

HISTORY COLORADO | FALL / WINTER 2024

THE COLORADO

MAGAZINE

Remembering Columbine After Twenty-Five Years



Fairplay Firsts / Crack Cave / Making Americans



History Colorado

DE LA TIERRA

REFLECTIONS OF PLACE IN THE UPPER RÍO GRANDE



VISITA
EL
MUSEO
HOY

VISIT
MUSEUM
TODAY

HUMAN HISTORY

The word of the year for 2024 was *brain rot*. I would like the word for 2025 to be *human*.

We live in a strange world where humans are seeking to become more machine-like and computers are trying to become more human-like. I would like to make an argument in this strange era for some humanness—not just for our technology but for ourselves. We need not just human reason, but human softness that is forgiving, loving and immeasurable. We need human interaction that is unmitigated by technology—the long lunch with friends, the Sunday afternoon with elders, baking cookies with our kids, the pick-up game of basketball. We need quiet time for our human imaginations to run wild. And, we need more human storytelling in our lives, whether around campfires or in classrooms.

History, at its purest root, is our grand human story. It is the story we tell about ourselves and each other. It has existed as long as human flesh and is as essential to our existence as biology. Yet we have largely stripped it from our classrooms. What's lost when our kids are mostly STEM-educated, with little to no emphasis on humanities or civics? How have we lost the simple joy of reading? Some graduates haven't read (if you believe the headlines) a single book from cover to cover.

So is it inevitable that our world must become increasingly codified in dehumanized ways? I think the answer is no, and I was relieved recently when my son, a high school senior, told me that they were reading *Frankenstein* in class this fall. This first published example of science fiction demonstrates the timelessness of great literature to tell us the truth about ourselves and the power of humanities to interrogate the dilemmas and tragic flaws of being human. As we turn the page on another year and perhaps on another era, will we harness the alchemy of our humanness to manifest humanity's magnificence or its monsters? Do we choose beauty or brain rot?

History Colorado offers respite in this tech-addled age. The work we do together is human-centered and grounded in those who have come before with an obligation for those who will follow us. We advocate for humanity and historic truth. We understand the power of hands-on, the power of place, and the power of telling our stories.

Wishing you a year filled with happiness and human goodness in 2025. I would love to spend time with you in real life at one of our many events or activities.



President/CEO & State Historic Preservation Officer



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 fifty-one sovereign nations who continue to call this land home. Together, we plan exhibits; collect, preserve, and interpret artifacts; do archaeological work; and create educational programs to share the history of Colorado.

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THE COLORADO MAGAZINE

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ABOVE The Denver Gas & Electric Building, better known as the Public Service Building, was designed by architect Harry W.J. Edbrooke. The building was completed in 1910 and used more than 13,000 light bulbs on its exterior.

COVER Rebel Hill at sunset. Courtesy of Ted Engelmann

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THE FORUM

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Drop us a line at publications@state.co.us

Praise for the Last Issue

Kudos to Devin Flores! This article was fabulous. I am not a particular fan of dinosaurs, but I confess I couldn't stop reading your article. I love to read about real people and events with a touch of intrigue and mayhem. This article fit the bill and expanded my knowledge of dinos from right in my own backyard. Well written!

—Ginny Gelbach, via email

I enjoyed your piece on the misplacement of El Paso, Texas, and negotiations following the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo over the southern border. It brought back fond memories of my college professor, historian Robert Remini, a Jacksonian American specialist who was still upset about the screw-ups based on that map. This was at the University of Illinois, Chicago, fifty years ago. Thanks for the memories.

—Cristin Cochran, via email

Requesting Military History

History Colorado visitors and members are requesting more about the history of the military in Colorado.

The military constitutes one of the largest employers in the state, but we neglect to tell the story and history of this important factor in our state's economy. Military history helped shape the boundaries of our state, and we have been significantly impacted by this history. Can we see more articles, exhibits, and interpretation of this aspect of our history?

—David Little, via email

History Colorado replies: Military history is long and deep in this state, and we're grateful for our men and women who served. Check out our Lost Highways team's work in their episode "The Ship Inside the Mountain" about the history of NORAD and the Cheyenne Mountain Complex. Our work with the 10th Mountain Division is also ongoing, and we're delighted to announce that versions of the Winter Warriors exhibition are ready to travel to museums around our state!

In Appreciation of Print

Thank you so much for continuing to publish *The Colorado Magazine* as a print edition. As you are undoubtedly aware, several major cultural organizations in Colorado are now publishing their magazines only in digital formats. This is very unfortunate, as one cannot really appreciate the contents, particularly photos and maps, on a computer or tablet or cellphone. Keep up the good work! History Colorado is a great asset to our community, including visiting the exhibits in the several museums around the state, conducting research in the Stephen H. Hart Research Center, or just reading the latest issue of the magazine.

—Jean West, via email

History Colorado replies: Thank you for these kind words! We are committed to maintaining our 101-year-old tradition of print magazines for all of the reasons you mentioned! We're grateful for you and all of our print subscribers and members.

Mistaken Dates

In an informative piece on William Henry Jackson, published by History Colorado last year, "Mesa Verde: First Official Visit to the Cliff Dwellings," Jackson provides his narrative of that expedition and the background to the very first photos taken of cliff dwellings in the area. However, except for the first photo reproduced for the article taken in 1874, the dates published for the other photos accompanying the article are incorrect. Jackson and his party, as related in his story, traveled up Mancos Canyon, at the eastern boundary of today's national park. He and his men did not visit Cliff Palace or Cliff Canyon on this visit. Had they done so, Jackson would be credited today for "discovering" Cliff Palace, instead of Richard Wetherill, who first recorded entering the dwelling in 1888.

—Jett Connor, via email

History Colorado replies: Thank you very much for bringing this error to our attention. After some investigation, we confirmed you are correct and that our dates were indeed mistaken. In searching for the source of the error, we determined our archival record for some of the W.H. Jackson images are mistaken. We have corrected the mistakes and are grateful for eagle-eyed readers like you!

Overlooked History in Eastern Colorado

It's sad that you continue to ignore the southeastern portion of Colorado (which has more history than any other Colorado area). For one thing, why don't you include the Pueblo farms on the Mesa? Six-generation families own and operate most of these farms and have wonderful produce, autumn fun, and so much history.

—Laurel Campbell, via email

History Colorado replies: Thank you for making sure we are keeping the aperture of our historical lens open to stories from all of Colorado's four corners. While we strive to make sure we are telling the whole history of the state, we know we can always do better when it comes to representing the whole history.

THE
COLORADO
MAGAZINE

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PRETTY PENNY

A Winter Oasis at Penny Hot Springs

BY JASON L. HANSON

The dashboard thermometer in our car read 28 degrees Fahrenheit and the weather report said the wind was gusting 25 to 35 miles per hour as we pulled up to Penny Hot Springs. My wife and I were on a holiday-season trip to the Crystal River Valley, enjoying a respite in the historic coal company town of Redstone and savoring the quiet beauty of the Rocky Mountain winter away from the familiar and crowded hotspots for skiing and cold-weather recreation. After a long snowshoe hike that morning, we were looking forward to relaxing in the geothermal pools along the side of the river.

The snow was heavy and whipping along with the wind as we stepped out of our car. The climb down the steep riverbank was icy and treacherous—more of a slide down the last section—and the few minutes it took to shed our overclothes and boots, carefully setting them on a rock with our jackets over them as a shield, were numbing. But once we got into one of the naturally heated pools on the edge of the river, all of that melted away like the snow that kept falling into the steaming water.

From the pools, we looked out over the flowing water of the Crystal River to hulking peaks that rose up beyond the opposite bank. Their sheer red rock faces were all the more vibrant alongside the white snow covering all the slopes it could hang on to.

Is there a better Colorado experience than sitting in a natural hot spring, an ice-cold river flowing past just beyond, with snow falling down?

Penny Hot Springs was a site of relaxation for local residents from the early days of settlement in the 1880s, and newspapers at the time noted that the Ute had enjoyed the springs as well before they were forced from the place. Dan Penny arrived from Kansas in 1884 and built a bath house at the site. The *Crystal River Current*, which recorded the valley's news for just a few years in the 1880s, contains numerous references to people building homes and living around the springs, forming a loose settlement that had its own

**Is there a better
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constable and justice of the peace. “Quite a prosperous town promises to spring up at Penny Hot Springs,” the *Current* predicted in 1887. The author supported the claim by noting that “numerous citizens are desirous of erecting summer resorts around the springs,” which were preferable, he explained, to the excessive heat and dust of Glenwood.

The town never materialized. Instead of becoming a resort, Penny Hot Springs became a battleground in the counterculture wars of the 1960s and '70s. Free-spirited bathers started taking the waters au naturel, much to the chagrin of more modest older soakers, and occasionally these nude bathers would jump out to stand across the highway and block coal trucks lumbering down the valley from the few mines still operating in the area. The turmoil finally prompted Pitkin County to bulldoze the soaking pools as a public nuisance in 1972. But it's too great a shame to ruin a natural hot spring, and they were resculpted in the early 1990s, although not much beyond what they had been when the first users found them.

Today, guidebooks and websites will tell you that Penny Hot Springs is “clothing optional.” We soaked with modest bathers who wore suits, and the informal rule seems to be swimsuits by day, birthday suits by night.

As our snowy day grew later, more people showed up—solo soakers or groups of two or three friends, locals relaxing after the workday alongside a few folks from the Front Range, like us, enjoying the high-country holiday. Soakers adjusted the rocks around the pools to balance the proportion of geothermally heated spring water and icy river water to get just the right temperature, changing the configuration of the pools as the level of the river fluctuated.

Whatever you wear (or don't) to soak, pro soakers in wintertime bring a robe. Getting out of the pools is a race against the frigid air as it tries to

penetrate the force field of warmth the pools imbue you with. Slipping on a robe keeps the cold at bay long enough to scramble up to the car, get more properly situated, refreshed and fortified for the road ahead.

Hot springs in winter can feel like you've discovered a secret space. For a pleasant hour or two, you can balance on the fulcrum between extremes, shutting out the world in favor of your own personal Goldilocks zone where it's not

too hot, not too cold, but just right. It's a sensation that people have sought out since before this place became eponymous with America's most democratic denomination, since before this land was called Colorado.

In the magic of the steaming water, it's easy to feel a kinship with those who enjoyed this place before, from the Ute bathers to the Penny family to the hippies to the folks we shared the springs with that day. The people of

Colorado, it seems, have always reveled in a moment to soak and appreciate the good fortune of living in such an incredible place. 🇨🇺

Jason L. Hanson is the chief creative officer and director of interpretation and research at History Colorado.

Bathers reveling in the good fortune of finding a place to experience a classic Colorado hot spring.
Courtesy of Jason L. Hanson



ADA BELLE EVANS

The Trailblazing Black Mayor Who Changed the Face of Colorado

BY ACOMA GAITHER



Portrait of Ada Belle Huff Evans. Courtesy of the Evans family. History Colorado, 2024.118.2

Nested in a high-mountain valley known as South Park (the inspiration for the famous cartoon of the same name) in the rural Rocky Mountains, Fairplay is one of Colorado's oldest mining and ranching outposts. It's part of the traditional homelands of the Ute people, among other Tribes, but white settlement in the area began in 1859 during the Colorado Gold Rush. The town's name came from the "grab-all" mentality common among the era's gold seekers. But a different attitude characterized Fairplay's founders, and some established miners were able to organize themselves to create the town of Fairplay, a place where all were welcome and all "played fair" (or so the legend goes).

Fairplay began shifting its economy towards ranching and tourism in the early twentieth century, a shift that picked up momentum in the decades following World War II as Colorado's high country became known worldwide for its natural beauty and opportunities for outdoor recreation. But aspiring ranchers and adventurous tourists weren't the only ones migrating into the area. An African American family landed in this high-elevation town (at 9,953 feet) and made their mark in Colorado history.

Ada Belle Evans became Colorado's first Black woman mayor when the people of Fairplay voted her into office in 1974. Now, fifty years after her groundbreaking election, I find myself reflecting on Evans's family life and what her extraordinary achievements tell us about the ways Colorado has changed in the last 150 years.

EARLY BEGINNINGS OF THE EVANS FAMILY

Born in Langley, South Carolina on June 9, 1932, Ada Belle Huff grew up in a small rural town where many labored in the surrounding chalk beds and textile mills. Townspeople called it “the valley.” As African Americans living in the American South at that time, the Huffs faced various forms of racial discrimination under Jim Crow. Discriminatory banking practices often barred African Americans from getting home loans. Redlining, a discriminatory practice whereby lenders would deliberately and strategically avoid giving mortgages to people living in predominantly Black neighborhoods, was common. It had the effect of segregating towns across the country. Policies from the Federal Housing Administration fueled this practice and actively encouraged redlining throughout the early twentieth century. Consequently, many Black residents had to build homes themselves. Ada grew up in a home her father, along with other members of the community, built. The house lay on a dirt road across the street from the Baptist church where her family attended every Sunday, and everyone was close-knit.

The Huff family showed spirited determination and diligence. The household included two brothers and two sisters. Her mother worked in the school cafeteria, and her father labored as a barber and worker in the nearby chalk bed. Unfortunately, he passed away in his sixties from a respiratory illness his granddaughters believe resulted from his exposure to calcium carbonate and sulfate in the chalk. At the time, many residents only received up to an eighth-grade education, but Ada, affectionately known as Belle, stood determined to go further. She pushed through many challenges to graduate high school and attend college. In 1951, she went to Benedict College with the goal of becoming a science teacher, and graduated magna cum laude with a degree in biology.



The Evans family home in Fairplay. History Colorado, 2024.118.4

Upon graduating in 1955, Ada returned home to work as a student teacher at her alma mater, Martha Schofield High, back in Aiken County. There she met her husband, Ray Evans, a teacher at the school. They decided to start a family. In the early 1960s, the small-town couple moved to Los Angeles, but they failed to land teaching jobs there. Money was tight, and the birth of their first daughter, Cheri Evans, during their time in Los Angeles, didn't make their situation any easier. To ease the financial stress, Ray worked in the post office, and his brother offered to let the family stay with him while they figured out their next steps.

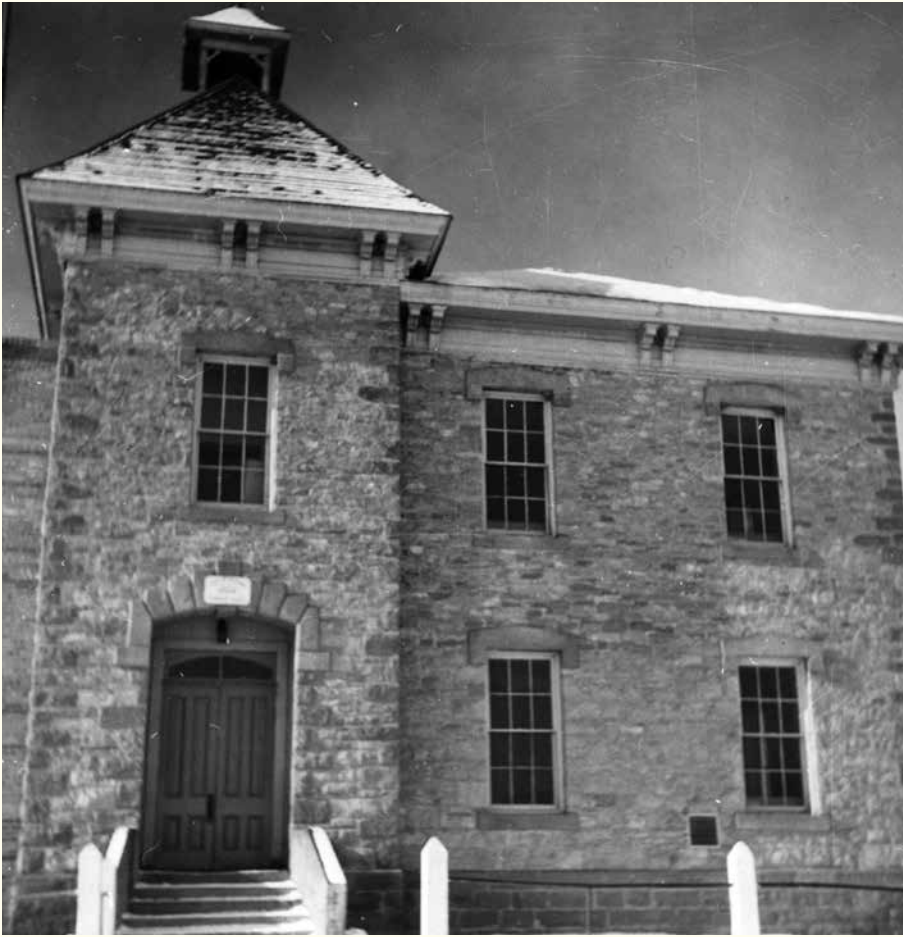
Eventually, Ray Evans took a job offer as a music teacher in the small town of Agate, Colorado, just east of Denver. The family packed up and moved to Denver, where they lived in a duplex on Thirty-sixth and Glencoe in the Park Hill neighborhood where their second daughter, Rachelle, was born in 1962. Ada hoped to secure a full-time teaching position with Denver Public Schools at that time, but unfortunately, none became available. She decided to substitute in Denver and Commerce City, and also found work as a cashier at a King Soopers supermarket. Rachelle and Cheri remember childhood bike rides, enjoying the community

pool, and playing with other children in the predominantly African American neighborhood due to the effects of redlining.

THE FAMILY MOVES TO SOUTH PARK

In 1963, Ray accepted a position as music director and instructor at South Park High School in Fairplay, around eighty miles southwest of Denver, making the long commute back and forth every week for three years. When a science teacher position opened up at the same school, Ada applied and soon joined her husband on staff in 1966.

Upon moving to Fairplay, the Evans family quickly noticed that, of the approximately 500 people living in the remote mountain town, they were the only African Americans. There were also political differences, but the Evanses found commonalities with their new community. Most of the residents were from a working-class background, and for much of the daughters' time in elementary school, they felt welcomed. The daughters enjoyed elementary school, but junior and high school were a little different. Rachelle remembers that's when differences regarding race began to shape which roles she could get in the school plays and who she could date.



Fairplay School, 1950-70. Courtesy of Denver Public Library Special Collections X-8334

Ada taught all the sciences at the high school, including biology, physics, and chemistry. Her classroom was described as hosting a menagerie of sorts, filled with tadpoles, dragonflies, and various other insects. Ada's students described her as a curious person, someone who just found people interesting; Fairplay's townspeople perceived her as loving, caring, and generous. She began to take the pulse of things going on around town. Rachele recalls Ada's good friend, Mrs. Johnson, the South Park kindergarten teacher, joking around with her saying "you should run for mayor!" And eight years after she started teaching at South Park High, Ada decided to just go for it.

Ada's campaign focused on better roads, expansion and care of recreational facilities, and attracting industries to the area to improve employment opportunities. She was always frustrated walking over the rough dirt roads, and she wanted to pave some of Fairplay's streets. In one news article, she complained that she broke too many heels on her shoes walking over those rocky roads.



Looking over the town of Fairplay in the late 1800s. Courtesy of the Park County Local History Digital Archive

Rachelle recalls Ada's good friend, Mrs. Johnson, the South Park kindergarten teacher, joking around with her saying "you should run for mayor!"

In 1974, she beat the mayoral incumbent and another contender, winning sixty-five votes compared to their forty-nine and forty-five votes, respectively. She became the first Black mayor to win by popular vote in the state of Colorado and the first woman to be elected in Fairplay. She served two consecutive two-year terms.

Ada made important policy shifts after taking office. She explored federal revenue-sharing options rather than increasing residents' taxes to pay for much-needed equipment, facilities, and

other resources the town desperately needed. She spent much of her time writing proposals to secure federal funds in order to build low-income housing units including two to three duplexes, find avenues to attract various industries to expand job opportunities, and improve road infrastructure.

In contrast to big-city administrations, mayors of small, rural towns often face different challenges and opportunities. For example, one of Ada's concerns centered on making sure that residents could walk on paved roads and enjoy adequate housing. She advocated for rural towns, hoping to

grow awareness and expand economic development. Lack of housing posed a big concern. When she and her family moved to Fairplay eight years before, they had trouble finding a place to live due to a housing shortage. They eventually found a home, but they had to renovate and enlarge it first.

Ada's time in office saw many accomplishments, both professional and personal. She expanded the variety of job opportunities in the communities and developed plans to attract new industries into the area. Ada wanted to make sure that people could find jobs that fit their skills and improved the visibility of the

► Main Street, Fairplay, 1940. Courtesy of the Denver Public Library Special Collections Z-15635

▼ Fairplay's Main Street, 1972. Courtesy of the Colorado Encyclopedia. Image by Thomas J. Noel



town. Her attempt to expand recreational facilities led to the creation of the South Park Recreation Center years later. In doing so, she sought ways to secure federal revenue-sharing and grants for the recreation center. Completed after she left office, the facility, still standing, came as a result of her laying the groundwork. While in office, she also completed her master's degree in science education from the University of Northern Colorado in Greeley.

Ada's daughters' recollection of the relationship between their parents was that they were friends who complemented each other. Cheri and Rachelle describe their mother as serious and their father as perpetually jovial, adding levity to their lives. Both parents were also great dancers. The sisters also vividly remember helping their mother take care of the local parks like Cohen and the tennis courts by raking leaves and cleaning up after events. It seems like the townspeople were very proud of Ada for putting Fairplay on the map. Local and national press coverage of her efforts helped spread community successes nationwide.

Events such as the Vietnam War, civil rights legislation, equality for women, and the assassinations of President John F. Kennedy and Martin Luther King Jr. were the nation's headlines as the daughters navigated life within their small community, but traveling with their mother helped them see beyond Fairplay. Ada attended political events in surrounding areas like Colorado Springs and Denver. They even remember dropping her off at the governor's mansion for an event, at times attending alongside her. During her tenure, Governor Richard Lamm appointed Ada to the Committee on Manpower and Balance of State Funds. She also became a member of the Colorado Council on Women's Rights.

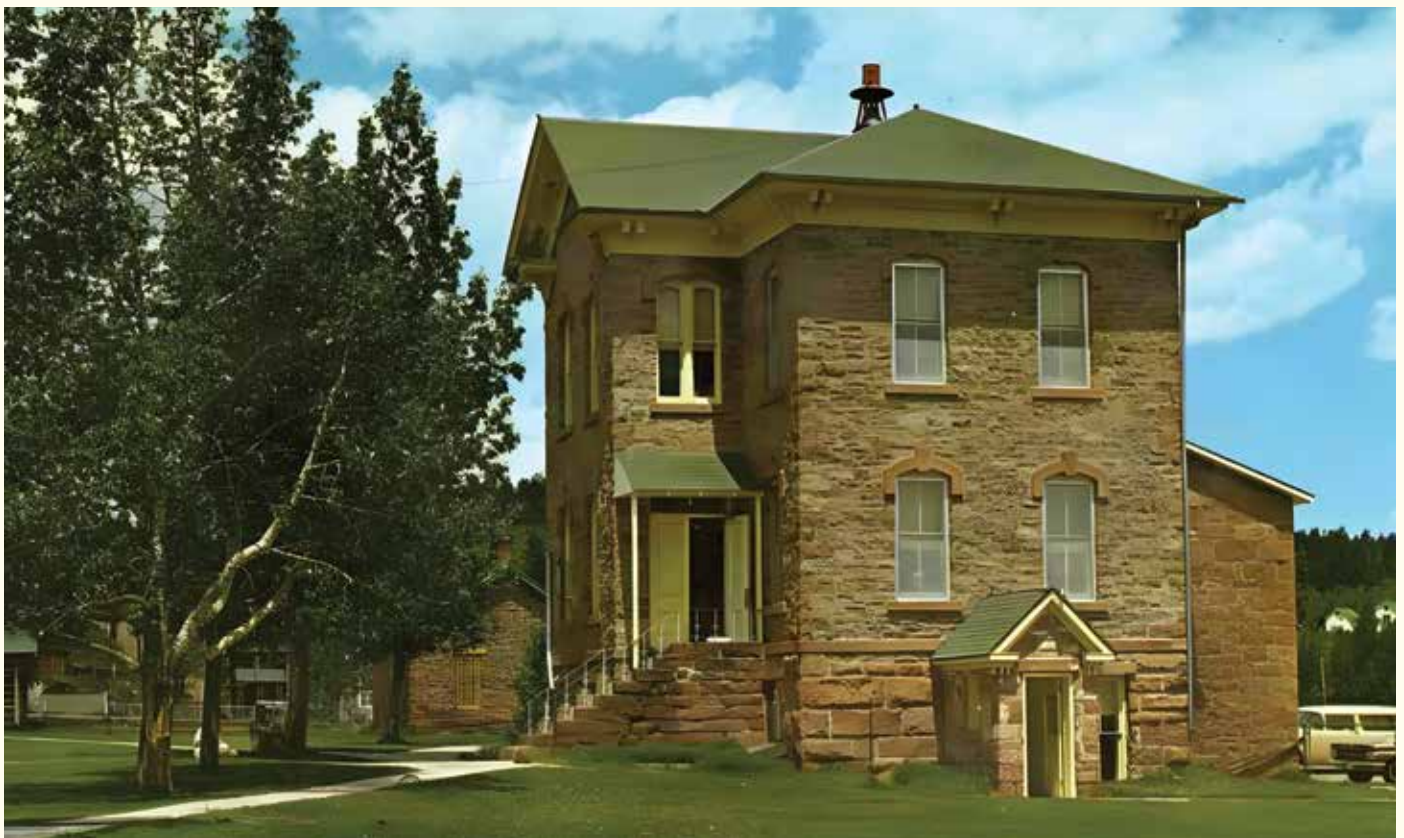
The family garnered increased attention due to Ada's newfound celebrity. As the first Black woman mayor in Colorado, Ada, along with family members, occasionally caught the attention of the media. The family received invitations for interviews by local and national news sources such as the *Rocky Mountain News*, *Denver Post*, and *Jet* magazine.

Letters from across the United States also made their way to the Evans residence.

Ada's being in the spotlight put certain responsibilities on the daughters. The girls' parents strongly encouraged them to be on their best behavior, as they represented the town's mayor and African Americans everywhere. Their parents imparted to them an important lesson: that they should be willing to help anyone in need and that satisfaction comes from loving anyone, regardless of economic circumstance, race, or ethnicity.

After Ada's appointment as mayor she continued to work at South Park High for some time, but soon experienced burnout from teaching. She decided to become a caseworker for the Department of Social Services in Fairplay. Rachelle and Cheri both finished high school and then went to college at Colorado State University in Fort Collins. Like their mother, both entered public service: They became social workers,

Park County Courthouse, built in 1879. Courtesy of the Colorado Encyclopedia. Image by Thomas J. Noel



called to the work by their family's values of generosity and championing the underdog. After attending graduate school, Cheri and Rachelle moved to Winston-Salem, North Carolina. Then in 2001, after forty years of living in Colorado, Ray and Ada moved to North Carolina to be closer to their daughters. They lived their retired life enjoying tai chi classes and spending time with extended family. Cheri opened up a private therapy practice, and Ada helped out when she could.

Surrounded by relatives, Ada Evans lived her final days in peace and joy. On June 3, 2011, she passed away in her home after a battle with colon cancer. She was seventy-eight years old.

A BARRIER-BREAKING LEGACY

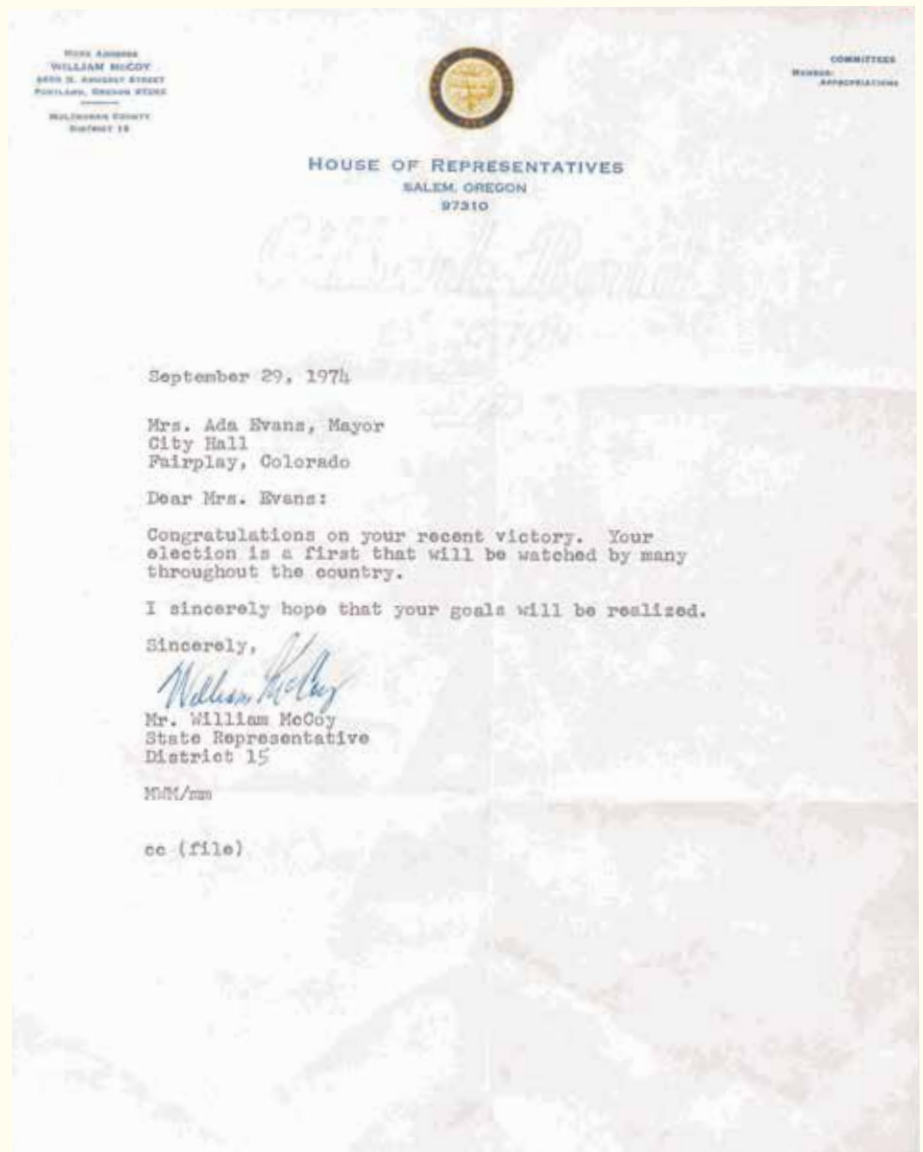
It's not only important to honor Ada's legacy as the first woman, and first African American, to be popularly elected mayor in Colorado. Her merits extend to significant, consequential contributions made through various public policies during her time in office. She increased city infrastructure and social services, secured federal funds for recreational and low-income housing facilities around town, and sought out industries for employment. And she inspired a new generation through her teaching.

Ada made this sanguine comment to *The Denver Post* that I think really summarizes her spirit just a year into her appointment as mayor: "I love going to school. When I was young in South Carolina, I scrubbed floors and cleaned houses and the more I did that, the more I knew I didn't want to do that, so I studied hard. I'm a Gemini, and my horoscope said I'd be in high places, so I worked hard and here I am today, mayor of a town that's 10,000 feet up in the mountains." 🌈

Acoma Gaither is an Emmy Award-winning public historian and serves as the Assistant Curator of Black History at History Colorado. She has a master's degree in Heritage Studies and Public History.



Ada standing in the driveway outside of her home in Fairplay. History Colorado, 2024.118.3



Correspondence from William McCoy, state representative from Oregon, September 29, 1974. Courtesy of Denver Public Library Special Collections

REMEMBERING COLUMBINE, AFTER TWENTY-FIVE YEARS

A Colorado photographer looks back on the images he made in the wake of the shootings at Columbine High School.

BY TED ENGELMANN

A tragedy struck Columbine High School, in Littleton, Colorado, on Tuesday, April 20, 1999. In the usually quiet western suburb of Denver, twelve students and a teacher were shot to death, and twenty-four others were wounded by two students who later took their own lives. The nation was in shock.

Twenty years earlier, I photographed the parades of veterans who fought in Vietnam. The emotional wounds of the war were evident throughout the US and for those who fought alongside us, our allies from South Korea, Australia, and those in their home country.

Early on April 24th, I drove to Clement Park to photograph whatever I could find. By then, individuals, groups of people, and local schools had brought flowers and banners of support, and had even made memorials of the victims' cars. News organizations were out in force; vans, trucks, camera crews, lighting, sound, all supporting the national and local reporters who would discuss the events on the evening newscast.

Similar to documenting the emotional wounds of war, I felt compelled to photograph the events that followed the trauma at Columbine High School.

My only notes from that time reflect my feelings: "Sick—Stress, Shooting at Columbine." These images represent my efforts to show the outpouring of compassion and care that came from the surrounding schools and community. In 1999, the emotional trauma of children

being murdered in an American school was an unheard-of tragedy. Today, it is a tragic experience that happens more than we want to think, or remember. 🇨🇺

Ted Engelmann has been photographing the effects of emotional wounds of war in the US, Australia, South Korea, and Vietnam for more than thirty-five years. He felt compelled to photograph the immediate reaction to the trauma of Columbine, and these photographs

provide a glimpse into the compassionate outpouring and heartfelt sadness in the days following the shooting.

All photos courtesy of Ted Engelmann

Roses placed in line on the fence at the school tennis courts.





Rebel Hill at sunset.

Overlooking Columbine High School and the rest of the community, people gather at the cross on “Rebel Hill” in Clement Park, pause, and reflect on the senseless tragedy.



A man and a woman stop to admire a snow angel in Clement Park.



Visitors gather for prayer, and a hug.





People walk up Rebel Hill in Clement Park to visit the wooden cross, its blue and white balloons and the many notes sharing their messages with the wind.

A plastic covering protects the car of one student killed at Columbine High School. Several cars left in the parking lot were made into memorials.

Flowers, balloons, small wooden crosses, plus letters and messages cover every square inch of ground. Park Hill Elementary Schoolers and their parents left their thoughts, too.





Placing a bouquet of flowers at the Columbine High School sign made of blue and silver paper flowers on the tennis court fence.

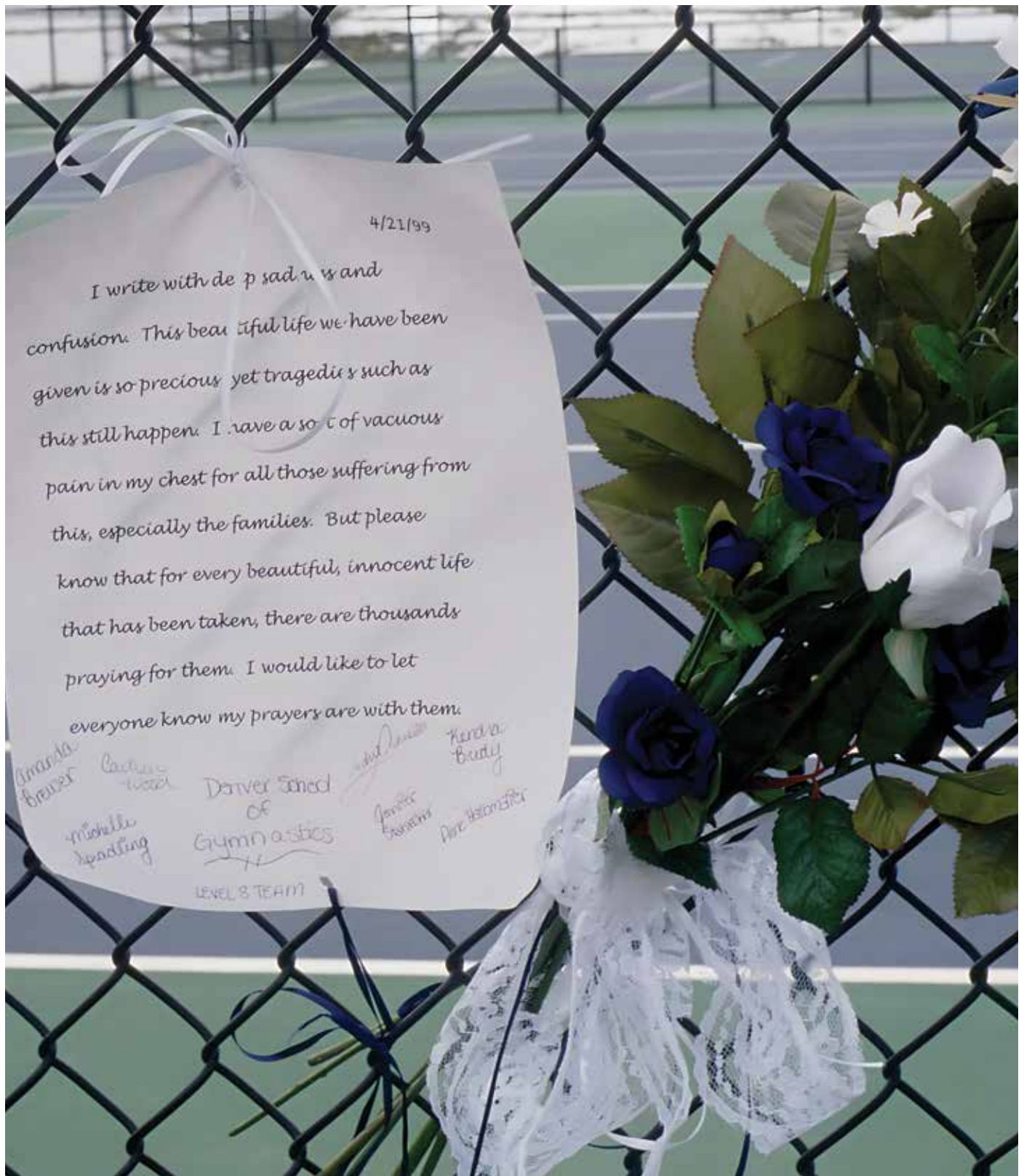
Trekking up Rebel Hill in Clement Park to the cross. A couple inches of snow on April 22nd created a muddy mess where people made paths to this high point.



During a lull in work,
a sound technician reads
the April 24, 1999,
Denver Post.

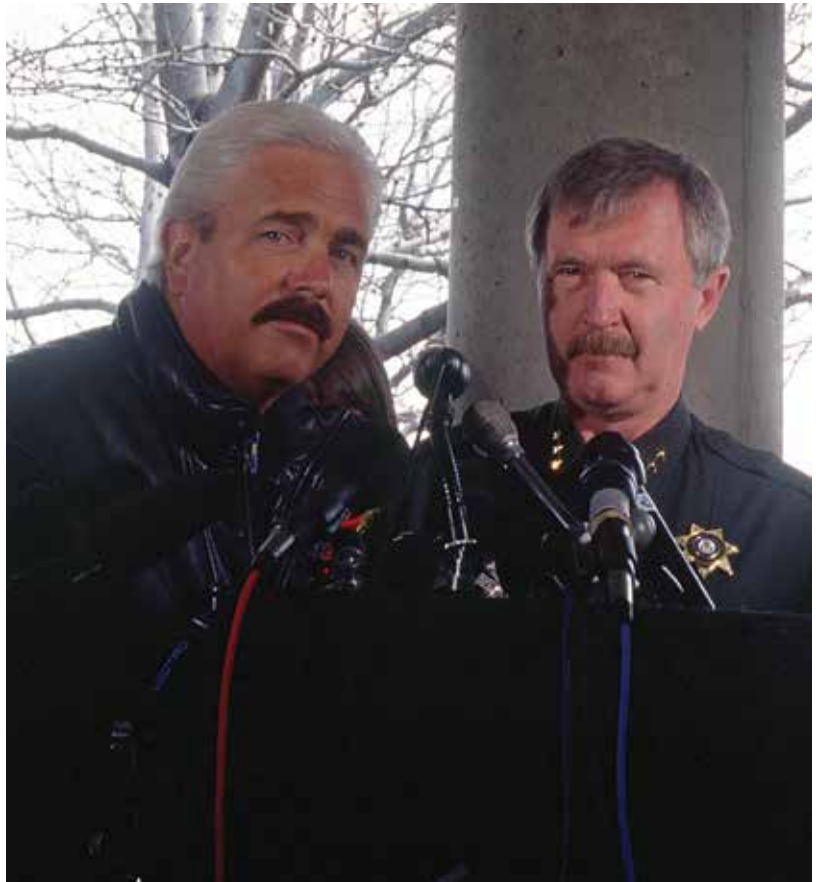
A woman places her
thoughts and prayers
among the growing
collection of condolences.
A line of TV trucks is in the
background.





On the tennis court fence, a letter dated April 24, 1999, from the Denver School of Gymnastics expresses the feelings and sympathies of so many. Instead of on crowded grounds, people tied their messages of heartfelt condolences onto chain-link fences.

Steve Davis, Jefferson County Sheriff spokesman (left), and Jefferson County Sheriff John Stone speak to reporters at a news conference.





A big heart with many thoughts and prayers among the growing well wishes, and tents set up for reporters and film crews.

“Friend, Coach, Father” describe Dave Sanders, the science teacher and coach killed in the massacre. Dave died protecting his students.



"The challenges in life aren't intended to make you
but to watch you fly like an eagle when you go

Our thoughts are with you.
Students and Faculty of Cherry Creek High

OUR THOUGHTS ARE WITH
STUDENTS & FACULTY
OF
CHERRY CREEK HIGH S

like you fall
conquer them"

School

TH YOU

TY

SCHOOL

TO JEN DOYLE
GET THE SCALP

we love
you!

A Cherry Creek High School banner with literally hundreds of signatures, thoughts, and well wishes.

Not All It's Cracked Up to Be:

Ogham, Equinoxes, and Wandering Celts in Crack Cave

BY KEN FEDER

I visited Picture Canyon, located in the Comanche National Grassland in southeastern Colorado, in October of 2015. I was there to see Crack Cave for an entry in a book I was working on at the time, *Archaeological Oddities: A Field Guide to Forty Claims of Lost Civilizations, Ancient Visitors, and Other Strange Sites in North America*. Though I knew there was some Native American rock art in the canyon, initially that was of secondary importance to me. My interest in Crack Cave was sparked by the claim that there was a message on the

walls of the cave, written in Ogham, an ancient Celtic form of writing found in western Europe and dating to as much as 1,500 years ago. I have written extensively on fraudulent ancient inscriptions in North America, most of them dating to the nineteenth century, so I was very skeptical about the significance of the Crack Cave writing.

I freely admit that I was unprepared for the extraordinary beauty of the artful messages left by the Native inhabitants of the canyon, likely between about 1500 and 1800 CE. My experience in the aptly

named Picture Canyon was the equivalent of a stroll through a vibrant and extensive outdoor art gallery with imagery produced by gifted artists reflecting a style unlike anything I had seen previously in Utah, Arizona, New Mexico, or southern California. I encountered painted and inscribed images of what appeared to be cattle, bison, horses, and perhaps a warrior, as well as a remarkable depiction of what looks to be, at least to me, a sort of multi-legged insect like a millipede. (That image is sometimes identified online as being located in Crack Cave itself. It is not.)

The genuine messages in stone the Native People of Colorado etched into and painted onto the rock faces in Picture Canyon represent a remarkable legacy of skill, imagination, and creativity.

That, however, still leaves open the question concerning the significance of those markings in Crack Cave. What do they mean and how can archaeology help identify and explain them?

CRACK CAVE AND WANDERING CELTS

I often told my university students that being an archaeologist is a lot like being a detective. Archaeologists and detectives both reconstruct events and investigate human behavior through the recovery and interpretation of items left behind, whether at the scene of a crime or the scene of a life. There is no better role model for that process than the great consulting detective Sherlock Holmes.

For example, in the short story titled “The Adventure of Silver Blaze,” a valuable racehorse goes missing and its trainer is found dead. The wealthy owner brings in Holmes to investigate, when

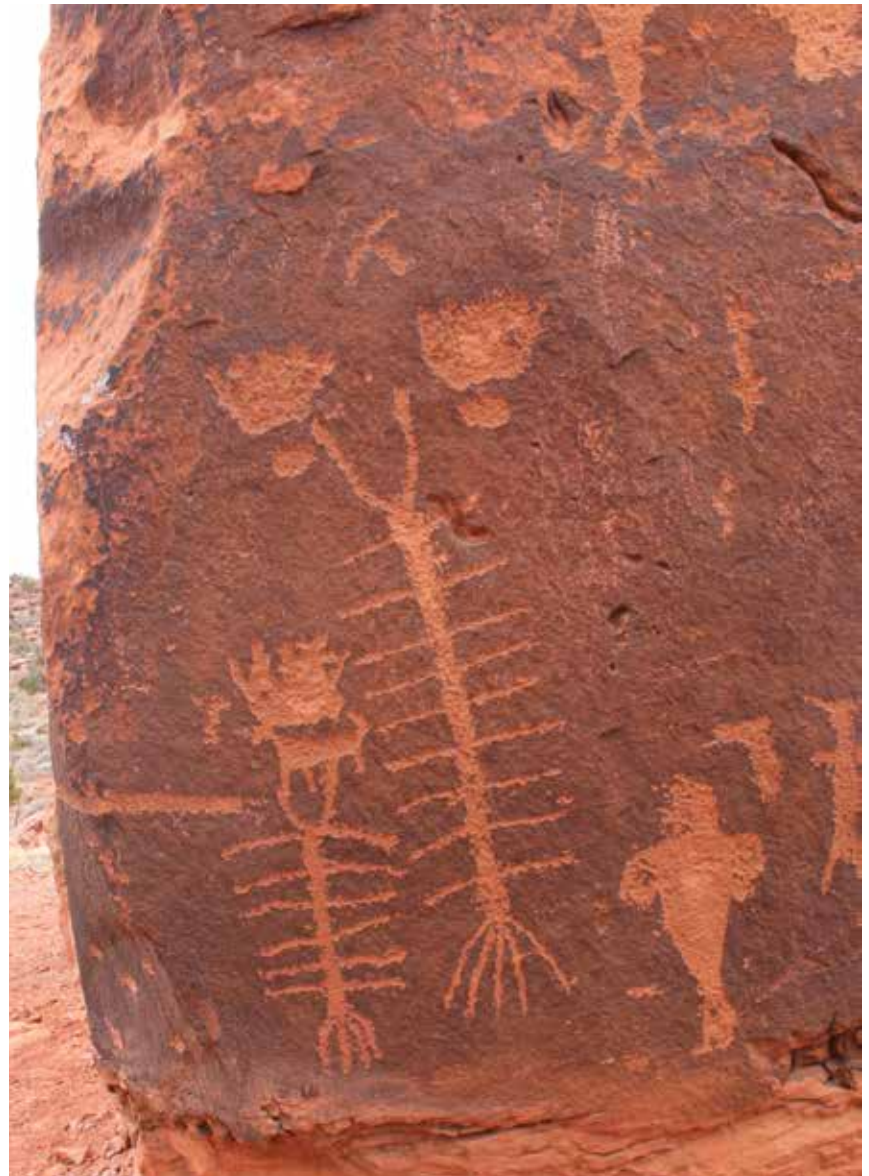
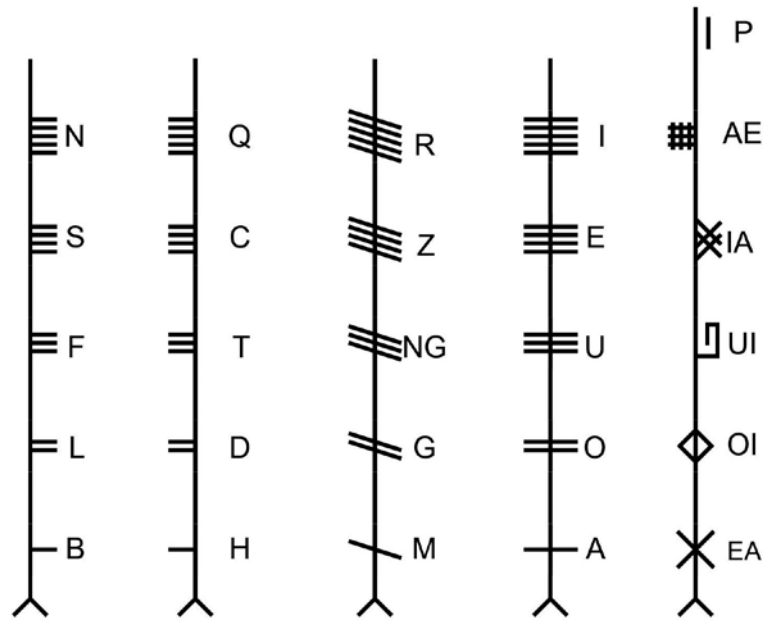
The gated entrance of Crack Cave in Picture Canyon, Colorado. Courtesy of Ken Feder



the local police reach an impasse. Holmes visits the crime scene and, in a manner reminiscent of a field archaeologist, lies on the ground and uses his hands to literally excavate in the mud, extracting a crucial bit of evidence, a burned wax “vesta” or match head. The inspector expresses his great surprise that Holmes found anything at all in ground already pored over by his police investigators and the response is both vintage Holmes and revealing in an archaeological sense. Holmes informs the inspector: “I only found it because I was looking for it.”

Indeed, after accumulating a vast storehouse of experience investigating criminality, Holmes knew exactly what should be found if his working hypothesis about the crime were to be upheld (no spoilers here). This is precisely how the disciplinary experience of archaeology informs its practitioners when assessing scenarios concerning the human past, including the earliest human settlement of the Americas, and the abandonment of Mesa Verde, as well as the possible presence of a contingent of ancient Celts in a small cave in southeastern Colorado. Like Sherlock Holmes, we know what to look for if a given scenario or interpretation is true. If ancient Celts were in Picture Canyon, we know what we should find there, beyond the inscription. How would Sherlock Holmes assess the purported ancient writing in Crack Cave? For many years local researcher Bill McGlone, among others, investigated the markings there and elsewhere, interpreting them as a form of the aforementioned Ogham, an alphabetic script developed and used by Celts in western Europe between the fourth and ninth centuries CE. A total of only about four hundred Ogham inscriptions are known from Europe, the majority of which can be read as people’s names. Most Ogham inscriptions were carved on upright slabs of stone with specific groupings of horizontal lines representing letters emanating from one or more of the stone’s vertical edges.

Significantly, the purported Ogham in Crack Cave looks nothing like that. Despite this, do the markings there mean that ancient Celts visited and settled in Colorado? It’s



- ▲ The Ogham alphabet. Wikimedia Commons
- ▶ These wonderful depictions of centipedes/millipedes are in Moab, Utah. Courtesy of Ken Feder

an interesting proposal but there are a number of linguistic challenges that must be addressed. Ogham is not, for example, a hieroglyphic system consisting of elements with distinct and recognizable imagery as writing was in ancient Egypt. Furthermore, Ogham is not a formal system of regularly shaped, distinctive, and recognizable letters as is the case for the Latin alphabet I am using in writing this essay. As noted, the individual elements of Ogham simply are lines scratched in rock and there are lots of human behaviors that can produce a series of such lines, none of which constitute a form of writing. Sharpening stone knives by grinding their edges in a soft abrading stone can produce a series of parallel lines conveying no comprehensible message other than the fact that the knives needed sharpening. Tally marks reflecting a counting system or calendar can be etched into a rock surface and to some may resemble—and be misconstrued as—a variation of the Ogham alphabet. Even Native

American petroglyphs, for example those depicting centipedes or millipedes, may include a series of parallel lines that for some may evoke an American version of Ogham.

Admittedly, even just suggesting the presence of Ogham in ancient Colorado is a big deal but McGlone went beyond this and actually translated it. He concluded that the Crack Cave message reads, in part, “Beim La a Bel,” meaning, “Sun strikes here on Bel” (“Bel” being the vernal equinox).

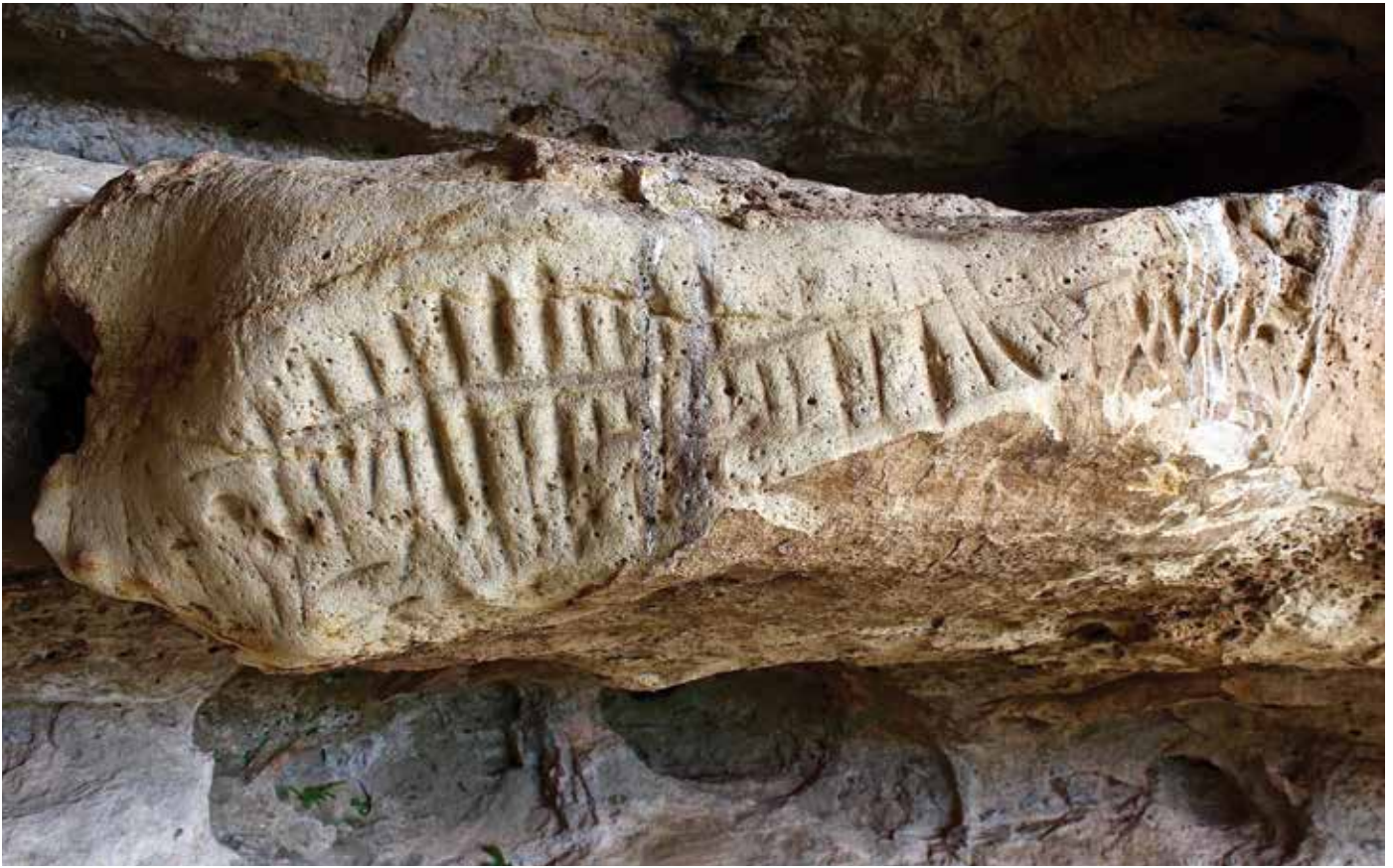
That translation, by the way, depended on McGlone imaginatively supplying the vowels, since, in an apparently unique aspect of American Ogham, it is claimed to have been written only with consonants, despite the fact that European Ogham does indeed include vowels. So, even in McGlone’s interpretation, the etched message was actually only “B-M L H B-L.” McGlone relied on his imagination to fill in the missing vowels to render the message decipherable.

Experts in Ogham note that with only consonants, the interpreter of ostensible American Ogham has free rein to coerce scratches in rock into one of any number of messages. As a result, confirmation bias rears its ugly head and the reader may be prone to produce a translation that conforms to their own preconceived notion of what the message is supposed to convey. As the late Celtic studies scholar John Carey concluded, the lack of any vowels in the purported American Ogham “makes it so ambiguous that one can extract almost any meaning one pleases for the resulting string of letters.”

Clearly that’s an issue, but let’s ignore, for the moment, my snarky skepticism regarding the identification of the markings in Crack Cave as Ogham as well as my doubts concerning the resulting translation. After all, I am not an Ogham scholar or expert. Fair enough. I am, however, an archaeologist with more than forty years of experience in the field. Following

A sampling of some of the marvelous Native American painted rock art in Picture Canyon, Colorado: a warrior; a bull or, perhaps, a bison; a horse with a gracefully elongated neck. Courtesy of Ken Feder





Holmes's example in "The Adventure of Silver Blaze," as an archaeologist I know the kinds of things we should find, above and beyond inscriptions, to support the hypothesis that ancient Celts visited southeast Colorado. The same holds true for claims of the presence of ancient Israelites in New Mexico (based on the Los Lunas Decalogue Stone) or Ohio (the Newark Holy Stones); ancient Vikings in Minnesota (the Kensington Runestone) or Oklahoma (the Heavener Runestone); or of additional wayfaring Celts in West Virginia (the Christmas Greeting). Where's their stuff, where are all the "wax vestas" they must have left behind if they were here?

The claimed discovery in North America of ancient messages written in antique Old World languages was one of the many speculative claims about the human past that inspired me in 1990 to write a book titled *Frauds, Myths, and Mysteries: Science and Pseudoscience in Archaeology* (Oxford University Press, now in its tenth edition). Those frauds, myths, and mysteries have recently inspired a YouTube series

sponsored by the Office of Archaeology and Historic Preservation in Colorado: *Exposing Hoaxes, Busting Myths, and Solving Mysteries*. I focus in a few of the episodes on claims of visitors to the New World in antiquity. In one ("Messages in Stone") I expressly address the claimed existence of comprehensible inscriptions written by those visitors. Crack Cave makes a brief appearance in that episode of the series.

THE VERDICT OF ARCHAEOLOGY

Archaeology is more frequently about the study of trash than it is about treasure. Each group of people, each culture, behaves in culturally prescribed ways in their choice of raw materials, in the ways in which they made their weapons, tools, and pots, in how they fancied up those items to make them aesthetically pleasing, in what they ate, in the ways in which they prepared their food, how they disposed of their dead, and even in the patterned ways in which they discarded their trash. As the patriarch Tevye enthusiastically

One of my favorite artworks in Picture Canyon is this depiction of what might be a centipede/millipede, or it might simply represent tally marks. Courtesy of Ken Feder

proclaims in song in the Broadway musical *Fiddler on the Roof*, people do things in particular ways as the result of "Tradition!"

That applies to the nineteenth-century Jewish community featured in that show as well as to every other human group throughout history. As a result, each group of people leaves behind a unique archaeological footprint that archaeologists have the training and experience to define and recognize. Stretching the metaphor to its limit, just as Sherlock Holmes was an expert in identifying actual human footprints, archaeologists are practiced at identifying the cultural footprints of different human groups. So beyond the inscriptions, what identifiable archaeological evidence is there, if any, for the presence of ancient Celts in the American Southwest in antiquity?



The markings in Crack Cave that are asserted by some to represent a unique American version of Ogham written without vowels; the vowels are simply made up. Photo by Dr. Michelle Stevens, US Forest Service

Though I am not a resident of Colorado, I have it on good authority that it is not a coastal state. So, as the scenario demands, once an oceangoing group of Celts made it across the Atlantic, they might have ended up in the Gulf of Mexico, where they made landfall in Texas, and then trudged northwestward toward southeastern Colorado—for reasons that remain opaque to us. They arrived in Picture Canyon, lingering there long enough to track the location of the rising sun during the course of the year and to notice that a wall in the interior of a small cave in a cliff demarcating one edge of the canyon was illuminated by the rising sun on the equinoxes. Figuring that out would have taken, minimally, a year and maybe more to confirm the movement of the rising sun across the horizon, just as was accomplished by the builders of Stonehenge 4,500 years ago. Finally, these Colorado Celts then left a message etched in stone about this celestial phenomenon.

Therein lies the most salient challenge for the supporters of the hypothesis of ancient Celtic astronomers in Colorado. Mysteriously, those Celts left no archaeological trail of encampments and settlements anywhere along their journey across the Southwest.

Perhaps those encampments were too short lived and ephemeral to leave clear archaeological footprints. Okay. However, they also left no material trace of their presence in Picture Canyon once they arrived and settled in. They never lost, discarded, or abandoned any of their foreign stuff like iron and bronze weapons; gold, coral, glass, and amber jewelry; the remains of their wattle and daub dwellings; broken bits of their distinctive ceramic vessels with round bodies and pedestal bases; or the buried bodies of their deceased comrades whose DNA could be used to trace their kinship to people in western Europe.

It should be clear that explorers, invaders, and immigrants do not parachute into an area, only to flit away and, in a reworking of the back end of the old expression—“take only pictures, leave only footprints”—they “leave only inscriptions.” Actual people walk around, they lose stuff, they discard stuff, they abandon stuff, they forget stuff, and that stuff is diagnostic of their culture and demonstrably and recognizably different from the stuff the Indigenous People of southeastern Colorado made, used, and left behind. Without the existence of the mundane material that defines and distinguishes every culture

archaeologically, it is very difficult for an archaeologist to accept the presence of a group of foreign visitors in Colorado (or New Mexico, or New Hampshire, or anywhere else), whether we trace those visitors to Western Europe, Atlantis, or another planet; by the way, those are actual claims discussed in episodes of the aforementioned lecture series.

Locating, identifying, and recognizing the unique material footprint of wayfaring Celts in New England, the Mid-Atlantic, or Colorado should not be terribly difficult. For example, I have conducted the majority of my archaeological fieldwork in New England (the name of the region might be a little bit of a spoiler here), and we have ample archaeological evidence for the historical arrival of Celtic people there. They brought with them, discarded, and lost: glazed, wheel-made crockery; white kaolin smoking pipes; iron and brass kettles; glass used in windows and bottles; firearms; and a bunch of other bric-a-brac unknown to the Native People of the region who preceded the new settlers by more than 12,000 years. And yes, I buried the lede here. I’m referring to the well-known English settlers of New England in the seventeenth century at places like Plimouth, Hartford, and Boston who actually provide an excellent model for the archaeological footprint of the movement of a group of foreigners into a new, already populated territory.

Okay, but isn’t it at least possible that the equivalent footprint of Celtic culture from more than a millennium ago exists in Colorado, but archaeologists simply have missed it? Maybe, but it’s not terribly likely.

Archaeologists are forever busy surveying, digging, sifting, and just plain searching, so if there were any ancient Celtic artifacts in Colorado, it’s a pretty sure bet that archaeologists would have found them already. State Archaeologist Dr. Holly Norton, who

was the inspiration for, and champion of, the aforementioned lecture series, has told me that just for the year 2023, archaeologists surveyed nearly 46,000 acres in Colorado. That's a lot of ground and a lot of archaeology. Have those archaeologists encountered any ancient Celtic sites in those 46,000 acres? The answer is simple: "No." In a discipline where material objects are the gold standard when it comes to answering questions about the human past, this is an insurmountable barrier to the wide acceptance of the Celtic hypothesis.

Additionally, it is important to remember that Indigenous People did live in Picture Canyon for more than a millennium. Evidence like the Sun Dagger petroglyph on Fajada Butte in Chaco Canyon (New Mexico) and the medicine wheels of the Northern Plains (for example, Bighorn Medicine Wheel in Wyoming) clearly show an interest and expertise on the part of Native People in using natural, celestial "calendars" to keep track of time during the year. The Native People of Picture Canyon may very well have recognized the fortuitous alignment of Crack Cave with the equinoctial sunrise and kept a kind of tally calendar on the illuminated wall. It is difficult to test that hypothesis but it does have the advantage of not requiring the presence of a group of foreign intruders whose existence in the canyon is, as noted, unencumbered by archaeological evidence.

SHERLOCK HOLMES: CONSULTING ARCHAEOLOGIST

Having started with Sherlock Holmes, it's only fair to end with the great consulting detective. In another story in the "canon," "The Adventure of the Sussex Vampire," Holmes is faced with the possibility that the county of Sussex in the south of England is home to a nest of bloodsucking creatures of the night. When his friend, confidant, and chronicler Dr. John Watson asks Holmes if he is actually contemplating the possibility of the existence of vampires in Sussex, Holmes's response reflects his skepticism: "The world is big enough

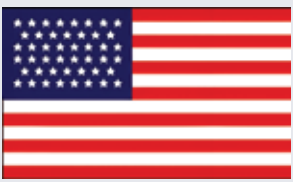
for us. No ghosts need apply." Simply put, the real world presents Holmes with more than enough fascinating puzzles to consider without embracing fantasies of the walking dead. I feel the same way about the place that is the focus of this article: Picture Canyon is big enough for us. No ancient Celts need apply. 🍷

Dr. Ken Feder is professor emeritus at Central Connecticut State University. Along with more than forty years of experience in field archaeology, he is the author of several books including

Frauds, Myths, and Mysteries: Science and Pseudoscience in Archaeology (Oxford University Press, 10th edition) and *Native American Archaeology in the Parks: A Guide to Heritage Sites in our National Parks and Monuments* (Rowman & Littlefield).

Engraving of a typical Ogham inscription on a slab of stone. Groupings of horizontal lines emanating from the vertical edges of the slab can be read as letters in the Ogham alphabet. Illustration by Stephen Reid, in: *Myths & Legends of the Celtic Race* by T. W. Rolleston, 1910





MAKING AMERICANS

How Colorado Fuel & Iron's kindergartens Americanized southern Colorado's immigrant families

BY MICHALA WHITMORE

A group of happy elementary-aged children gathered around their teacher to inspect vegetables growing in neat garden beds. Clad in white bonnets and straw-brimmed hats to keep away the sun, the inquisitive brood was participating in a new program. During the first decade of the twentieth century, the Pueblo-based industrial giant Colorado Fuel & Iron Company (CF&I) sponsored a free kindergarten program for the children of some of its laborers.

The kindergartens, under the leadership of Dr. Richard Warren Corwin, were a profit-oriented endeavor. As an arm of the company's industrial welfare program, the schools' aim was to increase productivity and "dividends for the company." In fact, Denver's *Rocky Mountain News* quoted Corwin in 1901 claiming the Sociological Department to be a project "not of charity, but of business."

The image of happy children inspecting veggies in their school garden as training for their future as laborers or in order to improve a company's bottom line may be at odds with the ways modern Colorado communities think about and approach education. But company-funded child care has long been an important perk for employers looking to increase their workers' happiness (or the amount of time they can spend at their desks). Such programs have rarely been thought of in terms of the role they played in assimilation and Americanization, and yet that was exactly the rationale behind company schools like CF&I's. They were making Americans, and the values the schools instilled played an influential role in developing a regional education system in southern Colorado that endures today.

AN AGE OF IMMIGRATION

An influx of children from Catholic nations in Europe in the late 1800s and early 1900s brought dramatic changes to the ethnic makeup of southern Colorado's mining and steel towns. CF&I was the main employer for the company town of Pueblo, and for many of the mining communities in the region's remote mountain valleys. Its employees were increasingly drawn from a polyglot mix of immigrant families living at CF&I camps and the ethnic enclaves near the smelter in Pueblo.

The diversity of its labor force was a major factor in the company's decision to sponsor free kindergartens with the express aim of Americanizing its workforce, starting with their children.

Children of the Starkville Kindergarten, about 1903-1904. Courtesy of Pueblo City-County Library District

Administrators intended the classrooms to unite under a singular identity which reflected the white, middle-class, Protestant worldview of Colorado's business class. For those Coloradans with their hands on the levers of power, diversity in nationality, language, and religion represented divisiveness and even potential threats to the country's—and the company's—social hierarchy. Such xenophobic fears and prejudicial attitudes were common tropes at the time, but the nativism—an intense opposition to immigration on the grounds of perceived foreign loyalty—that such beliefs represent has ebbed and flowed in political influence all throughout United States history.

Some of the earliest and longest-lasting nativist sentiments to arise in the US were directed against immigrants bringing along their Catholic faith. A deep strain of anti-Catholic suspicion has long run through American society, a holdover from the religious wars of sev-

Anti-immigrant sentiment hit a crescendo in the 1880s, as unskilled laborers seeking economic opportunity streamed into the US from southern and eastern Europe, primarily Italy and the Austro-Hungarian Empire.

enteenth-century Europe and a prejudice that was explained with nods to the founders' emphasis on personal liberty as antithetical to the centralized structure of the Catholic Church. Resentment towards Catholic immigrants only grew as more and more began arriving from majority-Catholic countries in the mid-nineteenth century.

Anti-immigrant sentiment hit a crescendo in the 1880s, as unskilled laborers seeking economic opportunity streamed into the US from southern and eastern Europe, primarily Italy and the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Later, immi-

gration expanded as new arrivals started coming from Poland, Russia, and the Iberian Peninsula. Between 1905 and 1914, ten million immigrants entered the United States, sparking a massive response reaching across many social and government organizations (along with ongoing waves of social anxiety and anti-immigration backlash).

Women meet for a Child-Study Club at Crested Butte, around 1903-1904. Courtesy of Pueblo City-County Library District



Expanding urban centers were places where the inequalities between foreign-born laborers and business owners were most obvious, since these tended to be the places where immigrants congregated and established new communities. New social settlement organizations aspired to improve the inhumane conditions of urban ethnic slums. Government organizations, labor unions, churches, and social clubs all launched efforts to assimilate immigrants into Western culture through lessons on language, civics, and cuisine, representing the softer side of the Americanization movement. Hereditary societies like Daughters of the American Revolution were on the other end of the spectrum. Motivated by fear of foreign political radicalism, they and like-minded groups pursued an agenda of patriotic education focused on obedience. Adherents to this way of approaching integration became known as “Americanizers.”

The Americanization movement emerged around the turn of the century, peaked during the First World War, then

Men socializing in the card and game room at Pueblo's Minnequa Works, around 1901-1902. Courtesy of Pueblo City-County Library District

By the early 1900s, activists had cemented public kindergartens into the American education system, but from the beginning there was an ulterior motive.

waned in the late 1920s. In Colorado, the nativist elements of the Americanization movement found their most vocal and active adherents in the state's substantial and powerful Ku Klux Klan. Conceived as the “100 Percent American” campaign, its supporters aimed for naturalization of all eligible immigrants into citizens, emphasized the English language over multilingualism, and called for an abandonment of all “Old World loyalties, customs, and memories” in the words of author John Higham. However, World War I ushered

in a resurgence of nativism as paranoia spread about “undesirable” people—foreigners, Jews, Catholics, Bolsheviks, and more. The melting pot dream gave way to a stronger appeal to preserve “America for Americans,” culminating in a spate of new anti-immigration laws in the 1920s. The Immigration Act of 1924 (also known as the Johnson-Reed Act) placed quotas on European immigration and eliminated immigration from Asia. President Lyndon B. Johnson would later sign legislation replacing race-based quotas, but not until 1965.

Many Americanizers were concerned that incoming waves of immigrants taxed public education systems across the nation. Although turn-of-the-century reformers believed kindergartens were unnecessary for their own children, they were thought of as a valuable tool for the Americanization movement, reflecting strains of prevailing paternalistic social attitudes about the role of public education that have long flowed through American education systems. In the industrial town of Buffalo, New York, according to historian Maxine Seller, school officials believed kindergarten classrooms should remove





immigrant children from their families, which were then considered to be “deficient and immoral or, at the very least, un-American.”

By the early 1900s, activists had cemented public kindergartens into the American education system, but from the beginning there was an ulterior motive. In her book *Mothers of All Children*, historian Elizabeth Clapp documents middle-class social reformers proposing the idea that kindergartens could erase urban poverty and socialize poor children in “habits of cleanliness and discipline.”

CHANGES IN SOUTHERN COLORADO

With energy-rich coal fields nearby and the Arkansas River running through town, Pueblo’s Colorado Fuel & Iron Company was a powerhouse of steel development in the late nineteenth century. It formed in 1892 out of a merger of two rival companies, resulting in a monopoly that vertically integrated coal mining and steel production along the

Rocky Mountains. CF&I’s expansion between 1890 and 1900 relied on large amounts of immigrant labor, drawing workers from around the globe to meet the company’s demand. Men flocked to Pueblo’s Minnequa Steelworks and the forty coal mining and coke camps scattered across New Mexico, Colorado, and Wyoming. In 1902, CF&I counted 17,000 male employees, with their families totaling 80,000, representing an array of home countries including Mexico, Italy, France, Germany, Scandinavia, the Slavic states, and Japan.

Most of the company’s laborers were Italians, Mexicans, and people from the multiethnic Austro-Hungarian Empire. By 1900, Italians comprised more than 20 percent of the state’s population of 539,700, and more than half of them lived in the counties of Las Animas, Pueblo, Huerfano, and Fremont. Many Italians in Pueblo came from regions south of Rome, a vast agricultural area economically marooned during the Italian Unification of 1861.

A miner and his young sons sitting on a stoop in Las Animas County, Colorado, during the 1914 Colorado Coalfield Strike. Courtesy of Denver Public Library

Colorado’s southern region was also home to large numbers of Hispanos—descendants of Spanish-speaking settlers who had formed communities in New Mexico and southern Colorado before the region was conquered by the United States—and Mexican nationals, more recent immigrants who often came north fleeing the economic instability under Mexican President Porfirio Díaz.

Around the turn of the century, a large number of Slovenian immigrants came to Pueblo, fleeing poverty and military conscription in their homeland, which was then part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Like many of their Hispano, Mexican, and Italian neighbors, most Slovenians were Catholic. They founded what is known as the Eiler Heights neighborhood near the Eilers Smelter in Pueblo, which was derogatorily called Bojon Town—likely after a nickname given to the Slovenians who

called it home. Today, the neighborhood is called Eilers Heights.

Stereotypes of the day derided southern and eastern Europeans as inferior and less intelligent than Anglo Americans. Although these ethnic prejudices were founded in fiction, their existence did shape the immigrants' reality. For example, in the 1915 report by the United States Commission on Industrial Relations, the author documents how CF&I executives believed they needed to control all aspects of the workers' lives because "the inhabitants of the coal camps, being largely of for-

eign birth and speech, were incapable of either political self-government or of exercising a voice in determining their working conditions."

These conspicuous groups of immigrants often caught the ire of nativists, who perceived them as a threat to the American way of life, but communities made up of people from somewhere else continued growing across Colorado. In southern Colorado, CF&I families together with management established the trappings of community life, from booming towns to rustic mining camps. Employees and their families

lived in company housing, shopped at company stores, and, soon after their arrival, would be sending their children to company schools.

BECOMING AMERICANS AT SCHOOL

Schools were among the first markers that a new camp or town was going to stick around as Colorado made the transition from territory to state in the 1870s. Statehood came in 1876 and, in less than twenty years, even the farthest-flung camps were building schools. In 1892, the camp town of Sopris built a schoolhouse with a day nursery, which was followed by similar classrooms in Engle, El Moro, Starkville, Rockvale, and New Rouse. Residents of the camps raised money to erect the buildings, but Emma Abbot Kebler, wife of CF&I's then-general manager, is credited for the organization and establishing the spirit of the early schools.

Enthusiasm for community child-care soon spread. In El Moro teachers recounted how one boy, "who came tugging his tiny baby sister, was asked how old she was. 'Oh,' he replied, 'she's five years old when she comes to school but she's two and a half at home.'" The schools provided pillows for naptime because so many children under the age of three attended. Within a decade, CF&I had appropriated community-led efforts to establish public education systems and was organizing its own schools for the children of its workforce.

In 1900, Dr. Corwin began collaborating with John F. Keating, superintendent of School District No. 20, to start three kindergartens in Pueblo's immigrant neighborhoods south of the Arkansas River: Wildeboor in the Grove, Corona on West Abriendo Avenue, and Bessemer on East Routt. The classrooms followed a "Froebelian" model. German scholar Friedrich Froebel had developed a new method to teach young children, focused on play, nature, and social unity,



Two kindergarten boys displaying their fall harvest, around 1902. Courtesy of Colorado Historic Newspapers Collection

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Children of the Corona Kindergarten in Pueblo working in their garden, around 1902.
Courtesy of Colorado Historic Newspapers Collection



Children of the Wildeboor Kindergarten in Pueblo celebrating the Fourth of July, around 1902. Courtesy of Colorado Historic Newspapers Collection

and coined the term “kindergarten,” meaning “child garden.” These programs literally involved gardening, as it was believed the responsibility would allow children to become inquisitive, creative, and responsible. As a result, Colorado’s early kindergartens operated from April to December so that the children, born to industrial laboring families, could learn to grow food and the school could take advantage of their labor for the growing season. The Pueblo school board proclaimed that a “study of nature is the best means of awakening in children the power of keen and accurate observation, of visualization and of discrimination.”

Classes were held five mornings a week. The children first tended their vegetables: radishes, lettuce, turnips, beets, carrots, squash, and pumpkins, alongside flowers. They then returned inside for paper crafts, singing, and watercolors. The Pueblo school attempted to be frugal—the Pueblo Water Company donated water, nearby property owners donated land, and students ate their own produce for lunch. The classrooms also raised funds by selling vegetables to parents. Enrollment numbers revealed the experimental curriculum was well-attended. CF&I also supported classrooms in the mining towns of Sopris, Rouse, Starkville, Engleville, El Moro, Pictou, Primero, Segundo, Tercio, Berwind-Tabasco, and in the mountain villages of Redstone and Crested Butte. Camp towns’ enrollment actually exceeded Pueblo’s. Class sizes in distant camps reached the forties, and the Starkville kindergarten even boasted fifty boys and fifty-five girls.

In 1901, CF&I created its Sociological Department under the leadership of Dr. Richard W. Corwin, the company’s Chief Surgeon, who championed “the cause of social betterment” for the workers and their families. Corwin was both a nativist and also a eugenicist, who believed in the inherent inferiority of some people based on their race, ethnicity, or heritage. Corwin distinguished “Latin peoples,” his term for Italians and Mexicans, from “American” Pueblo res-

idents. The company’s September 1903 newsletter *Camp and Plant*, under Corwin’s direction, projected their discriminatory views on the Italian and Mexican neighborhood located on Smelter Hill, describing the homes there as too filthy, their streets as too crowded, their men as too angry, and their speech as too loud.

Corwin’s work for CF&I can be described as a type of welfare capitalism, a movement for companies to provide their workers with education, health-care, and recreation to mollify union demands. Alongside the continued operation of the kindergartens, the Sociological Department worked to establish “model communities” for CF&I workers. It worked to improve hygiene and provide company-approved leisure activities (to distract from alcohol, gambling, prostitution, and union organizing). Distinctively, CF&I already operated closed camps. In isolated southern Colorado, workers lived in company houses and shopped at company stores with their company-issued money, all under the authority of the mine superintendent. In the beginning, much of the company housing consisted of dirt floor shacks without access to water or heating. However, soon the Sociological Department declared the importance of “improving the home relations and furthering the interests of the men, making them better citizens and more contented with their work.”

And in the early 1900s, pacifying workers was high on the CF&I priority list since Colorado miners and smelter workers had joined in a large protest movement in 1903 seeking an eight-hour workday, among other workplace protections that we take for granted today.

AMERICAN WAYS

In January of 1902, Pueblo’s *Colorado Daily Chieftain* newspaper ran an article praising the city’s new schools, quoting extensively from Lois J. Shepherd, then superintendent of schools for Pueblo County. When asked about the free kindergarten pro-

gram, she spoke at length, capturing the popular attitude and paternalistic outlook of the school district:

There is nothing like the civilizing influence of [free kindergartens]. The worst elements and questions which confront our land are found in these crowded, foreign-speaking localities. Man, fearing neither God nor man, spurning the governments left, indifferent to the new, indifferent to all law but that of love for their children, are being led by them to truth and true patriotism.

Richard Corwin, reflecting similar thinking about the benefits of education, wrote that the kindergartens of CF&I’s Sociological Department were its most important work because unlike adults who “come to us with habits fixed,” these “children readily absorb American ways.” Americanizing lessons in most schools included personal hygiene, moral virtues, and Christmas gift giving, although the most salient goal for CF&I schools was to inhibit union support. The classrooms, according to noted Colorado historian Thomas Andrews, functioned as an inoculation “against the contagion of unionism” spreading through the company and threatening its attempts at social control and revenue-oriented reform.

In the company schools’ curriculum, Corwin charged the kindergarten teachers to inspire women through social and educational gatherings. Influenced by prevailing ideas about childhood, middle-class women across the United States adopted “educated motherhood.” This enriched version of motherhood held women responsible for protecting the country’s future by raising children based on scientific methods. Teachers led Mothers’ Meetings, but the curriculum differed depending on which language the audience spoke. One meeting of camp women attending could not speak English, so the instructor had them make scrapbooks and weave baskets. The Child Study Club, consisting



entirely of English-speaking women, spent a meeting complaining about the women's home lives.

The many languages spoken among the laborers and their families were emblematic of the way Americanizers talked about their fears at the changing ethnic makeup of the region and the country more broadly. The presence of immigrants speaking Italian, German, and Spanish was a deepening identity crisis that demanded swift and far-reaching action. In 1902, according to the company, CF&I employees spoke twenty-seven different languages. The kindergartens tried to remediate that by teaching English to both the children and adults. However, the Sociological Department claimed that "the language difficulty, so troublesome in all other branches, seems to be but a comparatively small obstacle" in the kindergartens because "the little foreigners watch and imitate the movements of the lips" of their teachers. Company newsletter

Camp and Plant highlighted how the thirty pupils of the Wildeboor kindergarten were unable to speak "anything but German, Slavonic, Spanish or Italian" but "most wisely the teachers have directed their efforts at this school along patriotic lines, and have spent a great deal of time in the inculcation of a spirit of love of country."

Amid an explosion in the nation's rate of alcohol consumption in the early 1900s, CF&I's Sociological Department was also charged with curbing drinking habits, but it was like holding back the incoming tide. Countless saloons dotted mining camps across the state. They catered to the coal miners and other laborers, and served as community centers and even union halls—important sites for social bonding and a relief from the hazards of their work. Saloons carried a dim reputation in Colorado mining camps, and were frequently the site of both bar fights and less-dramatic disagreements.

Kindergarten teachers employed by Colorado Fuel & Iron Company, around 1903–1904. Kindergarten Superintendent Margaret Grabill is in the top row, fourth from the left. Courtesy of Pueblo City-County Library District

The men in CF&I's upper management experimented with different ways to temper drinking and settled on blaming the women in the workers' lives. Dr. Richard Corwin argued husbands drank when their wives failed to provide enough comfort at home. He asserted that training from the kindergarten teachers would prevent the future husband of a girl "who has learned to keep a tidy home and cook a savory meal" from drunkenness. Regardless, CF&I still sold liquor concessions and rented retail space to saloon owners in its territory. Realizing the futility of dry policies, the company eventually reverted to preaching temperance to the men through their families.

Men resisted such heavy-handed attempts by the Sociological Department to control their leisure time. Saloons fostered union organizing, as miners appreciated the camaraderie formed over shared frustrations. Tellingly, some of the nation's biggest capitalists and employers like the Rockefeller family supported both state and national prohibition amendments, noted by Robin C. Henry in *Making an American Workforce*, because they believed "alcohol fueled vice and unrest among workers." The Sociological Department at CF&I responded by creating clubs and reading rooms as alternative entertainment. In Pueblo, the Minnequa Reading Room hosted card games to promote "social gatherings of a wholesome sort," the opposite of raucous watering holes. Corwin's attempts at "soft power," argues Thomas Andrews, turned home and community into a "key battlefield," escalating a labor conflict over pay and working conditions into a fight for "the fate of America."

Meddling in the workers' home lives, their children's education, and community spaces only frustrated the workers and undermined loyalty they might otherwise have had to CF&I. Workers were quick to recognize company coercion, and resented the company's high-handed paternalism. Community bonds proved strong sources of resistance, and parents utilized churches and parochial schools as bastions of culture to preserve Catholicism in the younger generations. In Pueblo, Italians and Mexicans worshiped at Our Lady of Mount Carmel, Slovenians and Croats at St. Mary's, and Slovaks at St. Anthony's.

Resistance efforts were locally successful in stymieing the company's Americanization agenda, though many of southern Colorado's women were encouraged to enroll in domesticity classes through the Sociological Department. One teacher, Marguerite Prendergast, complained that "the classes were not as well attended" because the work "was not thoroughly

understood by the mothers." CF&I ignored that most of these women already kept house and probably found no need for a class on cupboard and utensil care. In fact, southern Colorado women, in many places, developed cottage industries like bakeries. Adding to insult, CF&I overrode many mothers' desire for alternative childcare, coercing them into sending their children to company schools. Corwin recorded many families' complaints about the schools, particularly that the kindergartens have "no benefit in the summer because then their children could play out of doors." He dismissed them for not understanding the classrooms' purpose.

Children of the Sopris Kindergarten, about 1901-1902.
Courtesy of Pueblo City-County Library District



JUST BUSINESS

The Sociological Department was a business endeavor, intended to save CF&I money by increasing its control over its workers and influencing future generations to develop the values and ideals that would support business expansion into the future. But, as time went on, CF&I management grew skeptical that Corwin's programs could deliver on their promises. From the very beginning, Corwin acknowledged that the massive and widespread workforce of CF&I meant his department would be unavoidably inefficient. Instead of a single facility, the department was required to oversee many small operations across the state, each with its own equipment and many employees working the same jobs but in separate locations, all at what he termed "ruinous expense." He correctly predicted that the company would balk at the cost. In 1908, Lamont Montgomery Bowers, a business protégé of John D. Rockefeller Sr., an anti-unionist and a critic of social reformers, took over as CF&I's vice president. In the midst of the transition, Bowers slashed the Sociological Department's budget.

Ultimately Corwin was like many other reformers of the day: at once motivated to educate and uplift the people in his care, but oblivious to the resentment his high-minded and heavy-handed policies engendered. He once compared working in Colorado's industrial landscapes favorably to conditions in Pennsylvania, scolding the easterners for pursuing "the selfish interest of the mine owners and steel millionaires." Out West, he claimed CF&I treated its toilers like "younger brothers...to be humored and taught by their elders."

Five years after Rockefeller's takeover in 1913, CF&I camps became ground zero for the Colorado Coalfield Wars. Though the strikes that precipitated the violence were most explicitly about gaining union representation for workers, the company's control over its employees' lives was a major motivat-

ing factor behind their push for unionization. After months of skirmishes between laborers and company-hired guards, the Colorado National Guard attacked the striking workers in April 1914 at Ludlow, resulting in escalated warfare between the factions. Following the Ludlow Massacre, striking miners waged a guerilla war against CF&I. For fifteen total months, strikers fought against CF&I's hired guards, strikebreakers, and the Colorado National Guard, until federal troops called in by President Woodrow Wilson came in to pacify the region.


The unity found in the strike colonies, argues Thomas Andrews, represented a unique "vision of Americanism." The miners subverted CF&I's image of conformity and instead created their own ideal. The uprising coincided with the Sociological Department's closure in 1914. A year later, CF&I introduced the Rockefeller Plan, a public relations campaign that resumed aspects of the social-betterment work. Instead of an internal operation, CF&I partnered with the Young Men's Christian Association (also known as the YMCA) to promote Protestant middle-class values to the workers.

As the twentieth century carried on, the needs of Pueblo and the coal hinterlands outgrew CF&I. As early as 1906, the Sociological Department was financially supporting only three of the camp kindergartens, while local school boards took charge of the rest. Eventually the very idea of company towns died away, helped along by Colorado's deeper integration into the broader national economy, its growing middle class, pressure from unions, the economic downturn of the Great Depression, and the introduction of cars.

Richard Corwin remained influential in Colorado education, serving for decades on the Pueblo School Board. His attitudes towards immigrants and nativist leanings continued appearing in his work. As part of a later American Medical Association investigation into

the conditions of rural schools, Corwin condemned the country, claiming that "undesirables" filled the schools and the only hope of "improving our race or saving our nation" was through eugenics. Corwin remained active in southern Colorado until his death in 1929, and his name is still prominent in Pueblo, including in the name of the city's second largest hospital, St. Mary-Corwin.

The perceived threat of millions of newly arrived immigrants speaking Italian, Greek, and Spanish and practicing Catholicism, against the US-born white Protestant population, presented an opportunity for experimental social engineering across the nation. In southern Colorado, measures to "Americanize" its foreign-born employees across the region melded with the new logic of industrial capitalism to produce a specific approach to assimilation and integration of immigrant populations. While the company and many of its contemporaries no longer exist, the ramifications of their kindergartens and other programs still resonate in classrooms today.

Though stripped of some of the more odious racialized thinking of 120 years ago, "Americanization" and nativist sentiments still course through contemporary discussions around immigration and education. Colorado's educators still face similar questions as their counterparts from the early twentieth century, including the question of how to best prepare their students to be members of a vastly diverse nation. 

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The Legend of La Llorona

A conversation with Adele Aguilar, southern Colorado actress, artist, and storyteller.

Ghost stories are one of those things that bring us together. They bridge cultures and generations and even cross borders. In Hispano, Chicano, and Mexican communities across the Southwest, the legend of La Llorona (“the Crying Woman,” in English) is one of the most popular ghost stories. It’s one that has endured hundreds of years, evolving each time it’s told and changing from family to family. But this common story—often used as a warning for children to stay away from dangerous waterways—links millions of people, past and present.

This story is experiencing a resurgence lately. La Llorona has been featured in some popular media, including two movies in 2019. In Pueblo, where a project is ongoing to resurrect the world record-holding Arkansas River levee mural, a painted image of La Llorona now looms large on a levee for anyone visiting the river to see.

We recently caught up with Adele Aguilar, a southern Colorado actress, artist, and storyteller who painted the mural and whose life has been interwoven with this story from the first time she heard it from her grandmother on an old Hispano homestead not far from Trinidad.

Q Tell us about the first time you heard the story of La Llorona.

My grandma was real animated in telling us stories. I now live where my grandmother grew up, on our homestead which was founded in 1808. It’s right along the Purgatoire River, in a town called Hoehne, Colorado. My grandmother would tell stories about the river, and La Llorona would come up. I grew up in a different time. Back then, when we’d hear the story

from our grandparents, we were in a house with no electrical lights...so when it got dark, it was really dark! So of course, every sound at night seemed exaggerated. Every sound made you think that La Llorona was real and is coming for you.

Q What is the legend of La Llorona as you know it?

This is the version of the story I grew up with.

My grandma told us that La Llorona was an *adelita*, a type of female soldier, in a war. She fought alongside her husband, for her community and for her culture. Her husband died in one of the battles. After the fighting, she settled in a little town, which she made her home. She was fine up until she met another man, who happened to be the son of a Spanish rancher. So even though he courted her and they had children together, they can’t stay together because she’s Mexican. She carries on with her life, and is fine, until he comes back with another woman—and now he’s threatening to take her children away. So she went to the river, crying, and asks the river what she will do with her children and how she will carry on. In a moment of insanity, she heard the river speak to her, and it says that it will take care of her children. She threw her children in the river.

Realizing what she’s done, she dove in after them to try and find them, but she couldn’t. She crawled ashore and died of heartbreak. The townsfolk found her the next morning and, knowing what she’s done, they buried her in a shallow grave. But that night she rose again to search for her children, and she’s done that every night since. That’s the story we tell to our children, as a warning, to say:

Stay away from the river, or La Llorona will take you away.

Q What has the story of La Llorona meant to you?

She’s been part of me all my life, and playing her for two years, she became a part of me. I have been a volunteer and actress in Pueblo for about thirty years, and the role of La Llorona came to me a few years ago while volunteering for the Pueblo Historic Ghostwalk. They were kind enough to let me rewrite the story to fit more how I had learned it as a child. I also painted La Llorona on the levee, when they opened up the Pueblo Levee Mural Project again.

Q What was it like painting La Llorona on the levee?

We had a lot of fun putting it up there! It came together well. She really comes out, with her hand reaching out to you. She’s also in front of a whirlpool, so when kayakers go down the river they get stuck in front of her for a while. It’s a great location. I remember back in the day, when they were painting the levee for the first time—when they weren’t allowed to paint it—my ex-husband knew some artists who were doing that. They would come running to our house and hide there after painting, and I’d get them all coffee. I wasn’t very involved back then, but it’s great to be a part of it now.

A mural by Adele Aguilar depicting La Llorona painted on the Arkansas River Levee in Pueblo. Photo courtesy of Devin Flores



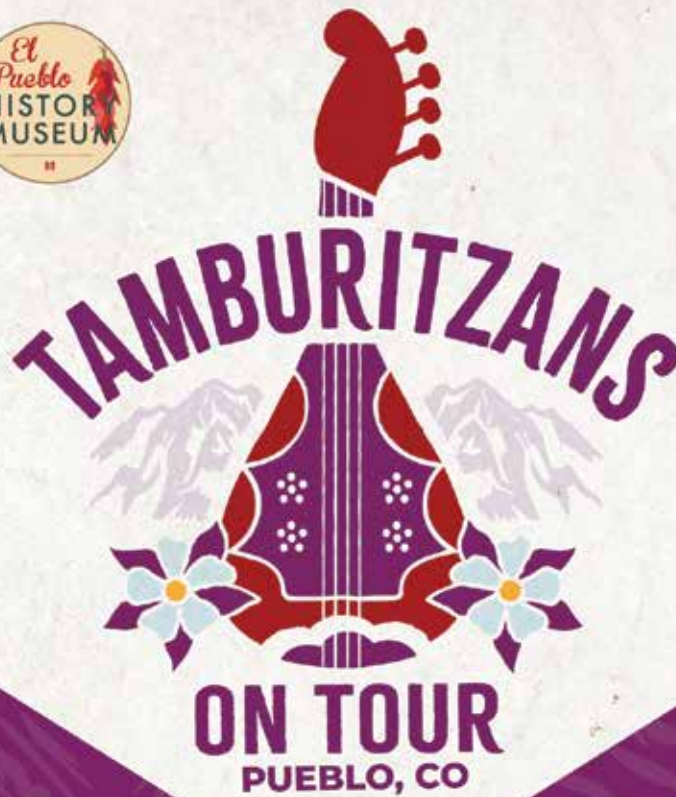


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