of Black recreation in the West.

**2017:** Robert R. Smith, entrepreneur and co-founder of the education non-profit Lincoln Hills Cares, purchases the property.

**Present:** Winks Panorama is being considered for National Historic Landmark (NHL) status. The National Park Service (NPS) Landmarks Committee recommended the site for NHL status in 2021 and it will go to a vote at the NPS Advisory Board in 2022.

*Winks Panorama in the 1950s.  
Denver Public Library Special Collections*



# Readings for a Too-Long Fire Season

Six books about wildfire that are helping us think about the future of our homes on the range.

BY SAM BOCK

As if we needed yet another, the closing hours of 2021 were a reminder that there is no such thing as fire season in Colorado anymore. Every time of year is fire season now. With the embers of the devastating Marshall Fire barely cooled, like many Coloradans, we've been casting around for new answers to the big questions: How and why did this happen? How could this happen in December? When and where will the next fire happen?

The full answers to these questions are complex. Anthropogenic climate change is certainly playing a role in pushing these blazes deeper into winter and closer to the Front Range urban corridor. But a warming, drying climate isn't the whole story. More than a century of state and federal forestry policy, along with overly rosy estimations about the risks of home-building in disaster-prone areas, have left us more nervous than ever about living in fire country.

But luckily for those of us who want to make better sense of too-familiar tragedies, historians and novelists offer unique perspectives. And they haven't been silent on the subject of fires. From accounts of the brave women and men who lost their lives protecting our homes from flame, to in-depth examinations of humanity's relationship with the most essential of elements, here are six of the books we're reading right now as we search for answers amongst the ashes.

## **Wilderburbs: Communities on Nature's Edge** by Lincoln Bramwell

The author, who should know a thing or two about fire since he's the Chief



Destroyed Louisville homes after the Marshall Fire. Photo by Todd Phillips.

Historian for the United States Forest Service, documents the emergence of vulnerable suburban communities built into disaster-prone hillsides all across the American West. He calls them "Wilderburbs" for short. From his unique perspective inside the agency most responsible for forest fire management, Bramwell asks us to consider the future of homes in the West.

## **Paradise on Fire** by Jewell Parker Rhodes

In this novel geared towards school-age readers, award-winning author Jewell Parker Rhodes brings us a coming-of-age story about a young Black girl who confronts a wildfire years after she lost her parents in another fire. Rhodes has a knack for helping young learners work through issues like trauma, race, and climate change in the context of a rapidly changing world.

## **Fire on the Mountain: The True Story of the South Canyon Fire**

by John N. Maclean

The 1994 South Canyon Fire was one of Colorado's deadliest. Fourteen firefighters lost their lives, and Maclean's portraits of the fallen pull back the curtain on the increasingly familiar world of wildland firefighting.

## **The Pyrocene: How We Created an Age of Fire, and What Happens Next** by Stephen J. Pyne

*Pyrocene* is a brief (but fascinating) survey of humanity's relationship to fire. Pyne is one of the leading scholars of fire history, and his provocative style leaves readers thinking deeply about one of humanity's greatest tools and oldest foes.

## **Gifford Pinchot and the Making of Modern Environmentalism**

by Char Miller

Gifford Pinchot could be the most important bureaucrat you've never heard of. As the first person to lead the United States Forest Service, Pinchot's policies and attitudes still shape this country's relationship to its forests.

## **The Big Burn: Teddy Roosevelt and the Fire that Saved America**

by Timothy Egan

One of the most acclaimed authors writing about the West today, Timothy Egan has a knack for helping readers put historical tragedy in context. With *The Big Burn*, Egan tells the story of a wildfire in Idaho, Washington, and Montana that scorched an area of forest the size of Connecticut, and the President who ushered in a new conservation movement in the United States.

# LION IN WINTER

## What Lies Beneath the Snow in Redstone?



**T**he road has become a narrow tunnel in the nighttime snowstorm, its edges marked by the reach of our headlights. The blurred snowflakes illuminated by the beams whip past us out of the dark, giving us the sense of flying, like we are making the jump to lightspeed through a star-strewn galaxy far, far away.

In this particular corner of the Milky Way, however, we are easing our way up Colorado's Highway 133 at speeds well below the posted limit. It's the last week of 2021, in the midst of the first major winter storm of this season, and my

wife, Stacie, and I are on our way to the small mountain haven of Redstone for a few days of stillness and respite after the busy holiday season and almost two years of living through this pandemic.

Typically a little more than three hours from our home in Denver, we are well into the seventh hour of our journey when two lines of colored holiday lights emerge from the snow. They are wrapped around the rails of a bridge over the Crystal River, it seems, to save travelers like us from missing the turn and guide us into the town.

The town of Redstone is an easy place to overlook, even in good weather. Among that class of western towns where the elevation (7,185 feet above sea level) significantly outpaces the population (127 at the last census), it dots the east bank of the Crystal River that flows down from McClure Pass to its junction with the Roaring Fork at Carbondale. Opposite the town, a row of strange ruins—beehive-like brick structures—line the west side of the highway.

Safely across the bridge, we pull up to the Redstone Inn, with its distinctive,



square clock tower that rises into the snowy night sky as it has for nearly 120 years. Hauling our bags out of the car, we knock the snow off our boots as we open the door to the lobby, which has not changed much since the clock tower started to tick in 1902. As we settle into our third-floor room, the hotel's guide book prepares us to enjoy Redstone with the proper mindset, explaining that the town "is a heartbeat, yet a world away from Aspen." It encourages visitors like us "to stop, take a deep breath, slow down, step back in time, leave your cell phone

in the car, and experience the magic of the valley and the inn."

With Wi-Fi scarce and cell signals nonexistent, it is an easy invitation to accept. But there's something perhaps unintended in that notion of a relaxing step back in time. Even quiet places vibrate with the drama of lives lived there, the consequences and repercussions that radiate out from them across the decades. The peaceful tranquility we're seeking in Redstone belies a complicated past. Here, during the first decade of the twentieth century and, with the backing of one of

Cleveholm Manor, built in 1902 for John Cleveland Osgood in the Crystal River Valley.  
*Photo by Stacie Hanson.*

Colorado's largest corporations and one of America's richest men, the ideals of the Progressive Era, the opulence of the Gilded Age, and the struggle for labor justice came together in an experiment aimed at creating a new future. The result was, for better or worse, a new way of thinking about the relationship between work and life that continues to shape the modern American workplace today.

In the light of the next morning, with the snow still falling, we get our first good look around. A carved wooden sign standing just beyond the bridge into town welcomes us to the “Ruby of the Rockies,” a moniker bestowed by an alliterative *The New York Times* reporter in 1902 and embraced by residents ever since. A weathered hand-painted sign on the main street boasts that this is a state historic district, a nod to the fact that not much has changed here since 1902 when the town was constructed as a sociological experiment by John Cleveland Osgood for his Colorado Fuel and Iron Company.

A walk down Redstone Boulevard (locals just call it “The Boulevard”) gives us glimpses of the town’s residents. The smell of wood smoke drifts from chimneys and Black Lives Matter signs dot snow-covered yards. A man shovels the snow off of his roof while another clears the community ice rink (free skates are available to borrow in the nearby shed). A woman walks two goats—whom she introduces as Bubble and Squeak—down the street on leashes attached to hand-knitted holiday collars. They are on their way over to the Redstone General Store, which sells essentials, local artists’ work, and artisanal beverages, and has served as a hub for the community to gather on cold afternoons since 1950.

Behind the buildings, the deep red canyon walls that gave the town its name loom. Their color is made even more vivid by the bright white snow. Before American newcomers called it Redstone, this place—along with much of what we now know as Colorado and large portions of the surrounding states—was firmly within the ancestral homelands of the Ute people, whose traditions do not record a migration story.

Indigenous presence and control notwithstanding, during the Spanish colonization of North America, the valley was nominally a part of Spanish and subsequently Mexican claims in the region, before the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo moved the national border south. As the United States government asserted

control, it forcibly restricted the Ute (and other Tribes) to ever-smaller portions of their ancestral territory in order to make way for onrushing American settlement.

To facilitate settlement, the US government dispatched surveyors to explore the newly American territory and report back on the most promising opportunities for extracting the wealth of its natural resources. In 1873, Ferdinand V. Hayden led a survey party through this valley, noting the area’s rich coal reserves. Six years later, while Colorado continued to expel the Ute from most of their homelands within the state, EuroAmerican prospectors combed the crimson hillsides in search of riches.

Despite the Hayden survey’s reports of coal in the area, those early prospectors were in search of gold and silver and had little use for anything else. Legend has it that the region’s richest coal deposit was discovered by two prospectors when an avalanche exposed a black seam in the red rock along a tributary of the Crystal River. Propelled by visions of shinier stuff, the prospectors weren’t interested in the coal, and when a dapper man from Iowa offered them \$500 for the claim in 1882, they took the money and moved on.

The well-dressed buyer was John Cleveland Osgood, then thirty-one years old, already successful in business but not yet satisfied. He was born in Brooklyn in 1851 and raised by relatives after his parents both died when he was a young child. Compelled to go to work at age fourteen, over the next decade and a half he rose through positions of increasing responsibility in textile factories, merchant houses, coal mining companies, and banks. By 1878 he had saved enough to purchase a troubled coal company in Iowa.

Ambitious, quick with numbers, and adept at attracting financial backers, he soon put the company on solid financial footing. Shortly thereafter, at the request of a railroad customer looking to extend their lines west, Osgood journeyed to Colorado to investigate the new state’s coal resources. In the mountains, his



John Cleveland Osgood in the 1920s.  
*History Colorado*. 83.500.5

fashionable wardrobe and fastidious grooming would have stood out. He wore his dark hair slicked and parted down the center; his mustache curled up into points at the ends. In photographs, his eyes look calm and confident, as though perhaps he saw something not apparent to everyone else.

What he saw, it seems, was that coal was the future. The compressed energy of verdant swamps from geologic ages gone by, the glossy black lumps of carbon were rapidly becoming the fuel of everyday American life in the decades around the turn of the century. Coal heated homes and businesses. It fired the steam boilers that made it possible to connect a continent by rail and to power the machines that freed humans and animals from their dreariest toils. It unlocked the alchemy that smelted ore into precious metal and forged raw minerals into iron and steel. By 1890, it accounted for 90 percent of the nation’s energy consumption. In short: It represented a fantastic business opportunity.

And, with his \$500 purchase in the Crystal River Valley, John Cleveland Osgood suddenly had one of the finest supplies in the United States. With three business associates from Iowa, Osgood organized the Colorado Fuel Company. A decade later, he’d merged with a top

competitor to form Colorado Fuel and Iron Company (CF&I), which became one of the nation's biggest coal companies. CF&I boasted fourteen operating coal mines spread across approximately 70,000 acres and employed more than 7,000 workers who lived in thirty-eight company-owned mining camps from Wyoming to the Territory of New Mexico.

At the center of CF&I's operation was the West's only integrated iron and steel plant in Pueblo. Under Osgood's leadership, the company would continue to grow throughout the next decade. By 1902, the company employed 15,000 workers, and when its many subsidiaries and related enterprises were factored in, it accounted for nearly 10 percent of the state's entire workforce.

Back at the Crystal River, where Osgood had embarked on his journey to become the coal king of the West, extracting the area's fantastic wealth required installing a large workforce in the remote valley. By 1902, CF&I had established Redstone along the main line of the Crystal River Railroad as a hub for processing the coal mined nearby into coke and shipping it to users like the company's steel mill at Pueblo. It was a company town, but Osgood had a personal interest in Redstone and was determined to make sure that it wasn't a typical coal company town, which had a well-earned reputation for being a dismal and dirty camp where coal miners and their families fended for themselves as best they could in makeshift housing that barely met their basic needs.

The inaugural edition of *Camp and Plant*, CF&I's company magazine (and gift to future historians), which was published in December 1901, explained: "Beauty has been the guiding principle in the building up of our little town. We do not have monotonous rows of box-car houses with battened walls, painted a dreary mineral red, but tasteful little cottages in different styles, prettily ornamented, comfortably arranged internally and painted in every variety of restful color." *The New York Times* reporter

who visited in 1902 agreed, writing that Redstone, "is the most beautiful town in Colorado, a thriving little village of 250 to 300." The writer complemented the community and its harmonious, well-built workers' cottages, counting more than 100 of them, each one different from the rest.

The workers living in Redstone's cottages enjoyed homes that many people in Denver would have envied. Beyond their architectural individualization, each home enjoyed indoor plumbing (although they still needed to use out-house bathrooms) with fresh running water piped from reservoirs along the Crystal River. Electric lighting was

**The result was,  
for better or worse,  
a new way of thinking  
about the relationship  
between work and life  
that continues to shape  
the modern American  
workplace today.**

available for 35 cents per light added to the rent. Homes ranged from three to five rooms, and monthly rent was \$2 per room. To encourage healthful living, each family was given a plot in the community garden across the river and a cow to provide fresh milk. Larger homes for upper-level managers rented for \$18.50 per month, which included indoor bathrooms and choice locations higher up on the hillside.

The town's layout was a physical expression of the workplace hierarchy, allowing the higher-ranking officials to look down over the workers of the town. And watching over all of it from a tasteful remove was John Cleveland Osgood himself.

**F**rom the Redstone Inn, The Boulevard jogs and winds south along the river, dwindling down to a narrow lane as it gradually climbs along the carved

contours of the rust-red cliff face. The river meanders along a meadow floor, shallow and relaxed in its winter flow, a glassy black ribbon under the gray, snow-laden sky. The current floats easily around snow-capped boulders and past the wintery skeletons of riparian bushes poking up through the snow along the bank. The vista is framed by slopes covered with frosted evergreen trees, which are obscured by falling flakes.

When the road departs from the river, we come to two iron gates hinged to square sandstone pillars and topped with stone lions. This is the gate to Cleveholm Manor, the baronial estate that John Cleveland Osgood—his close friends called him "Cleve"—built alongside the Crystal River. And the welcoming lions are there to let us know just whose house it was.

Lions are prominent all around Cleveholm, so much so that one of Osgood's biographers called him "The Lion of Redstone." Stone lions guard the gates, and another greets visitors outside the courtyard. Metal lions cast in bas-relief adorn the trim plates of nearly every door in the house. Most notably, Osgood's lion presides over the house from the impressive crest carved into the great room's chimney, the focal point at the heart of the sprawling manor. Carved or cast, the lions hold a sheaf of wheat, supposed to signify freeborn landed gentry in England—surely a notion that Osgood identified with as he looked out over his estate from the room's oversized windows.

He was exceptionally landed. CF&I's success had made Osgood extremely wealthy—his fortune was reported to be the sixth largest in America by the turn of the twentieth century—and his estate stretched from near Marble (to the south) to past Redstone, including the town itself, which he owned entirely. Osgood called the expanse Crystal Park, and he situated his home at the top of an idyllic meadow overlooking the Crystal River.

The inspiration for his new house had been his wife, Nattie Irene Belote. Happier living in England by herself

than in Colorado with John, Irene (as she was called) was a socialite and author who contributed to popular publications like *Vanity Fair* and wrote melodramatic romance novels. The latter were published by the Cleveland Publishing Company, which Osgood established for the purpose. Her debut novel, *The Shadow of Desire*, was a thinly veiled autofictional portrait of her marriage to John that *The New York Times* described to be “as unwholesome as any we have had the bad fortune to read.”

When Irene did deign to come to the area, John put her up at the gracious Hotel Colorado in Glenwood Springs. But around 1899, he began planning a home modeled on the English country estates Irene was so fond of. Not only would it showcase his status as one of the nation’s great industrial tycoons but, he hoped, it might lure Irene to live with him in his beloved and profitable Crystal River Valley.

Situated nearly a mile upstream from the workers’ homes, Cleveholm Manor was forty-two rooms (plus bathrooms) of grandeur standing at the heart of a 4,200-acre fenced estate. If you’ve driven up Highway 133 to McClure Pass, you may have caught a glimpse of it through the trees across the river. More commonly called the Redstone Castle today, it is a Tudor-inspired manor house, complete with towers, turrets, and sprawling wings. Resting on a base of substantial sandstone blocks quarried at Mount Casa just across the valley, it stands at the edge of a wooded hillside at the top of an expansive lawn sloping down to the Crystal River.

When we arrive, April and Steve Carver, who have lovingly restored the castle since 2016, meet us at the porte cochere where carriages once discharged passengers. The Carvers’ remodeling efforts “touched every wall,” says April, but did so with a light hand to maintain the original integrity of Osgood’s dream home. Having spent the last two winters as the only occupants because of the pandemic, April says the castle still reveals new things to her: “Every



time you look out a window you see something different. Every time you look inside you see something different. It’s just amazing architecture—even the spaces for servants, or the carriage house for the horses.”

Osgood reportedly poured \$2.5 million into Cleveholm, just a half-million less than it had cost to build the Colorado State Capitol several years earlier, and an amount equivalent to the annual earnings of more than 4,000 of CF&I’s workers, according to historian Thomas Andrews. It was designed by Boal and Harnois, the Denver-based architectural firm that also designed the workers’ homes in Redstone. With Cleveholm on their resume, the firm

went on to design grand homes for the wealthy elite in Denver, including the Grant-Humphreys Mansion on the city’s “Quality Hill” (now operated as an event venue by History Colorado) and the Crawford Hill Mansion at Tenth Avenue and Sherman Street, once the home of Louise Sneed Hill and the epicenter of the Sacred Thirty-Six, Denver’s exclusive and exclusionary high society group.

Its nomination to the National Register of Historic Places in 1971 proclaimed that Cleveholm’s interior “reflects the opulence associated with American entrepreneurs at the turn of the century.” It was the Gilded Age, after all, and there is gilding to be found in Cleveholm. Most notably, the ceilings in the library

The great room at Cleveholm Manor, where John Cleveland Osgood looked out over his estate toward the Crystal River. Osgood's crest is carved into the fireplace below one of Alma's trophies.  
*Photo by Jason Hanson.*



furnishings and elegant rugs. They, along with several other rooms throughout the manor, are protected by a conservation easement that ensures Cleveholm's interior is preserved.

From the daylight basement to the upstairs bedrooms, Cleveholm was designed to impress. The white Colorado Yule marble floor in the lower level, like the floors of the Colorado State Capitol, was quarried in nearby Marble where Osgood had a stake in one of the mining operations. (Colorado Yule marble later gained national fame as a stone featured in the Lincoln Memorial and the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier.)

On the main floor, artisans sculpted plaster frescoes on ceilings. They rubbed Honduran mahogany paneling to a cherry finish that complimented the ruby-colored velvet upper walls. And they painted striking peacock and pineapple designs where others might have settled for wallpaper. At the heart of the house, rising two stories from the main floor, the great room is centered around a large fireplace into which Osgood's personal crest was carved in the sandstone above the mantle, proclaiming "Pecturo Puro," pure of heart, below the image of his lion.

Above the great room, an unassuming lace-covered window looks down from the second floor to allow the lady of the house to get a look at her guests before making her own appearance. That lady was Alma Regina Shelgren, the second Mrs. Osgood. John's plan to save his marriage to Irene by creating a slice of England in the Colorado Rockies was not enough to keep the couple from divorcing in July 1899. Three months later, as construction began on Cleveholm, Alma and John were married.

Family legend has it that they first met in the court of King Leopold of Belgium, where Osgood was making a pitch for funding his coal operation. (King Leopold, as the exploitative private "owner" of the Congo Free State, was flush with investment capital extracted from African natural resources and receptive to opportunities in the extractive industries elsewhere.)

and the dining room were covered in shiny, room-brightening aluminum leaf tinted with a gold wash.

But even so, it has a comfortable feeling, more country estate than castle, and is decorated in an Arts and Crafts style that manages to feel homelike and cozy despite its sprawling footprint. And while it is opulent and ostentatious—a little bit of artisanal hand-stenciling or silk brocade wall treatment goes a long way to clarifying the order of magnitude between a manor house and a humble home—it still feels warmer and more welcoming to me, even on this cold day, than some of those great industrialist mansions of the same era that still stand in Denver.

Closed to guests for another Covid winter, when it opens again visitors will be able to glimpse what it was like to be at home with one of the United States's leading captains of industry (as Osgood and his fellow industrialists were known by their admirers—and, no doubt, to themselves). The views of the winter wonderland outside are breathtaking from every window, but particularly from the west-facing rooms that look out across the lawn toward the Crystal River and the peaks across the valley.

These rooms—the library, the great room, and the dining room—remain almost precisely as the Osgoods lived in them, from the custom-made Tiffany light fixtures to the Stickley

At the time, Alma was rumored to belong to the Swedish aristocracy. But more recent research suggests that, while she was in fact born in Sweden, Alma Regina Johansson (Shelgren was from her first marriage) immigrated to Chicago as a girl with her family and was orphaned soon thereafter. She did later travel to Europe, but wherever she met John, the two appear to have shared the experience of losing their parents and having to make their own way in the world.

Alma was called “Lady Bountiful” by residents of Redstone for her generous engagement in the local community. She encouraged children to write letters to Santa, which she would intercept and fulfill herself at lavish Christmas parties she held at the town’s clubhouse. Generous in all seasons, *The Marble Times* and *Crystal Silver Lance* reported in September 1901, that “The last day of summer was made memorable by the grand party given the children of Redstone and the vicinity by our Lady Bountiful of the Crystal Valley.... Whatever life holds in store for them, not even

the smallest little tot will ever forget this red letter day of unalloyed happiness and contentment.”

Alma was also a talented musician. She wrote the lilting, mid-tempo “Redstone Waltz,” and her sheet music is proudly displayed in a case in one of the castle’s several exhibition areas. Presumably, she played for guests in Cleveholm’s music room.

But her beneficence did not extend to the area’s wildlife. Alma was celebrated as an excellent shot. On June 4, 1904, the *Aspen Daily Times* reported on a successful hunt in the mountains of northern Colorado during which Alma killed a large black bear, a feat apparently so noteworthy that it rated a notice on the front page of *The New York Times* the following week. Most of the trophy heads that decorate the walls at both Cleveholm and the Redstone Inn—and there are a notable number of trophy heads—were killed by Lady Bountiful.

In the guest wing at Cleveholm, rooms are distinguished by different colored fireplaces: The architectural

plans call out lavender, cerise, blue, pink, and green rooms, each with a private sink. Today the guest suites are named after famous visitors who enjoyed the Osgoods’ hospitality, an eclectic mix of the day’s leading figures.

Financiers J.P. Morgan, George Gould, and John D. Rockefeller (Senior and Junior) each found occasion to trade New York City’s gray urban canyons for the steep vermilion walls of the valley to talk business with Osgood. President Theodore Roosevelt stayed at Cleveholm during his hunting trip to Colorado in the spring of 1905, and was reported to have stationed himself on the porch like it was a decadent hunting blind as he shot at animals that were driven in front of the house for him.

**R**edstone was a coal town, but it was not a coal mining town. The coal was extracted from the mountain at Coal Basin, twelve miles west of Redstone up Coal Creek. In the summer, one can drive up the old logging road to the vanished townsite, where the mine area and the



The Redstone General Store at night.  
Photo by Jason Hanson.



Old coke ovens. Photo by Stacie Hanson.

affected waterways have been the focus of extensive environmental reclamation efforts in recent years. Last summer, new property owners (heirs to Sam Walton's Walmart fortune) created a free public mountain bike park that they intend to further the ongoing reclamation effort. But none of that is visible under the snow. The road is only plowed up to where the canyon begins, about a mile from town. So that's where we strap on our snowshoes.

"Beautiful isn't it? Winter is finally here!" one fellow traveler calls out to us as we make our way in the falling snow up Coal Basin trail toward the mine. And indeed it is. The snow falls heavily in massive fluffy flakes, landing cold against the skin on our faces and blurring out our view of the pine-covered slopes and red canyon walls just a few hundred yards down the trail. The effect, once again, is galactic. Only this time, instead of hurtling through the star-strewn universe, it feels like we're standing at its center.

When we stop and the swish and crunch of the snowshoes pauses, the scene comes alive with other sounds. The big fluffy snowflakes create a lively static as they crash to earth. The river alongside the trail flows under snow-covered ice and emerges in burbling windows that look mirror-black in the flat light of the snow. A bird sings somewhere from a frosted pine.

In Redstone's heyday, the chorus might also have included the chug and metallic whine of the narrow gauge railroad line, affectionately called the Columbine Road for the profuse wildflowers that lined its route, contorting its way through the canyon twice a day. The winding rails, which allowed the train to straighten out at only one point as it navigated through the canyon, carried passengers and, most importantly, hauled coal between Coal Basin and Redstone.

A few words here about that coal: Coal is an umbrella term for a variety of organic sedimentary rock types that will burn. The old Spencer hot water boiler in our 1918 Denver home still has instructions tacked to the wall detailing which coals to feed it: "pea coke or coke screened from coke braize; bituminous coals, such as Illinois No. 4 and No. 3 when mixed half-and-half with anthracite buckwheat or pea coal; Colorado lignates and Arkansas coals" all "properly proportioned." The level of detail humbles me: a person really had to *know* their coal at the turn of the century. One type in particular—bituminous coking coal—was the secret to smelting Colorado's ore into precious metal and for manufacturing iron and steel. This was the type of coal John Cleveland Osgood extracted from the Crystal River Valley.

Some 800 tons of that bituminous coal was being transported each day from Coal Basin to Redstone to be

transformed in the coke ovens in 1903. Coke is coal that has been heated in the absence of air to burn off impurities and concentrate the fuel's energy-producing carbon. The coal was baked in domed ovens that were loaded from the top and closed to allow it to bake slowly for two to three days.

Redstone's battery of 250 beehive-style ovens (these are the ruins still visible along the other side of the highway) are arranged in two back-to-back rows to efficiently share the heat they generated. The smoke from the ovens was toxic and spewed tar, ammonia, benzol, and other pollutants that often killed vegetation for miles in the vicinity. The end result was valuable gray cinders of almost pure energy that burned hot enough to smelt precious metal or fire steelmaking blast furnaces.

The people who powered Colorado's coal operations at the turn of the century hailed from around the world. Coal camps were notably cosmopolitan communities, diverse by design thanks to international recruiting programs funded by the operators. In 1901, twenty-seven different languages were spoken throughout the CF&I's mining camps.

But tending the coke ovens was one of the least desirable jobs in the coal fields. Hot, dirty, and poisonous, the work was often done by the most recent and low-status immigrants—particularly those from southern Italy and the Slavic regions

of eastern Europe (often referred to as “Austrians” because they had lived in the Austro-Hungarian empire)—who were looked down upon by other immigrant communities in the coal fields.

By 1903, Redstone’s ovens produced 11,000 tons of coke a month that was shipped to CF&I’s steel mill at Pueblo and smelters throughout Colorado. Between 1900 and 1909—the peak operating years—Coal Basin produced one million tons of coal. But by 1908, with demand declining and the steel mill upgrades running behind schedule, CF&I was producing more coke than it could market. The days of the Columbine Road were numbered.

**F**rom the window of our third-floor room at the Redstone Inn, I look at The Boulevard as snow gently falls again in big fluffy flakes. Redstone looks like the setting for a heartwarming holiday movie. The inn would certainly be a location in such a film. The same *The New York Times* reporter who christened the town the “Ruby of the Rockies” described the Redstone Inn as “a model little hostelry in old English style” when it opened in the fall of 1902. A succession of preservation-minded owners—and perhaps a bit of benign neglect—over the ensuing 120 years have retained the character that charmed the *Times* writer.

A more extensive *Camp and Plant* review in 1903 boasted that “The Inn contains all the conveniences and appliances of a modern hotel,” noting among them “steam heating apparatus, electric lights, hot and cold water, bathrooms, closets, barber shop, laundry, telephone, beautifully furnished lounging and reading room, and all the accessories.” While some of these features have lost a bit of their luster in the glare of modern convenience today, the lounging and reading room has remained a constant.

It is still beautifully furnished, and guests still congregate there for conversation, a game of chess, or simply to sit beside the warming fire. A mural above the hearth in the cozy fireside room has greeted generations of guests (at least

those who could read Dutch) with this bit of advice: “Derkoop de huid niet voor de Beer gesch oten is,” or “Don’t sell the hide before the bear is shot.” The taxidermied trophies Alma Osgood had mounted to the walls testify to the practicality of this advice.

The inn, which was built to provide comfortable quarters for bachelor cokers, was an expression—one of the more generous expressions—of a broader movement toward welfare capitalism at the turn of the century. Historians like Thomas Andrews, F. Darrell Munsell,

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and H. Lee Scamehorn suggest that the coal company towns built in Colorado around the turn of the twentieth century were a response to the perceived threat of growing union sentiment and strikes among their workforce.

In the unrelenting tension between labor and management, John Cleveland Osgood was no advocate for labor. He was a vocal opponent of the eight-hour work day, claimed credit for developing the scrip system that paid workers with company coupons rather than cash, promoted the “closed camp” system in which companies built the towns their workers lived in, and refused to countenance unions.

The *Denver Times* related Osgood’s view of unions during a strike in Colorado’s coal fields in 1901: “I have never known a union among coal miners that was not a curse to the man as well as

the employer. The labor union that is trying to control miners in Colorado is the most objectionable organization I have ever known. If we cannot get men to work in our mines unless they belong to the United Mine Workers, then we will close our mines.”

In the context of this grim view of unions, Osgood’s vision for Redstone as a workers’ haven built at company expense represented his attempt to relegate the union to irrelevance. He could try to make the union unnecessary by providing better for his workers than any company had ever done before. Osgood and his fellow reform-minded welfare capitalists (as they’ve come to be known) found what they thought was a sweet spot between their humanitarian concern for their workers’ welfare and their capitalist desire to prevent costly labor disputes. By assuming greater responsibility for the circumstances under which their employees lived and labored, they hoped to keep them doing both in service to the company.

To lead this effort, Osgood promoted Doctor Richard Corwin, who’d spent two decades running the company’s small hospital at the steel mill in Pueblo, to be the head of CF&I’s newly formed Sociological Department in 1901. Corwin was to “have general charge of all matters pertaining to education and sanitary conditions and any other matters which should assist in bettering the conditions under which our men live,” explained CF&I general manager Julian Kebler.

With the resources and breadth of CF&I to draw upon, Corwin was suddenly positioned to be one of the leading practitioners of Progressive thought among the activists who were then implementing a litany of social and economic reforms aimed at improving the lives of the working class. Corwin believed that the responsibility for providing “a healthy social and intellectual life for...adults... must be [borne] by the great corporations controlling the coal fields, for they have the means and control the situation.”

As early as 1899, Osgood and other company officials had noted the



Cliffs covered in snow near Redstone. Photo by Stacie Hanson.

substandard conditions that many CF&I employees lived in. Corwin had inspected the company's town at El Moro, north-east of Trinidad, and concluded that workers' poor living conditions were responsible for high rates of illness in the workforce.

Determining that it would be a relatively small investment for the company to construct houses and other improvements that would upgrade workers' quality of life, Corwin spearheaded an effort to do just that. The company's *Camp and Plant* magazine, which the Sociological Department produced, was soon routinely full of photographs and descriptions of the new homes and whole new towns—not just at Redstone, but at Primero, Fierro, Berwind, and others—erected by the company for its workers.

Explaining that “Education is the master-key to the whole social betterment situation,” Corwin established universal kindergarten for all children in CF&I towns. The Redstone schoolhouse was one of the finest buildings in the community. And to ensure that workers and their families received the healthcare they

needed, Corwin expanded the company's Minnequa Hospital at Pueblo into a new, state-of-the-art facility capable of providing high-level care to employees at no-to-little cost.

Corwin was one of Colorado's leading Progressives at the time, which is to say he also embodied many of the shortcomings of the self-sure reform movement that has come to be viewed by contemporary activists and scholars as well-intended but undermined by paternalism and racism. For example, *Camp and Plant* often made a point of pairing its alluring photos of new company homes with contrasting “before” shots of the shacks, tents, log cabins, and adobe buildings that Italian, Mexican, and other employees had previously built for themselves. All of which, the captions rarely failed to note, had been “torn down and replaced” by the “hygienic” new homes built by the company.

Most perniciously, Corwin's efforts to promote social betterment, as he called it, among CF&I's workers and their families were entwined in his embrace of eugenics. A pseudoscience that promoted a healthy society through the manipulation of

human heredity, eugenicists advocated for limitations on the procreation of those people they viewed as inferior. Forced sterilization, institutionalization, involuntary abortion, and even euthanasia were the tools of eugenicists, and they were administered disproportionately to people of color and those in poverty.

Many leading Progressives, including social worker Jane Addams and trust-busting President Theodore Roosevelt, embraced eugenics as the solution to social ills. Corwin enthusiastically joined them, explaining in 1913 that “upon eugenics rests the salvation of the race.” The paternalism that animated his homebuilding program and school curriculums, and the racism evident in his endorsement of eugenics, cannot be separated from his motivations for promoting social betterment among CF&I workers.

For his part, Osgood made Redstone a laboratory for many of Corwin's ideas, but he never hid the pragmatic calculus he applied to the whole enterprise. As one of the leading sociological journals of the day, *The Outlook*, reported in 1902, “While some stockholders

Snowshoeing on the Coal Basin Trail.  
*Photo by Jason Hanson.*



might criticize the using of company funds for such humanizing purposes, the Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Company, Mr. John C. Osgood, declares he is simply carrying out good business principles in promoting the welfare of his employees. 'We do not ask credit as philanthropists,' he says; 'we are aiming to carry out common-sense business ideas in the conduct of business.'"

Against the backdrop of a bitter and violent strike in the Pennsylvania coal fields that threatened the nation with a "coal famine" during the winter of 1902–03, Osgood's welfare capitalism at Redstone must have seemed like good business indeed. Even more so when strike came once again to the southern Colorado coal fields in 1903–04 and the workers of Redstone and Coal Basin declined to join their fellow colliers. Osgood had built Redstone in the hopeful expectation that workers would exchange labor solidarity and militancy for workplace satisfaction and loyalty. And when it was tested that is, in fact, what happened. The investment in welfare capitalism paid dividends.

**T**he only room at Cleveholm in which the view is obscured by bars on the windows is John Cleveland Osgood's ground-floor study with its large walk-in safe. As we enter from the billiard room across the hall, it is tempting to imagine the cigar smoke in the air (Osgood smoked a handful or more each day), the business deals struck over the crack of billiard balls, and the safe door ajar as he worked at his desk.

Here, one of America's richest men had schemed against the United Mine Workers of America as it tried to organize CF&I workers, strategized to repel a hostile takeover effort by John "Betta-Million" Gates and US Steel, and poured over financial statements as he tried to stem the losses from his behind-schedule expansion plans to modernize the Pueblo steel plant. And here, he finally recognized that he would lose control of the company he had built; a company that had grown into one of

the most significant industrial concerns in America in just two decades.

Even as builders were putting the finishing touches on Cleveholm, trouble was on the horizon for John Cleveland Osgood. When John D. Rockefellers Junior and Senior visited Cleveholm in the fall of 1902, they were not simply enjoying the Rocky Mountain scenery. Osgood was once again courting royalty—this time of the American aristocracy—for money.

He needed funds to fight off the hostile takeover attempt and continue with expansion plans at the steel mill down in Pueblo. The Rockefellers, along with George Gould, invested to supply

**Osgood had built Redstone in the hopeful expectation that workers would exchange labor solidarity and militancy for workplace satisfaction and loyalty. And when it was tested that is, in fact, what happened.**

the funds Osgood needed. But the deal proved fateful. Osgood did defeat the takeover bid in 1902, but he found himself overextended in the aftermath. When his creditors moved to take over the company from him, he could do nothing to stop them. He surrendered control of the CF&I to the Rockefellers and Gould in 1903.

Osgood insisted that Redstone, which he had built under the auspices of the company but with money that he considered his own personal funds, was not part of CF&I and not part of the deal. He wanted to keep his estate intact, and as long as the coal was flowing to the CF&I's operations (and balance sheets) the Rockefellers did not fight him on it.

Lady Bountiful still frequently visited the town—traversing the road along the river in her yellow-wheeled buggy with a fringed umbrella and, later, her electric

car—and inquired after its residents. She still arranged Christmas parties for the children. And the CF&I Sociological Department continued to operate the school and provide medical care. Life in Redstone was pleasant enough that superintendent T.M. Gibb felt moved to tell the *Engineering and Mining Journal* in 1907, perhaps with only a touch of managerial hyperbole, "This isn't a camp—it's a mountain village!"

Some of the town's original residents seemed to feel the same way. They formed a mandolin club and a brass band. Theater productions were also popular and staged in the well-appointed auditorium in the town's clubhouse, which served as a special event venue as well as a place for workers to shower, change, and unwind after the day's work. Club members (who paid 50 cents a month for their membership) enjoyed a reading room with a selection of periodicals in a variety of languages, a library, pool and billiard tables, and penny-ante poker. The bar was well stocked, as Corwin and Osgood recognized that prohibition within the town led thirsty working men to bootlegging and the black market.

Many of the testimonials we have today about how workers and their families enjoyed their lives in Redstone are from the company's self-serving perspective, but Norma Kenney wrote her memoir long after there was any company interest to flatter or appease. She was a teacher at the Redstone school while her husband served as the town caretaker, and she remembered their time there in an egalitarian light. She recalled a community in which "There was talking, visiting, borrowing, sharing, and mingling among the workers. Each type of work brought a paycheck home, which in turn was exchanged for company script [*sic*]. There were gradations in the paychecks, to be sure, but this did not affect life in Redstone, where without modern transportation and communication a close knit community had emerged."

But, despite all the comfortable living arrangements, Redstone struggled. Turnover remained vexingly high,

with workers often leaving to go work in the fruit orchards over McClure Pass at Paonia. In some ways, by providing so many of the elements of daily life, the company invited the concentration of workers' frustrations—and if you were a coal miner or coker in Colorado at the turn of the century, there were going to be frustrations, no matter how nice your house was. If the company had not been so prominent in their lives, workers' frustrations may have been more diffused among the many entities that create the texture of most Americans' daily lives.

Part of the workers' discontent may have been attributable to the dilution of the welfare capitalism philosophy that gave Redstone reason for its unique existence. After the Rockefeller-Gould group took over, the new management soon began dismantling the Sociological Department and, with it, many of the social betterment programs that had underpinned the construction of Redstone and many of the company's other efforts at improving the quality of life for workers and their families.

The altruism that motivated the Progressive movement and its corporate expression through welfare capitalism had effortlessly overlapped with the desire for increased control over workers that motivated many of the day's management strategies. Without the gilded handcuffs of welfare capitalism that made workers beholden to the company for higher quality of life than they could get elsewhere, there was little to obscure the company's exploitation of its workers.

Whatever benevolence may have motivated Osgood's creation of Redstone, it could never be separated out from his animosity toward the union. That animosity was on display a little more than a decade later when Osgood, now president of the Victor American Coal Company, was the spokesperson for the coal operators during another bitter strike in southern Colorado. He resolutely refused to negotiate with the union or acknowledge any legitimacy in the workers' grievances. Even after the public recoiled from the violence

that indiscriminately killed women and children when the state militia attacked the striking miners' camp at Ludlow in April 1914, Osgood blamed the United Mine Workers of America for instigating the slaughter.

**A**s we pack up on the last morning of our getaway, I look out at Redstone one last time. The town still stands much as it did when it was first built, a historic district for good reason. But the still-falling snow collecting on roofs, yards, fences, and signs softens their edges,

**Every place has  
a story. The quiet,  
contemplative sites  
around Redstone in  
the winter invite us to  
imagine ourselves  
as part of Colorado's  
unfolding story.**

and I can't help thinking about how the accumulation of years can similarly blur our view of past events and the memories that sit in a place.

John Cleveland Osgood's sociological experiment in welfare capitalism lasted only a decade in the Crystal River Valley and was, essentially, over before the Ludlow Massacre exposed more flaws at the heart of this policy. The coke ovens at Redstone went cold in 1909 as declining precious metal mining depressed demand for coke. The decision to establish the coking operation at Redstone and build the model company town here was based less on a business decision for a coking coal supply and more on Osgood's desire to build his own home in the breathtakingly picturesque valley. When times got tough, there was not a strong enough case to keep it open.

The Osgoods shuttered Cleveholm as operations were shutting down at Redstone, leaving the workforce to seek opportunities elsewhere. As Redstone became a near-ghost town, *The Denver*

*Post* reporter Lord Ogilvy eulogized in 1911 that "I have seen the Redstone sociological achievement of Mr. Osgood referred to as an experiment, but it was a great deal more than that; it was an achievement, the successful achievement of an idea often promulgated and seldom carried into effect."

After he lost control of CF&I, Osgood did what he'd done before: He started over. In the wake of the tragedy that her husband had helped bring about at Ludlow, Alma went to France to help with the war effort as a nurse. Coincidentally, John's first wife Irene, now the inheritor of a large home in the English countryside, was engaged similarly, turning her estate into a hospital during the war. After the war, John sued for divorce from Alma on grounds of abandonment, although he continued to express his admiration for her until the end of his life.

In 1920, shortly after his divorce from Alma was officially granted, John Cleveland Osgood married for a third time, saying his vows with Lucille Reid. The couple toured Europe before returning to live at Cleveholm in 1924. They launched a flurry of restoration and updates to reopen the estate and turn it into a year-round resort, but the effort was cut short by John's failing health. When he died of stomach cancer just after the New Year in 1926, Lucille honored his wishes to scatter his ashes in the Crystal River and to burn his papers.

Lucille Osgood tried to carry on with the couple's vision for a resort at Redstone, but as the Depression settled in she was forced to dismantle some of the original homes to get them off of the tax roll and to sell others. She finally sold Cleveholm in 1940, getting \$20,000 for it—a steep drop from the \$2.5 million Osgood had spent building it. In the year after the sale, only twelve people called Redstone home.

Depending on which side of the day's politics you were on, John Cleveland Osgood was either a robber baron or a captain of industry. The distinction is important—the difference between



A sign greeting visitors. Photo by Stacie Hanson.

heartless exploitation and essential economic leadership. Without his papers, which might have allowed us to appreciate his worldview more fully, we are left to take the measure of the man not from his own words but from the way he is reflected in his actions and those close to him.

The portrait that emerges is of an adroit and driven businessman, capable of recognizing opportunity, adapting to circumstances, cultivating close relationships, inspiring loyalty from friends, and able to confront multiple challenges at once. But it is also of a man who regarded the feudal systems of the past with an anachronistic longing, felt his workers owed him fealty if not gratitude, and who fought against unions with both enticing subversion and unyielding ferocity.

Whatever the mixture of altruism and self-interest that inspired him to build Redstone, the community Osgood enabled offered workers and their families a quality of life that was otherwise unattainable for most. It was a prescient way of doing business. His strategic embrace of welfare capitalism still echoes in the employer-provided health insurance enjoyed by many workers today, to say nothing of the bus passes, recreation amenities, workplace happy hours, and

other employee benefits that have become entrenched in Americans' workplace expectations today.

And so to visit Redstone today is not really to step back in time. Leaving aside the fact that it is no more possible to do than it is to step into the same proverbial river twice, that phrase often covers all manner of wishful recreations of the past. Most often, these enticing visions of the past are calibrated, perhaps unconsciously, to reinforce historical narratives that paper over the complexity and drain the real color away from a place in time and the people who were there.

But a trip to Redstone is an invitation to envision the people of the past, not so different from Stacie or me (or, I'd guess, you), navigating the complexities of life and work in the way that seemed best to them on any given day. Sometimes in ways that inspire, befuddle, or infuriate those of us who come after.

In our histories, and in our contemporary lives, we often long for our heroes to be pure of heart: "Pecturo Puro" as John Cleveland Osgood inscribed in the stone crest over the central hearth of his great manor house. We want the past to offer us clear lessons. And it's tempting to think of historians as something akin to journalists of the past, simply reporting

events as they happened and describing their self-evident meaning.

But events of the past often lead us to multifaceted and sometimes contradictory takeaways in the present. The better analogy for historical practice is detective work, investigating the past through an array of methods and a range of sources (sometimes contradictory sources) to carefully parse what they can tell us in order to develop a clearer understanding of how we got to now and how we can continue to move toward a more just society.

Every place has a story. The quiet, contemplative sites around Redstone in the winter invite us to imagine ourselves as part of Colorado's unfolding story. Sometimes those stories are more complicated or not the ones we wish they were. Perhaps it seems increasingly so to some of us. But, for places as for people, history is not destiny. Each generation looks to the past for instruction, insight, or inspiration, and then applies those lessons to create our lives and, ultimately, our shared future. ●

**JASON L. HANSON** is the chief creative officer and director of interpretation and research at History Colorado.

# Las Voces de Covid

PHOTOS BY  
SARAHY PLAZOLA

TRANSCRIPTION AND  
TRANSLATION BY  
NAOMI PÉREZ AND  
BRITTN Y SALDAÑA

During the first year of the pandemic, we listened to the experiences of immigrant essential workers. Today, their memories and words resonate more than ever.

**O**n March 5, 2020, Colorado confirmed its first case of Covid-19 and the ensuing years have been truly challenging, confusing, and emotional for all. In Colorado, more than 1.2 million people have contracted the virus; more than eleven thousand have died. Families continue to cope with the financial distress caused by the mass layoffs, pay cuts, and business closures of the early pandemic.

In Denver, during the first year of the pandemic, a disproportionate number of Covid-19 cases, hospitalizations, and deaths occurred among people who identified themselves as Hispanic or Latino—many of whom worked in essential and frontline industries. These families, particularly those living on low incomes, were also hit forcefully by pandemic-related economic hardships. And yet, in the midst of great loss, resilience and hope survived.

Here, we share excerpts from the collection of inspiring stories resulting from the “Voices from Centro Humanitario: Labor, Barriers, and Hope in Times of Covid-19” community memory project. Part of History Colorado’s Museum of Memory initiative, this community-based project explores the experiences of low-wage Latino immigrant workers in the Denver metropolitan area during the first year of the pandemic.

The project was led and curated by the community outreach team from El Centro Humanitario para los Trabajadores (El Centro), a Denver-based labor center that promotes the rights and well-being of day laborers and domestic workers in Colorado. During the pandemic El Centro has helped distribute more than \$6 million in Covid relief funds among the low-wage worker community in the state. The photographs and excerpts from oral histories presented here describe the unique ways that this moment in history impacted the lives of immigrant essential workers who played a pivotal role during the Covid-19 crisis.

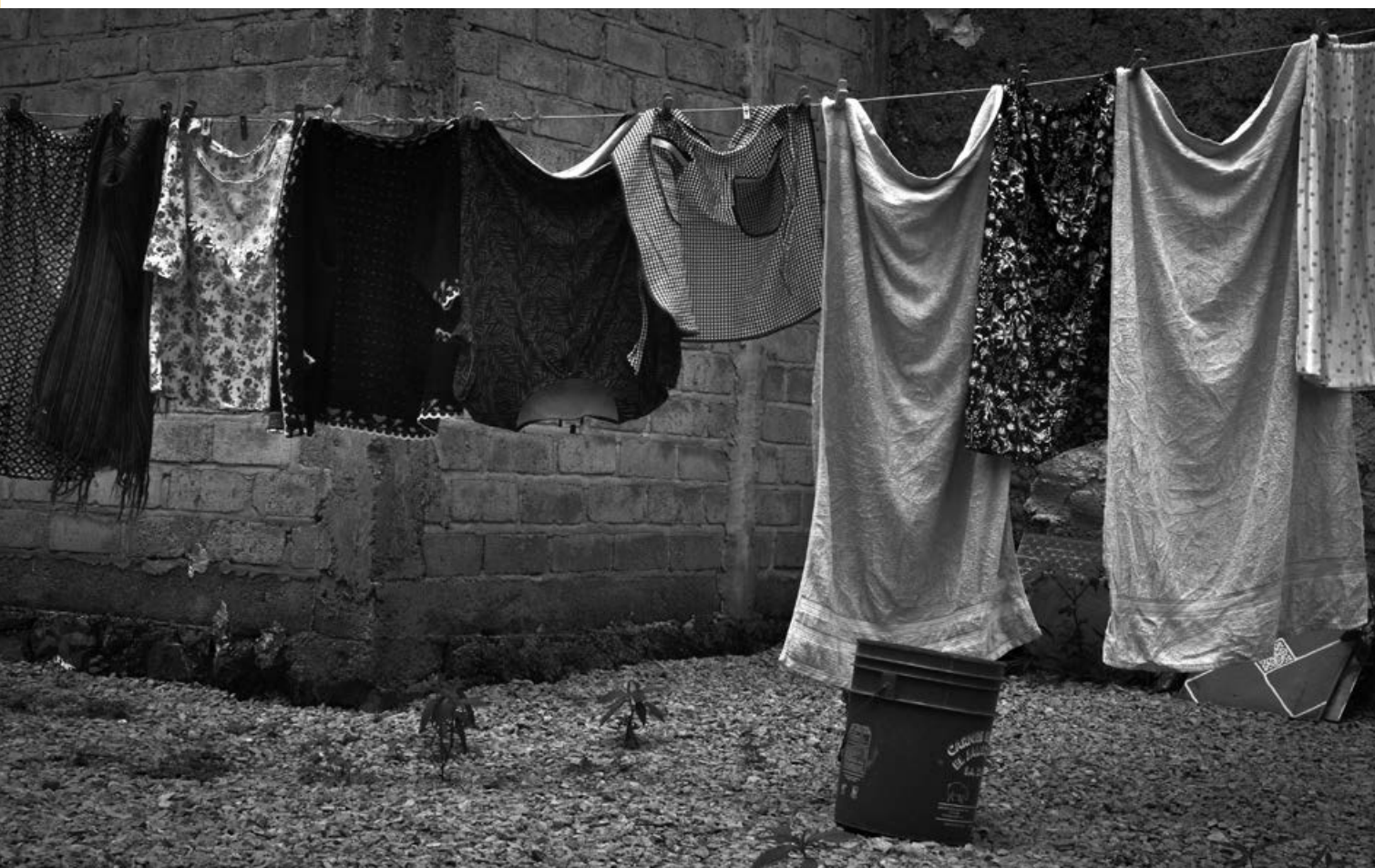
—María Islas-López, PhD,  
Museum of Memory Manager

**Lorena Osorio**  
on recovering from  
Covid and doing work  
with higher risk for  
Covid-19 exposure.

*Interview by Patty Grado, Project Curator,  
Centro Humanitario Connector*

Pues cuando empezó, así como que, le digo "¡Ay! A lo mejor no es nada tan serio como dicen, ¿verdad?" Y entonces—pero a raíz de eso, que se fueron viendo las noticias, como iba pasando el mes, y luego en el mes de septiembre, cuando me dio a mí. Entonces fue cuando me entró más a mí como un, este, un miedo, mucha ansiedad. Porque a mí sí me dio, me dio de todos los síntomas: se me bajó un poco el oxígeno, unos dolores de cabeza horribles, náuseas, y diarrea que, la verdad, no se lo desearía a nadie. Pero bueno, yo estoy bendecida, ¿verdad? Porque no, no, no tuve que ir al hospital....Pues, entre algunos, pues yo me siento bendecida porque estoy en vida—en vida todavía con esperanza y superándolo. Y otras personas, lamentablemente otras familias no. Han—han perdido, varios, varios familiares. E incluso, a veces, hay familias completas.

Well, when it started, like that, I said "Oh! Maybe it's nothing as serious as they say, right?" And, but as a result of that, the news was showing how the month went by, and then in the month of September is when I got it. That was when it came to me more like a, this, a fear, a lot of anxiety. Because I did get it, and it gave me all the symptoms: my oxygen dropped a little, horrible headaches, nausea, and diarrhea that I really would not wish on anyone. But hey, I'm blessed, right? Because I didn't have to go to the hospital....Well, among some, I feel blessed because I am alive—still alive with hope and overcoming it. And other people, unfortunately other families are not. They have—have lost, several, several relatives. And even sometimes entire families.



## Angélica Don Diego & Fabián Meraz on experiencing job shortages and wage theft in the construction industry.

*Interview by Blanca Madrid, Project Curator,  
Centro Humanitario Connector*

**Fabián:** Mi trabajo era un trabajo muy estable; había un cheque cada viernes, cada viernes, no fallaba. Entonces, pues, no teníamos problemas: cuestiones de renta, cuestiones de comida, de, pues, de biles. Todo estaba, pues, bien. Digámoslo de esa manera. En mi experiencia, a raíz de esta pandemia, yo he descubierto las carencias en este país. Yo, realmente antes de esta pandemia, creo, yo, que pues yo nunca vi, yo nunca vi eso de inclusive llegar a querer acortar el dinero hasta para que nos alcanzara para un galón de leche en la próxima semana. Sí, sí se vio muy—mucho la diferencia a raíz de esta pandemia....Tenía muchísimo tiempo que yo no veía trabajos de doce dólares la hora, de catorce dólares la hora, y se vino esta pandemia, y hasta la fecha, si usted se mete a Mil Anuncios Denver [anuncios clasificados], usted va a ver trabajos de doce dólares, de once cincuenta.

**Angélica:** Y tener que estar, pues, sobre todo hacer rendir el dinero. Lo poco, lo mucho que me daba, hacerlo rendir. Como él dijo, hasta para un galón de leche tenerle que pensar y tener que ajustar y sobre todo las necesidades más de las niñas [hijas], ya las de nosotros pues ya, así como que eso se esperan. Las prioridades ahorita, pues, las niñas porque ellas no saben si hay, o no hay, ellas nada más “quiero leche” y pues, a tener la leche.

**Fabián:** My job was a very stable job, there was a check every Friday, every Friday, it didn't fail. So, well, we had no problems: income issues, food issues, well, bills. So everything was fine. Let's put it that way. In my experience, as a result of this pandemic, I have discovered shortcomings in this country. I, really before this pandemic, I think, I, well, I never saw that of even wanting to not spend the money until we could afford a gallon of milk in the next week. Yes, yes, the difference was seen a lot as a result of this pandemic....It had been a long time since I had seen jobs for twelve dollars an hour, fourteen dollars an hour, and this pandemic came, and to this date if you search on Mil Anuncios Denver [classified ads], you will see jobs for twelve dollars or eleven fifty.

**Angélica:** And having to, well, make money last above all. However little, however much he gave me, make it last. As he told you, even for a gallon of milk, to have to think and have to adjust; especially for the needs of the girls [daughters], because ours, well, those can wait. The priority right now is the girls because they don't know if there is, or there isn't, they just say, “I want milk,” and well, to have the milk.



**Paula Ríos**  
on helping a  
stranger early in  
the pandemic  
at the hospital.

*Interview by Dámaso Ahumada, Project  
Curator, Centro Humanitario Connector*

Había muchísimas restricciones en el hospital. No te dejaban entrar; llegaban muchas personas enfermas. Que muchas veces me tocó a mí, en el lobby, en las entradas de la clínica y el hospital, bien, bien enfermas y este—y pues me hacían ir a limpiar donde esas personas se habían sentado. De hecho me tocó una señora adulta, ya, Hispana que me, me pidió ayuda para con la señorita que estaba en el, en el frente que era la que estaba tomando temperatura y, y pues—no dejaban entrar a muchas personas entonces la señora pues no hablaba inglés y me, me preguntó que si yo hablaba español, que si le podía ayudar y le dije “¡Claro que sí! ¿Qué necesita?” Y la señora me dijo que ella sentía todos los síntomas del Covid. Y aún así, yo estaba como asustada porque sabía que yo me podía infectar, pero a la vez pues me gustaba ayudar a las personas y, y yo dije “Bueno, pues tal vez esto me pueda pasar a mí y me voy a sentir muy mal si alguien no me ayuda.”

There were so many restrictions in the hospital. They wouldn't let you in; many sick people arrived. That many times it happened to me, in the lobby, at the entrances of the clinic and the hospital, well, very sick and that—and well, they made me go clean where those people had sat. In fact, I had an adult lady, yeah, Hispanic, who asked me for help, with the lady who was in the, in the front, who was taking temperature and, well—they didn't let many people in and, so the lady didn't speak English and she, she asked me if I spoke Spanish, could I help her and I said, “Of course I can! What do you need?” And the lady told me that she felt all the symptoms of Covid, and even so I was kind of scared, because I knew that I could get infected, but at the same time I like to help people and, and I said “Well, maybe this could happen to me and I'm going to feel very bad if someone doesn't help me.”





## BEHIND THE LENS

As an artist I suggested that these stories should have a visual narrative, not only because they would look pretty, but also because that way we could bring the voices to life and keep them alive for several years—to give identity to our storytellers. The photos that accompany the interviews reflect my family, they reflect my fears, they reflect my nostalgia, and that imagination that we have as immigrants. There are portraits and photos of things that reminded me a lot of my own childhood. Those images represent the narratives of my immigrant parents. Some photos were also taken in Mexico; those represent the life that we left on the other side of the border and that we still carry in our hearts and souls. And they also reflect me as a first-generation immigrant woman, who came here as a child and continues to live the legacy of her parents.

—Sarahy Plazola

## Señor Valverde on community solidarity and finding joy and hope in the midst of uncertainty.

*Interview by Guadalupe P. Martínez, Project  
Curator, Centro Humanitario Connector*

Pues, bastante, bastante apoyo tuvimos de la comunidad, de los hermanos de la iglesia, que, que de una manera u otra nos hacían llegar—este, nos traían comida, nos dejaron en la puerta muchísimo mandado, bendito sea Dios. Que eso nos ayudó bastante. Si no hubiéramos tenido ese mandado, si no hubiéramos tenido todo eso con que comer. Porque había ocasiones en que, en que mi esposa y yo no nos podíamos ni levantar para poder cocinar, para poder calentar agua para un té, un café, o algo. Le digo yo, solamente el Señor, el Señor que, que mueve a todas esas familias. Que, que nos apoyaron bastante. Que—había ocasiones en que la puerta no la podíamos abrir. Porque había bastante mandado. Había un plato de comida, había una sopa calentita. Y siempre, siempre, estaban en constante comunicación, preguntando “¿Qué, que necesita?” “¿Qué se le ofrece?” y me decían “¿Qué se le antoja?” Le digo yo, “Lo que ustedes puedan.” Ahí se mira la mano del Señor, en todas esas familias que nos apoyaron muchísimo, gracias.

Well, we had a lot, a lot of support from the community, from the brothers of the church, who somehow made us get—they, they brought us food, they left us a lot of groceries at the door, blessed be God. That helped us a lot. If we hadn’t had those groceries, if we hadn’t had all that to eat. Because there were times when my wife and I couldn’t even get up to cook, to heat up water for tea, coffee, or something. I tell you, only the Lord, the Lord who, who moves all those families. That, they supported us a lot. That—there were times when we could not even open the door. Because there were plenty of groceries. There was a plate of food, there was a warm soup. And always, always, they were in constant communication, asking, “What, what do you need?” “What can I do for you?” and they said to me, “What do you crave?” I would tell them, “Whatever you can.” There you see the hand of the Lord, in all those families that supported us a lot, thank you.

## María Pineda on faith in times of crisis.

*Interview by Sarahy Plazola, Project Curator,  
Centro Humanitario Connector*

Mucha gente ha sentido tanto dolor en esta pandemia, tantos que han muerto y yo le doy gracias a Dios porque cuando veo ahí a mamás que se les han muerto dos, tres hijos o algo así, ¡Guau! Yo digo, “Gracias Señor, en eso no se me fué mi hija, gracias a Dios, Señor. Y pasamos la pandemia, gracias a Dios, gracias a mi Dios.” Algo que aprendí, pues en este tiempo: darle gracias a Dios. Y pues pensar que él es único que decide nuestras vidas, nadie más. Podemos estar bien fuertes, pero si Dios dice “Ya ahora te toca,” no hay de otra, ¿verdad?

Many people have felt so much pain in this pandemic, so many who have died and I thank God because when I see mothers there who have lost two, three children or something like that, wow! I say, “Thank you Lord, in that my daughter did not leave me, thank God, Lord. And we passed the pandemic, thank God, thank my God.” Something I learned, well in this time: give thanks to God. And then to think that he is the only one who decides our lives, nobody else. We can be very strong, but if God says, “Now its your turn,” there’s no other way, right?

### ABOUT THE PROJECT CURATORS

The Centro Humanitario’s community connectors are a group of immigrant and first-generation Latina women and Latino men. Being part of the community and having received training to serve as community liaisons, the connectors are trusted advocates, educators, community leaders, and outreach workers.



**Patty Grado**  
on the emotional  
side of providing  
relief and resources  
to the community and  
a message of hope.

*Interview by Marina Cruz, Project Curator,  
Centro Humanitario Connector*

He tenido etapas de tristeza, he tenido etapas de alegría, de felicidad, cuando a la gente le ayudan, y cuando esas—esos mensajes que recibo de agradecimiento de la gente, eso me hace sentir bien. He tenido etapas de mucha tristeza, de ver cuánta gente se ha muerto que no tienen [dinero] ni para enterrarlos. Cuántas personas no volvieron a ver a su familia. Y eso es bien triste para mí, es horrible. Y, sí, he tenido etapas de todas....A mí me gustaría dejar ese mensaje de esperanza y que esto va a mejorar y esto va a cambiar. Y, ojalá y el futuro nos traiga lo mejor y lo que anhelamos. Y ojalá que este nuevo presidente lleve a este país por una—una vía donde todo sea más justo. Sabemos que no puede ser perfecto, porque la vida si fuera perfecta no tendría chiste. La vida sin retos no tiene chiste. Pero sí, a mi me gustaría dejar ese mensaje de esperanza.

I have had phases of sadness, I have had stages of joy, of happiness. When people receive help, and when that—those messages that I receive of thanks from people, that makes me feel good. I have had stages of great sadness, of seeing how many people have died that they do not even have [money] to bury them. How many people did not see their family again. And that is very sad for me, it is horrible. And, yes, I have gone through all kinds of stages....I would like to leave that message of hope and that this will improve and this will change. And, hopefully and the future brings us the best and what we long for. And hopefully this new president will lead this country down a—a path where everything is fairer. We know that it cannot be perfect, because if life were perfect it would be boring, life without challenges is boring. But yes, I would like to leave that message of hope. ●



To learn more about *Voices of Centro Humanitario: Labor, Barriers, and Hope in the Times of Covid-19*, visit [h-co.org/centrohumanitario](https://h-co.org/centrohumanitario).



Photo by Viviana Guajardo.

# A Moment in Time

We asked Coloradans one question: If you could have been an eyewitness at a historic event, which one would you choose?

EDITED BY  
NATASHA GARDNER

There are moments in your life that you might be able to recall with precision. The first, thundering cry from a newborn. What it felt like to say goodbye to a grandparent. The squeeze of a friend's hand after a long day at work. The warmth of the summer sun on your face; the chill of winter's wind.

The past two years have left plenty of indelible marks on our collective memories. But instead of focusing solely on the contemporary, it made us ponder—as we often do—the past. If we could cast back in time, what historic moments would we have liked to witness? There are plenty to choose from: listening to the first Red Rocks Amphitheatre concert, marching with Corky Gonzales, and attending the first Juneteenth celebration, to name a few. But that's just the start. To broaden our search, we asked Coloradans to send us their responses, which inspired, educated, and encouraged us to learn more. Come, take a step back in time with us.

## **The Moment: Governor Ralph Carr's time in office**

A moment in history I would have liked to witness was 1942. This was a horrible time for our country and for our state. I do not wish to witness all of the awful things that were done to the Japanese and Japanese Americans in our state and in our nation, but I would have liked to witness the character and principle of Governor Ralph Carr. He was a man who stood up for the rights of the American citizens of Japanese descent when no one else would. As someone whose grandfather, great-uncle, and great-aunts were incarcerated during this time, this period in our history resonates greatly with me. My grandfather was incarcerated at Tule Lake (California) but my great-uncle and aunt were incarcerated at Amache (Colorado's incarceration camp for Japanese and Japanese Americans). Because of the work that Ralph Carr did, they were able to leave Amache and go to the University of Denver to

finish their schooling. They have been forever grateful to the man who stood up for their rights when no one else did. I wish I could have seen this honorable man in person and thanked him from the bottom of my heart for standing up against injustice and fighting for the rights of all American citizens.

—Sara Moore, Executive Director,  
Colorado Dragon Boat Festival

### **The Moment: The 1980 State Spelling Bee**

This one's a bit niche, but as a former two-time Colorado State Spelling Bee champion, I would've loved to see Jacques Bailly win the state spelling bee in 1980. He won the national bee that same year and has since become the Scripps National Spelling Bee's official pronouncer and an unparalleled icon in the spelling world—most importantly, an unparalleled Colorado icon. Lots of people don't know that the person pronouncing the words on national TV every year grew up in Colorado, but he did! He was possibly the biggest

celebrity of all to me as a kid, and I'd personally consider him as much an icon of Colorado history as anyone.

—Simon Lamontagne, former Colorado Spelling Bee Champion and student at Dartmouth College (class of 2024)

### **The Moment: The creation of the root beer float**

Mining towns of the mid- to late-1800s housed both substantial hardship that came with being in the working class, and increased avenues of luxuries and entertainment that grew much more accessible than they once were for the average American. One such phenomenon was the creation of the "Root Beer Float," which was inspired by the snow-capped peaks of Cow Mountain. Frank J. Wisner, who owned the Cripple Creek Cow Mountain Gold Mining Company and Brewery, gazed upon the snowy mountain peaks one cool August evening in 1893. He saw the light of the full moon over them, faintly resembling what he thought was a perfect scoop of vanilla ice cream floating atop a glass of

dark soda (Myers Avenue Red Root Beer, to be exact). He named his creation the "Black Cow."

This event is one that resonates with me because it engenders a feeling of liberation among the working class. It informed an evident casualness to their pleasures and created a carefree and fun-loving sentiment that has carried into today's Cripple Creek, now a prominent tourist and outdoor recreation destination. Oh, and the event furthermore resonates with me because, well, I quite like root beer floats.

—Vishal Balaji, Program Facilitator  
and Oral History Indexing Volunteer

### **The Moment: Formation of Glenwood Canyon**

I would love to travel back three million years ago to see the Colorado River just begin to carve Glenwood Canyon, nearly half a mile above the river's location today. After two consecutive years where we have witnessed—and Colorado Department of Transportation crews have responded to—devastating natural

Three Japanese American women at the Granada Relocation Center in Amache on December 13, 1942. Photo by Tom Parker, History Colorado. 88.312.3



An automobile in Glenwood Canyon, sometime between 1910 and 1920.  
*History Colorado. 89.636.4001*



disasters, the chance to see the canyon in its infancy would be a powerful reminder of the change Mother Nature is capable of making to our landscape.

In dozens of visits to Glenwood Canyon, I've gotten to learn more about the stunning geology that is right before our eyes as we pass through. The Colorado River has exposed rock formations as old as 1.7 billion years, and in the rockfalls that hit I-70, we see various rock types that span this immense time frame.

While I-70 through Glenwood Canyon is a challenging stretch of road that faces growing threats from climate change, it offers us an unequaled look back into our ancient past that never ceases to be breathtaking. The next time you're a passenger traveling through, I hope you admire that beauty and history.

—Shoshana Lew, Executive Director  
of the Colorado Department  
of Transportation

### **The Moment: When the Ute people discovered hot springs in Glenwood Canyon**

As a science nerd, there are many times I would like to travel back to. However, if I could only travel back in time to one place I would love to be present when the Ute people first discovered the natural hot springs in what is now Glenwood Springs. I cannot imagine how bizarre it must have been. Traveling through the beautiful, awe-inspiring Glenwood Canyon and finding spots of very hot water. Some areas are over 100 degrees Fahrenheit. From the first discovery, to the first soak, to the first sweat in the vapor caves. How amazing that must have been.

—Autumn Rivera, Colorado's 2022 Teacher  
of the Year; sixth grade science teacher  
at Glenwood Springs Middle School

### **The Moment: Civil rights milestones and a barbecue riot**

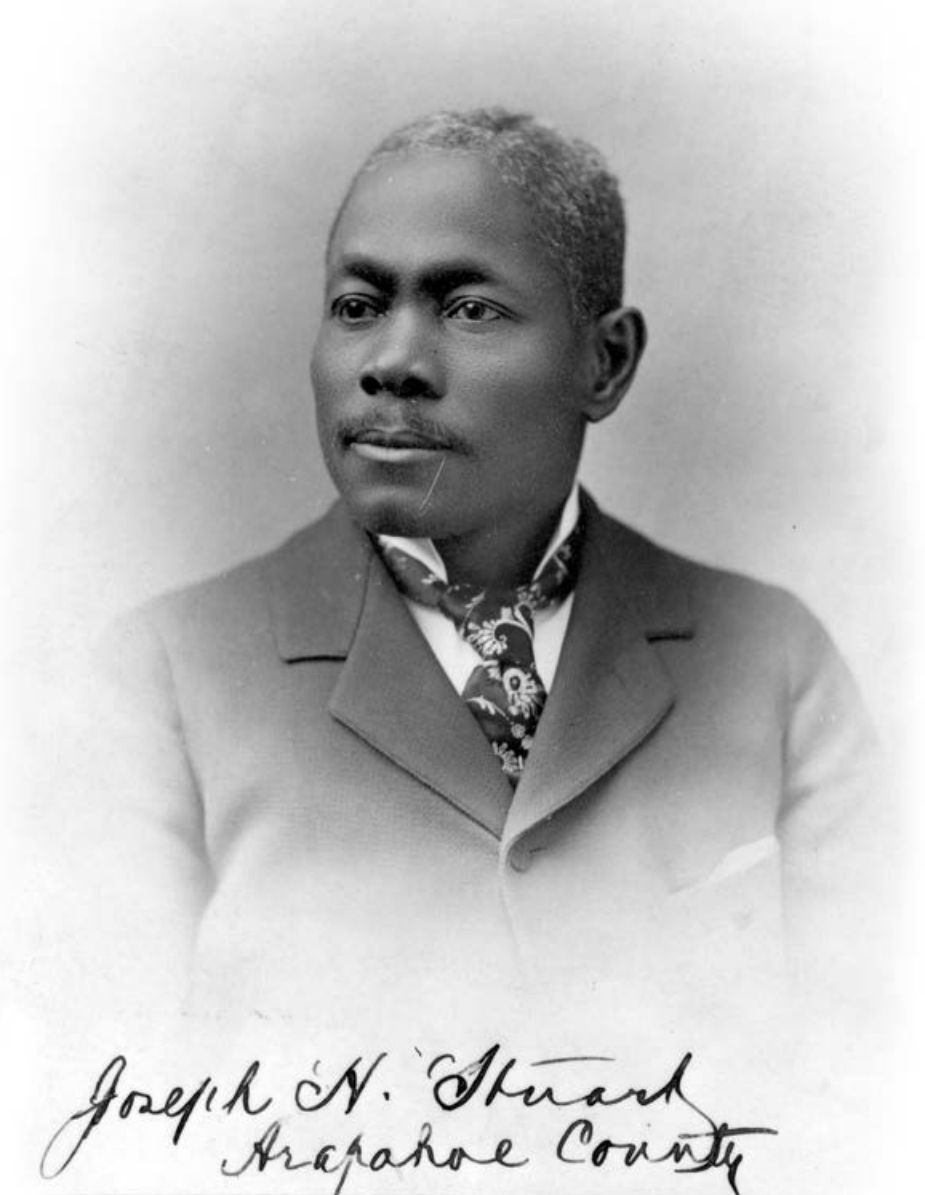
Once my time machine functions properly, there are three moments in Colorado history that I'd love to have witnessed. The first moment is an extended one. From 1865 to 1867, a group of African

American men launched a sustained, and ultimately successful, civil rights campaign to include their right to vote in the state's constitution. The second moment is April 1895 when Colorado State Representative Joseph Stuart, an African American, successfully sponsored a civil rights bill that had the same legal framework as the federal Civil Rights Act passed in 1964. Stuart's bill passed and was enacted with no opposition. Third, was the spectacle I call "The Great Barbecue Riot of 1898." Columbus B. Hill, an African American and prominent barbecue cook, oversaw a VIP barbecue dinner to help persuade key influencers

to keep the Stock Show in Denver. The original guest list included a few thousand people and a menu that promised to barbecue almost every animal imaginable. However, more than twenty-five thousand people showed up for free barbecue. As you can guess, it didn't end well. The crowd pressed to get some food and a riot ensued. The farce garnered national headlines, and Hill's reputation took a temporary hit. It would have been quite the sight to behold and a feast to savor.

—Adrian Miller, food writer,  
James Beard Award winner, and  
certified barbecue judge

Joseph H. Stuart. Photo by H. Rothberger, History Colorado. 89.451.4084





Mother Jones marching in 1914.  
History Colorado. 89.451.4260

### **The Moment: Labor movements of the early 1900s**

The fight for workers' rights has been an extensive and important part of United States history. In my junior year AP US History class, I wrote a research paper analyzing the effects of the Haymarket Massacre of 1886—a peaceful labor-rights protest in Chicago that turned into a deadly shootout after an unknown source threw a bomb. The event was followed by a series of legal proceedings that sentenced prominent figures who supported the protest to death. Years following, there were continued setbacks in labor movements around the country as strikes were crushed, unfair trials proceeded, and there was a lack of a change in legislation to provide fair working environments. In our own state of Colorado, there was a long enduring battle for workers' rights that often remains untold. In 1914,

the Colorado coal strike climaxed in an event known as the Ludlow Massacre in which at least nineteen people were killed.

I would want to see the nationwide response to this event and how it still took decades to achieve justice—as it wasn't until 1938 that payment in scrip wages and child labor became illegal under the Fair Labor Standards Act.

—Arman Kian, high school senior  
at the Kent Denver School

### **The Moment: The Civil Rights era**

The moment in history I would most like to witness is the Civil Rights era. I am a student and a beneficiary of these trailblazers, who, going as far back as the Tuskegee Airmen, broke barriers, marched, or even refused to give up their seat on a bus so that everyone who came after them, and not just those at

the time, would have greater equality and new opportunities. Every experience I have, personally and professionally, as an African American in Denver and Colorado is informed by the courage and sacrifices of those who stood up and demanded change. And when you look at what we are still determined to achieve today, whether it's equity, greater social justice or securing voting rights, we must continue to champion these causes because these heroes passed the baton to us. We have a responsibility to history and to future generations to pick up that baton and carry it forward.

—Denver Mayor Michael Hancock

### **The Moment: The Beatles at Red Rocks Amphitheatre**

Imagine, standing within row after row of stone, stretching on tiptoes to catch a glimpse as the screams of 7,000 fans collide. The lights go out. Suddenly the

first bars of “Twist and Shout” burst forth, turning the roar into a fever-pitch. Even in my dreams, watching The Beatles play at Red Rocks Amphitheatre (1964) is spectacular, but oh, to have lived it.

During this time, the Vietnam War escalated abroad, violence continued with race riots across our nation, and only a month prior, the Civil Rights

Act of 1964 was signed into law. With civil unrest still plaguing our country, I would have been honored to witness Coloradans come together to celebrate the joy, music, and message of The Beatles in the most beautiful and acoustically pleasing outdoor concert venue in the world (I’m only a little biased). It not only represented a microcosm of pop culture in 1964, it secured the

status of a beloved Colorado venue. It also foreshadowed the vibrant arts and culture scene in the Denver metro area, of which I am so proud. Was it profoundly important? Perhaps. Was it endlessly cool and indicative of the rock-on Colorado spirit we still exude today? Absolutely.

—*Katherine Rose Rainbolt, Chief Marketing Officer, Tattered Cover Book Store* ●



Red Rocks Amphitheatre in the 1960s.

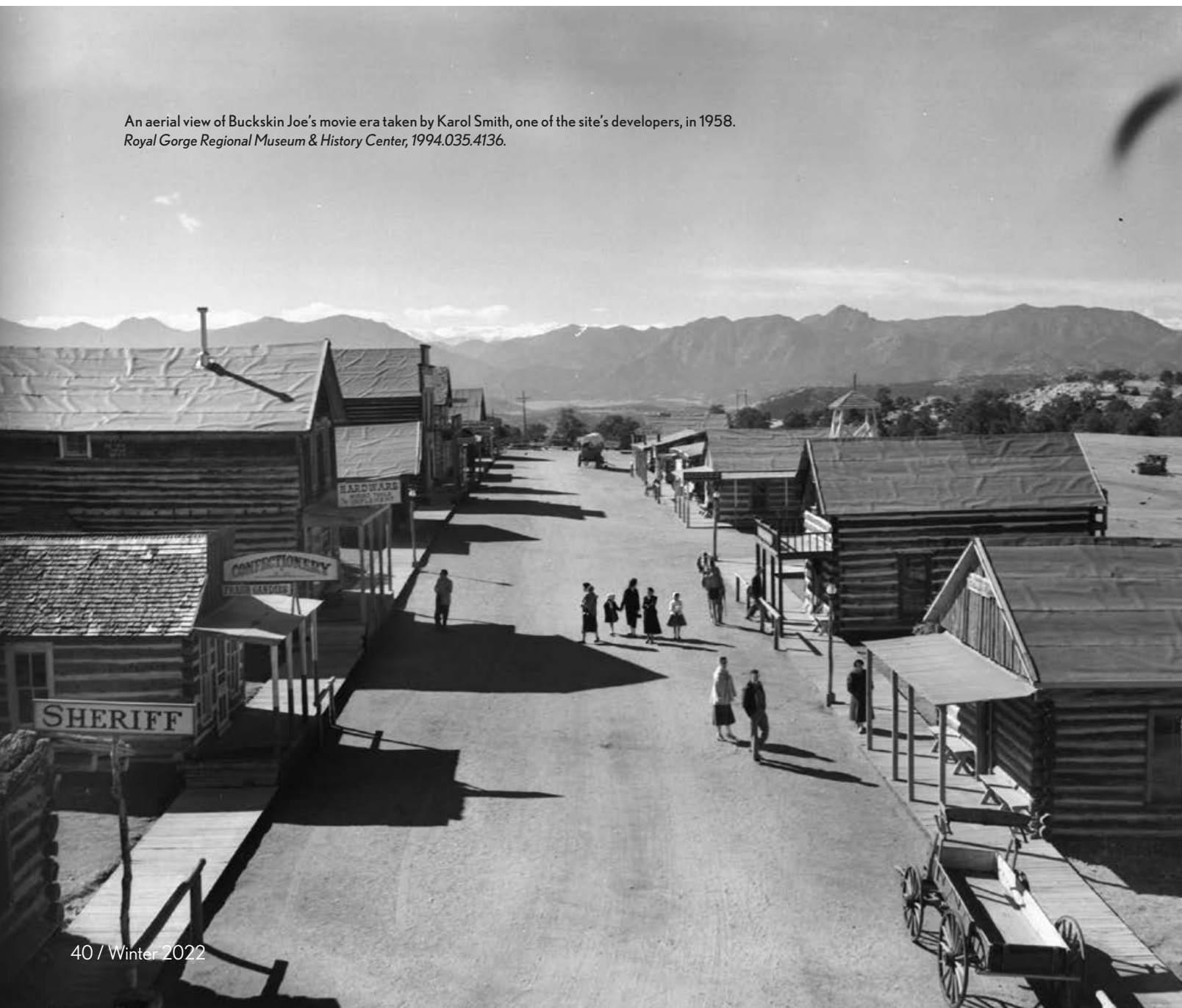
Photo by Robert W. Schott,  
History Colorado. PH.PROP.70

# **GOLDEN DREAMS TO SILVER SCREENS**

**The tall tales surrounding Buckskin Joe, a historic  
settlement that has lived at least three lives.**

BY DEVIN FLORES

An aerial view of Buckskin Joe's movie era taken by Karol Smith, one of the site's developers, in 1958.  
*Royal Gorge Regional Museum & History Center, 1994.035.4136.*



**G**host towns are real, physical places, but they always strike me as being more about the myth of the place than the buildings. Walking through them, it's almost impossible to resist imagining what must have happened there, to picture the lives of the people who built those now-dilapidated buildings, and to wonder why they left.

Maybe it's because of their emptiness. The mind wants to fill in those blank spaces, to make a dead settlement feel alive again. Maybe it's because unlike "living" towns, they have an undeniable endpoint, which makes you ask, *Why?* and *What happened?*

Often, with just a little research it's possible to dig up plenty of stories about a ghost town, but they tend to carry with them unique twists. Local legends and personal flairs echo across generations to distort the real history, and those tales continue to impact how we understand the history of the American West. That is exactly what's happened with the strange—and ongoing—tale of Buckskin Joe.

### The Man and the Myth

The origin story of Buckskin Joe—a hamlet that sprung up in the nineteenth century in what is now Park County—begins in a way very much like many other mountain towns in Colorado: Somebody struck gold.

The original "Buckskin Joe" wasn't even a place, but a man. His name was Joseph Higginbottom and extremely little is known about him, except that he was a Canadian, Black or mixed-race fur trapper and gold panner in the Colorado Rockies. Not long after the Pikes Peak Gold Rush began, and most likely during the winter of 1860, "Buckskin" Joe Higginbottom found himself in the mountains just north of South Park, near modern Fairplay.

According to local legends, Joe went hunting on a cold winter day. While shouldering his rifle at his quarry, he slipped on a patch of ice and his shot went wide. It scared off his target, but Joe was astonished to find that the bullet had

struck a nearby rock face, stripping away the surface and revealing a glimmering vein of gold.

This story is so fantastic that you can practically smell the campfire around which it must have originated, and the scent of liquor and chewing tobacco on the breaths of the early gold miners retelling it over and over, each time making the hunt more dramatic—sometimes it's a deer; maybe it's an elk, moose, mountain lion, or even a bear. And you can almost hear the Ennio Marconi music swelling as the shimmering golden light reflects onto a gruff mountain man's face.

The truth is almost certainly more mundane than that, but the truth wasn't the point of retelling this story. It must have made every trapper's and prospector's heart swell with vicarious joy and not a little bit of envy. Everybody wanted to be that lucky. It was nice to hear that someone was, at least once.

A little mining camp sprung up alongside the shore of the nearby creek as prospectors poured in to stake claims. Mister Higginbottom was still there in the early days, and the camp was known as "his," earning the moniker: Buckskin Joe's. At some point, somebody dropped the possessive "s" and Buckskin Joe was here to stay. The population flashed in the pan in the way mining towns tended to do at that time, and it boasted about 5,000 residents by 1861.

By this point there seems to have been a general consensus among the residents that their home was becoming a proper destination and, as far as town names go, Buckskin Joe lacked something. So when it came time for a post office to open in late 1861, it did so under the name Laurette. (There's plenty of speculation about how that name came about, but one possibility is that it was a combination of the names of two women in the camp: Laura and Jeanette Dodge.)

It doesn't seem like the new name really stuck. The town site is just as often referred to as Buckskin Joe in documents from that time period—and even a few decades later. Whatever you call it, this isolated boomtown

was one of Colorado's earliest success stories and, as the gold kept flowing, the workers kept coming.

New residents threw up shops and saloons and other businesses, including some names that might be familiar to Colorado history nerds: Horace Tabor, the famous silver mining magnate of Leadville, opened his first general store in Buckskin Joe in 1860, and the ski-wearing, itinerant preacher Father John Lewis Dyer included the little town in his circuit. The town was even briefly made the county seat of Park County and a courthouse was erected near the center of town. It was during this time of prosperity that Buckskin Joe's most famous legend arose about a woman whose name we don't even know.

### The Ballad of Silverheels

The tale of Silverheels is a complicated one that is both extremely easy and frustratingly difficult to recount. There are so many variations to this story that it's almost impossible to get a bead on the original narrative, and each one is a little more unbelievable than the last.

The stories do seem to agree that Silverheels was an entertainer employed by the local saloons. She danced for wages and maintained a mysterious facade: According to most of the tales, she never told anybody her name, and, in fact, wore a mask or veil of some kind so that no one even saw her face. As a result, the town came to know her as Silverheels, after the silvery shoes she wore while dancing.

Silverheels could only have been in town for a short time before the smallpox came. Disease was a constant threat in isolated mining towns. People were often living in rough conditions, and the nearest doctors were far away, so when the first case of smallpox struck Buckskin Joe in late 1861, it spread quickly. Most of the miners refused to abandon their claims and seek respite in other locations, and as a result many of them became deathly ill—and there were few people to take care of them. One of those who did was Silverheels.



This etching, titled *Dancing with Silverheels*, depicts a rowdy scene in a crowded saloon. The semi-legendary dancer is depicted without the veil that most stories describe her wearing. *History Colorado*. 86.296.4406

According to lore, Silverheels remained in town, getting food and supplies for the sick and helping to tend to them. Some say she even produced large sums of money—either saved up from her time dancing, or from some unknown source—to bring a doctor to town. How many died is unknown, as very few records from Buckskin Joe still exist, but it is said to have been a harrowing time.

By the spring of 1862 the worst had finally passed, and those who remained in the town remembered the diligence of Silverheels. The miners set for her cabin to thank her (and the way some tell it, carrying a gift of \$5,000), but when they arrived they found her cabin immaculate—and empty.

Some say Silverheels had caught smallpox and died of it somewhere on the mountainside. Some say she contracted the disease and survived, but was so scarred by pockmarks that she could no longer make a living as a dancehall girl (despite her apparent habit of covering her face). Others simply end the tale at the cabin saying she vanished and was never seen again.

With such an air of mystery around it, it's easy to see why this story remains popular today among the people of Park County. There are so many versions, many of them contradictory, that it's impossible to even say for certain that there was a woman called Silverheels. Nonetheless, the story struck a chord with people from the very beginning—so much so that one of the most prominent peaks in Park County is known as Mount Silverheels to this day.

### Giving Up the Ghost

Buckskin Joe survived that smallpox outbreak and soon returned to being a booming mining town, but good times don't last forever. Boomtowns often have a bust, and Buckskin Joe's came sooner than most. The gold seam it was built around was unusually close to the surface, but it was also shallow, and ran dry after just a few years of mining. The miners began to disperse, wandering off in search of richer seams. By 1866, Buckskin Joe was completely empty.

The buildings, everything from the bank to the general store to the saloons,

were abandoned where they stood. The only one saved was the county courthouse, which was lifted up log by log and moved down the mountains to Fairplay.

Buckskin Joe's old residents left the area entirely, maybe even heading back east or going further west. Many likely stayed in Colorado, settling in other mining towns like Ouray or Salida. But wherever they traveled, they took with them stories about that place, a wayward bullet, and a dancer who vanished without a trace.

Piece by piece, Buckskin Joe—as a story—became immortal. Even as the abandoned buildings began to rot away high in the mountains, the town's legendary status had become cemented. It wasn't an accurate picture, but something a little more vibrant than life...a little more, well, cinematic.

### A New Age

In an act of what can only be described as town necromancy, Buckskin Joe was reborn in the year 1957. Western films were very popular in the 1950s, and at that time there was a growing interest in authentic sets. So when MGM Studios

director Malcolm Brown heard the stories of a ghost town with an almost pitch-perfect “Old West” name, he knew he too had struck gold—figuratively, this time. MGM wanted a movie set in Colorado with the mountains as an all-natural backdrop, and he found a way to give it to them.

A team was sent to Park County’s Buckskin Joe, where they examined what remained. The only building in decent shape was Horace Tabor’s old general store, so it was carefully taken apart and moved down to a new site in Fremont County, eight miles west of Cañon City.

Other buildings were carefully transported from other ghost towns across central Colorado, and a few new structures were constructed to fill the gaps. There was a jail, multiple saloons, and a stable. In the summer of 1957, the new site was used to film several movies, and after the movie stars and film cameras left, a skeleton crew was left behind to tend to the site. By 1958, interested locals were asking for tours of the buildings and the owners began to let them in during the downtime between filmings.

Over time, the locale became a popular destination. The new Buckskin Joe, as it was soon officially titled after the now-dismantled ghost town, became known as one of the world’s

largest “Old West” theme parks. Generations of people visited Buckskin Joe during this time period to marvel at the historic buildings lining its few streets and to enjoy historical reenactments of saloon entertainment, horseback riding, and staged gunfights. It was all very touristy and, in a way, its larger-than-life retellings of Wild West clichés became a living, breathing successor to all those tall tales that had been told about the original Buckskin Joe for almost a century.

The movies being filmed at Buckskin Joe added even more tales. In all, more than two dozen films were made there, including the original *True Grit* from 1969, and several episodes of *How the West Was Won*. Television programs were filmed there as late as 2010. These movies repeated and retold the old campfire stories and cemented the mythologization of the American West for yet another generation. But this silver screen era, like the brief golden age of the 1860s, also came to an end.

In 2010, Buckskin Joe announced it was closing down. It had been sold to billionaire William Koch, who moved the old buildings to private property on the Western Slope. Though there has been interest in recent years in redeveloping the site into a new destination, the theme park—like the town’s original

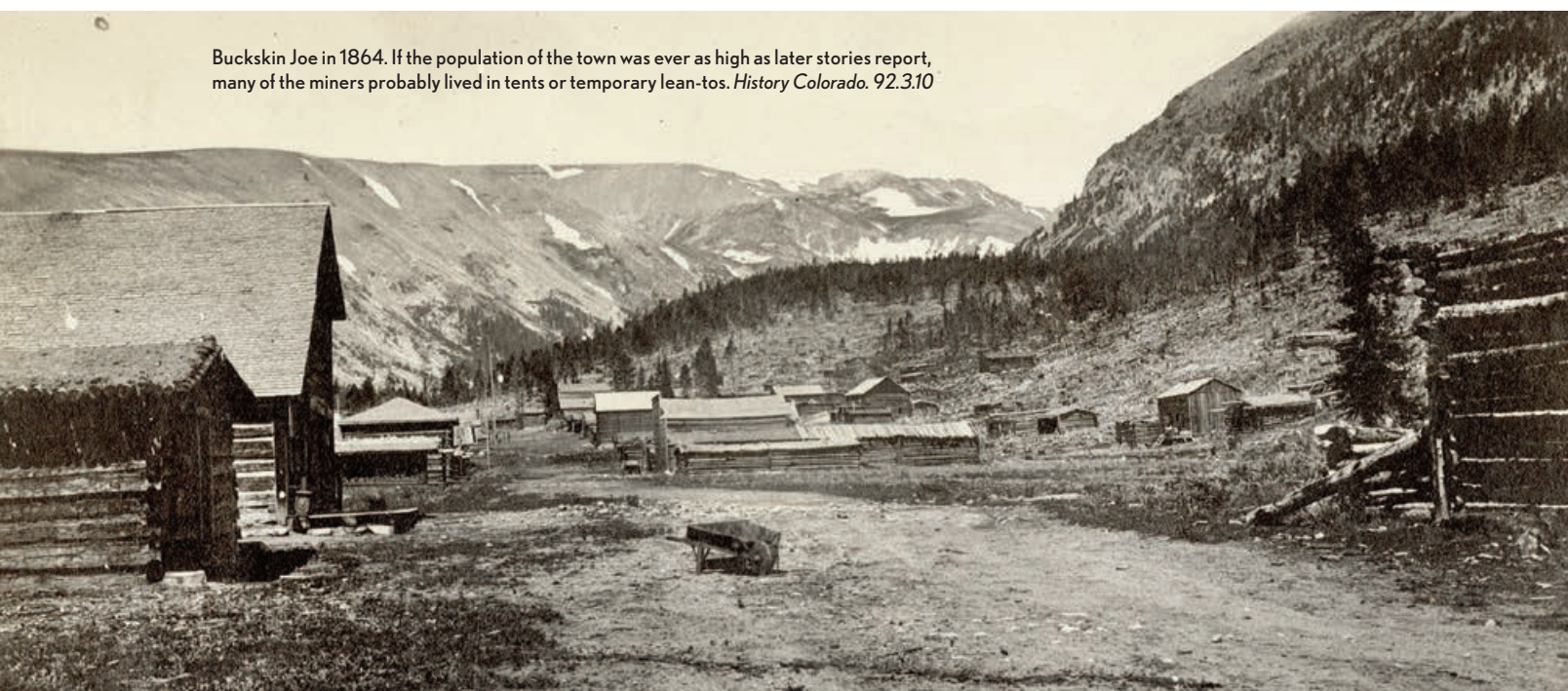
site—is now mostly empty and desolate. Buckskin Joe lies lifeless once more—a ghost town’s ghost town.

But the stories woven about it live on in the frontier-era campfire stories still retold by residents of Park County, in the memories of people who visited the theme park during its heyday, and in the many films that were shot on location there.

These stories—as unverifiable, exaggerated, or outright fabricated as they might be—remain important to us. Not because they teach us the truth about what life was like in those time periods, but because they tell us a lot about the people who were telling them. They reflect more on the storytellers than on the actual history of towns like Laurette, show what is important to these people, and indicate what stories resonate with them—the good, the bad, and even the ugly. And the specters of ghost towns like Buckskin Joe and so many others continue to haunt us to this day, affecting how many interpret and understand history, whether we realize it or not. ●

**DEVIN FLORES** is the Digital Content Specialist for History Colorado. He graduated in 2019 from CSU-Pueblo, with a degree in Mass Communications and Spanish.

Buckskin Joe in 1864. If the population of the town was ever as high as later stories report, many of the miners probably lived in tents or temporary lean-tos. *History Colorado*. 92.3.10



# DRAWING BOARD

**We sat down with architect Alec Garbini to discuss building booms, good design, and the Cash Register Building.**



## **Q Why do you think it is important to support History Colorado's work?**

**Alec Garbini:** I think it's really important to have a central focus for architectural artifacts and stories of Colorado. There are a number of museums and institutions here in town who preserve and protect their pieces of history, but do not necessarily share them with the rest of the community. I think having one place to go where you can have access to that information is really important.

## **Q We're in the midst of a historic building boom in Colorado. Why do you feel it's important to document this architectural moment?**

**Alec Garbini:** I'm from the East Coast; I grew up outside of Philadelphia. And if you go to the communities and the cities of Baltimore, Philadelphia, northern New Jersey, they're static. It's history, but there's very little new going on. Come to Denver and you turn a corner and there's something new all over town. There are so many centers of activity and influence. And each one of them has a little bit of a different character.

## **Q Is there a "Denver" character?**

**Alec Garbini:** You know, it's been an ongoing argument among the architects in this community for years: *What does Colorado architecture look like? Does it look like something that the client in Houston or Chicago or Kansas City created?* And I always tell the story that one of the centerpieces of Denver wasn't even designed to be here.

## **Q Are you talking about the Cash Register Building?**

**Alec Garbini:** Yes. It was originally designed to be in Houston and it's interesting that we view that as the symbol of Colorado. We're having a lot of that go on right now. And so the search for an identity still goes on in Colorado. And it involves not only the architectural community, but the community at large who can ask for better than what we're getting.

## **Q What building really delights you?**

**Alec Garbini:** I love the Denver Botanic Gardens's conservatory building. Victor Hornbein was the designer of that, and he was trained under Frank Lloyd Wright. And we're lucky enough to have his drawing in the [History Colorado] collection. If you go over and look at that structure it is amazing in terms of the details.

## **Q How do you think that history can guide us in confronting the challenges that we're facing today, here in Colorado and as Americans?**

**Alec Garbini:** I think what comes through in *Building Denver* is the impact of the individual and the power of the group. The buildings exhibited are more than bricks and mortar. They are the physical representations of the ideas and efforts of individuals, whether they were Denver mayors, real estate developers, architects, or citizen groups. The individuals may be the spark, but they cannot succeed without the group, whether they are for or against change.

The history of building Denver is one of taking chances and promoting change. Some ideas considered state of the art at the time have worked and others have failed. The successes as well as the failures are what make the urban fabric of Denver unique. What is important is that we foster a dialogue within the community where change is possible.

*This interview has been edited for length and clarity.*

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