

## **Declining Colorado City (1860-1862)**

Category: OLD COLORADO CITY - Decline/rebirth

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**by LaDonna Gunn**

In early 1860 with the town booming, the founders of Colorado City never expected the town to begin waning in business and prosperity. The Town Company certainly did not lack motivation and desire to have "the largest and best city in the Pike's Peak region." No, several extraneous factors contributed to the decline of Colorado City.

First, Colorado City was in competition with Denver City and Canon City for the leading route to and from the South Park mining camps. During the winter of 1859 and 1860, the Colorado City Town Company had constructed the Ute Pass wagon road, but shortly after that, both Denver City and Canon City built their own roads to South Park. Colorado City could no longer boast as having the best route to the South Park mining camps.

Secondly, with border troubles in Kansas escalating in 1860 and 1861 and the start of the Civil War in April 1861, the balance of travel to the Pike's Peak region shifted almost solely to the Platte River. Before these troubles arose, travel to the region was split between the Arkansas Trail along the Arkansas River and the Oregon Trail along the Platte River. In 1860 and 1861, when travel shifted to the Platte River, Denver became the destination town for weary travelers to the Pike's Peak region. Colorado City felt the effects in declining business and prosperity.

Although the town began to "wane," determined residents found additional ways to maintain Colorado City's viability other than relying on the mining industry. Agriculture became the next interest of the Pike's Peak region.