

FLORISSANT, COLORADO

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The Territory of Colorado was part of the Kansas Territory until 1861 when the first Colorado Territorial assembly created 17 counties, including Clear Creek, Fremont, Jefferson, Park and El Paso.

Florissant, CO was settled in 1870 and in 1876 when Colorado became a state, there were about 70 pioneers living in the Florissant area. By the 1880 census, there were 200 men, women and children living in the Florissant area. **Florissant was part of El Paso County until Teller County was carved out in 1899.**

Colorado City, CO, on the West side of Colorado Springs, was founded in 1859. There were no settlements west of Colorado City on the Ute Pass Road until the small town on Twin Creek, named Florissant, was established in 1870 by **James Castello**.

James Castello had moved to Fairplay in Park County, CO in 1863. His wife, Catherine, and seven of their children joined him in Fairplay. However, Castello was a good businessman and saw the better opportunities of having a trading post on Twin Creek.

After James Castello established a trading post and home in Florissant, other families joined them. **Fred Smith** was the first blacksmith in the community. Fred and his wife **Emmeline (Huffmann) Baker** and her children--Ida Baker, Emma Baker, Louis Baker, and Charles Baker--left their home in Kansas and established their home in Florissant in October 1872.

Michael Caylor served the Union in the War Between the States from Indiana. He and his wife **Louisa (Beal)** moved to Colorado Territory ca. 1873 and lived in Park County. He was assistant postmaster at Rocky CO.

John C. Wilson and his wife **Mary J. (Bates)** were married in Missouri and homesteaded in the Florissant area ca. 1874. Mary Ellen Wilson married **William C. Bird** and they moved to the

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Florissant, CO area in the summer of 1875. They later moved on to Routt County, CO; however, their 4-year-old daughter, Viola A. Bird, was buried in the Florissant Cemetery in 1879.

Valentine Hamman and his wife **Elizabeth (Kerby)** left Iowa after their marriage and were farming in the Florissant area by 1880. John Wilson, Valentine Hamman and Frank F. Castello were the three men who formed the Florissant Cemetery Association in 1886.

Adam G. Hill and his wife **Charlotte (Coplen)** arrived in Old Colorado City, CO from Ohio in 1861. Adam acquired a homestead for 160 acres in 1869 and the family moved up to their homestead on the fossil beds in the early 1870s. This was a couple miles south of Florissant. Their daughter, Minnie Hill died in 1877 and was buried in the Florissant Cemetery.

Civil War Veteran, **John M. Hensley**, and his wife, **Elizabeth (Proctor) Elswick**, were residents of El Paso County before 1880. He farmed and was a miner. Captain and Mrs. Hensley boarded many travelers at their ranch which was located along the Ute Pass Wagon Road. Elizabeth died in 1890, John in 1894. They are buried in the Florissant Cemetery as are two of their Powell grandchildren who died in the 1870s.

William L. Chiles/Childs and his wife **Sarah A. (Hargus)** first lived in Manitou where he was a teamster in 1880. They moved up to Florissant before 1885 where he was a ranchman. William was one of the 44 qualified electors of Florissant in 1891 when they petitioned to incorporate the town of Florissant. William worked in the gold mines in Cripple Creek. Their son Willie Chiles died in 1894 and was buried in the Florissant Cemetery. William and Sarah appear to have been buried in Mount Pisgah Cemetery in Cripple Creek.

Until the Colorado Midland Railroad was completed, it was a two day journey for the 35 mile trip from Old Colorado City up the steep, single lane, Ute Pass Wagon Road to Florissant. The Colorado Midland Railroad created the first economic boom in Florissant when the standard gauge railroad tracks were laid up the mountain in 1886.

The Florissant area enjoyed a building boom when gold was discovered in 1890 in Poverty Gulch by cowboy Bob Womack. Mount Pisgah, in what is now Cripple Creek, was reached by stage or wagon from Florissant. Mining men needed supplies. Gold ore had to be taken down the mountain. Florissant was the chief railroad point for business to and from Cripple Creek. Those going to the mining district came up to Florissant by the Colorado Midland and then by

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stage or wagon to Cripple Creek until 1894 when the Florence & Cripple Creek Railroad was completed. Florissant's residents numbered about 300 during this time.

Arthur F. Cummins and his wife **Eva (Akery)** were residents of Florissant before 1891. He was a blacksmith. They buried a child in 1892 in the Florissant Cemetery and then moved on to San Miguel County, CO.

Nathaniel Stanley Davis and his wife **Mary A. (Walters)** settled in Florissant, CO in 1887. He became a clerk in the Teller County Assessor's office. Their infant son, Russell Vernon Davis, rests in the Florissant Cemetery.

Father and son are buried in the Florissant Cemetery: **Eugene Griswold** and his son, **Georgie F. Griswold**, both died in 1890. Sisters, **Mary Lucretia (Phelps) Pitwood** and **Nellie (Phelps) Voorhees** are buried side-by-side in the Florissant Cemetery. Mary died in 1893; Nellie had died from childbirth in 1892. **John Horn** died in 1889 near Howbert in Park County, CO; his nephew **John Kropf** died in 1888. They are buried next to each other in the Florissant Cemetery.

Judson Blackman Harper and his wife **Frances Elizabeth (Morgan)** buried their son December 20, 1890 in the Florissant Cemetery. What a sad Christmas for the Harper family.

Joseph Hurtgen from Switzerland and his wife **Maude (Lanigan)** were in the Florissant area in the 1890s. Three of their infant children were buried in the Florissant Cemetery 1891-1895. They moved on to Glenwood Springs, CO.

Charles McLaughlin was one of the qualified electors of Florissant, CO in 1891. He and John Horrigan purchased the Florissant Mercantile from Frank Castello about 1892. Charles' wife was **Leoan** (maiden name unknown).

Fred D. Perrin born 1860 was buried in the Florissant Cemetery. He died in 1897 in Puma City, Park County, CO. Very little is known about Fred. We hope to find someone who can tell us more about this man.

Ludlow H. Pruden buried two wives in the Florissant Cemetery—**Alice (Kearby)** in 1882 and **Olive (Averil) Cheney** in 1894—and his only child, George K. Pruden in 1880. Ludlow served in the Union Army from Colorado during the American Civil War.

Ernestus J. Putman, Jr. was born in Ohio; he died in 1896 and was buried in the Florissant Cemetery. He was a grocer in Leadville, CO in the 1880s and homesteaded in the Florissant area in 1890. His wife was **Sarah J. Deem**.

Curtis G. Rice was from Ohio. He married **Flora Belle Cover**. Curtis died in 1891 and was buried in the Florissant Cemetery. After his death, his wife remarried and moved to Missouri.

The most elaborate tombstone in the Florissant Cemetery is that of **Roxy Shuemaker**, daughter of Henry and Minnie (Colcleser). Roxy died in 1892 at age 2 years. Henry Shuemaker worked at the saw mill and after his death, Minnie married Henry Krauskopf. Roxy's three brothers remained in the Teller County, CO area.

James William Sims and his sister **Laura J. Sims** are buried side-by-side in the Florissant Cemetery. James died in 1893 and Laura in 1897. They were the children of James B. and Leona Dorcas (Averil) Sims of Park County, CO.

Samuel Stevens and **Eva (Long)** buried their daughter, Maree Stevens, in 1894 in the Florissant Cemetery. Sam was a night telegraph operator for the Colorado Midland Railroad. Eva was the daughter of David and Lydia Long of Florissant, CO. Eva died in 1937, but it is not known where. Clarence R. Young and Eva M. (Stevens) buried their son in 1896 in the Florissant Cemetery. Eva was a sister of Sam's.

So many children were buried in the Florissant Cemetery. **Fredrick Stoll** from Germany and his wife **Katherine (Hoffman)** buried 5 of their children and a granddaughter in this pioneer cemetery. **Samuel W. Thompson** and his wife **Elizabeth** buried their first daughter, Eva May, in 1881. Sam's brother, **Silas M. Thompson** and his wife **Atlanta Georgia (Long)** buried their first 2 daughters in the Florissant Cemetery. Lena May Thompson was 4 and Ina Lydia Thompson was not yet 3 years old. **Robert Bartram** was 1 year old when his parents buried him in 1889. And who was the child—G. L. Scott—with only the footstone remaining? Did someone

steal his tombstone and his identity?

Many others were buried in this pioneer cemetery. Two young women were buried here---two mysteries to be solved. “**Laura K.**, wife of **C. W. Morse** died October 15, 1900 aged 27 years;” and “**Jennie Thompson**, 1875-1901.” Who were these women? Can you help?

These stories and many more are told in **Laura L. Moncrief & Nancy M. Boyd, *Florissant, Colorado Pioneer Cemetery: The Stories Behind the Tombstones*** (Florissant, CO: Pikes Peak Historical Society, 2009). This book of 220 pages consists of 100 family genealogies, photos of each pioneer tombstone, and a complete index of over 500 surnames. The authors have donated their time and resources; therefore, 100% of the profit from the sale of this book will be used to support this pioneer cemetery. Books are for sale at the Old Colorado City Historical Society.