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THE POWER OF THE HUMANITIES

Growing up, La Junta's Woodruff Memorial Library was my window to the world—a fuel for my curiosity. Some summers, I would cartwheel the entire distance to the library or read every single book one by one on a particular shelf. There were times I burst through the main door, eager to see if Madeleine L'Engle just happened to publish a new book that I hadn't yet read. I remember the wooden tables upstairs where I wrote my Daughters of the American Revolution essay on "The Star-Spangled Banner." I had no need of the Dewey Decimal System because I already knew where everything was. The universe—both real and imagined—was all attainable, accessible, and available right there in the library of my small Colorado prairie town.



This is the magic of humanities. They lift us up, open portals to new worlds, help us to feel rooted where we are, and enable us to understand each other. We think of science as the realm of innovation, but whether literature or history, geography or music, humanities catalyze the imagination in ways that so often lead to our biggest endeavors.

It is wise for a thriving nation and state to fund and bolster the humanities, especially in our small and rural communities. Coastal cosmopolitan areas have more access to funding—both public and private—to power their museums and libraries. But for the rest of the nation, we need democratizing institutions like the Institute of Museum and Library Services and the National Endowment for the Humanities. They are the incubators for exploration, conduits that bring museums, libraries, and cultural amenities to the classrooms, main streets, and community centers of small towns across America.

Humanities are not about partisan politics; rather, they are about being human. They help us to imagine new futures, embody the past, build empathy for each other across both geography and time, pursue knowledge and ideas, and foster freedom.

English Poet John Milton wrote powerfully nearly 400 years ago about a marketplace of ideas where truth can only prevail through the free exchange of ideas. This feels like a wildly quaint notion in an age of misinformation where we are beleaguered by deep fakes, algorithms, AI, and bot armies. But, Milton was also grappling with the very real social and political implications of his own contemporary technology, the printing press. The aspirations of America are directly rooted in Milton's marketplace of ideas, and this inspirational concept that truth rises within freedom is the basis for our First Amendment. However, this time of unprecedented misinformation requires us to not just protect the humanities but to tend to them.

It is exactly because we live in a world of troll farms and algorithm manipulation that we must collectively and actively invest in the pursuit of ideas, civic institutions like libraries and museums that inspire and preserve knowledge, humanities and civics education that promotes intuition and critical thinking, archives, storytelling, and evidence-based histories that build wisdom and moral agency.

At History Colorado, we pride ourselves on our ability to creatively rise to any challenge—but we do it together—with our Colorado communities.



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.

HISTORY COLORADO

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THE BETRAYAL THAT CHANGED
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THE COLORADO MAGAZINE

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Sixteen-year-old Cecilia Kay White was the first African American crowned Miss Colorado Teenager in 1975. A gifted harpist and dancer, she later won the inaugural national "All-American Girl" title in 1978 and performed internationally. History Colorado, 87.567.5

COVER Thomas Riha photographed before his disappearance in Boulder. Cover design by Mariely Marquez-Lopez.

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THE FORUM

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SPEAKING OUT FOR SELF

Dr. William King's article, "Speaking Out for Self" in the last issue has been a major eye-opener for readers around the state.

I just re-read this article because of Barney Ford's picture. I am a guide at the State Capitol and my favorite stop on my tour is the House Gallery where I can show my group the stained glass portrait of Barney Ford and talk about his remarkable life. I have read a lot about his life and each story is unique and somewhat different from others. Political and social bias based on skin color is not a new concept and one that influenced the road to Colorado statehood.

—Ginny Gelbach, via email

As always, I enjoyed the articles in the Winter/Spring edition. I especially appreciated "Speaking Out for Self." I had no idea about The black struggle to regain the right to vote, so for me, that article was eye-opening. Thank you for that education. My only question is why wasn't it mentioned on the cover? It was a very important article.

—Kathy Derrick, via email

History Colorado Responds: *Thank you for the kind words and for your question! The honest truth is that we weren't sure the article would be ready in time for this issue, but needed to move ahead with cover design. It's a very important article, but sometimes the workflow doesn't line up for us to feature the weightiest articles on the cover.*

BEANIE BABY BONANZA

Jeremy Morton's reminiscence on the Beanie Baby boom brought back '90s memories for many readers, and a few of them wrote in to share!

I can't believe my childhood toys are now museum exhibits and subjects of historical study. Thanks to Jeremy Morton for the great read and reminding me of the relentless flow of time.

—Andrea Connor, via email

PRAISE FOR THE WEEKLY DIGEST

Our weekly roundup email brings you the news you can use in historical context! All with a dose of good cheer. Sign up for the only newsletter that puts Colorado current events and stories from the past in your inbox each week at historycolorado.org/stay-in-touch

You do a great job of bringing Colorado history and its people to life with your stories, with new information, and reminders of things I have forgotten. Please keep the stories flowing!

—Philip Hernandez, via email

I can't believe how much I learn over my morning coffee each Tuesday! Most newsletters are basically marketing, but I appreciate that you share the stories about what actually happened in my home state.

—Karen Levingston, via email

HISTORY COLORADO'S MUSEUMS REVIEWED

Online recommendations keep pouring in! Visit your local museum today!

The portraits in the Aultman Studio exhibition in Trinidad are awesome, well worth the drive just for that. The museum in back of the house is awesome too.

—Lise Christofferson, via Facebook

Learning about all the hardships the early settlers had at the History Colorado Center helped me respect the mountains that much more. This was a wonderful day and this museum was extremely informative, educational, and interesting.

—Paula Hilbert, via Facebook

THE COLORADO MAGAZINE

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Exhibition Now on View

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The **DISAPPEARANCE** of Thomas Riha

A True Crime Story

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MYSTERY.**

CU Boulder
Russian history
professor Thomas
Riha vanished on
March 15, 1969.
He's never been found.
Was it the FBI? The CIA?
Russian intelligence?
Or a mysterious woman
who left a trail of lies
in her wake?

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Remembering DAVID WETZEL

BY STEVE GRINSTEAD

The History Colorado family recently learned of the passing of David Wetzel, who served as editor and publications director from 1980 until his retirement in 2006.

Hiring me as an editor back in 1996, David gave me the opportunity of a lifetime. I quickly learned what a talent he was, and how selfless he was with his knowledge. Born in Salt Lake City and with two English degrees from the University of Utah, he'd become an impeccable historian of Colorado's past—his wealth of knowledge matched only by his infectious passion for every nuance of the state's history. For what was then the Colorado Historical Society he coauthored the books *Robert S. Roeschlaub: Architect of the Emerging West, 1843–1923* (1988) and *I Looked in the Brook and Saw a Face: Images of Childhood in Early Colorado* (2002). In the pages of *The Colorado Magazine*, he chronicled a girl's life at the turn of the twentieth century, the opening of Denver International Airport, and the career of historian LeRoy Hafen.

In his department, we produced journal volumes, a monthly newspaper, and *Colorado Heritage* magazine—today's *Colorado Magazine*. Forging a partnership with the State Historian's office, David also headed up the editing, and often the writing, of the museum's exhibits while expanding the publications with offerings like the online *Colorado Book Review*, still going strong. Meanwhile, he was a walking encyclopedia of Colorado knowledge, always reliable to have a factoid at hand or to know where to find it.

For the book *I Looked in the Brook and Saw a Face* (its title taken from a line in a Eugene Field poem about childhood), he and photo editor Mary Ann McNair combed the History Colorado collections for photographs of children—their names usually unknown and their circumstances discernible only through details in the images themselves. He wrote the text in second person, channeling not just the ways of earlier times but the sensitivities of a child:

Once you stepped across the threshold, you immediately saw the sky, the horizon, and the landscape before it. As in your house, you grew familiar with the setting—trees, houses, gardens, fences, roads, fields, hills, and the whole shape of the earth around you.... But, however far you traveled, alone or with friends, there was a tether inside that always tugged—and that was time.

In so doing, he brought a literary sensibility to the study of Colorado history—something, I'd come to realize, he always did.

Just as importantly, "Wetz" could spontaneously launch into a perfectly rendered Shakespeare soliloquy (or sometimes it was Chaucer, we weren't always sure) whenever the occasion demanded—which was surprisingly more often than one might think. There was singing. And he had one of those toy slide-whistles, which emerged whenever things got too serious. We had such hilariously good times in that office that the long-suffering staff of the adjoining Stephen H. Hart



Born in Salt Lake City in 1942 and a star sprinter (and poet) in high school, David Wetzel earned bachelor's and master's degrees in English from the University of Utah before he and his wife Jodi moved to Colorado in 1980. Courtesy of Richard Wetzel

Research Center had to routinely pop their heads through the door to ask us to please, please keep the racket down.

David had a knack for spotting talent, too, bringing on editors like Clark Secrest, Larry Borowsky, Ariana Harner, Dianna Litvak, and Ben Fogelberg—all of them lauded writers of Colorado history in their own right. He set the exacting standards for approachable history and lively writing that followed after his retirement, which came at a time of shrinking print runs, print-on-demand technology, the rise of ebooks, and a growing emphasis on web content and online engagement. When I took on his role as department head after his retirement, it struck me just how well-poised he'd left us for those evolutions.



And as an editor, he was just so good: an ally to the reader, an enemy to jargon and pomposity, and with a hawk's eye for every imprecision, every redundancy, every tiniest of typos. Put it all down to his innate ability as a writer: He excelled as an author with a fluid and charming voice. His long-term side project and final book-length work, *The Vanishing Messiah: The Life and Resurrections of Francis Schlatter* (2016), is an intriguing masterwork of historical sleuthing and riveting storytelling.

In the more than 100 years of History Colorado's publications, David served longer than any of the program's directors except LeRoy Hafen, who founded the program back in 1923. Always content to be the "invisible hand of the editor," as he liked to put it, David, writing in 2004, credited the "vast accumulation" of Colorado history "to the authors who have contributed to [History Colorado's] magazines, journals, newsletters, and newspapers over the years." The number of those writers whose careers he furthered—and of the readers whose lives he enriched—would be impossible to calculate. David left an indelible mark on the institution and the people he leaves behind. While we can't fill his shoes, we hope we've made him proud.

Steve Grinstead was an editor at History Colorado for twenty-five years, including fifteen years as managing editor. Since 2021 he has worked as an independent consultant. He is the coauthor of *Walking Into Colorado's Past: 50 Front Range History Hikes* (winner of a 2006 Colorado Book Award) and coeditor of *Western Voices: 125 Years of Colorado Writing* (2004). 🇨🇵



TOP David Wetzel in his later years, still as quick with a smile as ever. Courtesy of Richard Wetzel

Retirement brought opportunities for travel. David and a group of friends visited Morocco in 2021. Courtesy of Richard Wetzel

Through the Lens

The world of Frank Muramoto, a Japanese-born photographer in southern Colorado, as captured by his camera.

BY DEVIN FLORES

The story of Frank Muramoto begins very similarly to many other Japanese immigrants to the United States at the turn of the twentieth century. He was born Muramoto Denichi on December 1, 1884, in southern Japan. In 1903, at the age of only nineteen, he joined the steady flow of many other young, single men migrating from Japan to the Americas, seeking work. The majority planned to eventually return to Japan with their savings. While many did just that, others instead laid down roots in America. Muramoto was one of them.

Through his early twenties, he traveled across the United States working a series of manual jobs—railroad labor in Wyoming, farm labor in Texas, even household servant work in the Midwest—but by 1911 he was seemingly looking for something more permanent. That year, now going by the name Frank Muramoto, he enrolled in the Illinois College of Photography.

After graduating a year later, Muramoto moved to Pueblo, where in 1915 he founded his own photography business alongside Tsume Manabe, a fellow Japanese immigrant and alumnus of the Illinois College. However, within the year, Manabe had moved away. Muramoto became the sole proprietor of De Luxe Photography Studio, which he would own and operate until his death in 1958.

Professional photography was a competitive field, but Muramoto's passion for his craft set him apart from his contemporaries. From his extensive catalogue, much of which wasn't even paid work, it's clear that he saw



A young Frank Muramoto, likely at the Illinois College of Photography, around 1910. Pueblo City-County Library District, pchs-p-99-0123

photography as more than just his career. It was something he pursued as art, as a way of preserving memories, and a way of connecting with the world around him—a very modern attitude not always shared by other photographers in the 1910s and 1920s.

By his family's accounts, Muramoto took his cameras with him everywhere. It was a time when cameras were very bulky, inconveniently heavy, and surprisingly delicate all at once, and Muramoto lugged upwards of fifty pounds of equipment to take his snapshots.

Photography evolved a lot during his four-decade career, and Muramoto's studio (despite its small size and relatively remote location) was always on the cutting-edge. He was an early adopter of new techniques and technologies, including color film. In the 1930s he recorded home movies at great personal expense, seemingly for no reason other than to experiment. These are some of the earliest home movies in our state's history, and some of the oldest surviving depictions of Colorado in full color.

As an immigrant from Japan, raising a family in southern Colorado during the first half of the twentieth century, Muramoto had a unique perspective and captured images few others would have

been able to record. His work doesn't just include the typical studio portraits and industrial photography that were common in his time, it also shows the community around him—the daily lives of Japanese immigrants and other immigrant communities in southern Colorado.

RIGHT Garden of the Gods, during the 1930s. Photo by Frank Muramoto. Pueblo City-County Library District, pchs-p-99-0136

Students touring the dark room at De Luxe Studio. Photo by Frank Muramoto. Pueblo City-County Library District, pchs-p-99-0208b



A large house, possibly the Muramoto family home in Japan, around the 1920s. Photo by Frank Muramoto. Pueblo City-County Library District, pchs-p-99-0161



This visual record of life in Pueblo, almost literally through the eyes of an immigrant, is unbelievably valuable. It's an often-overlooked piece of history that reveals intimate details from the lives of the more than 400 hundred Japanese Americans living in Pueblo—almost one in fifty people in the city by 1910. Most lived in the Bessemer or Peppersauce Bottoms neighborhoods, and worked on farms or at the steel mill, smeltery, or food packing plant. They built a close-knit community, attending the same churches and gathering for neighborhood events and trips out into the mountains. But while other immigrant communities did much the same and persisted in Pueblo, the Japanese American community dwindled and is little remembered today.

Throughout Muramoto's life in Pueblo, his community dwindled. By 1940, there were fewer than fifty Japanese Americans living in the city, a number which included Frank Muramoto and his family of five. After a 1921 flood that ravaged the city left many unemployed, and many more lost their jobs during the Great Depression. Some relocated to Denver, while others went farther afield. The once large and strong community was reduced to a small handful of families, many of whom moved away as well in the coming generations—including Muramoto's own descendants.

We are extremely lucky to be able to see a few hundred tiny snippets of their lives, the community they built, the celebrations they held, and the people they knew and cared for, through the lens of one of their own community's members. Frank Muramoto's photography is an almost priceless gift he left all of Colorado, and he did it all just by being himself. 🇨🇪

Author Bio: Devin Flores is the Assistant Editor for The Colorado Magazine and the managing editor for the *Colorado Encyclopedia*. In addition to writing articles for History Colorado, he has also been the lead developer for the exhibits *High Water Marks: The Great Flood of Pueblo, 1923*, *You Should've Seen It: Pueblo's Mineral Palace*, and *Through the Lens: The Photography of Frank Muramoto*.



Children in costume for a Halloween Party, 1934. Photo by Frank Muramoto. Pueblo City-County Library District, pchs-p-99-0119



Frank Muramoto's sister sitting at a table in a house in Japan, around the 1910s. Photo by Frank Muramoto. Pueblo City-County Library District, pchs-p-99-0162



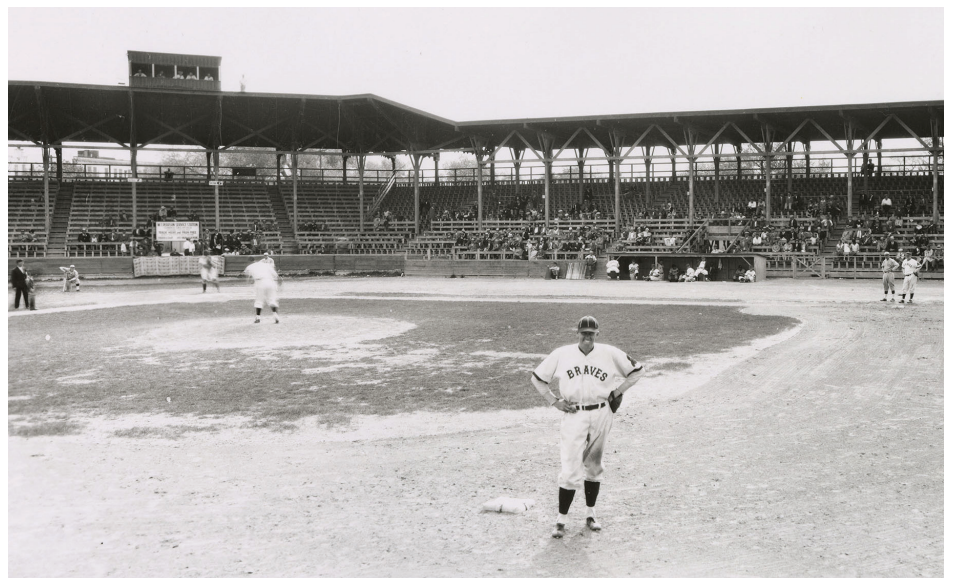
TOP A signed self-portrait of Frank Muramoto, later in his career. Pueblo City-County Library District, pchs-p-99-0124

TOP RIGHT James Muramoto, architect and son of Frank and Mary Muramoto, painting on an easel, around the 1950s. Photo by Frank Muramoto. Pueblo City-County Library District, pchs-p-99-0183

ABOVE Actor and educator Chief Hailstorm (Cherokee Nation) photographed in 1934. Photo by Frank Muramoto. Pueblo City-County Library District, pchs-p-99-0205

ABOVE RIGHT Japanese Americans on the porch of a house in Bessemer, date unknown. Photo by Frank Muramoto. Pueblo City-County Library District, pchs-p-99-0222

RIGHT Minor league baseball team the Pueblo Braves playing or practicing in the old Mineral Palace Park field, about 1930-1932. Photo by Frank Muramoto. Pueblo City-County Library District, pchs-p-99-0840



THE SAM CARY BAR ASSOCIATION

Colorado's Vanguard for Black Attorneys

BY GARY M. JACKSON

In the spring of 1971, seven young attorneys met in a Denver office and embarked on a singular mission: to advance equal opportunities for Black lawyers and judges.

It is almost commonplace today to see Black prosecutors carrying the torch of democracy and fulfilling the American principle that the rule of law should apply to all people equally. Former Vice President Kamala Harris as San Francisco District Attorney; Alvin Bragg, New York County District Attorney; Fani Willis, District Attorney of Fulton County, Georgia; and Jerry Blackwell, former Minnesota prosecutor in the George Floyd murder trial are all Black prosecutors who gained nationwide media attention in prosecuting celebrity defendants for criminal conduct.

But even in the not-so-distant past, things were so very different.

I graduated from the University of Colorado Law School (CU Law) in 1970. At that time, the nation was divided over the Vietnam War (among other issues), with student protests at Kent State, Jackson State, the University of California at Berkeley, and various other colleges and universities across the nation. The country was still reeling from the untimely deaths of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and presidential candidate Robert Kennedy. The Black Power movement was impacting all aspects of my life. In the legal arena, the death penalty had been declared unconstitutional in the case *Furman v. Georgia* by the US Supreme Court. The Hon. Thurgood Marshall was the Black Supreme Court justice we had revered since his selection in 1967, when Jim



Samuel Eddy Cary was the first Black man to graduate from Washburn Law School in Kansas. He moved to Colorado and began practicing law here in 1919. Courtesy of Gary M. Jackson

Cotton, Sonny Flowers, and I were admitted to CU Law. Edward Brooks of Massachusetts was the first Black US senator since the Reconstruction years. Shirley Chisholm of New York was the first Black person to run for president of the United States.

In 1970, when I was hired as a deputy Denver district attorney, I was the only Black deputy DA in the state of Colorado. There was one Latino deputy DA—Roy Martinez—but there were no Asian Americans and only four women who held the office: Anne Gorsuch, mother of current US Supreme Court Justice Neil Gorsuch; Ann Allott, sister-in-law of Gordon Allott, a former US senator; Marilyn Wilde; and Orrelle Weeks, who later became our first Denver Juvenile Court woman judge. All four women were siloed into the non-support section of the office, collecting child support payments or practicing law in the juvenile section.

My “welcome” to the Bar of Colorado was a 1969 photograph in *The Denver Post* with Art Bosworth, David Fisher, and Bob Swanson. We had been hired as legal interns by Mike McKeivitt, Denver District Attorney. Each of us wore a suit and tie. The only difference in our appearance was the three-inch afro on my head, the goatee on my chin, and, of course, my skin color. The photograph set off a firestorm of anonymous letters and even a negative editorial comment by a Colorado Supreme Court justice who called my appearance a disgrace to CU Law and the Denver District Attorney’s Office. My moment of celebration for the achievement of academic success initiated me immediately into the resistance that lawyers of color have faced ever since we entered the profession of law and the American Bar Association in 1925.

FILLING THE NEED FOR AN AFFINITY ASSOCIATION

Sometime in the spring of 1971, Billy Lewis called a meeting at his office on 1839 York Street, inviting six other Black attorneys. Lewis, a graduate of Denver’s Manual High School and the first Black scholarship basketball player for the University of Colorado in 1956, was a graduate of Howard University, the historic Black law school in Washington, DC. He had an integrated law firm with Black partners Morris Cole and Phil Jones and white partners Natalie and Hank Ellwood. The other six lawyers who attended the meeting were King Trimble, Raymond Dean Jones, Daniel Muse, Norm Early, Phil Jones, and me.

There were a total of fifteen Black lawyers in the state of Colorado at the time, two of whom were judges. Hon. James C. Flanigan, Denver district judge, was appointed as the first Black judge in 1957 on the Denver Municipal Court bench. Ten long years after Jackie Robinson broke the color line for Blacks in baseball in 1947, Judge Gilbert Alexander was the other Black judge in Colorado.

At that meeting, we decided to create a bar association focusing on the needs of Black attorneys and the issues of our Black community. The organization would be a local one but in the mold of the National Bar Association (NBA), the nation's oldest and largest national network of predominantly Black attorneys and judges. The NBA was established in 1925 at the convention of the Iowa Colored Bar Association. On August 1, the NBA incorporated in Des Moines, Iowa, as the "Negro Bar Association" after several Black lawyers were denied membership in the American Bar Association. When the number of African American lawyers barely exceeded 1,000 nationwide, the NBA tried to establish "free legal clinics in all cities with a colored population of 5,000 or more." Its members supported litigation that achieved a US Supreme Court ruling that defendants in criminal cases had to be provided with legal counsel. Members of the NBA were leaders of the pro-bono movement at a time when they could least afford to provide legal services for free. When the Supreme Court outlawed school segregation in *Brown v. Board of Education*, the NBA was only nineteen years old.

In Colorado, we named our organization the Sam Cary Bar Association (SCBA) after one of Colorado's first prominent Black lawyers: Samuel Eddy Cary, who had a solo practice in Denver's Five Points neighborhood. Born in 1886 in Providence, Kentucky, Cary was the first Black graduate of Washburn University School of Law in Topeka, Kansas. Admitted to the

Colorado Bar in October 1919, he was known for his outstanding trial abilities and for defending the rights of Black, Brown, and poor people. At the time, he was the only Black attorney practicing law in Colorado. On September 30, 1926, Sam Cary had to endure the harshest jolt of his life and career when he was disbarred by the all-white Colorado Bar Association. Exactly nine years later, on October 1, 1935, he was reinstated to the Colorado Bar; he continued practicing law until June of 1945, when he passed away as a result of throat cancer.

In 1971, the founding members of the SCBA researched the late Sam Cary's background, including the reason for his disbarment. Founders spoke with former Colorado Chief Justice O. Otto Moore, who advised us that the disbarment was both racially and politically motivated at a time when members of the Ku Klux Klan held positions of power in state and local government, as well as in the judiciary. Thus, the SCBA took Cary's name and became Colorado's first minority bar association, or what is now known as a specialty or affinity bar association. We were all under thirty-five years of age,

activists, community organizers, and fearless in terms of what we wanted to accomplish: equal opportunities for Black lawyers and judges. With no Black partners in the commercial law firms along Denver's Seventeenth Street, no Black professors at the law schools, and only two Black judges and one Black deputy district attorney in all of Colorado, it was a profession in which many voices were not being heard and the economic rewards were all directed toward white men.

THE VANGUARD

The Sam Cary Bar Association became the vanguard organization in advancing the need for more lawyers of color and women attorneys in the state of Colorado. It was our mutual belief that forming a Black bar association was necessary for a multitude of reasons. We came together to create a bar to expand our influence—not through separation but through our need for inclusiveness and equity in the legal profession. Each of us became a leader within the legal profession. SCBA played a significant role in expanding the representation of diverse lawyers to key appointments of judgeships, committees, and



A gathering of District Attorney's Office alumni in 1982. The photograph was taken on the steps of the old District Attorney Building on Speer Blvd and Colfax. At least ten members of that staff became County, District, and Presiding Disciplinary judges. Courtesy of Gary M. Jackson



FAR LEFT Judge Gary M. and Regina Jackson. Judge Jackson won the Hon. Wiley Daniel Lifetime award from the Center for Legal Inclusiveness in 2020. Courtesy of Gary M. Jackson

Former presidents of the Sam Cary Bar Association, from left to right, Wally Worthan, Hubert Farbes, Earle Jones, Linda Wade Hurd, William Harold Flowers Jr., Hon. Ray Dean Jones, Hon. Gary M. Jackson and Hon. Wiley Y. Daniel. Courtesy of Gary M. Jackson

associations. Importantly, four of the seven founders went on to become city, state, and federal prosecutors at various times in their careers.

Leaders of SCBA were not only local leaders but rose to national acclaim. Wiley Y. Daniel was our tenth SCBA president in 1981. He accelerated to high public profile as Colorado's first Black federal court judge in 1995, selected by President Bill Clinton. Before his appointment to the bench, he served as the first and only Black president of the Colorado Bar Association from 1992 to 1993. Born in 1946 in Louisville, Kentucky, Daniel earned his undergraduate and law degrees from Howard University. After practicing law for seven years in Detroit, he moved to Colorado in 1977. He immediately became an active member of the SCBA. Appointed chief judge of the US District of Colorado in 2008, Judge Daniel was the president of the Federal Judges Association from May 2009 to April 2011. In 2013 he was appointed as a special mediator for the City of Detroit's bankruptcy—the largest municipal bankruptcy at that time, involving approximately eighteen billion dollars of debt. Judge Daniel, along with a panel of mediators, helped negotiate a settlement with creditors and with city employees regarding their pensions. According to the Associated Press, the settlement led to about seven billion dollars of debt being restructured or wiped out, and to other financial relief set aside to improve city services.

Another significant case of Judge Daniel's was *Roy Smith v. Gilpin County, Colorado*. This civil rights case involved extraordinary allegations of racially motivated crimes against Roy Smith, an African American man, including torture while hanging from a beam in his house, being shot at, and being assaulted with a vehicle. Among other charges, the case alleged that the Sheriff's Department failed to investigate Smith's complaints of ongoing racial harassment and failed to protect him based on racial animus. As *The Denver Post* reported on December 24, 1996, Judge Daniel stated in a hearing that the case had "the most appalling and reprehensible record I've ever seen." He found that the defendants were not entitled in qualified immunity, stating that Smith "demonstrated not only a pattern of deliberate indifference on the part of the individual officers and the Sheriff's Department, but also presented direct evidence of racial slurs that was[sic] sanctioned by the Sheriff's Department." Settled before trial, the case was featured in an episode of *20/20* with Barbara Walters and was the subject of a documentary screened at the Denver Film Society.

Lastly, Judge Daniel was an extraordinary leader for the Sam Cary Bar Association. He served as chair of the Sam Cary Convention Committee in hosting the sixty-first Annual Convention of the National Bar Association in July 1986. With more than 1,500 Black

lawyers and judges coming to Denver, his leadership put the SCBA on the map of the best Black bar associations in the country. Daniel passed away in May 2019.

Hon. Gregory Kellam Scott was appointed a Colorado Supreme Court justice in 1993 by Governor Roy Romer. Graduating from Rutgers in 1970, Scott earned his law degree with honors at Indiana University Law School. He started his career with the US Securities and Exchange Commission in Denver. Scott moved on to teach law at the University of Denver Law School for more than a decade. On the Colorado Supreme Court, he participated in more than 1,000 cases. Scott authored the opinion in *Hill v. Thomas*, a landmark case that concluded in early 2000 in which the Supreme Court upheld legislation that allowed a buffer zone around anyone entering or exiting healthcare facilities to avoid violence by picketers. During his time on the bench, Scott issued a concurring opinion in the 1994 decision of *Evans v. Romer*, in which the court blocked the enforcement of Amendment 2, a 1992 constitutional amendment prohibiting government protections for gays and lesbians. "Amendment 2 effectively denies the right to petition or participate in the political process by voiding...redress from discrimination," Scott wrote. "[L]ike the right to vote which assumes the right to have one's vote counted, the right peaceably to

assemble and petition is meaningless if by law, government is powerless to act.” Scott resigned from the Supreme Court in 2000 and died on April 1, 2021.

A third leader of SCBA who gained national prominence was Norman Strickland Early Jr. Norm Early attended American University and then obtained his Juris Doctorate at the University of Illinois at Champaign. He came to Colorado in 1970 on a Reginald Heber Smith Community Lawyer Fellowship and worked for the Legal Aid Society of Metropolitan Denver. In 1972 District Attorney Dale Tooley hired Early as a deputy district attorney; he served in the position until 1983, when Governor Richard Lamm appointed him as head of the Denver District Attorney’s Office, a post he held until 1993.

Early became known nationally as a fierce advocate for the rights of victims, and he worked hard to create the most diverse district attorney’s office in the state. He helped establish and lead organizations such as the National Organization for Victim Assistance, for which he served as president. The Colorado Organization for Victim

Assistance named its highest honor the “Norm Early Exemplary Leadership Award.” A champion of crime victim’s rights, Early was also co-founder of two premier organizations dedicated to ensuring the success of Black lawyers. He created an organization to unite and advance Black prosecutors in 1983—the National Black Prosecutors Association—with 100 individuals gathered at its first meeting in Chicago, and was elected its first president. In 1971 Early was one of the seven co-founders of the Sam Cary Bar Association. Norm Early passed away on May 5, 2022.


A PLACE FOR SPECIALTY ASSOCIATIONS TODAY

Today, with no formal barriers for diverse lawyers to become members of the American Bar Association or the Colorado Bar Association, some have questioned whether this array of affinity associations is still necessary. But I believe that the need for specialty bars is strong. Today, eighteen states have no Black state supreme court justices, and, in nineteen there are no state supreme court justices who publicly identify as a person of color.

If we reflect on the criminal prosecutions of President Donald J. Trump and of Hunter Biden, the son of former President Joe Biden, those cases raise the question of how Americans are maintaining and upholding our democratic principle that all are accountable under the rule of law. We are greatly concerned about the massacres of our children at our schools, which raise questions about the interpretation of the Second Amendment of our Constitution and its viability in a world inundated with automatic weapons. Access to the voting booth has become more restricted in some states, and people of color, women, and LGBTQ+ individuals are also underrepresented in many.

The mission of specialty bars today remains the same as always: to overcome barriers and to promote equality in the judicial system so no one, regardless of race, gender, or identity, faces discrimination under the law. Specialty bars are creating great leaders who have reached beyond their associations to make an impact on the legal profession at large, and they have a voice that needs to be heard in the major legal and constitutional questions that the people of this country must answer.

The Sam Cary Bar Association in Colorado began this movement of diverse leaders and associations, and it continues to lead the way on the path to creating a more perfect union.

The Honorable Gary M. Jackson’s legal career spanned five decades until his retirement in 2020. He presided in the Criminal and General Session Divisions of the Denver County Court. In 2020, the Center for Legal Inclusiveness honored Jackson with its inaugural Judge Wiley Daniel Lifetime Achievement Award. In 2021, Jackson was inducted into the National Bar Association Fred Gray Hall of Fame. 



William Harold “Sonny” Flowers Jr. and Gary M. Jackson in 1991. Courtesy of Gary M. Jackson

Lost and Found

HOW MY PANDEMIC PASTIME LED ME TO REDISCOVER SOME OF COLORADO'S EARLIEST RECORDS

BY LARRY OBERMESIK

Standing at the foot of the stairs leading into the Pueblo County Courthouse, I gazed up at the towering structure, its architecture a testament to the endurance of history. In that moment, I reflected on the unexpected journey that had brought me here. After years in high-tech jobs focused on future technologies, I found myself exploring Colorado's past and unearthing treasures that had long been hidden.

I invite you to ride along with me on a journey of discovery, and see how a simple curiosity led to the unearthing of some long-forgotten secrets of Colorado's history.

THE JENKS JOURNALS

In 2012, Christie's Auction House sold a remarkable five-volume collection

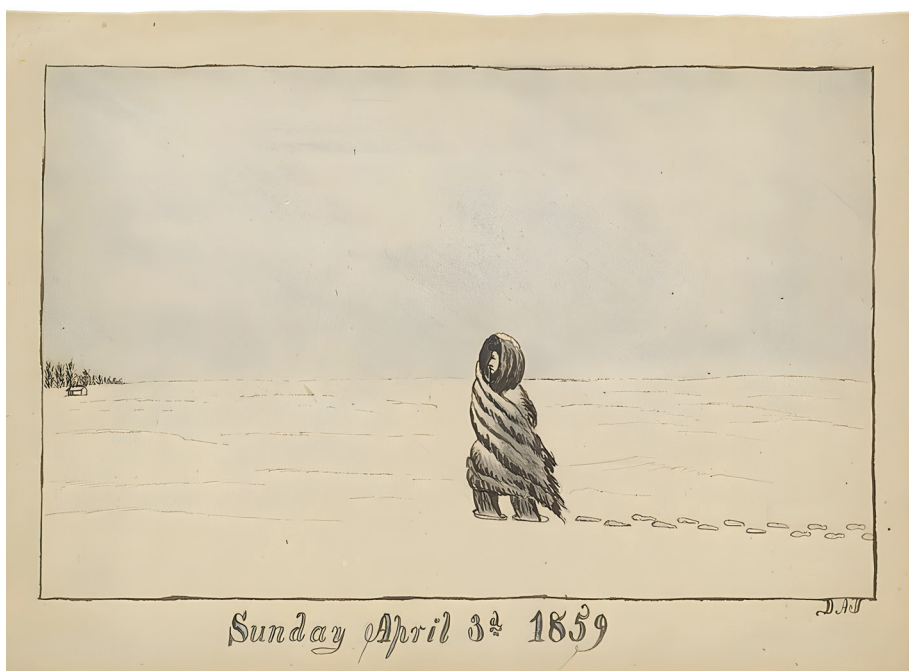
of Gold Rush journals, describing it as "one of the most vivid and best-written gold rush journals we have ever handled." The handwritten diaries, which had never been published before, fetched an impressive 185,000 dollars. The collection, known as the Jenks Journals, was sold in two lots. Volumes one through three, detailing the California Gold Rush from 1849 to 1859, were acquired by an anonymous bidder for 104,500 dollars—and then vanished from public view. The US Library of Congress purchased volumes four and five, which contain a firsthand account of the journey to the Pikes Peak Gold Rush in 1859, for 80,500 dollars.

By sheer luck, I learned the library held these two volumes just before the Covid-19 pandemic shut the world

down. Almost overnight, museums, libraries, and historical societies began closing, making my already challenging research even more difficult. I worried that the lockdowns would halt my progress, but after some serious sleuthing, I learned that a digital copy of the Jenks Journals had quietly been made before Christie's sold the originals. Persistence paid off, and I finally secured access. The thought of binge-watching Netflix during the lockdowns never appealed to me. Instead, I spent months transcribing those long-lost journals, diving into the mind of Daniel Jenks, the son of a Rhode Island Baptist Deacon who was both an adventurer and an astute observer.

Between 1849 and 1865, Jenks wrote in his journals to what he called an "imaginary confidant," obviously hoping others would read about his adventures someday. As I pored over the Jenks Journals, one particular entry stopped me cold. Jenks glued a picture over the passage he wrote on February 14, 1849—as if trying to bury a painful memory. But time had other plans. The glue degraded, the image came loose, and Daniel's gut-wrenching words emerged: "And Sarah dear, although we may never again meet here on Earth, may your life be one of happiness, may you never know what it is to feel as I now do, so utterly bereft of friends and bourn down by sorrow, so broken."

The first time I read this excerpt, I felt an undeniable connection to Daniel—not just as a historian, but as a human



A drawing by Daniel Jenks dated Sunday, April 3rd, 1859.

being. It was more than a passage in an old journal—it was a plea, a fragment of a lost love story that time had almost erased. And in that moment, I knew I had to tell his story.

THE CHEROKEE TRAIL

Colorado's Forgotten Highway

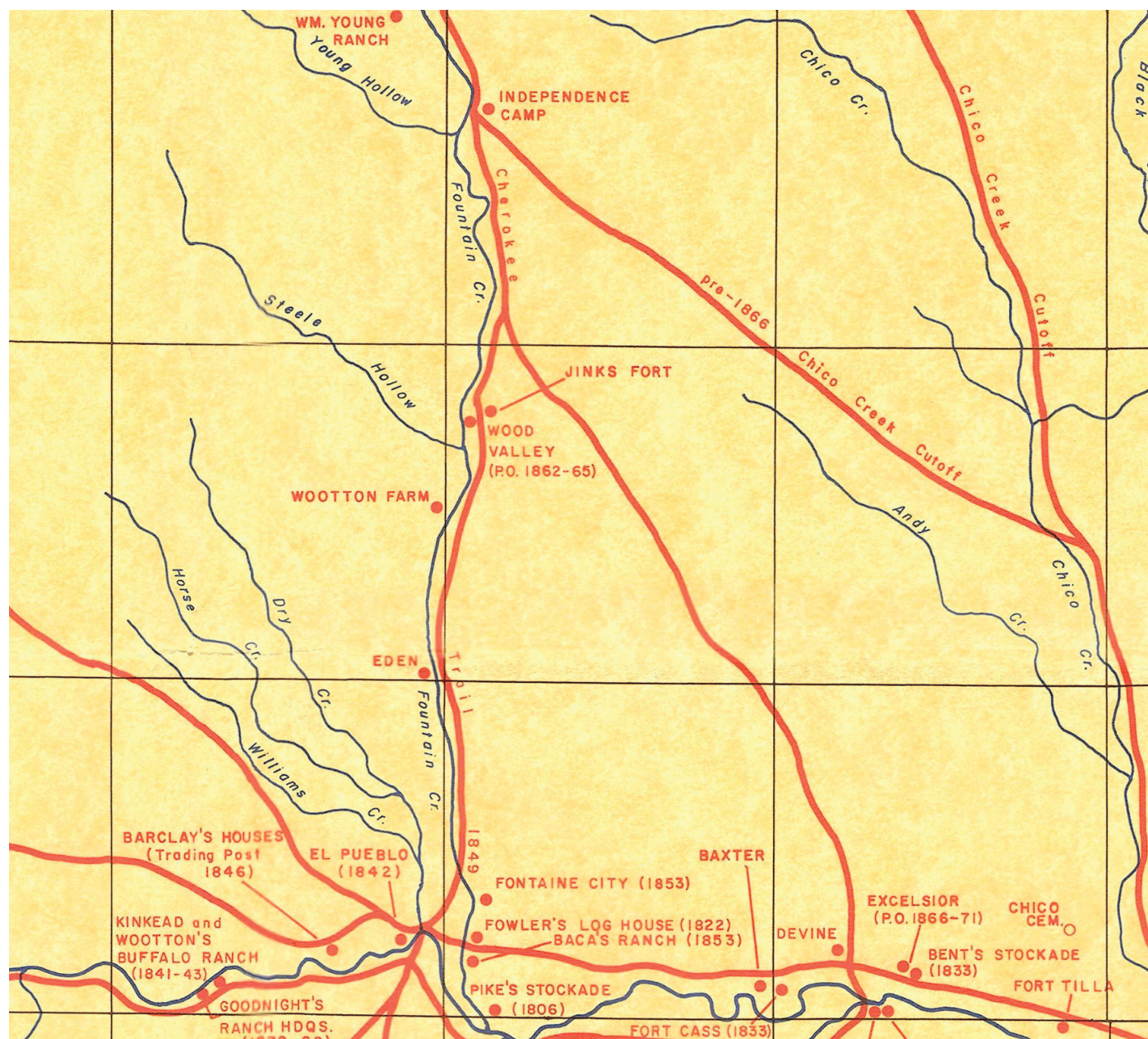
In 2021, I self-published *The Lost Gold Rush Journals of Daniel Jenks*, finally bringing his extraordinary first-hand account of that era to light. By then, I had developed a growing curiosity about the route Jenks took through Colorado—one that ran surprisingly

close to my own home. This led me to download every survey the General Land Office made of this territory in the 1860s, which I used to plot Jenks's path onto a modern map. I soon realized that Daniel had been following the historic Cherokee Trail, a significant yet lesser-known emigrant route that reshaped westward migration.

With help from Bruce Watson, a trail mapping expert from the Oregon-California Trails Association, we began piecing together Jenks's cross-country route, tracing his movements and pinpointing each campsite. In

1859, Daniel followed segments of the Santa Fe Trail, the Cherokee Trail, the Overland Trail, and the California Trail—a path Bruce and I now call The Jenks Trail. Our ultimate goal is to chronicle his journey using Google Earth, allowing others to retrace the route and gain a deeper understanding of the struggles nineteenth-century emigrants faced.

By 2022, I was eager to share my research with experts like Dr. Jack Fletcher, Pat Fletcher, and Lee Whiteley, authors of the *Cherokee trail Diaries*. The Fletchers told me they had inquired



A map showing early settlements in Colorado's Fountain Valley, including Independence Camp (also known as Jenks Ranch), Jinks [sic] Fort, Wood Valley, Wootton, and Eden. Map by Arla Aschermann, courtesy of Pueblo County Historical Society

about the Jenks Journals years earlier while researching their books and were thrilled to see them finally emerge from the shadows. Their validation that Daniel's journals were historically significant—and that I hadn't just wasted years of my life chasing a dead end—was both humbling and empowering. After that meeting, I happily jumped into this historical rabbit hole with both feet.

THE JENKS FAMILY

As I delved deeper into Jenks's story, the journals revealed intriguing details about his cousins, Loren and Judson Jenks, both of whom made their marks on Colorado history but have largely been forgotten. Daniel came to Colorado with Loren and Judson in 1859, bound by a shared sense of adventure. Loren had been with Daniel in California during the Gold Rush, where both men weathered the hardships of frontier life. After returning to Michigan and marrying Elizabeth, a young schoolteacher, Loren invited Daniel to join his family on their westward trek to Colorado.

Judson, meanwhile, had already experienced the wilderness at its most unforgiving. In 1852, he and Loren left Michigan for the western plains, where Jud almost lost his life in a harrowing snowstorm near Ash Hollow, Nebraska. With their wagon train's provisions running low, three volunteers, including sixteen-year-old Jud, went ahead to seek assistance from Fort Laramie. They got lost in a blizzard and spent days without food. Jud's traveling companions left him for dead, but he wasn't ready to expire just yet.

For nine days, Jud crawled through the snow on his hands and knees, grubbing for roots. Just as all hope must have seemed lost, a search party from Fort Laramie arrived and rescued him. Although he lost all of his toes and most of his fingers to

frostbite, Jud's near-death experience seemed to deepen his love for the mountains and the life of a frontiersman. After recuperating at Fort Laramie, Daniel tells us Jud lived at Bent's New Fort among well-known figures, some of whom defined Colorado's early history—men like the brothers Bent, John Wesley Prowers, Charles Autobees, and “Uncle” Dick Wootton.

The Jenks family endured many struggles, including the tragic loss of Loren and Elizabeth's newborn baby shortly after arriving in Pueblo. Daniel Jenks noted in his Gold Rush journal that Lissy was the first emigrant mother to give birth to a child in this territory. However, *History of the State of Colorado* corrects the record, referring to Elizabeth as “one of the first” emigrant mothers. Either way, Eliz-

**For nine days,
Jud crawled
through the snow
on his hands and
knees, grubbing
for roots.**

abeth's strength and character were pivotal in shaping the Jenks family's legacy and their contributions to Colorado's history.

In 1863, Loren Jenks played a role in the pursuit of Felipe and Vivian Espinosa—two of the most storied outlaws in nineteenth-century Colorado. As a seasoned guide and skilled scout, he joined Tom Tobin's posse, tasked with tracking down the Espinosas. Yet, despite his involvement, Loren's contributions have largely faded from history—buried under misspellings of his name (Tobin referred to him as “Loring Jinks”) and omitted entirely from some of the wildly conflicting accounts of the events that have survived.

Meanwhile, Jud gained a reputation as a true mountain man rooted deep in Colorado's wilderness. In 1860, Jud was one of the founding members of the Canon City/Arkansas Valley Claim Club. In 1861, Judson Jenks and Dick Wootton were chosen as local delegates to represent the residents of Fountain Valley in Colorado's first territorial elections. And when the boundaries of the new county seat—Pueblo City—were first defined in 1862, the town abutted Judson Jenks's land. Without this research, the memory of Toeless Jud's exploits would probably have been lost to time.

Jud met an untimely death in 1862, when his ferry capsized and he drowned in the Arkansas River. It's heartbreaking to imagine the difficulty a man who had lost all his toes and most of his fingers would have faced in trying to swim to safety. Judson Jenks remains one of Colorado's forgotten mountain men. It is my hope that someday his amazing story will be recognized as part of Colorado's legend, a testament to the harsh and unpredictable nature of frontier life.

After his role in the Espinosa affair Loren moved on to new adventures, becoming the first marshal in Prescott, Arizona, and investing in a Bradshaw Mountain silver mine that hit a mother lode. This strike made Loren a rich man and attracted some famous Wild West characters, including Wyatt Earp, who had a 100-foot drift mine at one of Loren's claim. Loren's legacy also lives on at Jenks Lake in California, the reservoir he built near San Bernardino that's been memorialized by the National Forest Service.

The remarkable stories we've unearthed about the Jenks family highlight the resilient spirit of Colorado's early pioneers and the countless, often-forgotten contributions of other unnamed migrants who helped shape the state.

WHERE ARE THE JENKS RECORDS?

Upon learning of Loren's connection to the Espinosas, I was driven to explore whether the Jenks family's pre-territorial land claims had survived in Colorado's oldest public records.

Thus began my next chapter; a quest through Pueblo County's archives to see if any traces of the Jenks family had survived on paper. As a newcomer to archival research, I had no idea where to start. Fortunately, I wasn't alone. My friend Nancy Prince—a geologist, genealogist, and accomplished author—agreed to guide me. We began at the Pueblo Courthouse, leafing through Pueblo County's master index book, hoping to find references to the Jenks family. We came up empty. Undeterred, we decided to dig deeper into the county's oldest surviving record books. In *Record Book One*, with entries dating from the early 1860s, we finally struck gold! That book

was a marvel—a hefty volume filled with meticulously handwritten entries, faded yet intact, like whispers from Colorado's formative days.

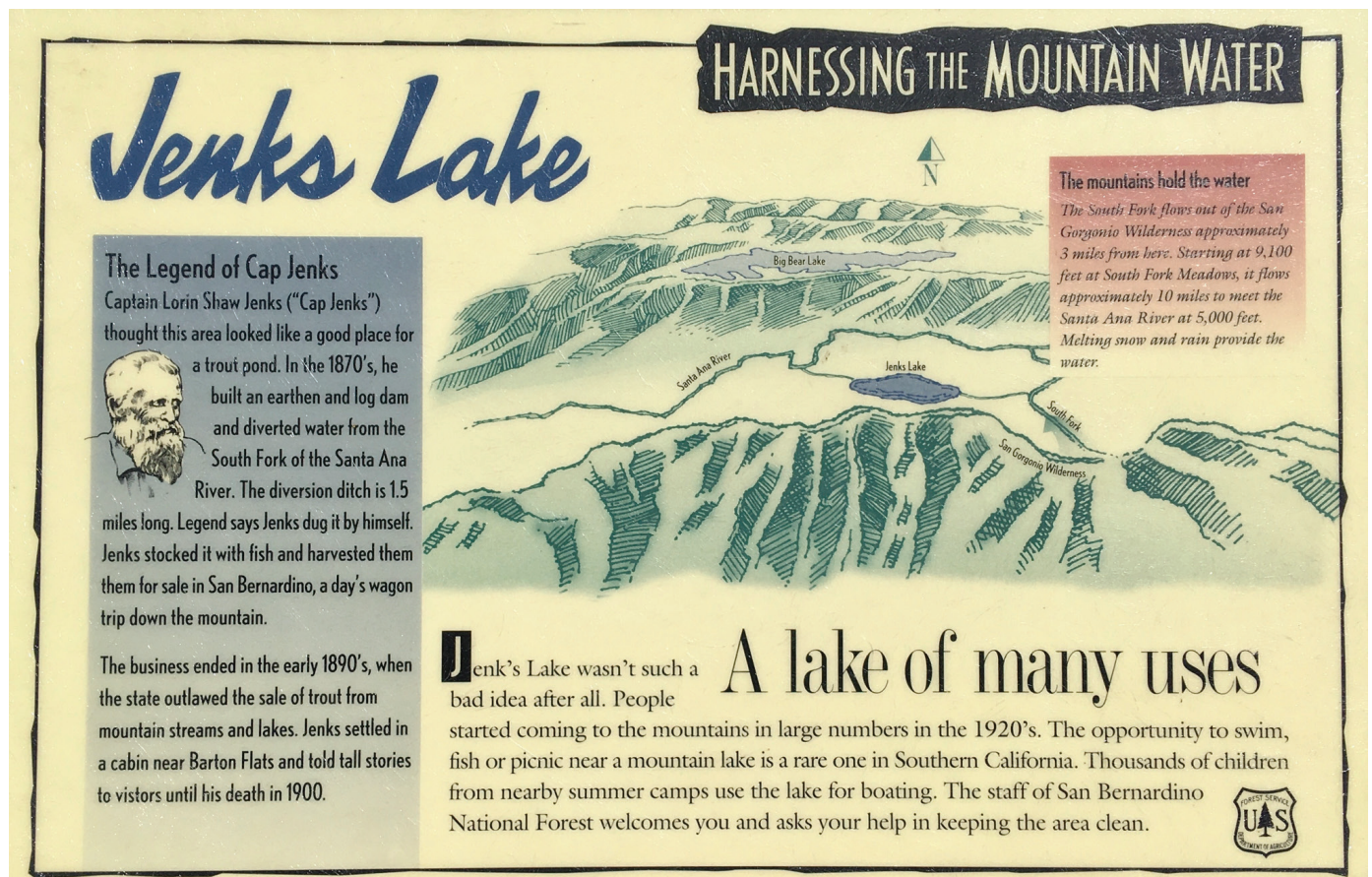
Together, Nancy and I pored over each page and eventually found actual records confirming the presence of Loren and Judson Jenks. These invaluable links to both the Jenks Journals and Colorado's early history offered new insights, but the most significant discovery I made that day was when I realized Pueblo County's oldest records had never been data-mined before, rendering them non-searchable. The "IT Guy" in me couldn't overlook the implications; those historic Pueblo records represented an untapped goldmine of information. So, I took matters into my own hands. I purchased digital photographs of all the pages in *Record Book One* up to 1867 and began months of meticulous data-mining, transcribing, and cataloging.

Thanks to this effort, Pueblo's oldest records are now digitized and will soon be publicly available for researchers and historians to explore for the very first time.

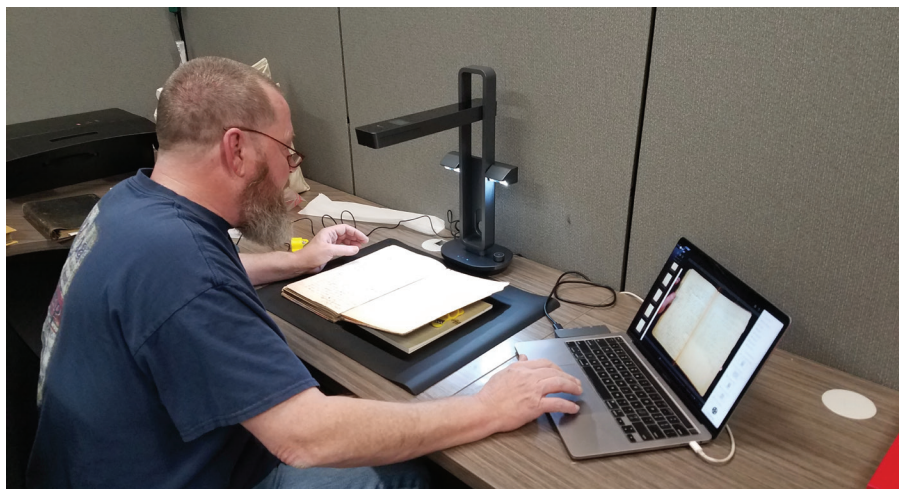
THE LONG-LOST EL PASO CLAIM CLUB RECORD BOOKS

Despite our thorough search, we were unable to locate the original land claim for Jenks Ranch in Pueblo's archives, but we did learn it was located near the boundary between Pueblo and El Paso Counties. Determined to find the missing pieces of this historical puzzle, I headed north to the El Paso County Clerk and Recorder's Office, unaware that my discovery there would reveal a long-forgotten piece of the Pikes Peak Region's early history.

When I asked the staff about the Jenks family's land claims, they were perplexed. They knew nothing about the pre-territorial records I sought nor



An informational placard about Jenks Lake, located in San Bernardino National Forest in southern California. Courtesy of the US Department of Agriculture and US Forest Service



Larry Obermesik scanning the newly discovered El Paso Claim Club record books at the El Paso County Clerk and Recorder's Office. Courtesy of the author

the El Paso Claim Club. I explained that the El Paso Claim Club was a settler organization founded before Colorado became a US territory in 1861. Settlers organized into claim clubs, land associations, and mining districts to protect their claims, buying and selling parcels they had no legal right to. Yet these clubs provided the foundations of self-governance in Colorado.

Between 1803, when President Thomas Jefferson negotiated the Louisiana Purchase, and 1848, when the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo was signed with Mexico, United States territory expanded by more than two million square miles. To put that in perspective, only twelve countries on Earth today are larger. In less than fifty years, the US acquired a vast continent that seemed, to many, like an endless bounty of natural resources just waiting to be claimed. But while land could change hands on paper, the federal government lacked the infrastructure and funding to properly manage it. There were few official surveys, no clear legal framework for settlement, and little to no protection for emigrants heading west.

This created serious problems. People were pouring into the West, building homes, starting farms, and carving out lives on land that, by right of treaty and occupation, belonged to Indigenous peoples. Legally speaking, settlers had no real claim to the land beneath their feet. To address this,

Congress passed the Preemption Act of 1841. It gave settlers—commonly called “squatters”—the right to purchase 160 acres of public land at a minimum price, as long as they lived on and improved it.

But in practice, claiming land was a chaotic affair. With no official surveys or boundary markers in place, settlers used the old “metes and bounds” system—describing property by natural landmarks like trees, rocks, and streams. It was easy to manipulate and even easier to dispute. “Claim jumping” soon became a widespread problem. A settler might spend weeks building a cabin, only to find someone else had moved in, staked their own boundaries, and challenged the original claim.

Loren Jenks himself was once the target of such a dispute. As one local newspaper reported: “A man by the name Loraine [sic] Jenks went out one night, and sticking a stake laid down beside it and slept. In the morning he found another stake within three inches of the one he set.”

By 1860, tensions had boiled over. The *Rocky Mountain News* issued a special edition with bold headlines declaring “War Against Claim Jumpers & Thieves.” To protect their claims and maintain order, settlers banded together into grassroots cooperatives. Each group had a constitution, elected officers, membership dues, and—perhaps most importantly—a “People’s Court” whose rulings members were sworn to uphold.

These locally-organized systems filled legal voids, long before official laws or government offices reached the frontier. Once Colorado officially became a US territory in 1861, those pre-territorial records were no longer seen as necessary—and many were discarded or lost. But a few have survived, offering us a rare and valuable glimpse into a time when law, order, and community were being built in Colorado from scratch.

Colorado’s claim clubs had all but been forgotten until the 1930s, when Professor George Anderson of Colorado College wrote about them in *The Colorado Magazine*, dedicating significant time to studying the El Paso Claim Club. Anderson’s team had located one of the club’s record books in El Paso County’s archive and transcribed it, but frustratingly, they couldn’t find the rest. Intrigued by Anderson’s note that the original volume was stored in the El Paso County Clerk & Recorder’s Office, I headed there next, hoping to pick up where his search had left off.

The staff at the Recorder’s Office listened politely, then offered to escalate my request. A few minutes later, I found myself retelling the story to a county data specialist, who hadn’t heard of the El Paso Claim Club either. She took down my contact information and promised to keep an eye out for anything resembling those record books. Leaving the Recorder’s Office, I felt deflated, as if my research journey had just hit an abrupt dead end.

Then, as I sat in my car contemplating my next move, my phone rang—it was an unknown caller from Colorado Springs. Instinct told me to pick up, and I’m glad I did. It was the data specialist calling with amazing news; they found that El Paso Claim Club record book! I raced back inside and saw it—the original book Professor Anderson had transcribed in the 1930s, still intact. Leafing through its pages, I recognized familiar entries from Anderson’s transcription. I couldn’t contain my excitement and asked, “Where did you find this book?”

They showed me a box of old miscellaneous items that had been sitting in their archive for years. In that box, I also discovered a cache of El Paso Claim Club records that had eluded George Anderson nearly a century ago. When the binding of the original record book(s) deteriorated, the stewards at the El Paso County Clerk & Recorder's Office had the foresight to rebind those records into a whole new book. Upon closer inspection, it appeared the book contained pages from more than one original record.

PRESERVING HISTORY FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS

The realization that those historic El Paso Claim Club record books had likely never been photographed or digitized intrigued me, and I asked for permission to scan them. The gracious staff at the Recorder's Office agreed, and a week later I returned to carefully digitize each page, capturing this invaluable historical resource before it could be lost again. When I finished scanning those record books, the office supervisor approached me and said: "Five years ago a gentleman came into our office and asked the same question as you, but he didn't leave his contact info."

Now, I had another research angle to explore. Who was that Claim Club Guy? I would later learn that man was Dave Hughes from the Old Colorado City Historical Society, and Lorene Englert, a fellow historian, had played an instrumental role in saving the books decades earlier. Thanks to an old audio interview uncovered by Amanda Severeid-Long, a board member at the Old Colorado City Historical Society, I heard a voice from the past—Lorene herself—recounting how she had rescued the books from an attic while the new El Paso County building was being built in the late 1970s:

After they moved down to the courthouse, Mr. Russell, the surveyor, allowed me to use his vault. And I went into the attic, and I dug through all that rubbish for years,

and would bring these books down and put them on those shelves. And there's court proceedings, there's district court, there's civil court, there's everything. But up from 1859 to 1870, I hand-delivered every one into the departments.

Lorene's dedication ensured these records weren't lost to history—but it wasn't until 2023 that I stumbled upon them once again, tucked away in that box of old miscellaneous items at the Recorder's Office. Their rediscovery reinforces what Amanda so aptly put into words: "Ensuring these important records are accessible for all historians, genealogists, researchers, and interested citizens alike is such an important piece to our puzzle. It's a priceless asset that will deliver rare glimpses into our early history for many years to come!"

Claim jumping soon became a widespread problem.

Because of the tireless efforts of those who came before us, these records are now finding their rightful place in the historical narrative. Now that the El Paso Claim Club records have been digitized and data-mined, historians, genealogists, and researchers have an entirely new tool at their disposal. By carefully documenting the witness names on each of the transactions that were recorded in those books, we've begun connecting the dots between emigrants who traveled together and settled near one another. Small connections, long overlooked, can now help researchers piece together a more complete story of Colorado's past.

These records also confirm that the El Paso Claim Club was probably not the first land association in the area—entries reference an earlier, failed settlement that existed even before Colorado City (the precursor to modern Colorado

Springs) was founded. The data implies there's much more to be learned about Colorado's pre-territorial land associations, and that our research project—however extensive—has only scratched the surface.

HISTORY'S TAPESTRY UNFOLDS

Discovering the El Paso Claim Club record books was like finding a time capsule—one that had been waiting for someone to open it. Holding those pages, I felt a strange mix of exhilaration and responsibility. This wasn't just a stack of old documents; it was the key to a past that had been locked away for over 160 years. I thought about the people whose names were scribbled in ink, their hopes tied to claims that, for many, defined their futures. In some small way, I'm hoping my research will help give those forgotten pioneers back their voices.

One of the most surprising things to me, so far, is that few historians have heard of the claim clubs before. Their records shaped early land ownership in Colorado, yet they remained buried—both figuratively and literally. That realization fuels my belief that countless other historic records are still out there, undiscovered. While this research can be slow, even frustrating at times, when you uncover something truly lost to history, the feeling is indescribable.

Beyond the thrill of rediscovering those lost historic documents, this research has deepened my respect for the complex relationships between settlers and Native inhabitants. The land upon which these claims were made belonged to Indigenous nations, who thrived in the region long before the first pioneers arrived. In their fervor to establish roots, settlers often overlooked this reality, ignoring that they profited from land taken from its original caretakers. Many early settlers were well-meaning but complicit in a larger narrative of dispossession, a truth that deserves acknowledgment. I hope this article encourages readers to


grapple with these stories honestly, and recognize both the valor and the moral dilemmas inherent in our shared past.

Through the records of Colorado's earliest settlers, I felt as though I was witnessing history unfold with a richness I'd only glimpsed before in textbooks and movies. As I sifted through each archival discovery, a more nuanced portrait of early Colorado emerged—a

landscape not just of gold-hungry miners, but of diverse communities whose lives were woven together through ambition, hardship, and sometimes tragic misunderstandings. Jenks's accounts and those of the El Paso Claim Club members echoed with stories of alliances, rivalries, and steadfastness that defined the first waves of settlement in Colorado.

This research has reminded me that history is not simply a string of dates or isolated events. Instead, it's an intricate web, rich with overlapping narratives and layered truths, some of which are challenging to face. Yet these stories deserve to be told, not just because they are compelling but because they force us to reflect on how these early chapters have shaped the Colorado we know today.

Looking back on this journey, I realize it has changed me. The retired IT manager who began this project with a passing curiosity has become a custodian of a piece of Colorado's past. Each discovery deepened my understanding of the role I can play in preserving and sharing these stories. I hope others, especially young readers, will be inspired to embark on historical explorations of their own.

So, to the next generation of historians, I offer an invitation—start digging! Visit local archives, dive into primary sources, and ask questions no one else is asking. The trail of history is alive, and there's always more to discover. Colorado's past is not a closed book but a living document, waiting for you to add your voice to its ongoing story. 

Larry Obermesik is a retired IT manager turned historian, with a passion for unearthing Colorado's oldest historical records. His research sheds new light on the earliest land claims settlers staked in this region and the little-known story of our state's pre-territorial claim clubs.

108

Jenks Ranch N.S.

May 17th 1850

This is to certify that Edward Harris has this 17th day of May 1850 laid a foundation on a claim about 2 (two) miles above J. Jenks Ranch on the ~~Mountain~~ east side of the Fountain qui Bouille and intenas building within the time specified by the Colorado Claim Club law

Edward Harris

Witness J. S. Jenks

Recorded May 18-1850

H. J. Brughardt Recorder

by M. B. Beach Deputy

Jenks Ranch N.S. May 17-1850

This is to certify that James C. Sabine has on this 17th day of May 1850 laid a foundation on a claim about 2 miles above J. Jenks Ranch on the east side of the fountain qui Bouille and intenas building within the time specified by the Colorado Claim Club law

Witness J. S. Jenks

Recorded May 18-1850

H. J. Brughardt Recorder

by M. B. Beach Deputy

Colorado City

June 1st 1860

Atto Winick claims within the jurisdiction of the El Paso Claim Club One Hundred and sixty acres of Land for farming =

James Sabine's original Fountain Creek land claim two miles above Jenks Ranch. Courtesy of the El Paso County Clerk and Recorder

RIGHT Author Larry Obermesik at a Barnes & Noble book signing in Pueblo. Courtesy of Ron Robinson



Transcription of James Sabirre
Fountain Creek land claim two miles
above Jenks Ranch made by Professor
George Anderson of Colorado College
in the 1930s. Courtesy of the Pikes Peak
Library District and the El Paso County
Clerk and Recorder's Office,
CO-EP-EPCC-A1-108

Jenks Ranch K. T. May 17-1860

This is to certify that James. E. Sabirre has on this
17th day of May 1860 laid a foundation on a claime
about (2) Miles above J. Jenk's Ranch on the east
side of the fountain qui Bouille and intends build-
ing within the time specified by the Colorado Claim
Club Law

Witness S. S. Jenk's

Recorded May 18-1860

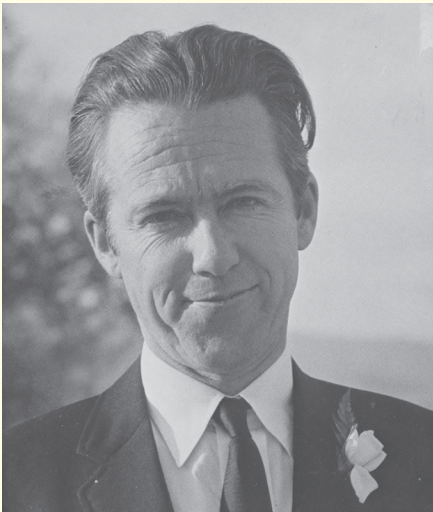
H. J. Burghardt Recorder,
by M. S. Beach Depty

REDACTED: The Disappearance of Thomas Riha

A CU Boulder professor vanished without a trace in 1969 sparking a Cold War mystery. The case is still cold—but clues abound in History Colorado's archives.

BY KATHERINE MERCIER

The morning of Saturday, March 15, 1969 was a warm one in Boulder, Colorado—fifty-two degrees, breaking a weeklong streak of freezing weather. In the University Hill neighborhood, the sun rose and illuminated the home of CU Boulder Russian His-



Thomas Riha smiling on his wedding day, October 13, 1968. Courtesy of the Carnegie Library for Local History/Boulder Daily Camera Collection

tory Professor Thomas Riha. Inside, his table was set neatly for a breakfast that would never happen. Thomas's phone began to ring. It would ring all day. Thomas Riha would never answer that phone again.

This is the tumultuous true story of a missing professor, a mysterious woman, a controlling FBI director, and their tangled webs of national and international intrigue. Cyanide poisonings, profound grief, a US intelligence communication crisis, and a Senate investigation lay ahead, but on the quiet morning of March 15, no one fathomed this would become an infamous Colorado cold case.

THE HISTORY STUDENT

Thomas Riha's story begins thousands of miles away from Boulder. Thomas was born in Czechoslovakia on April 17, 1929, and grew up in a flat in the shadow of Prague Castle. His mother Ruth was Jewish, and after Germany

invaded Czechoslovakia in 1939, she was forced to flee to California with Thomas's maternal grandparents. Thomas lived with his father's extended family in the Czech countryside during World War II, and then, after graduating high school, followed his mother to California in 1947 and enrolled at the University of California, Berkeley. Known as Tom to his many friends, he was a popular student who learned multiple languages, joined the YMCA, and passionately studied Russian political history. Riha's grandparents paid for his schooling but did not provide any extra funds. He worked multiple jobs and earned a reputation for frugality.

After graduating with his BA in political science in 1951, Thomas began working on his MA and became a naturalized US citizen in December 1952. He then joined the US Army and served at Fort Bragg in North Carolina. Riha was likely involved in translation work occurring at Fort Bragg as he was



Thomas Riha's house near CU Boulder was photographed around 1976. Courtesy of Carnegie Library for Local History/Boulder Daily Camera Collection

fluent in English, French, German, Czech, and Russian.

Thomas was discharged as a Specialist 3rd Class in December 1955 and received his MA from Berkeley in 1957. He was working on his PhD in Russian history in 1958 when he received a Foreign Area Training Fellowship from the Ford Foundation. Riha was studying Russia's constitutional regime of 1907–1917, and the fellowship funded a year of research in Russia. There was just one problem: it was the height of the Cold War.

A TRIP TO THE USSR

The capitalist United States and the communist Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) had been vying for global dominance since 1947. The Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) and Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) were on high alert for Soviet agents at home and abroad. The Russian Komitet Gosudarstvennoy Bezopasnosti (KGB) and Czech Státní bezpečnost (StB) were in the midst of recruiting their own networks of Cold War spies.

Against this backdrop of global political tension, Riha's fellowship grantors were concerned about his Czech background. They gave him the fellowship on the condition that he not visit Czechoslovakia while abroad. He agreed—then immediately made plans to visit his family in Czechoslovakia. From a now-declassified Boston FBI interview conducted in 1960 after Riha returned to the United States, we know the CIA briefed Riha when he landed in Paris on June 21, 1958. Riha claimed he was never contacted by the CIA again. However, the CIA intercepted eleven letters between Riha and the Soviet Union from 1958 to 1963, making it likely they were suspicious of his activity and may have believed he was involved with foreign intelligence services.

Some of Riha's interactions while abroad were indeed suspicious. After he arrived in Prague in summer 1958, Riha was approached by a government agent



Thomas Riha stands in the front row, second from left, in this group photo of the UC Berkeley Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA), published in Berkeley's *Blue and Gold* yearbook in 1951. Courtesy of Ancestry.com

named Karel Chrpa. Chrpa offered to give Thomas a tour and stationed himself outside Riha's family home. While Thomas claimed he did not engage with Chrpa, Thomas's nephew Zdenek Cervený remembered Riha accepting rides

Then, sometime between 1960 and 1967, he met the woman who would later become a prime suspect in his disappearance.

from Chrpa. Thomas left Prague on July 12, 1958, traveled back to Paris, and received a postcard there from Chrpa. Thomas arrived in Russia on September 27, 1958, where he studied at Moscow University and traveled freely across the country. He met a likely KGB agent named Iurii Mikhalkov who invited

him to a luxurious dinner at a hotel. Because Mikhalkov had money and a car, Thomas assumed he was associated with the Russian government, but claimed he only dined with him once.

Despite these encounters with probable Soviet agents, Riha insisted in his FBI interview that he was loyal to the United States. The Boston FBI considered using Riha as a double agent, but decided against it: "It is not believed at this time that RIHA possesses any double agent potential." Riha had received a professorship at the University of Chicago. "In this position [Riha] will have no reason to institute contact with the Soviets," concluded the report.

After he returned to the United States in August 1959, Thomas moved to Chicago in 1960. He edited *Readings in Russian Civilization Volumes I–III*, published in 1964. Everything seemed to be going well: an excellent job, newly edited books, a wide circle of friends. University publications show Riha was a popular professor. He spent a year as a visiting professor at the University of



Thomas Riha often taught his classes outside, as depicted in this photograph from *University of Chicago Cap and Gown* in 1963. Courtesy of the Hanna Holborn Gray Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library

Marburg in West Germany, visiting Russia for a second time.

Then, sometime between 1960 and 1967, he met the woman who would later become a prime suspect in his disappearance. Going by the name Galya, she worked for an art company designing graphic layouts. They may have met because they ran in similar artistic circles, as Thomas used a nearby publisher for his book design. According to Galya, she and Thomas became fast friends—and more. It is impossible to determine exactly where and when Thomas and Galya met, but she would become inextricably linked with the professor's later disappearance.

FROM GLORIA TO GALYA

Galya was born Gloria Forest on March 30, 1931, in Chicago, Illinois. Gloria recorded her personal history in a series of journals around 1970, which revealed she had a traumatic childhood. “Very scared, very unhappy—very very lonely,” Gloria recalled. She claimed her family would often lock her in the basement. Gloria remembered talking to imaginary friends to survive. At church, she would pretend the statues above the altar would come alive and speak to her.

Gloria attended Catholic schools and possessed great artistic talent. She married a bandleader named Robert McPherson when she was sixteen and became Gloria McPherson. However,

Robert became abusive and targeted their newborn baby. In her journals, Gloria claimed she forged a signature on one of Robert's checks and attempted to cash it in order to survive. She was arrested and placed on probation for forgery.

Gloria then moved to her parents' hometown of Galva, Illinois. She started telling townspeople she worked for the FBI after a neighbor taught her how to shoot a gun in April 1951. Soon after, the FBI investigated her for impersonating an agent. The case was closed because she hadn't financially benefited from the impersonation. She went on to work as a bookkeeper for the town of Wellston, Illinois, and was arrested twice in 1954 for forging three thousand dollars worth of checks

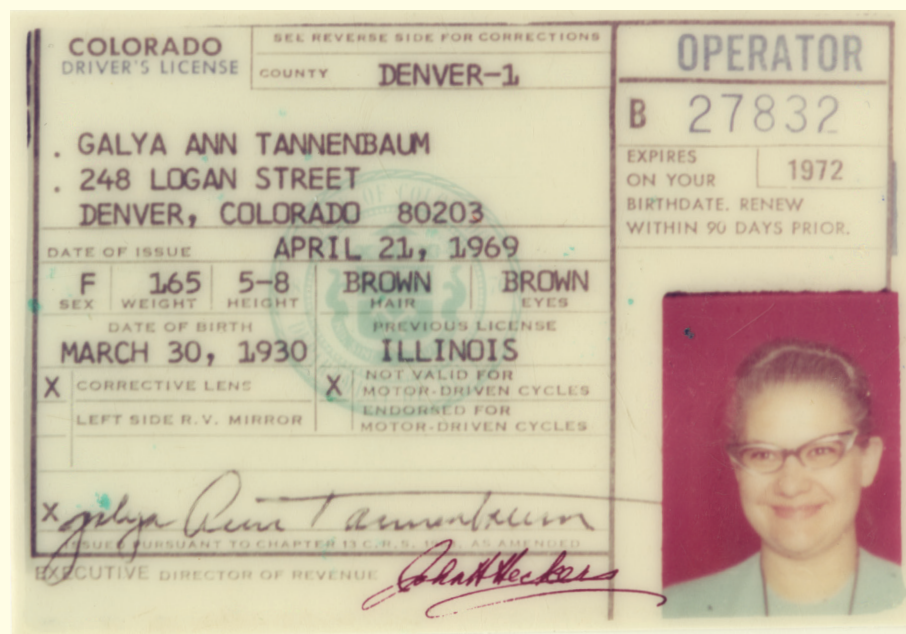
endorsed with the forged signatures of Wellston's mayor and treasurer.

Gloria may have been an FBI informant during this time. She uncovered evidence of illegal activities in Wellston in June 1954, when she caught Wellston's mayor tampering with ballots during an election and contacted the FBI. In October 1955, she served as a witness against a ring of city employees charged with a jewel theft. During her testimony, she checked into a hotel, requesting a hotel suite because she was an FBI agent. The FBI again investigated Gloria for impersonation, but did not take action.

By 1956 Gloria realized she needed a change of pace and moved to Chicago. She found a job as a layout artist at



Galya Tannenbaum cashed this check, supposedly signed by Thomas Riha, over two months after his disappearance. When compared with Riha's signatures from before his disappearance, this was determined to be a forgery. History Colorado, MSS.2647.3



Galya Tannenbaum had this photo taken for her driver license, issued April 21, 1969, a little over a month after Riha's disappearance. History Colorado, MSS.2647.12

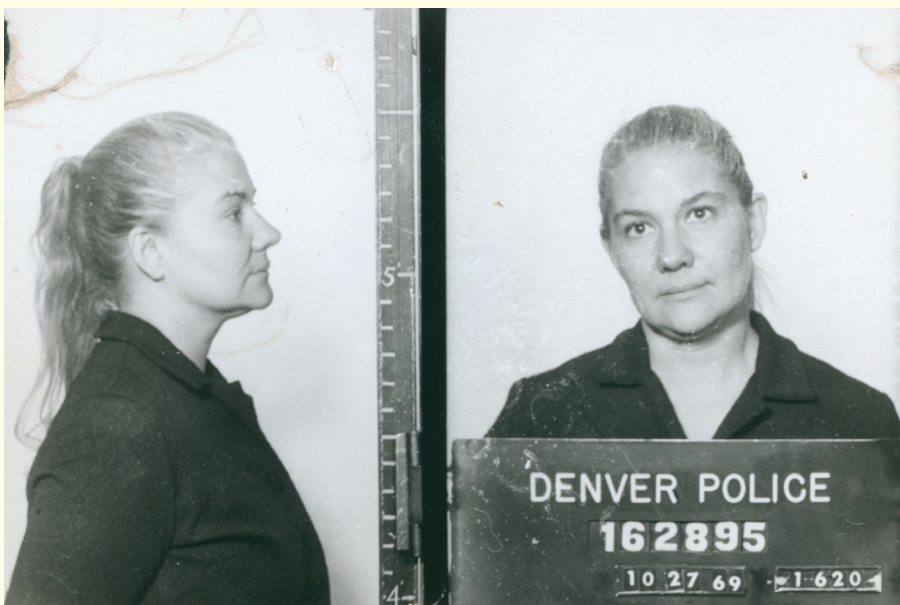
Advertising Promotions, Inc. and met artist Charles Russell Scimo. They married on November 26, 1958, and had a son on November 8, 1959.

Gloria was soon in trouble with the law once more. She claimed her brother visited in 1958 and asked her to embezzle funds from her company. In other records, she claimed her brother was solely responsible for stealing the money. Regardless, between fifteen thousand and thirty thousand dollars were embezzled. Duplicate checks were made out for company bills and cashed into Gloria's bank account. She was charged with embezzlement and forgery in May 1960 and jailed for over eighteen months.

Gloria adopted a new name upon her release from prison: Galya Zakharovna. Galya claimed the name came from a ballet dancer. Her attorney, John Kokish, speculated her inspiration was her parents' hometown of Galva, Illinois. Whatever the source, it made her sound Russian.

Now known as Galya, her FBI files indicate she may have continued as an FBI informant. Chicago, the original home of the Communist Party of the United States, teemed with Communist activity throughout the Cold War. Galya's FBI dossier shows she had regular contacts with book publishers from Russia. Around 1964 she went to work for Tanenbaum Associates, an art company, where she dated Leo Tanenbaum, a Communist Party USA member.

A fellow informant reported Galya to the FBI in 1965: "Zakharovna was constantly talking and bragging about herself. She claimed that she had been a spy for the Russians during World War II and had been dropped behind the German lines for espionage purposes...she said that she had been the one responsible for designing the small radio transmitter which was concealed in an artificial olive." Galya had been a young teenager living in Illinois during WWII so her tale was demonstrably untrue, and the report concluded, "Zakharovna definitely had an emotional or mental problem."



Denver police took this booking photo of Galya Tannenbaum after her arrest on October 27, 1969. Courtesy of Carnegie Library for Local History/Boulder Daily Camera

Galya and Leo had a daughter in February 1966. Galya listed her birthplace as Russia on the birth certificate. Galya divorced her second husband Scimo that April, but Leo's family dissuaded him from marrying Galya. A judge ruled Galya could not use Leo's last name since they weren't married. In defiance, she added an extra "n" and became, for the first time, Galya Tannenbaum. In her journals, Galya claims to have met Thomas Riha around this time in Chicago and that they made plans to marry by summer 1967. However, Thomas applied for and received a professorship at the University of Colorado Boulder that August.

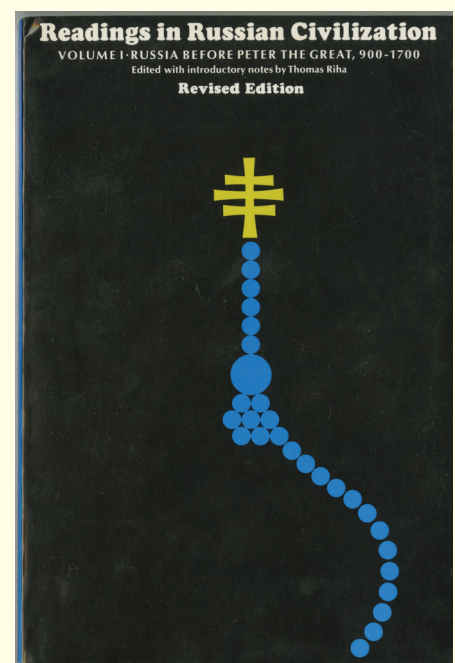
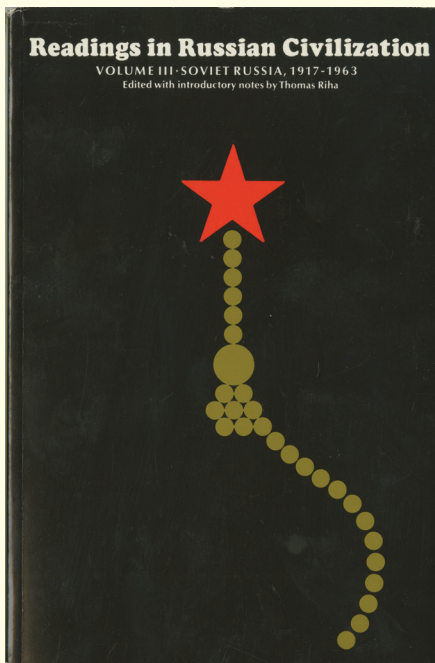
COLD WAR, COLD MARRIAGE

Colorado played a significant role in the Cold War. The North American Aerospace Defense Command (NORAD) was hewn out of Cheyenne Mountain in Colorado Springs to serve as an aerospace monitoring facility. The Air Force Academy trained the next generation of pilots. Peterson Air Force Base, Fort Carson, Lowry Air Force Base, and Buckley Air Force Base all played crucial roles in national defense. Rocky Flats and the Rocky Mountain Arsenal built parts for nuclear and chemical weapons. Missile silos dotted north-

ern Colorado. Across the state and the nation, residents pondered the possibility of nuclear war. Students practiced duck-and-cover drills at school, and bomb shelters were constructed in even the most staid suburbs, including Thomas Riha's own Boulder backyard.

Given the state's strategic significance, the FBI and CIA were highly active in Colorado. CU Boulder students took an anti-CIA stance, and students forced a CIA recruiter off campus in November 1967. Riha's Czech and Soviet connections caused the Denver CIA to include him in an investigation of US citizens who visited Czechoslovakia. "The CU History Department is a rather touchy group," the Denver CIA field chief wrote in an April 1969 memo, referring to an attempt to contact Riha in 1968. "Since we could get no sure indication from his colleagues that [Riha] would be receptive to a CIA approach we finally let the matter drop."

Galya Tannenbaum claimed she had moved to Boulder with Riha in the fall of 1967, and records show she loaned him seven thousand dollars to buy his home there. But none of his Boulder friends or colleagues ever saw her, and Thomas never mentioned her. Thomas—working on a new book



Thomas Riha edited these three volumes in the early 1960s. History Colorado, EX.TR:18-20

about Russian politician Paul Miliukov—soon found Galya's children too disruptive to his creative process. Galya claims they broke off the relationship because of this, and she moved back to Chicago in December 1967.

Galya returned to Colorado by March 1968. She arrived in Denver as a new person: "Colonel" Galya Tannenbaum, a retired military official with powerful connections. "I literally became the Colonel—felt like it, acted like it, and in fact became such a person..." wrote Galya. "For most of my life I have felt less than nothing... but as the retired Colonel I was somebody good, and I thought that there was nothing that I could do that would go wrong..."

Galya was surprised by sudden news about Thomas Riha in October 1968. With an established life in Boulder, an extensive European art collection, and popularity as a professor, Thomas had decided it was time to marry—and not to Galya. He dated several Boulder women before deciding he wanted a wife from Czechoslovakia. His third visit to Russia, leading a tour for university professors in summer 1968, seemed the perfect opportunity to find one. He asked his uncle to place an advertise-

ment in Czech newspapers. Hundreds of women responded.

Unfortunately for Thomas, the USSR invaded Czechoslovakia in August 1968, making it too dangerous for him to visit. But his uncle knew of a Czech woman named Hana Hruska, a business student, living in New York City. Thomas visited Hana in August after returning from Russia. Despite a fifteen-year age gap (Thomas was thirty-nine; Hana was twenty-four), the pair announced their engagement weeks after meeting. Hana moved to Boulder, and the two married on October 13, 1968.

Galya shocked wedding guests by interrupting the reception to speak with Thomas. Thomas informed the guests Galya was a retired colonel who was going to help bring his nephew Zdenek Cervený to the United States. Zdenek was trying to escape Czechoslovakia after the USSR's invasion, and Galya told Riha she could help. When Zdenek arrived in the US the following month, Thomas believed Galya had used her military connections to fast-track his immigration. In actuality, she had filed his application normally—the US government was expediting applications from Czech citizens due to the USSR's invasion.

Thomas and Hana's marriage was not a happy one, especially after Hana enrolled in beauty school and made friends. Frugal Thomas had been expecting a housewife who maintained an impeccable household without spending any money. He forbade her from using salt or making long-distance telephone calls to her family in order to avoid bills. By February 10, 1969, Thomas filed for divorce. He became concerned when Hana hired a lawyer to receive money in the divorce. He thought "the Colonel" could help him again.

Galya told Thomas she could get Hana deported. One terrifying night in early March 1969, Galya forced Hana into a vehicle and drove her around Boulder and Denver for hours, trying to force her to sign paperwork and take an unexplained pill. Her efforts to get Hana to sign the mysterious paperwork were unsuccessful. But that same month, Galya wrote to the Denver Art Museum to donate Riha's beloved European art collection, and she received two thousand five hundred and thirty-five dollars from Riha's savings account.

Hana returned home on March 9, 1969, and ran to her bedroom. Shortly

afterwards, Thomas and Galya began pounding on her door, demanding she sign paperwork. Hana refused and Galya threatened to shoot a gun through the door. Soon, an odd, sweet smell began to waft through the air. It was ether. Hana, coughing, threw open a window and screamed.

Riha's neighbors heard Hana, dragged her out of the window, and brought her into their home. Hana smelled so strongly of ether they had to open their own windows. Galya called the Boulder police. When they arrived, she showed them an ether bottle hidden in Hana's sheets and told them Hana was in the US illegally and was about to be deported. Galya claimed connections to federal immigration authorities, but when the police demanded to see identification, she provided only an expired Illinois driver license. The police decided it was a domestic disturbance and left. Hana fled to the Hotel Boulderado, where she stayed before returning to her family in New York. Her immigration documents were valid. She had never been in danger of deportation.

Thomas invited his nephew Zdenek to Galya's house four days later. When he arrived, Thomas seemed happy. The next night, Friday, March 14, Thomas attended a party thrown by one of his teaching assistants, Jan Sorensen. At the party, Jan recalled he seemed nervous and frightened. He told her someone had followed him. Jan offered to let Thomas spend the night at her house. He declined, left, and climbed into his Volkswagen. After he drove off, he would never be credibly seen again. The professor had vanished.

INVESTIGATIONS AND INFORMATION

The next morning, Saturday, March 15, Thomas missed a history symposium in Denver. His neighbor saw Galya let herself into Thomas's house with a key and observed her children playing in Thomas's yard. Friends peering into his windows saw his table had been set

for breakfast, as Riha habitually did the night before. Police found his suitcases and clothing in place with tax documents strewn about his desk. This was unusual for the well-organized Thomas. His calendar noted a meeting with "the Colonel" scheduled for the week after his disappearance.

On Wednesday, March 19, Riha's divorce lawyer Richard Hopkins received a telegram signed "Thomas Riha." It requested Hopkins "subdue the panic" over his disappearance and was followed by letters signed by Riha about the sale of his home. At least one of the letters was postmarked from Canada. Hana claimed the signatures on the letters did not appear authentic. By Thursday, Galya contacted Wheeler Realty to sell Thomas's house. They also received letters signed by "Thomas Riha" authorizing the sale.

Thomas's friends and colleagues were worried. They searched for him

across Boulder, even checking his bomb shelter. CU President Joseph Smiley contacted a wartime connection in the CIA for information. That CIA office reached out to the Denver CIA office and lead agent Michael Todorovich. A declassified memo from April 8, 1969, reveals the Denver CIA called the FBI, which said Riha was in a "safe haven known only to his attorney and that they were not concerned over his disappearance." The Boulder CIA relayed this to Smiley, telling him Riha was "alive and well." It is unknown where the FBI received this information, but it likely came either from Galya Tannenbaum or from Riha's lawyer. After sharing this with Smiley, the Denver and Boulder FBI and CIA offices remained silent throughout 1969.

J. Edgar Hoover typed this memo ordering the Denver FBI to cut off contact with the Denver CIA over the Riha situation, the beginning of a larger communication breakdown between the two agencies. History Colorado, MSS.2647.32

3/2/70

SECRET

TELETYPE
SENT BY CODED TELETYPE

TO SAC DENVER
FROM DIRECTOR FBI (105-78256)

REC-56

URGENT

| | |
|------------------|----------------|
| 1 - Mr. DeLoach | 1 - [REDACTED] |
| 1 - Mr. Callahan | 1 - [REDACTED] |
| 1 - Mr. Sullivan | 1 - [REDACTED] |
| 1 - Mr. Rosen | 1 - Liaison |
| 1 - Mr. Bishop | |

b7c

THOMAS RIHA, INTERNAL SECURITY - CZECHOSLOVAKIA

IMMEDIATELY DISCONTINUE ALL CONTACT WITH THE LOCAL CIA OFFICE

1 - 47-3190 (Galya Tannenbaum)

SJP:wmk
(12)

NOTE:

See memorandum [REDACTED] to Mr. W.C. Sullivan, same caption, dated 3/2/70, prepared by SJP:wmk.

CLASS. & EXT. BY SP2 TAP/act
REASON - FCIM 11, 1-2.4.2
DATE OF REVIEW 9-2-90
FOIPA NO. 93682

ALL INFORMATION CONTAINED HEREIN IS UNCLASSIFIED
DATE 9-5-80 BY SP2 TAP/act
FOIPA NO. 93682

ALL INFORMATION CONTAINED HEREIN IS UNCLASSIFIED
EXCEPT WHERE SHOWN OTHERWISE

FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION
COMMUNICATIONS SECTION

MAR 2 1970
505 PM ARB
TELETYPE

MAY 1 1970

TELETYPE UNIT

b7c

UNRECORDED COPY IN 47-3190-5050

SECRET

ORIGINAL
TO BE GIVEN TO
THE PERSON NATURALIZED

No. 7105013

Division No. 25936

Personal description of holder as of date of naturalization: Date of birth April 17, 1929 sex male
complexion ruddy color of eyes blue color of hair brown height 5 feet 10 inches
weight 125 pounds visible distinctive marks none
Marital status single former nationality Czechoslovakian

I certify that the description above given is true, and that the photograph affixed hereto is a likeness of me.

Thomas Riha
(Complete and true signature of holder)

STATE OF CALIFORNIA
COUNTY OF ALAMEDA

ss: I, the undersigned, being a Justice of the Peace for the County of Alameda, do hereby certify that the above named person is the holder of the certificate of naturalization in and for the County of Alameda, California, and that the same was issued to him on December 19, 1952, by the Court having found that

THOMAS RIHA
then residing at 2830 Etma Street, Berkeley, California
is duly and lawfully a citizen of the United States (when so required by the
Naturalization Laws of the United States), and in all other respects complied with
the applicable provisions of such naturalization laws, and was entitled to be
admitted to citizenship, thereupon ordered that such person be and (he was
admitted as a citizen of the United States of America.

In testimony whereof the seal of the court is hereunto affixed this 19th
day of December in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred and
fifty-two and of our Independence the one hundred
and seventy-seventh

John Joseph Kingston
Clerk of the Superior Court

By Deputy Clerk

It is a violation of the Code (and
punishable as such) to copy, print, photograph,
or otherwise illegally use this certificate.

DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE

Thomas Riha's photograph, taken around 1952, was featured on his certificate of naturalization.
History Colorado, MSS.2647.35.5

Galya sold Thomas Riha's car, telling the purchaser she was Mrs. Riha, and received a tax writeoff for donating Thomas's art collection to the Denver Art Museum. She donated over 1000 books from Thomas's home to Loretto Heights College in Denver. Galya maintained Thomas called her from places unknown and once even visited her in Denver. On July 30, Galya chartered a plane to fly Zdenek Cerveny to Texas. The check she used to pay the pilot, taken from Riha's checkbook and featuring a "presigned" signature from Thomas, bounced. On August 11, Galya received a royalty check from Riha's book sales for twenty-one hundred dollars.

A trail of suspicious deaths followed Galya over the summer. She joined a metaphysical church called the Brotherhood of the White Temple where she met recent divorcee Barbara Egbert. Barbara introduced her to Gustav "Gus" Ingwersen, a seventy-eight-year-old inventor. He conducted experiments and had a vat of acid large enough to dissolve a body. Gus and Galya became close, and she wrote that she considered him part of her family. On June 15, 1969, three

months to the day from Thomas's disappearance, Galya brought Gus some freshly baked bread.

On June 18 of that year, Galya called Gus's family and sent them to check on him. His son arrived to find Gus dead. Police found Galya's bread, white crystals, and a vial of cyanide on the table. Gus's autopsy revealed he had died of cyanide poisoning. The bread was tested and did not contain cyanide. Gus had changed his will days before his death and left Galya and her children stock shares. Everyone in Gus's family knew the stock was worthless. The will was signed by Zdenek Cerveny and Esther Foote, a Colorado Spring teacher who was tutoring Galya's children. A small boy around the age of Galya's son had delivered the will to a courthouse on June 19. It contained several odd spelling errors like "families," "visable," and "lonliness." Gus was not known for spelling errors. His family was confused—they had never heard of Galya Tannenbaum. A handwriting expert hired by Gus's children determined Gus's will was a forgery. Oddly, Thomas Riha's engraved wedding ring was discovered in Gus's home. Galya claimed she had given it to Gus so

he could remove the engraving from it.

Galya continued to attend church with Barbara Egbert, the recent divorcee. On September 10, Barbara wrote to her parents that she was seeing Galya for dinner. On September 12, Galya called Barbara's family and asked them to check on her. Barbara's ex-husband found Barbara lying on her living room floor, dead. A typewritten will and note riddled with spelling errors lay nearby. Barbara was usually an excellent speller. An autopsy found she had died from cyanide poisoning. Barbara left Galya one of her artworks, but otherwise Galya did not financially benefit from Barbara's death.

Galya dropped the Colonel persona sometime during the late summer or fall of 1969. She wrote, "Everything that happened with Tom was like it happened in a dream—and I'd wake up and all would be as it was." Police began to suspect Galya of murder because Esther Foote, the Colorado Springs tutor whose signature was on Gus's will, insisted she hadn't signed it. Zdenek Cerveny claimed Galya forced him to sign the will. With this evidence, police arrested Galya for forgery on October 27, 1969. Police found cyanide and Thomas Riha's passport in her home. While out on bond, Galya was arrested again for burglarizing a Golden house on December 31 and attempting to cash stolen checks. Young attorney John Kokish took Galya's case, thinking it would be simple. He was wrong.

Denver Post reporter Fred Gillies had also been investigating the Riha disappearance. His December 28, 1969, article was the first real press on Riha since early 1969. Gillies's story prompted an important tip: an auto shop reported they had fixed Galya's car, covered in red mud with a damaged front, in late March. She told the mechanics she had been chasing a soldier in the mountains. Galya owned several lots in the mountains in an area with red dirt—remote lots where a body could be easily hidden.

Gillies's article also prompted

Denver District Attorney James “Mike” McKeivitt to investigate Riha’s disappearance. He asked CU Boulder president Joseph Smiley where he’d learned Riha was “alive and well.” Smiley, scared, contacted the Denver CIA. The Denver CIA convinced McKeivitt to stop his investigation, and Smiley issued a statement saying the “alive and well” statement had been a misunderstanding. Meanwhile, Colorado Representative Donald Brotzman requested information from the US Attorney General. The AG forwarded Brotzman’s letter to FBI director J. Edgar Hoover, who responded, “We have no knowledge concerning Dr. Riha’s whereabouts.”

Declassified memos reveal Hoover was angry about a potential breach of internal security. Hoover had ruled the FBI since June 1935, controlling flows of information and committing abuses of power that would come to light only after his death in 1972. He demanded to know which FBI agent had told the CIA that Riha was “alive and well.” Colorado CIA and FBI offices remained silent, knowing the agent responsible would be terminated. Livid, Hoover wrote a memo to the Denver FBI office: “IMMEDIATELY DISCONTINUE ALL CONTACT WITH THE LOCAL CIA OFFICE.” He sent out national orders for all FBI offices to cease contact with the CIA. He then cut off communication with all agencies except the White House to avoid the appearance of bias. Unable to control information, Hoover simply stopped it.

“I DIDN’T KILL RIHA”

Galya Tannenbaum, imprisoned in a psychiatric hospital in early 1970, began journaling her life story. She insisted she was not responsible for Thomas’s disappearance and pinned blame on intelligence agencies or Riha’s ex-wife Hana. But local police continued to suspect her, zeroing in on the letters allegedly signed by Thomas after his disappearance. The letters featured spelling errors commonly made by Galya but not by Thomas. Gus Ingwerson’s will and

Barbara Egbert’s final letter contained similar errors. Meanwhile, the Denver FBI quietly conducted and closed an impersonation case on Galya Tannenbaum. “The claim by TANNENBAUM of Bureau employment is absolutely untrue,” the Denver field chief wrote to J. Edgar Hoover in July 1970. Declassified records reveal the FBI had gathered information on Riha during its investigation into Tannenbaum, making their claim that they knew nothing about him untrue.

Galya’s forgery trial began July 8, 1970. Psychiatric experts argued over Galya’s mental state during 1969. Notaries testified Galya had passed

herself off as “T. Riha” or “Mrs. Riha” in order to get signatures notarized. A handwriting expert testified Riha had not written any signatures after he disappeared, but could not determine whether Galya had written them. The judge declared Galya had been unable to determine between right and wrong when she forged Riha’s checks and committed her to the state mental hospital in Pueblo.

At the hospital, Dr. David Olenik restricted Galya’s activities so she wouldn’t manipulate staff. Galya convinced a technician named Henry Madrid she had powerful connections outside the hospital and he would be held



The interior of NORAD is shown inside Cheyenne Mountain. The structures were mounted on giant steel springs to protect them from a potential nuclear blast. History Colorado, 92.20913



The University of Colorado-Boulder campus and Thomas Riha's University Hill neighborhood are visible in this aerial photograph taken between 1960-1987. History Colorado, 87.229.23.

responsible if she died. While in Denver for a trial over forging documents for Riha's Volkswagen sale, she told people she had hidden cyanide at the hospital. After she returned to Pueblo, Galya gave Henry a package and instructed him to hide it. He stashed it in his garage.

Galya was struggling in the hospital—she lost a job typing papers on March 4, and she faced additional legal action in April. On March 6, Galya met Henry in a common room around 9:30 p.m. Galya went to the restroom. Afterward, she asked for his hand. “I took it,” she said. Henry would testify that she said “I didn’t kill Riha.” News reports would claim she said, “He made it to Russia.” She then fell unconscious. Henry suspected cyanide but did not mention it, and retrieved nurses who noticed the smell of almonds in the air. Galya was treated for unknown poisoning and died at 12:40 a.m. on Sunday, March 7, 1971.

Galya's attorney John Kokish received her letters the next morning. She had sent him the letters knowing hospital staff would not open them due to attorney-client privilege and mailed them on Friday so he would not receive them in time to stop her. Galya's letters blamed Dr. Olenik for her death. The Colorado Bureau of Investigation launched an inquiry. Her autopsy revealed she had consumed cyanide, but the inquiry could not uncover how Galya had smuggled it into the hospital. When Henry gave Galya's

packet to police, testing showed it contained enough cyanide to kill a dozen people. “She really got all of us,” Dr. Olenik would later write. “... There was always a very angry element that we could never do enough for her.”


The mystery surrounding Thomas Riha's disappearance did not die with Galya. After 1973's Watergate scandal, Idaho Senator Frank Church chaired a committee in 1975 to investigate whether the CIA and FBI had been committing illegal spying activities. Colorado Senator Gary Hart included Thomas Riha's disappearance in this investigation. Senators were concerned Hoover's 1970 order to stop communication between the FBI and CIA had impaired the effectiveness of US intelligence operations. The committee concluded Riha's disappearance was responsible for the communication rift and decided Riha was likely alive based on a previously classified report claiming someone had sighted Thomas in Prague. However, the informant claimed to know Riha from a school they both attended in Bratislava. Thomas Riha never attended school in Bratislava, casting the claim in doubt.

A COLORADO COLD CASE

Thomas's family was left to pick up the pieces. His mother Ruth died in February 1970 never knowing what happened to her only child. Her written pleas to the FBI had yielded no information. Thomas's nephew Zdenek petitioned the Denver Probate Court to declare

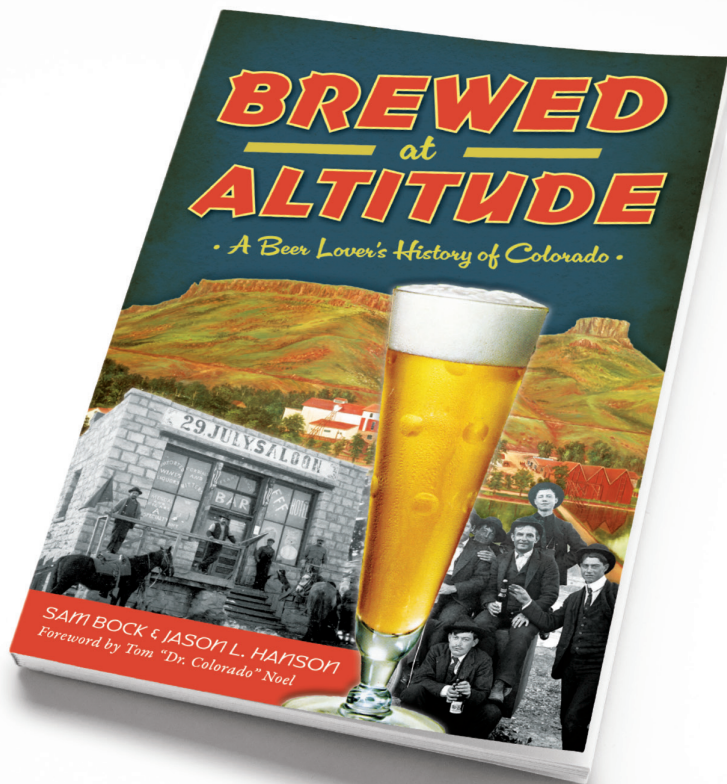
him dead. In 1979, Thomas's estate was divided up and disbursed. Hana Riha received five thousand dollars of Thomas's fourteen-thousand-five-hundred-dollar-estate. Riha's increasingly desperate attempts to keep Hana from receiving money in the divorce had been in vain.

Author Rachel Mann researched the Riha case in the 1990s. Galya's lawyer John Kokish shared Galya's journals and his casefiles with Mann. In February 2015, Kokish and Mann donated their materials and research to History Colorado.

Thomas Riha's disappearance has never been solved. Russian and Czech embassies denied having any information about him. The FBI and CIA, both locally and nationally, continue to maintain they know nothing about Riha's disappearance and never investigated it outside of Hoover's attempts to find the FBI agent who told the CIA Riha was “alive and well.” But against the tense backdrop of Cold-War Colorado, Riha's friends and family had no difficulty suspecting espionage played a role. What happened to Thomas Riha when he left the party shortly after midnight on March 15, 1969? Was he removed by an intelligence agency? Did he flee a marriage gone wrong? Did Galya Tannenbaum have something to do with it? She financially benefited from his disappearance, but only forgery was ever proven in court. The case remains cold. Someone knew what happened to Thomas Riha. The question is: who? 

View The Disappearance of Thomas Riha exhibition at the History Colorado Center, Spring 2026.

Katherine Mercier is an exhibition developer and historian at History Colorado. Katherine grew up in Bailey, Colorado. She graduated from the University of Denver with a BA in Anthropology and the University of Leicester, UK, with an MA in Museum Studies.



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SOCIETY WOLF

A con artist in the early 1900s blazed a trail around the world, swindling victims—including Molly Brown—from Colorado to Japan. More than a century later, a photographic discovery in History Colorado's Collection is shedding new light on his crimes.

BY JORI JOHNSON

It's an old adage for a reason—a picture is worth a thousand words. But when you find a picture that's a mystery, it's like finding a treasure map!

That's how I felt when I saw a never-before-documented photograph of Margaret (of Molly Brown fame) and J.J. Brown, taken together during a 1902 trip to Japan. Found by a research volunteer while rehousing items inside a box of manuscripts belonging to the Humphreys family in History Colorado's Collection, this souvenir portrait immediately piqued my interest. It captures the Browns together with another fashionable couple. Dressed in traditional Japanese attire, they are all sitting on the ground. An inscription in the upper left-hand corner of the

print caught my eye: "From Mr. and Mrs. J.C. Drayton to Their Esteemed Friend Mrs. C. Boettcher Yokohama."

It seemed to be an ordinary souvenir photograph at first glance, only remarkable for its excellent condition and the trio of well-known people involved. Pictured there along with the Browns and the Boettchers of Denver are (supposedly) the Draytons—an old-money family connected via marriage to the fabulously wealthy Astors of New York. The photograph is certainly interesting further documentation of Margaret (Molly) Brown's activities, offering a small glimpse into the remarkable life of one of Colorado's most famous residents before the Titanic voyage that catapulted her into

celebrity. But as I went about verifying the sitters in the photograph, something felt off. The Browns and the Boettchers didn't socialize much with those outside of their sphere during this time of more defined social classes that held sway even out West. Why would this man (Drayton) feel confident that the Boettchers would want a photo of him with the Browns?

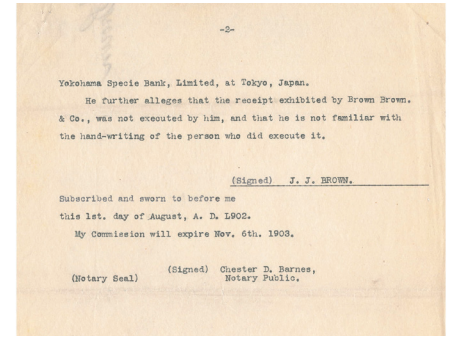
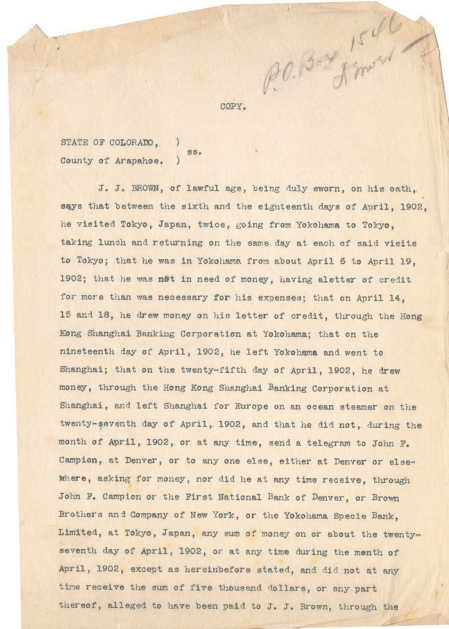
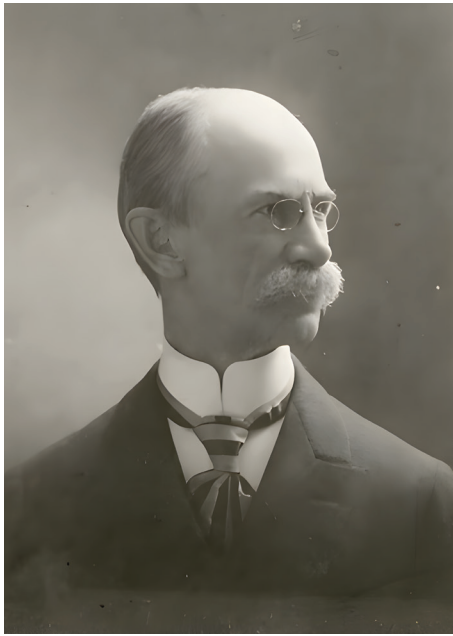
As it would turn out, this was just the first question of many I'd have to answer to get to the bottom of this mysterious photo's story. I set about my research in the archives, figuring that the people in the photograph should be easy enough to identify. Confirming the existence and details of someone called "J.C. Drayton" wasn't too hard. James



J.J. Brown, Margaret's husband and the victim of Harry's theft during their time in Japan. History Colorado, 2022.57.575



J.J. and Margaret Brown alongside Mrs. Susette and Harry Silverberg in kimonos. This photograph was the catalyst for discovering Harry's story. History Colorado, 89.615.121



FAR LEFT Governor Charles S. Thomas, eleventh Governor of Colorado and the man who gave Harry his position to raise funds for the Paris Exhibition, was most likely the key person who introduced him into fashionable Denver society. History Colorado, 89.451.1039

LEFT/ABOVE Affidavit from J.J. Brown confirming the theft of 5000 dollars by the man later identified as Harry Silverberg, when they were in Japan. Lawrence Brown Collection. History Colorado, MSS.84

Coleman Drayton was a son-in-law of the famous Mrs. Astor of New York society, and his sons were friends with the Browns' children. But the Drayton in the photo stood out for a few other reasons, namely his age. He appeared much younger than the Browns.

His striking features were another cause for pause. Online sleuthing turned up a verifiable photo of James Coleman Drayton from his older years, but the photo of the younger Drayton didn't look quite right. As I looked for more historic photos of the famous family, it quickly became clear the man purporting to be J.C. Drayton wasn't who he said he was. This is where the plot thickens.

HERE COMES HARRY

In about 1870, a man who would definitively alter the lives of the Brown family was born in Atlanta, Georgia. His name was Harry Silverberg, and by all accounts, his life was rather happy. His father, a former rabbi, made quite a fortune during the Civil War as a blockade runner, and subsequently moved his family to Arkansas where he owned a modest business empire, expanding to Missouri and Kansas. Harry was one of at least three children and, as far as childhood was concerned, he was lucky.

Beginning in Harry's father's lifetime, but especially after his father's passing when Harry was just fifteen years old, he took a hand in running the business alongside his remaining family members. However, easy access to a flow of cash became, in some ways, his undoing—the beginning of a web of swindles and lies that made Harry infamous. His family tidied up the situation after he embezzled funds from the family stores to fund his gambling debts. But it seems Harry no longer wanted to make a life for himself in Arkansas and decided to journey west.

He moved to San Francisco around 1893, and became an advertising agent with a monthly salary of 100 dollars. It was a decent wage for the average person, but Harry had become accustomed to a lavish lifestyle beyond his means. After running up debts and scheming his way through the city, according to his own account, he needed to skip town and this time he ran to Chihuahua, Mexico.

The papertrail I was uncovering hinted that this was the tip of the iceberg.

As it turns out, one of his first large-scale scams took place in this new locale, where he just so happened to become friends with a telegraph operator. To carry out this well-orchestrated

con, Harry would send a telegram to a "bank" and the "bank" (the telegraph operator) would respond by confirming "yes there are X dollars in this account, feel free to charge what you need for this." He went on to spend more than 150,000 dollars during this spree. Eventually, the operator gave up the scheme, and Harry was imprisoned in a Chihuahua jail for five weeks. According to Harry, his mother found out about his imprisonment and paid back the money Harry had stolen. However during Harry's time behind bars, he was paroled to the Governor of the State of Chihuahua, who offered Harry a job as an American telegraph operator. After working nine months, the governor secured Harry's release.

After his success in Mexico, Harry decided it was time to move on, heading next to Rochester, New York. Here, he became a new man—literally. He decided to go by "J.C. Davis," and as Davis, he met and married a very wealthy young widow. He forged checks totaling 4,600 dollars and was subsequently arrested. His father-in-law got him out of jail on the condition that Harry would divorce his daughter. Harry grabbed the opportunity and decided it would be a good idea to leave America altogether.

FOREIGN ADVENTURES, PART ONE

Here Harry's story really started taking wild turns. It was during his first visit to Europe that Harry became known as "J. Coleman Drayton" and befriended an Austrian countess. Notably, for all the talk and gossip this relationship would have created, Harry never divulged her name—and despite my hours of searching, I was unable to confirm her identity. I did learn that the Countess divorced her Count during this time. But eventually, the money that Harry had been spending dried up, and he had to "fess up" to the Countess. She was "astonished, but came to [his] assistance." Curiously, it was the Countess's idea that Harry change his identity to the now former son-in-law of New York high society's Mrs. Astor, as the real J. Coleman Drayton was recently divorced from her daughter, Charlotte Astor.

After taking up Drayton's identity, Harry found the name unlocked easy access to credit. Just about anywhere he sought loans wanted to do business with a relative of the Astors. One such jewelry store was desperate to sell to him, and the gems Harry picked out amounted to 40,000 German marks. The jewels were sent to Harry and the Countess's hotel prior to payment, and at this point, Harry and the Countess escaped to London with the ill-gotten goods. Unfortunately for them, the real J. Coleman Drayton was also in London and Harry was quickly found out. He was arrested and sentenced to a three-year prison term in Germany, and this is where the Countess abandoned Harry and faded from the story. In Harry's confession, he alluded to the Countess's own transgressions when he stated that she "became the famous woman of the Dreyfus case who sold secrets to both sides." He was deported back to America through the generosity of the American consul after falling ill in prison, and he headed back to the United States. As I worked to unravel the web of intrigue, one thing became increasingly clear: Harry was still proving rather lucky.

Settling stateside in Baltimore—just by coincidence—he met up with a former acquaintance from Baden-Baden (when he was first called Drayton), and kept up the ruse. With this assumed identity, but still in a bout of poor health from his time in the German prison, he moved to Texas for treatment. That's where he met cattle ranch owner Clara Barklow and she married the man she knew as J. Coleman Drayton. Harry was about thirty years old at this time, and it looked like he decided that, with his change in status, he needed to forge a new path. So off the couple moved to Colorado.

DENVER SOCIETY

It was in Denver that Harry, still being called J. Coleman Drayton (sources vary, but I found several indicating that this time he may have been impersonating J. Coleman Drayton, a "nephew" of the true Drayton), attempted to make a legitimate career for himself. He went back to his earlier career in advertising and was making a decent wage of 300 dollars per week. Good fortune smiled on him again, and one day following a particularly charismatic marketing pitch, it turned out that Colorado Governor Charles S. Thomas was in the audience. Impressed with Harry's persuasiveness, the governor offered him a position as a financial agent or commissioner—in charge of raising money for a statue that would be part of a special mining display at the Paris Exhibition. Harry envisioned a statue of a little girl, made of pure gold, he called the "Golden Girl." Still posing as Drayton, he traveled all over the state raising funds to create the statue, coaxing Coloradans out of significant sums of cash along the way. During his time campaigning for funds, he most likely met many among Denver's high society, such as the Brown, Boettcher, Cheesman, and Humphrey families. After months of fast talking and fooling, he disappeared. It was June 1900, and Harry was seen out and about, even borrowing 50 dollars from J.W. Jackson, secretary of the commission to the Paris

Exposition—only to vanish the next day. Governor Thomas, along with other prominent Denverites, realized they were victims of a wily con artist only known to them as Drayton, and every cent of the money was gone. Having uncovered what I thought were some of Harry's most brazen steps, this latest bold theft came as little surprise to me.

On the move, Harry headed north to Butte, Montana. While his wife Clara's whereabouts are unconfirmed during this entire time, Harry decided to change tracks once again. In Butte, he befriended Charles Clark, the son of Montana Senator William A. Clark. Clark owned the *Tribune* newspaper of Great Falls and gave Harry the manager role. Up to his old tricks, instead of using the money from the Paris Commission, he started writing bad checks and using his connections to the Clarks to garner credit. New debts were piling up; he needed to escape.

After fleeing to New York, Harry admitted to running up debts of 100,000 dollars. And with wife Clara Barklow nowhere in sight, he met a "Mrs. Susette" and decided to dash off to Europe once more. On July 18, 1901, on board the ocean liner *St. Louis*, they journeyed east.

FOREIGN ADVENTURES, PART TWO

Harry and Mrs. Susette travelled around Europe scheming and swindling to get rich quickly. Journeying into Asia—territory he had not yet visited—Harry found all new targets for his schemes. Among his exploits in India, he admitted to having traveled as the "head of a bogus railway company in the United States" and "purchased" fake companies in order to give them away, thereby showing off his unbelievable wealth. He was entertained by socialites in India; the likes of Lord and Lady Curzon of Kedleston (at that point the Viceroy and Vicereine of India) spent time with him. Later, the *Denver Post* reported in 1924 that "he entertained the King of Siam who was 'glad to meet the richest man in America.'"

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At last, I came across evidence that following his visit to Calcutta, he journeyed to Tokyo. It was in Tokyo that Harry and Mrs. Susette met his old acquaintances, Margaret and J.J. Brown, most likely having met during his days in Denver when he worked for Governor Thomas. Legal documents in the Lawrence Brown Collection at History Colorado reveal J.J. and Margaret were in Yokohama between April 6 and April 19, 1902, including J.J.'s two day-long visits to Tokyo. I was thrilled to finally uncover that during their stay in Yokohama, Harry (as Drayton) and Susette spent enough time with J.J. and Margaret that they visited the Yokohama studio to have a photograph of the four of them taken together. Still clinging to his chosen name that carried so much weight in Denver society, Harry even purchased a photograph to be sent along to his Boettcher acquaintances back in Denver. But from there the mystery only deepened: Harry happened to learn that the Browns were staying at the Metropole Hotel, after which he visited the Yokohama Specie Bank, Tokio [sic] Japan. A few days before the nineteenth of April, John F. Campion, a friend of Mr. Brown's at Denver, received a cablegram signed "Brown," asking for 5,000 dollars.

Campion, being a friend, must have felt some hesitation at doing so and followed up. Again, from later court testimony I learned that "He took the message to the bank, which, on the nineteenth of April, telegraphed the defendants as follows: 'Pay 5,000 dollars to Yokohama Specie Bank, Tokio, Japan, by telegram for credit of J.J. Brown, upon satisfactory identification, and attach much importance to mental condition of payee. The importance of this cannot be overestimated.'"

However, to unsuspecting J.J. Brown's detriment, the last two lines were omitted from the telegram. The money was subsequently paid out to a "Mr. Brown" on April 25 at the Metropole Hotel. After the incident was discovered and claims were filed, J.J. Brown testified that he at no time requested a transfer of money from the Yokohama Specie Bank at Tokio in April

1902. After he was shown the request, purported to be written by himself, he again testified that "the signature was not in his hand writing, but that he recognized it as having been written by one Harry Silverberg, whom he had met in Japan under an assumed name." During his time in Yokohama he also said that Silverberg went to Tokyo one day with him, as well as asked to borrow money from him multiple times. Harry, not getting the money by any honest means, had tried to fall back on an old trick up his sleeve: wire fraud. Not only did this create a financial headache for the Browns, it wasn't until the Supreme Court of New York ruled on the *Myers v. Brown* court case in February 1911, that any sort of fault was proven in wiring J.J.'s money to Harry. But to my astonishment, the story didn't end there.

Harry even purchased a photograph to be sent along to his Boettcher acquaintances back in Denver.

DRAYTON, MEET DRAYTON

Upon making his way back to the United States, Harry really landed himself in hot water. On July 8, 1902, while staying at the Annex Hotel in Chicago, Illinois, the real J. Coleman Drayton found out where his double was staying and confronted him. Exasperated, the real J. Coleman Drayton was reported to ask the con artist "Why do you impersonate me? Why do you call yourself my son, my nephew? Why do you persist? Haven't you got enough?" Accounting for this exchange, and the fact that a Pinkerton Detective Agent was on his case for repayment of a 500 dollar draft that was two years past due, Harry prom-

ised to change his ways. Nevertheless, Harry never settled anywhere or with any companion for long—and he was already involved with a new woman, a certain Mrs. S.R. Tuck, "of Somewhere." The women in his life never seemed to stick around for long.

Around August 1903, Harry made his way to Minnesota, and shortly thereafter, an old scam on a stenographer caught up to him and he was arrested. He languished in a Minnesota prison for months, until being released in February 1904 due to ill health. Never seemingly discouraged, Harry decided once again to return to Denver for recuperation, and set about a new plan to obtain money through less-than-gentlemanly means.

April 23, 1904 was a normal day, but not for Mrs. Beulah Trimble Edwards. Unexpectedly, a man appeared on the doorstep of her home on North Tejon Street in Colorado Springs, asking to speak with her. Claiming to be a representative of "Polly Pry," the well-known local newspaper columnist, he got straight to the purpose of his visit. According to the *Colorado Springs Gazette*, for a small sum of 1,000 dollars, the stranger said that he could affect her divorce suit against her husband Mr. Edwards by ensuring the readers of the paper were on her side. As Polly Pry was the society writer, what she wrote would be the version best suited to Mrs. Edwards, the man assured her. But Harry (posing as Drayton) and his blatant attempt at blackmail backfired; after her initial shock, Mrs. Edwards (who was, in fact, not seeking a divorce from her husband) showed him the door. Calmly, he took his leave and made for the train back to Denver.

Mrs. Edwards got in touch with the people associated with Polly Pry at the paper. It was confirmed that indeed, Harry, as Drayton, was employed at the paper, but in no way was he sent to Mrs. Edwards's home, nor was Mrs. Pry even in town, and was in reality on her way back from



Mrs. Beulah Trimble, the woman who Harry attempted to blackmail during his confirmed second stint in Colorado.
History Colorado, Carolus-Duran_-_Mrs._William_Astor... History Colorado

New York. By the time the story had unfolded in Denver, Harry had disappeared, having failed at this latest hoax.

I was as undeterred in my quest to get to the bottom of this story as Harry was in continuing his schemes and tricks. As I looked deeper into the sordid story, I found news reports going well into the early 1920s discussing Harry's antics and travels around the world. Remarkably, the biggest one was still to come: his 1909 plot to swindle investors across the pond in London out of hundreds of thousands of dollars using a railroad scheme in Chile. In Harry's own words, he turned up in Chile in 1907 and impersonated another journalist, this time from a New York newspaper. He fell in with a group that introduced him to the President of Chile and, with his permission, secured the backing to build a railroad. Harry obtained additional capital via contacts in London for the project, which for all intents and purposes seemed legitimate. An American judge who served as counsel to the railroad's company became suspicious of Silverberg, who was now going by the name James Jeffrey Williams. His quest to discover more about "Williams" led back to the picture of "rogues" at Scotland Yard in London, where Harry's face was predominantly featured. And with that, Harry's cover was blown, and he disappeared "to parts unknown."

PERSISTENCE PAID OFF

Unknotting the immense web of this incredible story, I was admittedly disappointed to learn that, despite incredible notoriety during his lifetime, Harry seems to have successfully passed into obscurity. No confirmed death notice was published in any papers. His family stayed out of the news. For all the women he married, not a single one seemed to reach out to the papers to tell their tales, nor were any children discussed from any union. Perhaps the women had the resources to keep their names off the society pages, and tried to forget about any encounter they had with the trickster. And that would have been that. Except for one ordinary souvenir photograph recently found in our collection.

Going through collections at museums always feels like searching for buried treasure, and I enjoyed every moment of this twisting, turning hunt. And yet, questions still remain.

BOGUS J. COLEMAN DRAYTON AGAIN SEES THE SHADOW OF THE STRONG ARM OF THE LAW

Said to Be Dodging a Warrant From Colorado Springs for Attempting to Blackmail Mrs. Beulah Edwards.

There is anything but peace and happiness around the quarters of Harry Silverberg, or "J. Coleman Drayton," as he is better known to the police and his victims who stretch around the world. In the first place the sheriff from Colorado Springs has come to Denver seeking Drayton, and with him he carries a warrant charging Drayton with attempting to blackmail Mrs. Beulah Trimble Edwards out of \$1,000.

It is doubtful if the sheriff finds Drayton, for it was said last night that Drayton had discovered he had urgent business in another quarter of the world. While Drayton long ago made his name famous as a swindler and confidence man of the cleverest type, his operations since he has been in Denver are said to have been on an extravagant scale. He attempted to hold up the Citizens' alliance for \$5,000, it is asserted, and he has called upon every large corporation in Colorado, to say nothing of scores of private citizens, and all with the effort to secure money by blackmail.

Drayton's sensational encounter with



HARRY SILBERBERG, ALIAS J. COLEMAN DRAYTON.

Swindler With a Long and Romantic Career in Two Worlds Reported to Have Feathered His Nest Well First.

and the Western men who came to New York, and then the rest was easy.

"My real name," Drayton went on in his written confession, "is Harry Silverberg. My father was William Silverberg, a Jewish rabbi. He turned to trade after the war and went to Chicago and was in the real estate business with Francis Penbody. He moved to Atlanta, Ga., where I was born. I am the youngest of nine children—six are now dead. My sister is the richest woman in a town in Arkansas, where she is still living."

His Luck Was Wonderful.

Silverberg was sent to school. When still a boy he joined his brothers in conducting a series of stores. He had wonderful luck, and this luck sent him to the gamblers.

"One day my books were inspected and it was found that I was \$25,000 short in my accounts—that is, the business did not show the profit it should. I left because I was rebuked, and went to San Francisco, where it was easy for me to make \$100 a week writing ads for men's shirts," he continues.

Silverberg ran short of money in the Pacific coast city, and he says his mother sent him thousands of dollars to keep



TOP Harry Silverberg, a.k.a. J. Coleman Drayton. The photograph from the *Denver Post* article was the key link confirming the photograph reported to be of Mr. J. C. Drayton was, in fact, Harry. *Denver Post* Collection. History Colorado

Mrs. Charles Boettcher Sr., one of the two "Mrs. C. Boettchers" to whom the photograph in question was inscribed. History Colorado, 89.451453



Mrs. Claude Boettcher, the other "Mrs. C. Boettcher" and possible recipient of the photograph in question. History Colorado, 2022.57.446

The photograph in the Humphreys Collection at History Colorado was given to “Mrs. C. Boettcher.” With two “Mrs. C.” Boettchers alive in 1902, it’s not known if this was Charles or Claude’s

wife, but it came into the possession of Ruth Boettcher, daughter of Charles, sister of Claude, respectively. She married A.E. Humphreys Jr. in May 1919 and brought many Boettcher family

heirlooms and photographs with her. No other information is known about this photograph, and in fact, it raises even more questions. I could not determine whether the Browns knew about this photograph being in Boettcher’s possession. It probably would not be a reminder of fond times for either of them. But it does capture a moment in time when the fake J. Coleman Drayton and Mrs. Susette spent a lovely day out with the Browns. It also highlights the lengths Harry went to in order to maintain his elaborate ruse, even after he had been exposed! And it reminds us that museum collections do have stories to tell—sometimes of mystery and misidentification—even if it takes a few decades to get to them. 🌈

Jori Johnson is a Collections Access Coordinator in the Stephen H. Hart Research Center at History Colorado. She has been part of the History Colorado Center team since 2013 when she started out as an intern in the curatorial department. She has an MA in Museum Studies from the University of Leicester, UK and an undergraduate degree in history from Colorado State University.



Mrs. Caroline Schermerhorn Astor, The Grand Dame of New York Society, whose social rules dictated who was “in and out” of American society. She was the one-time mother-in-law of James Coleman Drayton, who had married her daughter Charlotte. Mrs. Astor’s name and social status provided the star power to fuel Harry’s con as the fake Drayton. Courtesy Wikimedia Commons

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COLORADO HERITAGE FOR ALL





MAJOR GENERAL MAURICE ROSE

The lasting legacy of a Colorado World War II hero



Major General Maurice Rose.
History Colorado, 99.63.2

We caught up with Marshall Fogel, co-author of the new trilogy detailing the life and service of Major General Maurice Rose, the highest-ranking commander killed by enemy fire in the European Theater of World War II. The subject of the first book in the series, Major General Maurice Rose grew up Jewish in Denver, and attended East High School before enlisting in the military. Copies of the trilogy are available at HistoryColoradoshop.org or in person at the History Colorado Center in Denver.

Q Give us a little more background, who was Maurice Rose?

Rose is best known for commanding the 3rd Armored Division during World War II. He attended East High, although we found out that he never finished school there. Records show he dropped out and ran away to join the army at age sixteen. He was certainly the highest-ranking Jewish man in the entire army, and he was very well liked and respected, so his shocking death was a real blow to the troops under his command.

Q These books represent an incredible amount of research. What got you so interested in General Rose's story?

I was young—under the age of ten—and we'd go to the General Rose Hospital, and in the foyer was a beautiful case with Rose's helmet with two bullet holes in it and it had a big portrait of General Rose on the wall in the foyer. I remember asking my father "Who is this guy?" I knew it was

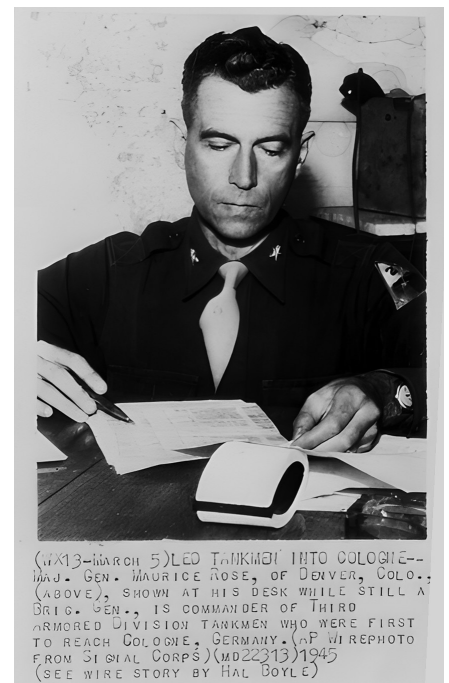
something to do with a Jewish hospital, but I didn't know anything about Rose and he said "Well, we don't talk about it." He wouldn't talk about General Rose. All I knew is that he said "Well, we used to sit shiva for him." Wow. But don't talk about it. So I sort of let it go, but over the years, I always wondered, who is this guy? And when I retired, I decided to find out.

Q It sounds like some people were really uncomfortable talking about him. Can you tell us more about why that might have been?

There was a rumor that Rose converted to Christianity to make sure his religion wouldn't interfere with his promotions. Which obviously would be really damaging to his reputation with the hospital named for him and his legacy as a Jewish general. And nobody wanted to talk about the rumor. But it did make some sense since we know he would have faced real prejudice for being a Jew and may not have been promoted if he were outwardly observing his religion.

Q Did he convert? What did your research turn up?

After a lot of searching, I found out that he didn't have the "J" on his dog tags that would indicate he was Jewish. And then I learned he listed about six denominations of Christianity on his hospital records, which I think was kind of a code—nobody is going to have that many religions before the age of forty-five. But that's all pretty circumstantial, I needed stronger evidence. The breakthrough came when I talked to a genealogist who turned up a letter from Rose to his parents during World War I. According to the letter, which he wrote to his parents after he was wounded in France, he broke out from a hospital to return to the front



Rose, photographed working at a desk before his promotion to Major General. History Colorado, 99.63.1

lines with his men. There he was about to lead a charge out of the trenches, and just before he leapt out, the letter says he yelled “Shema Yisrael,” or “Hear, O Israel”—one of the most important phrases in the Jewish religion. Which is something you only tell your parents about if you still consider yourself a Jew.

Q How is General Rose remembered today?

Of course there’s the monument in front of the Colorado State Capitol Building and the Rose Memorial Hospital in Denver. So he’s well known for his accomplishments and service—he was, after all, the first to negotiate the surrender of a German armored unit in World War II. But one thing I kept running across talking to soldiers was how good looking he was, the best looking guy you ever saw. He was a leader of men, the kind of guy that inspired people and had a real presence.

Q It’s unusual for such a high-ranking officer to be killed. How did that happen?

Rose was known for leading from the front, for wanting to be close to the action so he could see what was going on. In fact, the mockup of the memorial statue bears the words “Follow me.” There were occasions where he would cross bridges with just his driver alone to show his troops it was safe to cross, and he always put his command post way too far in the front. It made his commander, “Lightning” Joe Collins, nervous. That’s why, on March 30, 1944, he was near the head of a column that was about to be surrounded. They suddenly found themselves cut off by a German tank, and that’s when its commander opened a hatch and shot the general at least fourteen times with at least two bullets striking him in the head. It was national news when he died, America has lost a great general.

Q What happened after his death?

General Rose’s body was recovered the next day and he was buried in the Netherlands American Cemetery in the village of Margraten. The people there take care of the graves, and it’s an honor to be given responsibility for General Rose’s grave. The school there is named for him, that’s how well-regarded Rose (and American GIs in general) are in the Netherlands. After the war, some of Rose’s men gathered together some savings to start the hospital in his honor. Eisenhower came out twice to dedicate the hospital. The man is remembered not just for what he did, but for who he was.

Q The trilogy is mostly about General Rose, but you and co-author Jere Corlett also explore the story of another Colorado-born general, Jere’s relative, Charles H. Corlett. Tell us more about Corlett and that story.

Corlett grew up in Monte Vista and started at West Point at age nineteen where he got the nickname “Cowboy Pete” since he worked as a ranch hand until he enrolled and was good with the horses. He served in World War I and was instrumental in developing amphibious landing tactics in the Pacific during the early years of World War II. Then, in July 1944 when American and Allied forces found themselves stuck in Normandy, he and General Rose were instrumental in Operation Cobra, a successful attack on German defenses that changed the tide of the war in Western Europe. Not bad for two kids from Colorado!

**SCAN ME TO BUY
THE TRILOGY**



Rose giving orders into a radio in Cologne, Germany in March 1945, shortly before he was killed in action. History Colorado, 86.296.3717

Q You were also involved in the effort to put up the monument in Denver. What is your hope for that statue and for the trilogy?

Rose embodied four very important things: initiative, innovation, diplomacy, and leadership. I want people to see the statue and read the book and to know how important those qualities are in terms of success, not just in the military, but in life. As for the books, I think it’s good for everyone, maybe kids especially, to see this Jewish hero and to know that Jews weren’t just victims in the war. So I think the lesson to take away from Rose’s story is that the strength of this country comes from diversity, meritorious diversity, and the value of the respect you earn from the different people around you by working your way into leadership positions.





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