


Category: OLD COLORADO CITY - It's Start

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## Welcome to the sesquicentennial of the original Colorado City

The banner at the top of this page is from one of the few surviving copies of the Colorado City Journal of November 25th, 1861. The issue was full of the Civil War, the first territorial law and the fascinating early history of the new town (founded in 1859) that would grow to become our friendly Westside. We volunteers at the Old Colorado City Historical Society are using that early newspaper banner for this special Colorado City Journal edition and our sesquicentennial logo: "150 Years and Counting."

### FOUNDING



Colorado City was founded on August 12th, 1859. Melancthon Beach and Rufus Cable rode from Denver City where a group of investors, including Anthony Bott, had formed the Colorado City Town Company. They staked out their land patent claim of 1,200 acres, 2 miles long and 1 mile wide astride Fountain Creek, at the base of Ute Pass. Colorado Avenue was the main street. It remains today exactly as it was laid out by Henry Foushee, who planned the town. As gold seekers passed through the town enroute to the mining camps, over 300 cabins were built and lots sold briskly.

Since there were no government offices, the El Paso Claim Club was formed to hang horse thieves, manage the town, record the first deeds and lobby Congress to create a new territory, calling it "Colorado."

The territorial legislature then outvoted Denver to become, briefly, in 1862, the first Territorial Capital.

A cabin built by Dr. Charles Garvin in 1859, which was used by legislators at 1862 meetings, still stands today in Bancroft Park, under the care of the Historical Society.

### CIVIL WAR

The Civil War broke out in 1861. By 1862 a Texas Confederate Army tried to invade Colorado by coming up through New Mexico along the Rio Grande. One fourth of all Coloradans were Southern sympathizers. Many became Confederate guerrillas, robbed stagecoaches and attacked El Paso County settlers. Major train traffic coming west along the Arkansas River dried up. Colorado City stopped growing. Governor William Gilpin raised the First Colorado Volunteer Infantry Regiment. Company A was recruited in Colorado City. 1,200 men marched 400 miles to Fort Union before the Southern army got there.

### INDIANS

The Plains Indians attacked Territorial Settlers and by 1864 had sealed off Denver from travel to or from the east. Colorado City had to fortify its buildings from the threat. The US and Territorial Government raised the 3d Colorado Cavalry, 18 of whose men came from Colorado City. The 3d and 1st Colorado Cavalry, under Colonel Chivington were ordered to attack a large Cheyenne and Arapahoe encampment at Sand Creek. A battle ensued in which 24 Union soldiers were killed and 51 were wounded besides the Indian casualties. But the mountain Ute Indians were not hostile to Colorado City settlers. During the winter of 1866 and 1867 a large tribe under Chief Dugay and Queen Chispa camped along Fountain Creek. They visited often. Children played together. In 1868, however, Arapahoe Plains Indians again attacked settlers. They killed the young Robbins boys and Charlie Everhart, just east of Colorado City. The threats did not subside until the 1870s.

### RAILROADS

In 1871 Colorado Springs was founded 3 miles east of Colorado City. After that came Manitou Springs to the west. With them came, first the narrow gauge Denver and Rio Grande railroad, which passed through Colorado City on its way to Manitou. Then, in 1885, came the full gauge Midland Railroad, whose yards were in Colorado City. It went up Ute Pass, heading for points west. It served Cripple Creek after the discovery of gold there in 1891. The Midland Terminal Railroad, largely carrying gold ore, linked Cripple Creek and the Midland at Divide. Hundreds of local men worked on these railroads, which not only served passengers, but the mills, and numerous industrial plants, including the Glass Works, Ute Paint and Hazzell Iron Works. Colorado City became the blue-collar, Democratic and Union side of town.

### GOLD MILLS

Four great gold mills were built in Colorado City to process the ore transported by rail from Cripple Creek. The greatest was the Golden Cycle, which replaced the earlier Telluride mill in an area southeast of what is now Highway 24 and 21st Street. Others were the Colorado-Philadelphia and Standard, both owned by Bradnor Interest; and the Portland. The first three used the Midland railroad to transport ore from Cripple Creek, while the Portland used the Short Line railroad, following the route that is now the Gold Camp Road.

From 1906 to 1949, various processes were used to extract the gold and silver from the ore. The Golden Cycle Mill, using a cyanide process, was the most efficient and put the others out of business. It processed 14 million tons of ore, extracting 8 million ounces of gold over its life. The milling slowed after 1920 and was crippled by World War II's limitations and post-war labor problems. So Golden Cycle shut down in 1949. The equipment was moved to Cripple Creek. Only the 1908 smokestack and the tailings with residual gold remain.

### WESTSIDE

After Colorado City dissolved itself as a town and was annexed by Colorado Springs in 1917, the Westside continued with its own proud residential character. Westside children grew up attending its many schools and churches and also studying at the 1904 Carnegie Library. Four mayors of Colorado Springs grew up on the Westside. The entire racing Unser family were Westsiders. And many of the area's young men fought in World Wars I and II. The gold mills and railroads continued to operate for many more decades, and its workmen served the needs of a growing Colorado Springs. But "Old Town," as it had come to be known, suffered when both these industries closed the same year (1949).

Another economic blow occurred about 10 years later, when the city decided it needed a bypass - US 24 on the old Midland railroad bed. As a result, tourists heading to or from the mountains no longer used historic Colorado Avenue; this led to a business decline, and many small avenue shops closed. But the Victorian brick buildings survived, as did most of the modest Carpenter Victorian homes across the Westside. It was time, in the early 1970s, for economic change. The rich history of Colorado City would be the key to the future.

### REBIRTH

After years of decline, Old Town had a rebirth in 1976 as "Old Colorado City." Led by proactive merchants and residents, who convinced city officials that preserving the area's old buildings made more economic sense than tearing them down, Colorado City's original downtown was restored as a National Historic District in 1982, and many commercial buildings on Colorado Avenue, as well as the Carnegie Library and homes throughout the Westside, were improved and enhanced. Community, business and social organizations and events were reborn. The Westside became again a highly desirable place to live, work and play. It's not done yet. For Colorado City is now 150 Years and Counting.

### THE MONUMENT - PLEASE HELP

Members of the Old Colorado City Historical Society urge Westsiders to help us erect a six-foot-high Sesquicentennial Monument next to the 1859 Cabin in Bancroft Park. Our gift to the city, the Rocky Mountain rose granite structure will display eight engraved panels like the ones you see in this recreated Old Colorado City Journal. On the Monument, each panel will display a few lines of text. The panel sketches were donated by Johnnie Jackson. Society members need to raise \$15,000 to pay for the quarried stone, the engraving and the installation. We want to dedicate the Monument on August 8th, 2009, as we celebrate the 150th Anniversary year of Historic Colorado City. The Monument and its history will belong to the Westside. Please make your tax-exempt donations for the Sesquicentennial Monument Fund by check or cash or credit card at the History Center, 1 S. 24th St., or by secure Paypal online at <http://history.dccolo.com>. You school kids can add "Thanks for Pioneers' too. A list of all donors will go into the Sesquicentennial Time Capsule that will be placed in the History Center's Brick Memorial Patio. You will be remembered 150 years from now for your support.

### OLD COLORADO CITY

1859-2009  
150 YEARS - AND COUNTING

This sesquicentennial history compliments of the Old Colorado City Historical Society, 2009