Category: OLD COLORADO CITY - It's Start
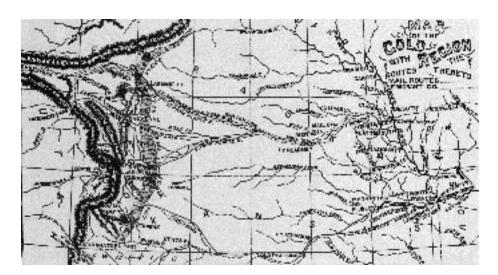Published: Sunday, 11 January 2009 17:19
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First Gold Rushers to Pike's Peak (1858-1859)

by LaDonna Gunn

Although Indians, explorers, and trappers had found gold in the Colorado Rockies before the 1859 Pike's Peak gold rush, Americans seemed unconcerned. Not until after the California gold rush in the late 1840s and the economic panic of 1857 did Americans begin seriously exploring the Rocky Mountains.

Because of some confirmed and unconfirmed reports of gold in the Rocky Mountains, three separate prospecting parties set out for the Pike's Peak region in 1858, traveling up the Arkansas River. Green Russell's party originated in Georgia; John Easter's party formed in Lawrence, Kansas; and Captain John Price's party organized in Westport, Missouri, which included future Colorado City founders, Anthony Bott and George A. Bute. All three parties explored the Pike's Peak region, camping at different times at the base of Pike's Peak on Fountain Creek. The prospectors found gold in 1858 but not in large enough quantities to stake claims. As other prospecting parties entered the region, several members from the earlier parties began speculating and organizing town sites rather than continue prospecting. Several members from the Lawrence party platted the town site of El Paso during the summer of 1858 on the present site of Colorado Springs; and several members from the Westport party platted the town site of El Dorado during the latter part of 1858 on the present site of Colorado City. Although the El Paso founders never improved their site, the El Dorado founders experienced a few months of building a few log cabins. However, when prospectors failed to discover a large find in the region in 1858, the town organizers had to abandon both sites for lack of interest.

In 1859, however, with confirmed news of large gold discoveries, the number of people rushing to the gold fields substantially increased. With a continual flow of people coming into the region, several of the earlier prospectors tried again to establish a town at the foot of Pike's Peak. Anthony Bott, George A. Bute, and other newcomers founded the present town of Colorado City in August 1859, hoping to become a mining camp supply town to the gold rushers in South Park.