COLORADO Heritage

The Magazine of History Colorado November/December 2012 $4.95

Denver A to Z

ADRENALINE to ZOMBIES

and (almost) everything in between.

"Barrel Man" Tim McKernan—
Broncomania in the Flesh

The Zombies of Cheesman Park

Cherry Creek—
Love it? Hate It?

The Denver Diorama Goes High-Tech

ALSO IN THIS ISSUE

- Civic Center Is Denver's First National Historic Landmark
- Winter Programs Around the State
- Holiday Happenings

HISTORY Colorado

Colorado Heritage

The Magazine of History Colorado

Edward C. Nichols
President and CEO

History Colorado Center
1200 Broadway
Denver, Colorado 80203
303/HISTORY

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Denver A to Z

ADRENALINE to ZOMBIES

and (almost) everything in between.

Opening Saturday, November 17!

See page 4.

COLORADO
Heritage
NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 2012

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ON THE COVER

Celebrating the Fourth of July at Denver's City and County Building. Denver Post *photo by Karl Gehring..*

History Colorado Center
1200 Broadway, Denver
Open: Monday through Saturday, 10 A.M. to 5 P.M.; Sunday, noon to 5 P.M.
Admission: Members free; nonmember adults $10; seniors and students (13–22 with ID) $8; children (6–12) $6; children 5 and under free. **303/HISTORY**, www.HistoryColoradoCenter.org

Byers-Evans House Museum
1310 Bannock Street, Denver
Open: Daily, except Sunday, 10 A.M. to 4 P.M. Guided house tours from 10:30 A.M. to 3:30 P.M.
Admission: Members free; nonmember adults $6; seniors and students (with ID) $5; children (6–12) $4. Group tours available. **303/620-4933**, www.ByersEvansHouseMuseum.org

El Pueblo History Museum
301 North Union, Pueblo
Open: Tuesday through Saturday, 10 A.M. to 4 P.M.
Admission: Members free; nonmember adults $5; seniors, children 6–12, and students with ID $4; children 5 and under free; children 12 and under free on Saturdays. **719/583-0453**, www.ElPuebloHistoryMuseum.org

Fort Garland Museum
25 miles east of Alamosa off U.S. 160
Open: April–October, daily, 9 A.M. to 5 P.M. November–March, Thursday through Monday, 10 A.M. to 4 P.M.
Admission: Members free; nonmember adults $5; seniors $4.50; children ages 6–16, $3.50. **719/379-3512**, www.FortGarlandMuseum.org

Fort Vasquez Museum
13412 U.S. 85, Platteville; 35 miles north of downtown Denver
Open: Daily through Labor Day, 9 A.M. to 4 P.M.
Admission: Members and children under 5 free; nonmembers $2.
970/785-2832, www.FortVasquezMuseum.org

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Call **1-888/456-6777** for reservations or visit www.georgetownlooprr.com.

Grant-Humphreys Mansion
770 Pennsylvania Street, Denver
Open: For rental events, including receptions, weddings, and business meetings.
303/894-2505, www.GrantHumphreysMansion.org

Healy House Museum and Dexter Cabin
912 Harrison Avenue, Leadville
Open: Daily 10 A.M. to 4:30 P.M. Last guided tour starts at 3:45. Closes for the season on October 7. Group tours (20+) can be arranged in winter (depending on availability) with reservation.
Admission: Members free; nonmember adults $6; seniors $5.50; children (6–16) $4.50; children 5 and under free. **719/486-0487**, www.HealyHouseMuseum.org

Pike's Stockade
Six miles east of La Jara, near Sanford, Colorado, just off Highway 136
Open: Memorial Day to October 1, or by appointment.

Trinidad History Museum
312 East Main Street, Trinidad
Open: May 1–September 30, Monday–Saturday, 10 A.M. to 4 P.M. Closed on state holidays. October 1–April 30, tours for groups of 12 or more available by appointment. The Baca-Bloom Heritage Gardens are open 9 A.M. to 4 P.M. year-round.
Admission: Members free. Nonmember ticket options for Historic Homes Guided Tours, Santa Fe Trail Museum self-guided tours, Friday Heritage Garden Tours, and combination tickets at adult, senior, and child rates. Children 5 and under free. **719/846-7217**, www.TrinidadHistoryMuseum.org

Ute Indian Museum
17253 Chipeta Road, Montrose
Open: July–October: Monday through Saturday, 9 A.M. to 4:30 P.M.; Sunday, 11 A.M. to 4:30 P.M. Winter hours vary.
Admission: Members and children 6 and under free; nonmember adults $4.50; seniors $4; children ages 6–16, $2. **970/249-3098**, www.UteIndianMuseum.org

From the PRESIDENT

Though we take pride in being a statewide organization with a long legacy of celebrating the full breadth of Colorado history, now and then we get a chance to celebrate the Mile High City, home of our flagship History Colorado Center.

That's just what we're doing with *Denver A to Z*, a light-hearted exhibit opening in the Honnen Family Gallery on November 17.

The newest addition to the History Colorado Center's core exhibit program, *Denver A to Z* features hands-on interactives, an eight-foot-tall version of Lawrence Argent's *I See What You Mean* (the "Big Blue Bear" of the Colorado Convention Center), and plenty of rich Denver history at every turn. You'll find nods to metro-Denver landmarks like Red Rocks, the Brown Palace, the D&F Tower, Casa Bonita restaurant, St. Cajetan Catholic Church, the Fillmore Auditorium, and more.

This issue of *Colorado Heritage* expands on a few of those stories:

D is for Devoted: The tale of Tim McKernan, the famous "Barrel Man" of Denver Broncos fandom, pays homage to the city's sporting spirit.

L is for Love It? Or Hate It? Cherry Creek—the waterway that links up with the Platte River at Denver's Confluence Park—has a long legacy of challenging Denverites to tame it, to make the best of it, and finally even to love it.

Z is for Zombies: The equally enjoyed Cheesman Park has a dark past as a boneyard with a troubled legacy—a legacy that few newcomers are even aware of.

In this issue you can also read an expanded feature by our own state historian about the return of the WPA-era *Early Denver* diorama, beloved by museum visitors since the 1930s. On February 7, this classic diorama makes its reappearance—in a new high-tech setting—in the History Colorado Center lobby.

The Mountain-Plains Museums Association recently honored History Colorado with its annual Leadership and Innovation Award, giving us kudos for the ways we've transformed our organization. As part of that transformation we reached out to thousands of Coloradans like you, in an effort to create the most engaging means of telling Colorado's stories. Now, *Denver A to Z* tells the Mile High City's story in vignettes that will delight your family—and maybe even surprise you.

Edward C. Nichols, President and CEO

New & On View

History Colorado Center Website

We have a website dedicated exclusively to what's going on at the History Colorado Center. Visit www.HistoryColoradoCenter.org to plan your visit.

Stephen H. Hart Library and Research Center

Wednesday through Saturday, 10 A.M. to 5 P.M.

The Grant-Humphreys Mansion

Party at the Grant-Humphreys Mansion

Still looking for that perfect spot to host your holiday party? Look no further than the Grant-Humphreys Mansion in Denver's historic Quality Hill neighborhood. Visit www.granthumphreysmansion.org or call 303/894-2505.

Denver

History Colorado Center

Original State Constitution on Display

For the People of Colorado takes a fresh look at the state's founding document. Explore the Constitution as it was and as it is—and why we keep changing it.

Destination Colorado and *Colorado Stories*

Have you experienced the History Colorado Center's inaugural exhibits yet? Journey back to the 1920s and visit the town of Keota on Colorado's eastern plains in *Destination Colorado*. Then, discover the compelling tales of eight different communities in *Colorado Stories*.

Trinidad

An American Icon: Louis Tikas and the Ludlow Massacre

Trinidad History Museum
Through June 2014

On view to coincide with observances of the 100th anniversary of the coal miners' strike of 1913–14 and the Ludlow Massacre of 1914.

Destination Colorado *at the History Colorado Center*

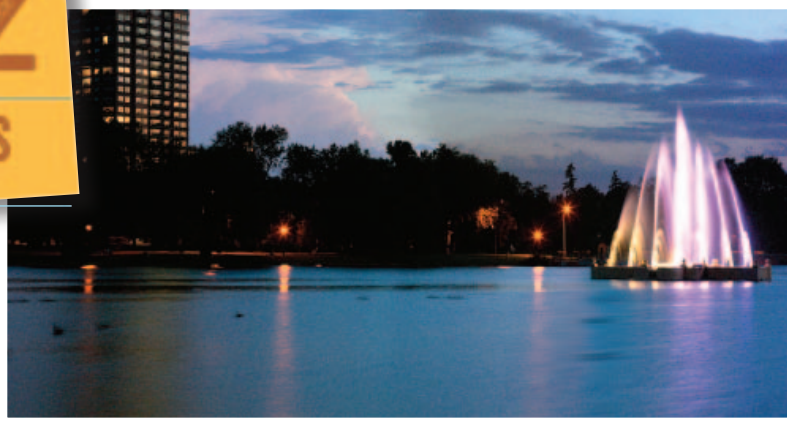
Denver A to Z

*Join History Colorado's "Discover Denver A to Z" **mobile scavenger hunt** November 10 through 18. Complete challenges to earn points, and you could win $1,000! Visit www.historycoloradocenter.org to sign up now!*

Denver A to Z

ADRENALINE to ZOMBIES

and (almost) everything in between.



Denver A to Z

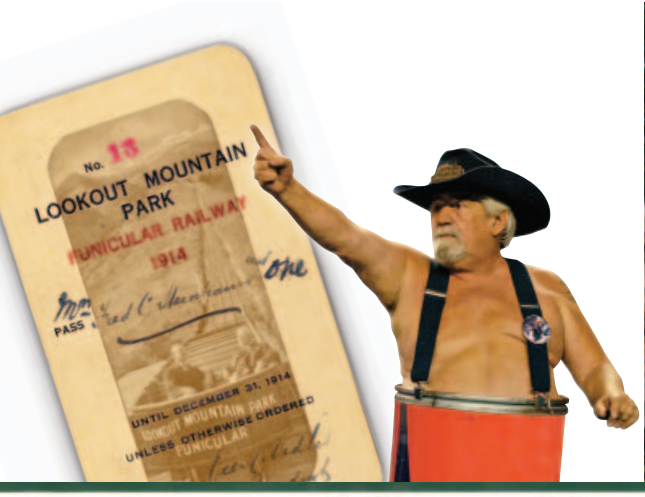
New Exhibit Taps the Essence of the Mile High City—*Opens November 17*

Denverites know that the Mile High City is like no other on earth. But what really makes Denver, *Denver*?

Denver A to Z, a new History Colorado Center exhibit, taps into the essence of Denver letter by letter—"A" for adrenaline, "Z" for zombies, and every letter in between. Discover the heart, the art, the whimsy, and the energy of Denver's people, places, and moments in this lighthearted and interactive exhibit.

Plus, the newly conserved *Early Denver* diorama from the Works Progress Administration—beloved by museum visitors since the 1930s—reappears in the main lobby of the History Colorado Center starting February 7.

Denver A to Z is included with general admission to the History Colorado Center. Admission is always free for History Colorado members.


No. 18
LOOKOUT MOUNTAIN
PARK
FUNICULAR RAILWAY
1914
PASS
UNTIL DECEMBER 31, 1914
UNLESS OTHERWISE ORDERED

NATIVE

Casa
Bonita

Tours & Treks

Take a Guided Trip Into the Past *(To register call 303/866-4686)*

For the People of Colorado: Colorado's Constitution Walking Tour

Second Wednesday of the month, through February, 10:30 to 11:30 A.M.

Learn about Colorado's Constitution in a tour through Denver's Civic Center and environs. From slavery to Sand Creek to suffrage, historic events have shaped our Constitution. Be ready to walk up to two miles.
Members $4, nonmembers $5

Historic Westminster Walking Tour

Saturday, November 10, 9 A.M. to noon

Join History Colorado high on the hills northwest of Denver, where the "Princeton of the West" looks down on the hustle and bustle along the South Platte. Dazzling modern art complements history at the beautiful Bowles House Museum. Discover the richness—historic and modern—of this suburban enclave.
Members $16, nonmembers $21

The Women of Denver: A Tour by Bus

Thursday, November 15, 10 A.M. to 3 P.M.

Is Denver history just about men? Absolutely not! Women ventured out of the home, across the prairie, up the mountains, and into our history. Meet the noble and notorious women of Denver—from Chipeta, the Ute woman who negotiated for peace, to Mattie Silks, the madam who negotiated for sex. Includes a one-hour break for lunch.
Members $36, nonmembers $46

Breckenridge Snowshoeing and Saloon Tour

Saturday, December 8, 6 P.M. to Sunday, December 9, 12:30 P.M.
Register by November 26

It's saloons and snowshoes on this scenic trek, where our guide from the Breckenridge Heritage Alliance shows us how this community worked and played. Visit historic saloons and sample spirits from the Breckenridge Distillery. In the morning, take an adventurous snowshoe trek to French Gulch and explore mining history in the fertile "Golden Horseshoe" district.
Price includes lodging, drink ticket, tours, and interpretation
Members $150, nonmembers $175 ($50 single supplement)

Christmas Lights Tour of Denver

Friday, December 14, 4:30 to 9:30 P.M.

Enjoy the history and beauty of Denver's holiday lights! This festive evening begins at the Byers-Evans House Museum, as you see how the Evans family celebrated Christmas a hundred years ago. Then board a heated bus for a drive through Denver's most beautiful neighborhoods. Your host will entertain with stories about Denver's holiday lore as hot chocolate and sweets are served. We design a new route each year, so join us for some surprises! Sure to get even a Scrooge into the holiday spirit.
Members $36, nonmembers $46

Snowshoeing in Breckenridge

Holiday lights in Denver

Jim Beckner's Grand Cherokee Lofts *won Best of Show at the 2011 Denver Plein Air Arts Festival. Beckner's works are on view through December 29.*

FAMILY FUN

Denver

Byers-Evans House Museum

Children's Christmas Tea
Saturday, December 15, 1:30 P.M.

Enjoy a special tea and tour. Christmas decorations will adorn the rooms of this Denver landmark. Members $18, nonmembers $22; children $16
Reservations required: 303/620-4933

Pueblo

El Pueblo History Museum

Friday Afternoons! Afterschool Program
Fridays, through December 21, 2 to 4 P.M.

Kids learn about history and culture through artifacts, art and science projects, maps, and writing exercises.
Ages 7–12, $1 each Friday
Call 719/583-0453

Break Out! Children's Winter Workshop
December 26–28 and January 2–4, 10 A.M. to noon

Kids explore art, culture, and their relationship to the natural world.
Ages 7–12, $20 (includes supplies)
Call 719/583-0453

ADULT PROGRAMS

Denver

DENVER ARTS WEEK at the Byers-Evans House Museum

Celebrate Denver's vibrant arts and culture, through November 12. Events around town feature visual arts, theater, music, film, dance, opera, comedy, history, and heritage! For more, visit www.DenverArtsWeek.com.

Denver Plein Air Art Festival: 2011 Best of Show

Works by Best of Show winner Jim Beckner on view through Saturday, December 29.

Night at the Museums
Saturday, November 3, 5 to 9 P.M.

The Byers-Evans House Museum offers free tours focusing on life in the Evans home in 1912.

Denver's on Stage: *An Evening with Edgar Allan Poe*
Fridays, Saturdays, and Sundays through November 10. Friday and Saturday performances at 7:30 P.M., Sundays at 6 P.M.

This fall favorite returns, with performances of Poe classics "The Raven," "The Masque of the Red Death," "The Tell-Tale Heart," and many others. Performances take place in the library of the historic Byers-Evans House Museum, the perfect backdrop to Poe's tales. Tickets $16. Reservations: 303/620-4933.

Byers-Evans House Museum

A Doll's House
Fridays, Saturdays, and Sundays, November 16–December 15
Friday and Saturday at 7:30 P.M., Sunday at 6 P.M.

Ibsen's classic comes to life! *A Doll's House* scandalized Victorian audiences when it premiered in 1879, with its portrayal of marriage and gender. The play was a favorite of Anne Evans—she staged a production in 1937 at the Central City Opera House.

Christmas Teas

December 8, 10, 12, 17, 19, and 22; special children's tea on Saturday, December 15

Teas begin at 1:30 P.M.

Enjoy tea sandwiches, scones, fruit, and desserts after a tour of the home, beautifully restored to 1912–24. Christmas decorations will adorn the rooms of this Denver landmark.
Members $18, nonmembers $22; children $16
Reservations required: 303/620-4933

Grant-Humphreys Mansion

Holiday Fashion Market

Sunday, December 16, 10 A.M. to 6 P.M.

Presented by Fashion Denver, *Holiday* features local designers and three fashion shows throughout the day. Shop local talent, just in time for the holiday season. Free admission! For more, visit www.fashiondenver.com.

LIBRARY PROGRAMS at the History Colorado Center

Stephen H. Hart Library and Research Center

Members $4, nonmembers $5
RSVP required. Call 303/866-2394 to reserve your spot or register online!

Rucksacks in the Stacks
Tuesday, November 20, 10:30 to 11:30 A.M.—Historically, people came to Colorado in search of wealth (mining) or health (tuberculosis cures). Today, transplants and locals alike seek outdoor adventure. Learn more about recreation and sports in the Rocky Mountain state. From Enos Mills to Isabella Bird, discover the hardy souls whose love for the outdoors continues to inspire us. Participants explore selected library collections.

Read All About It: Newspaper Research at the Stephen H. Hart Library
Tuesday, December 4, 10:15 to 11:15 A.M.—History Colorado's collection of Colorado newspapers is one of the largest in the world. It's a great resource for insight into history, family research, and firsthand glimpses of life across our state. Our serials manager and reference librarian give an overview of the collection and valuable tips on how to use it.

COLORFUL COLORADO at the History Colorado Center, 1 to 2 P.M.

Meet Colorado authors, History Colorado curators, and others in this new series. Call 303/866-2394 to reserve your spot, or register online!
Members $4, nonmembers $5

What's Old Is New: Canning in Colorado
Tuesday, November 13, 11 A.M. to noon—Curators Alisa Zahller and Keith Schrum explore the history of home and industrial canning in Colorado using objects and archival material from History Colorado's collections.

Holiday Traditions and Treasures
Thursday, December 6, 1 to 2 P.M.—Collections and Library Division Director Elisa Phelps "unwraps" a special selection of objects from the History Colorado collection. Explore the state's holiday traditions and celebrations using artifacts and documents.

2012 FALL CLASS

History Colorado Center

History Colorado classes provide direct access to our state historian, state archaeologist, and other staffers, who are excited to share their knowledge. Call 303/866-2394 to reserve your spot, or register online!

History Colorado's Americana Workshops: Knitting
Wednesday, November 7, 6:30 to 8:30 P.M.

Until the mid-1800s, most Americans relied on goods they made themselves. They spun fabric, sewed clothes, made tools and furniture, and preserved food. Join staffers Abby Krause and Melissa Bechhoefer for a knitting workshop—explore the basics and learn the history. All ages and skill levels welcome! Bring needles; some yarn available. Members $9, nonmembers $12

Pueblo

El Pueblo History Museum
All programs $3. To sign up, call 719/583-0453

Earth, Wind, Fire & Other Mini-Disasters of the 1800s

Wednesday, November 7, 6:30 P.M.

Nancy Prince, a geologist for the Colorado Oil & Gas Conservation Commission, discusses mini-disasters of the 1800s. She'll also talk about her own family's devastating encounter with a mini–dust bowl in Pueblo County in the 1950s.

The Fur Trade in Colorado

Saturday, November 17, 1 P.M.

Archaeologist William Butler discusses his recent book, *The Fur Trade in Colorado*.

What Was He Thinking? General William J. Palmer in His Own Words

Tuesday, December 4, 6:30 P.M.

Leah Davis Witherow—Curator of History at the Colorado Springs Pioneers Museum—uses General Palmer's letters and manuscripts to reveal the man who's been called the "Builder of the West."

Montrose

Ute Indian Museum

New Exhibit Opens December 1 *The Unquiet Utes*

Wednesday, November 7, 6:30 P.M.

Through the photographs of Thomas W. Tolman, *The Unquiet Utes* shares the story of 400 Utes who left Utah and traveled through Wyoming towards South Dakota in 1906. Frustration with the opening of their lands to settlement had led them to seek a new place to live. When the U.S. Cavalry was called out to intercept them, *Collier's Weekly* sent Tolman to document the historic encounter. On view through February.

Annual Open House

Saturday, December 1, 9 A.M.–4 P.M.

FREE

Come to the Ute Indian Museum for arts and crafts vendors, a silent auction, fry bread, a raffle, and more!

Winter Solstice

Friday, December 21, noon

On this winter Solstice of 2012, the sun rises into the center of our Milky Way Galaxy, forming a cosmic cross in the skies. This is a time for great reverence for the cosmos, for Mother Earth, and for all beings. Observance is free at the Peace Pole on the museum grounds.

The Ute Indian Museum

2012–2013 Lecture Series

Times That Define Us

Colorado history is made up of tales big and small, some well known and others untold. The 2012–13 lecture series dusts off familiar stories for new audiences and introduces recent research to shed light on the people, places, and experiences that define Colorado.

Discover the importance of saving family papers with the amazing story of a slave and the white couple who helped her, and consider the wartime perspectives of American Indians. We'll end the series by welcoming back Dr. Patricia Limerick.

All lectures take place at 1 and 7 P.M. at the History Colorado Center. Call 303/866-2394 for information. Sponsored by the Walter S. Rosenberry III Charitable Trust.

"And Many Wore Moccasins": The Ute, Navajo, and Blackfoot Nations and World War I

Tuesday, January 15

American Indians took part in World War I as an extension of the population's efforts to shape social and political realities, resist cultural assimilation and segregation, and attain equality. Natives fought on the battlefield and the home front—17,000 were registered by war's end. Join Colorado Mesa University's Dr. Timothy Winegard as he describes the events that led to citizenship for the Native population in 1924 and highlights the wartime experiences of the Ute, Navajo, and Blackfoot Confederacy.

A Fugitive Slave and a Boulder Family Archive

Tuesday, November 20

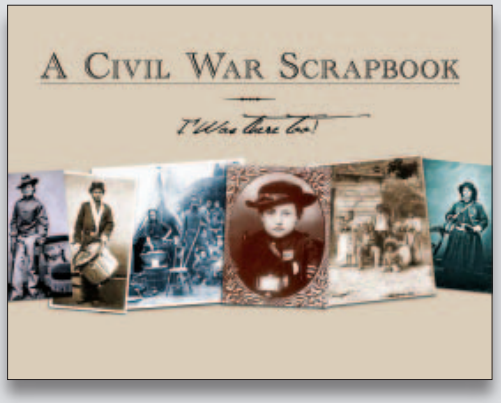
Duke historian Sydney Nathans shares a previously hidden Civil War–era epic: the story of a fugitive slave and a white antislavery couple who sought to recover the rest of her family from bondage. Nathans discovered an archival gold mine of 70,000 privately held letters in Boulder that helped him piece together the story. Join him as he discusses his book, *To Free a Family: The Journey of Mary Walker*.

Above: Slave Market *(oil on canvas), by Eyre Crowe. Private Collection, the Bridgeman Art Library.*

The Perfect Gift for Kids or Grandkids!

A Civil War Scrapbook: I Was There Too!

From History Colorado and Fulcrum Publishing



What's inside:

- Games—Capture the Flag, Pass a Message
- Activities—Morse Code, Slang Match
- Faces of the war
- Soldiers' pets and mascots
- Flags of the war
- Child soldiers' stories
- Women in the war
- Civil War music
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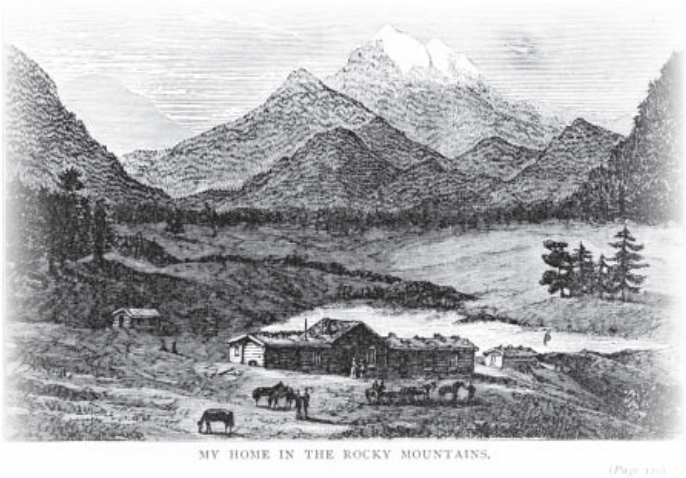
Calendar



My Home in the Rocky Mountains, *from Isabella Bird's* A Lady's life in the Rocky Mountains, *1882. See "Rucksacks in the Stacks," November 20.*

NOVEMBER

7 Wednesday
HISTORY COLORADO
ANNUAL MEETING
History Colorado Center, 3 to 4 P.M.

AMERICANA KNITTING
History Colorado Center
6:30 to 8:30 P.M.
See page 8.

MINI-DISASTERS OF THE 1800s
El Pueblo History Museum,
6:30 P.M.
See page 8.

10 Saturday
HISTORIC WESTMINSTER
WALKING TOUR
See page 6.

13 Tuesday
CANNING IN COLORADO
History Colorado Center,
11 A.M. to noon
See page 8.

15 Thursday
THE WOMEN OF DENVER
BUS TOUR
See page 6.

16 Friday
DENVER A TO Z
MEMBER OPENING PREVIEW
History Colorado Center,
5:30 to 9 P.M.
See page 4.

17 Saturday
FUR TRADE IN COLORADO
El Pueblo History Museum, 1 P.M.
See page 9.

20 Tuesday
RUCKSACKS IN THE STACKS
History Colorado Center,
10:30 to 11:30 A.M.
See page 8.

A FUGITIVE SLAVE AND A
BOULDER FAMILY ARCHIVE
History Colorado Center,
1 and 7 P.M.
See page 10.

DECEMBER

4 Tuesday
READ ALL ABOUT IT:
NEWSPAPER RESEARCH
History Colorado Center,
10:15 to 11:15 A.M.
See page 8.

GENERAL WILLIAM J. PALMER
El Pueblo History Museum,
6:30 P.M.
See page 9.

6 Thursday
HOLIDAY TRADITIONS
AND TREASURES
History Colorado Center, 1 to 2 P.M.
See page 8.

8 Saturday
BRECKENRIDGE SNOWSHOEING
AND SALOON TOUR
See page 6.

11 Tuesday
DENVER DIORAMA WORKSHOP
History Colorado Center
See back cover.

14 Friday
CHRISTMAS LIGHTS
TOUR OF DENVER
See page 6.

16 Sunday
HOLIDAY FASHION MARKET
Grant-Humphreys Mansion,
10 A.M. to 6 P.M.
See page 8.

Repeated Events

FRIDAY AFTERNOONS!
AFTERSCHOOL PROGRAM
El Pueblo History Museum.
Fridays, through December 21.
See page 7.

BREAK OUT! CHILDREN'S
WINTER WORKSHOP
El Pueblo History Museum.
December 26–28 and January 2–4.
See page 7.

A DOLL'S HOUSE
Byers-Evans House Museum.
Fridays, Saturdays, and Sundays,
November 16–December 15.
See page 7.

AN EVENING WITH EDGAR ALLAN POE
Byers-Evans House Museum.
Fridays, Saturdays, and Sundays
through November 10.
See page 7.

CHRISTMAS TEAS
Byers-Evans House Museum
in December.
See page 8.

BEHIND THE STORIES
Explore the History Colorado
Center's favorite stories and exhibits,
and find out what's coming up next!
One-hour guided tours FREE with
admission. Every Saturday at 2 P.M.

The Ute Indian Museum

Civic Center—Denver's First Historic District

In October, Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar announced that Civic Center has become the first National Historic Landmark in the City and County of Denver.

The new designation honors Mayor Robert Speer's turn-of-the-last-century vision of an inspiring urban space. Bounded by Grant and Cherokee Streets and Fourteenth and Colfax Avenues, the district embraces the City Beautiful movement and Beaux Arts design in its melding of architecture, landscape architecture, and art.

Inspired by the 1893 Chicago World's Columbian Exposition and the 1900 Macmillan Plan for Washington, D.C., Civic Center evolved between 1890 (when construction of the State Capitol began) and 1935 (with the completion of the City and County Building). Such renowned architects and artists as Reinhard Schuetze, Charles Mulford Robinson, Frederick W. MacMonnies, Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr., and Allen True designed the park's monuments.

As part of the broader City Beautiful movement, American cities like Cleveland and Detroit planned civic centers in the early twentieth century. But most remained just that—plans only—as they never drew the needed funding. Meanwhile, Denver leaders articulated and actively pursued enhancements to their city. The election of Mayor Robert W. Speer in 1904 solidified the interest, means, and political will necessary to make Denver's plan a reality. During Speer's three terms, Denver expanded its parks, established parkway and mountain park systems, and increased private support for public improvements.

Civic Center's architecture evokes that of ancient Greece and Rome as translated by architects trained at the influential École des Beaux-Arts in Paris. Three Beaux Arts–style buildings—the original Denver Public Library (1910), Colorado State Museum (1915), and Colorado State Office Building (1921)—surround the district.

Artist A. Phimister Proctor's monumental Broncho Buster *sculpture, a focal point of Denver's Civic Center, with the Colorado State Capitol in the background*

The landscape of Civic Center integrated those surrounding buildings with works of art and vistas into and out of the park while creating areas for diverse public use. A showcase of regional artists, the district testified to Denver's growing cultural sophistication and its residents' love of their western heritage and the magnificent Rocky Mountain landscape.

Civic Center was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1974. Now, it is one of only two civic centers in the country to achieve recognition as a National Historic Landmark.

New Listings

in the National Register of Historic Places and Colorado State Register of Historic Properties

National Register of Historic Places

Arapaho Hills Historic District

Bounded by Arrowhead (N) and West Berry Roads (S) and South Lowell Boulevard (E) and South Manitou Road (W), Englewood (5AH.3316)

Arapaho Hills was built between 1955 and 1964 and associated with a group of local Modernists in design, architecture, and construction. The subdivision reflects the distinctive characteristics of Modernism in post–World War II suburban residential development. This nomination falls within the historic contexts and registration requirements outlined in both the nationwide *Historic Residential Suburbs MPDF* and the *Historic Residential Subdivisions of Metropolitan Denver 1940–1965 MPDF*. Arapaho Hills can be considered a domestic subdivision among the subtypes developed in the latter.

James H. Baugh House

11361 W. 44th Ave., Wheat Ridge (5JF.973)

The James H. Baugh House is the earliest extant building from the 1859 settlement of Jefferson County's Clear Creek Valley. Baugh was one of the earliest Wheat Ridge area settlers to establish a farm in the valley and promote local agriculture. The house is an excellent example of a Late Victorian farmhouse and a good representation of the Pioneer Log style, with the original log cabin beneath the Victorian-era clapboard. Character-defining features of the Late Victorian style include the one-and-one-half stories, gabled roof, decorative shingles, porch with spindles, Tuscan columns, and gabled dormers. The cabin inside a portion of the house has hand-hewn logs, V-notching, and wood and sapling chinking—all features of the Pioneer Log style. After a 1994 fire damaged the upper story, the City of Wheat Ridge acquired the house in 1997 to save it from demolition. It has been fully restored using City funds and State Historical Fund grants.

James H. Baugh House

Good to Know

Properties listed in the National or State Register may be eligible for investment tax credits for approved rehabilitation projects. Listed properties may also be eligible to compete for grants from Colorado's State Historical Fund. These grants may be used for acquisition and development, education, survey, and planning projects. The next nomination submission deadline is February 1. For details, call 303/866-3392.

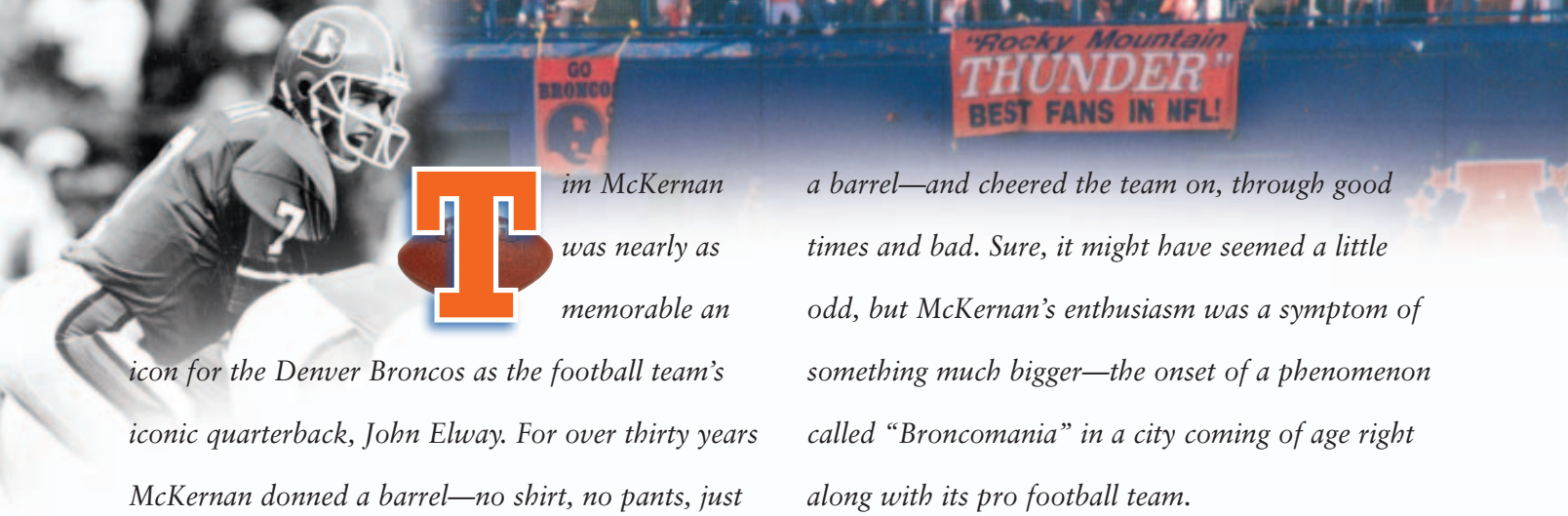
For more about these and all National and State Register properties in Colorado, visit the website of the Office of Archaeology and Historic Preservation at http://www.historycolorado.org/oahp/listings-county.

It's Not About the Barrel

Broncomania and the Barrel Man

BY PATRICK J. FRAKER

Tim McKernan sported a succession of different barrels over the years. Inset left: He wears the very barrel on view in the History Colorado Center exhibit Denver A to Z.



Tim McKernan was nearly as memorable an icon for the Denver Broncos as the football team's iconic quarterback, John Elway. For over thirty years McKernan donned a barrel—no shirt, no pants, just a barrel—and cheered the team on, through good times and bad. Sure, it might have seemed a little odd, but McKernan's enthusiasm was a symptom of something much bigger—the onset of a phenomenon called "Broncomania" in a city coming of age right along with its pro football team.

McKernan was born in Tacoma, Washington, in 1940 and grew up in southern California. After he found work as a mechanic for United Airlines, the company transferred him to Denver in 1967. Tim had always liked football, so he started going to Bronco games at Mile High Stadium. Like the team's other fans, Tim suffered through a decade of mediocre football. But in 1977, the Broncos finally hit their stride. Having been a National Football League laughingstock for most of its existence, the team surprised everyone by getting into the Super Bowl.

Meanwhile, 1970s Denver was shedding its image as a self-proclaimed cow town. Oil and gas money enriched its economy, sheltering Denver from the economic stagnation distressing other American cities. A building boom transformed the city's downtown skyline—visual evidence that Denver's time had finally come. The Broncos' success only magnified these feelings of civic optimism.

The 1977 season was a watershed in the history of the Broncos as a franchise. Heading into that season, the team appeared to be in upheaval—a group of players had essentially run head coach John Ralston out of town in the off-season. Suddenly in need of a new coach, owners Gerald and Allen Phipps hired Red Miller, a longtime assistant coach with the New England Patriots. Together with general manager Fred Gerhke, Miller had gone about rebuilding the Bronco roster. Amid all the turmoil, the most important addition was Craig Morton, onetime Dallas Cowboys quarterback who had fallen on hard times with the New York Giants and was thought by most experts to be washed up as a player. Morton, and the Broncos, would prove everyone wrong.

If you could pinpoint a single day as the origin of Broncomania, that day was October 16, 1977. The Broncos had broken out of the gate kicking that year, winning their first three games. They traveled to Oakland for a matchup with the hated Oakland Raiders, the defending Super Bowl champs. The game started badly for Denver: Oakland took the opening kickoff and marched down the field for a 7–0 lead. Most fans, Tim McKernan likely included, felt that twinge of disappointment so familiar to the Broncos' faithful; once in this position, the team generally crumpled under the pressure, never to recover by game's end. But this day proved otherwise. Denver's defense steadied itself, and the offense started to click. Denver intercepted Oakland quarterback Ken Stabler three times in the first half, taking a 14–7 lead near the end of the first half. Then came the play that fans would later avow purged all the bad karma from Denver's football past. The Broncos lined up for a field goal, assistant coach Marv Braden having convinced Coach Miller that the team should fake the kick. They executed the fake to perfection and backup quarterback Norris Weese lofted a perfectly thrown pass to kicker Jim Turner, who, in the chaos of the ensuing play, had run down the sideline unnoticed. Turner caught the ball and ran into the end zone, skipping in his black high-top kicking shoes like a giddy kid. The Raiders and their fans were stunned, and little improved for them in the second half as Denver intercepted Stabler three more times and crushed their hated rivals 30–7.

For Tim McKernan and the Broncos, life would never be the same. If the Raiders and their fans didn't know what had hit them, neither did Denver. A day after the victory, a local cartoonist for a Denver newspaper depicted Satan himself reading the sports page, its headline declaring that Denver had beaten Oakland. All around him, snow fell in Hell. (Not everyone knew quite what to make of this.)

The Broncos went on to win twelve of their fourteen games that season. McKernan was there through it all, having fun with the rest of the fans in the rowdy South Stands of Mile High Stadium. Like the Broncos, he was coming of age—as a Super Fan.

Denver crushed the Pittsburgh Steelers in the first round of the playoffs and then faced the Oakland Raiders for a third time that season. Denver quarterback Craig Morton had

spent a good part of the week in a hospital nursing a deep bone bruise in his hip. He later confessed that he'd doubted he could even play, but others had far more confidence in him. A local expert in the science of biorhythms predicted that Morton would be at an all-time high intellectually, emotionally, and, strangely enough, physically. The same expert predicted that opposing quarterback Stabler would be at a low physically and emotionally, but high intellectually. When word of this leaked out, one Raiders player gruffly retorted that "quarterbacks don't give off biorhythms." But he was wrong: Morton performed heroically and Denver eked out a 20–17 victory over the Raiders.

The Broncos were going to the Super Bowl.

Facing the Dallas Cowboys in the big game, Denver's luck finally ran out. They failed to capitalize on a few opportunities and fell 27–10. Still, for a team that was once a laughingstock, there was much to be proud of and much to build on. And for McKernan, the following season was the start of his amazing run as the legendary "Barrel Man."

As McKernan later related it, early in that 1978 season his brother Scott playfully challenged him to do something to get on national television during a Broncos game. Tim bet his brother ten dollars that he could accomplish the feat by wearing a homemade barrel—and not much else. The barrel was similar to the one he would become famous for, although, unlike his later models, he had to spend hours emptying it of the solvent it had previously housed. The Broncos' defense had earned the nickname of the "Orange Crush" in that heady season of 1977, so McKernan painted the first barrel bright orange to look like a can of Orange Crush soda. Beginning in 1977 and for years afterward, the city of Denver was awash in orange in honor of the team. But even amid this orange sea, Tim McKernan—in his homemade Orange Crush barrel and cowboy boots—stood out. He won his bet with Scott.

The next five seasons, the Broncos fell back to earth after attaining the dizzying heights of 1977. But in 1983 the team shocked the football world by pulling off a trade for John Elway, an athletic quarterback with one of the strongest arms the league had ever seen. Elway would go on to enjoy a hall-of-fame career for the Broncos, being instrumental in guiding them to five Super Bowl appearances and winning two of them. Tim Mckernan was there through it all, donning the barrel game in and game out, in sweltering September heat and frigid January cold. Kids asked their moms how he could wear that barrel without a shirt or pants and not catch a cold. Some mothers said he was running on adrenaline; others less kindly suggested he was drunk. But without a doubt, the barrel transformed him. "The moment he puts that barrel on he has a swagger," Tim's wife, Becky, said. "He's very shy. That's what a lot of people don't realize about Tim." This much was certain: no one loved the Broncos as much as McKernan.

Over the thirty years he donned the barrel, McKernan was often able to travel to the team's away games. His encounters in non-Denver venues could be less than pleasant—a San Diego fan even tried to shove him down a flight of stairs. But surprisingly, even in the most notoriously hostile of stadiums, a bond could form between rival super fans. At the Oakland Coliseum, known around the league as the "Black Hole" with its rabid fans, McKernan arrived as an honored guest of the infamous Raider Ron, a fellow super fan. Ron liked Tim so much that he personally escorted him around the stadium, protecting him should any other Black Hole denizens try to stir up trouble. Tim just had that way with people.

During John Elway's tenure as quarterback, the Broncos enjoyed a stellar run as one of the NFL's premiere franchises. McKernan cheered them on, becoming so famous himself that people recognized him outside the stadium even with his clothes on. As his son later related, Tim loved the publicity he got from wearing the barrel but it was never about him; it was all to support the team. Jim Saccomano, longtime PR head for the Broncos, considered McKernan a true class

act: he never asked for special privileges like tickets or free parking, always paid his way fair and square. And like all Broncos fans, he had his prayers answered when the team won back-to-back Super Bowl titles in 1998 and '99. He shared in the team's huge victory celebrations downtown after both championships.

Life was good for Tim McKernan on many fronts. In 2003 he began a relationship with his future wife, Becky, a diehard Broncos fan like Tim. In 2004 he married her, wearing his barrel. He had retired from United Airlines the previous year, and the two began spending the off-seasons traveling the Southwest in a fifth-wheel trailer.

Later that year, his fortunes took a turn. He suffered an abdominal aneurysm in Gunnison, Colorado, and had to be airlifted to a Grand Junction hospital. He spent months in a hospital bed. Becky says it was a miracle Tim even survived, but he had a strong will. Initially confined to a wheelchair and on oxygen, he recovered within a year and was back in the barrel, in the stands, rooting the team on. His doctors restricted him to wearing the barrel for only half of each game and forbade him from wearing it if the temperature dipped below freezing. But McKernan carried on; his devotion to the team and its fans was unmatched.

Tim and Becky McKernan on their wedding day

By 2007, McKernan's poor health prevented him from donning the barrel at games. He and Becky still spent most of the offseason traveling, now in a recreational vehicle; because of the cramped quarters McKernan even sold one of his most-prized barrels, the one he wore to the Broncos' first Super Bowl win in 1998. He got $30,000 for it on eBay. The buyer was a casino in the gaming town of Black Hawk, and McKernan donated 10 percent of his earnings to the Jubilee House, a shelter for battered women in Gunnison. Unfortunately, McKernan's retirement was short-lived, and on December 5, 2009, he died of lung failure. He was 69 years old.

Over the years, many honors came to Tim McKernan for his devotion to the Denver Broncos. He was the first Bronco fan inducted into the VISA Hall of Fans at the Pro Football Hall of Fame in Canton, Ohio. He was also invited by quarterback John Elway to attend Elway's induction ceremony into the Hall of Fame. For any Bronco fan, few honors could outdo that.

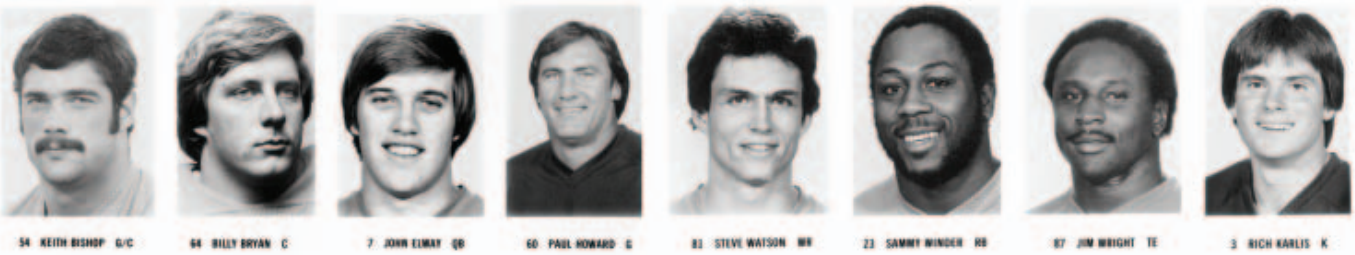
Despite all the tributes, McKernan saw himself as a fan, nothing more. As he once put it, "the more I can get the fans into it, the better the team plays."

For Further Reading

The author's "Armed and Dangerous: The Arrival of John Elway" appeared in the winter 1999 issue. See also "Second-Hand Broncos: The Best Worst Team in Football," James Whiteside's look at the team during the 1960s and '70s, in the winter 1997 issue. Both issues are available in the *Twentieth-Century Colorado* boxed set of ten decade-by-decade issues of *Heritage*.

PATRICK J. FRAKER is a cataloger in the Stephen Hart Library and Research Center of History Colorado. He has written previously for *Colorado Heritage* about the Denver Broncos, as well as the formation of the Colorado Rockies baseball team and Colorado Avalanche hockey team (winter 2000). Another essay, "'Hiya Space Pups!': The 1941 World Science Fiction Convention," appeared in the spring 2004 issue.

Some Denver Bronco players on the 1985 roster



Unlike City Cemetery, its neighbor to the west, the Mt. Calvary Catholic Cemetery (site of today's Denver Botanic Gardens) took greater care in relocating its dead. Here, workers remove the coffins of Denver pioneers in 1937 to make way for a new water pipeline.

Denver's Cheesman Park

A Place for the Living, or the Nonliving?

The verdant landscape of Denver's Cheesman Park, enjoyed by so many, belies its origins as the city's first cemetery. Modern discoveries of bones and sections of coffins that remain buried underneath the park and adjacent grounds unearth some disturbing questions…but what's the real story behind Denver's first boneyard?

When William Larimer and his son staked out a cemetery—first called Mt. Prospect—for the new town of Denver City in 1859, they likely never imagined that the city would reach 100,000 in thirty short years. Though he sited it far from the nascent city, Larimer's cemetery on the prairie would find itself besieged by development, and the dead rarely have a say as new houses spring from the earth.

But Larimer's vision for the cemetery was brighter. The burial ground sat on a high promontory overlooking the emerging town, bounded roughly by today's Thirteenth Avenue on the north, Eighth Avenue on the south, Franklin Street on the west, and High Street on the east, with smaller sections stretching over to Josephine Street.

BY SHAWN SNOW

The highest point of City Cemetery, as it was soon renamed, was reserved for the so-called "society" graves. Other sections of Boot Hill, or "Jack O'Neal's Ranch" as some also called it, held the graves of Odd Fellows, Masons, and even Civil War veterans. There was a small Jewish section on the eastern outskirts of the burial ground, and the Catholic section—roughly where the Denver Botanic Gardens lies today—was known as Mt. Calvary. Much of the southwestern sections of the cemetery near today's Eighth Avenue and Franklin were reserved as a "potter's field" for the poor, with a section for Chinese burial nearby.

But Larimer's choice of a hilltop setting proved problematic, as a lack of water left trees spindly or, even worse, dead. Meanwhile, the fancy neighborhood of Capitol Hill sprouted on the cemetery's western fringe. The unkempt burial ground became a source of contention for the city's growing elite, many of whom insisted that they would never be buried in such a place. The procurement and use of coffins and stone grave markers grew as the cemetery developed, but the fact that the grounds remained unlandscaped and unwatered, with no stately fence surrounding them, led to an increasingly poor reputation.

Because of this, Denver established a rival cemetery at Riverside in 1876 along the Platte River, where water wasn't an issue. Soon, City Cemetery was relegated to being used primarily for its potter's field. By 1890, another rival cemetery—Fairmount—was in place. Political pressure to remove the entire contents of the existing but now unused City Cemetery grew intense. Houses were popping up all along the prairie, marching toward the cemetery boundary adjacent to Humboldt Street.

By 1890, city government decided that something had to be done. Though many had gone to their graves thinking they'd found a final resting place, they were sorely mistaken. The bodies had to be moved. Proper reburials ensued as loved ones moved the departed to Riverside and Fairmount cemeteries…but not all of them.

What of those left behind? The earliest graves were often unmarked and unrecorded, or their wooden markers had long since disintegrated. In the potter's field, many bodies had been buried pell-mell. So how best to remove all the remaining bodies for reburial?

The city hired a contractor and undertaker named Edward McGovern to do the deed. He and his team would be paid per body removed. McGovern was well known in the mortuary business, but greed (or an overwhelming realization of the near impossibility of the task at hand) got the best of him. Hired to remove an untold number of graves and aware that the precise location of each grave would never be known, McGovern made the most of the bodies he did find. He sometimes separated one body into numerous smaller caskets so that he could collect more money per corpse. Lurid news accounts described how McGovern and his team mixed dirt and rocks into each box, whether it had a complete "body" in it or not.

Left: A horse-drawn wagon hauls flowers into Mt. Calvary Cemetery.

When they learned of McGovern's tactics, city officials quickly dismissed him but leveled no criminal charges. The newspapers filled their pages with grotesque details of the

scandal, including the *Denver Republican*'s report from March 19, 1893, describing the "Work of Ghouls" at City Cemetery.

Any of the restless spirits attributed to the area today must surely date from this time.

The city's new plans for the old cemetery rested on the creation of a park for central Denver—but how could this be done with so many bodies left buried beneath the ground? The easy answer was to ignore them. The city decided simply to remove any remaining aboveground evidence of the cemetery, including many headstones, and leave the rest underground. Re-grading and landscaping of the new parkland took some time but eventually found success, especially when Mayor Robert W. Speer urged the citizens of Denver to "Give While You Live"—a philanthropic push to beautify the city after the turn of the last century.

A few miles away in Civic Center, at the heart of Denver, stands the Colonnade of Civic Benefactors—listing the names of those whose monies improved Denver for future generations. One woman who heeded the mayor's call for civic improvement was Alice Foster Cheesman, widow of recently deceased water baron Walter Scott Cheesman. Part of a pioneering Denver family, Cheesman had helped promote and consolidate water holdings into a monopoly that the city eventually bought in order to ensure equal access for all. At the end of his lifetime, though, many vilified Cheesman for what they perceived as his undue power and wealth. To counter this slight on the Cheesman name, Alice agreed to give Denver $100,000 to name the former city cemetery land after her husband and to build a large pavilion in his honor at the park's pinnacle. An even bigger symbol of Walter Cheesman's influence was a new reservoir just east of the park that would finally deliver the important resource of water—something the cemetery never had.

Denver architects Willis Marean and Albert Norton designed the lovely pavilion, which was completed in 1910. A plaque on the edifice reads: "Presented to the City of Denver in memory of Walter Scott Cheesman, 1907." By that time, Denver knew the overall site as "Congress Park," the U.S. Congress having ceded the land back to the city to make way for the park. Soon, though, that name referred only to the area near Eighth and Josephine, allowing Cheesman's name to be attached to the area that now held his pavilion.

Though the park itself now rests on the remains of thousands of the dearly departed, few recent arrivals to Denver know its storied history. The tree plantings, roadway systems, and landscape design, including the famed row of tall linden trees along the park's western edge, were created by Denver park planner Reinhard Schuetze and carried out further by Saco DeBoer. Denverites young and old love the park, as it provides an oasis of green for one of the most densely populated neighborhoods in the state of Colorado.

What lies underground stays underground—or does it? The adjacent Mt. Calvary Cemetery ceased burials in 1909, but remained in place until 1950. At that time, Denver bought the land on the agreement that the city would take responsibility for carefully removing nearly 6,000 bodies to Mt. Olivet. Reports of casket pieces, bones, and whole skeletons being dug up have surfaced over the years.

Such was the case in October 2010, when workers uncovered three well-preserved skeletons during sprinkler and park upgrades near the pavilion. They found one set of remains mere centimeters beneath the surface of the ground by a sidewalk next to the north rose garden. The National Geographic television program in the United Kingdom picked

up the news reports detailing the find. Denver's county coroner took in the bones, giving the television producers permission to use them in a program dealing with DNA, forensics, and historical analysis.

History Colorado was proud to take part in the analysis of the remains. Who was the so-called "Denver-man"? With no records of burials and no headstone available, could DNA and history give us a clue as to his identity? We knew that the skeleton was buried near the most prominent area of the cemetery, where newspaper evidence indicated the wealthy and so-called "society graves" were located.

Analyses showed that a gangrenous toe did this man in, but the rest of his frame showed a sturdy body that was not given to heavy labor. Furthermore, latent DNA indicated a man of northern European background. The isotopes in his bones also showed abnormally high levels of cadmium, lead, and strontium.

Using this information, History Colorado researchers, including the author of this article, were able to piece together a likely answer. The elements found in the skeleton's bones are often associated with the smelting process used in refining ore. With many Germans bringing their know-how to this burgeoning industry, our Denver-man could have worked in a smelter in a managerial or leadership position—hence the low wear and tear on his musculature. While in Denver, he succumbed to blood poisoning caused by his problematic toe, to be interred at Mt. Prospect among the other prominent graves. He was likely buried sometime between 1868 and 1876, the former the year Colorado's first smelter opened in Black Hawk and the latter the year City Cemetery informally closed.

No smelter in Denver opened until 1878,which was also two years after Riverside Cemetery opened. A stone marker was never provided; if his grave ever had a wooden marker, it was long gone by 1890 when the cemetery closed. His location was lost to history until 2010.

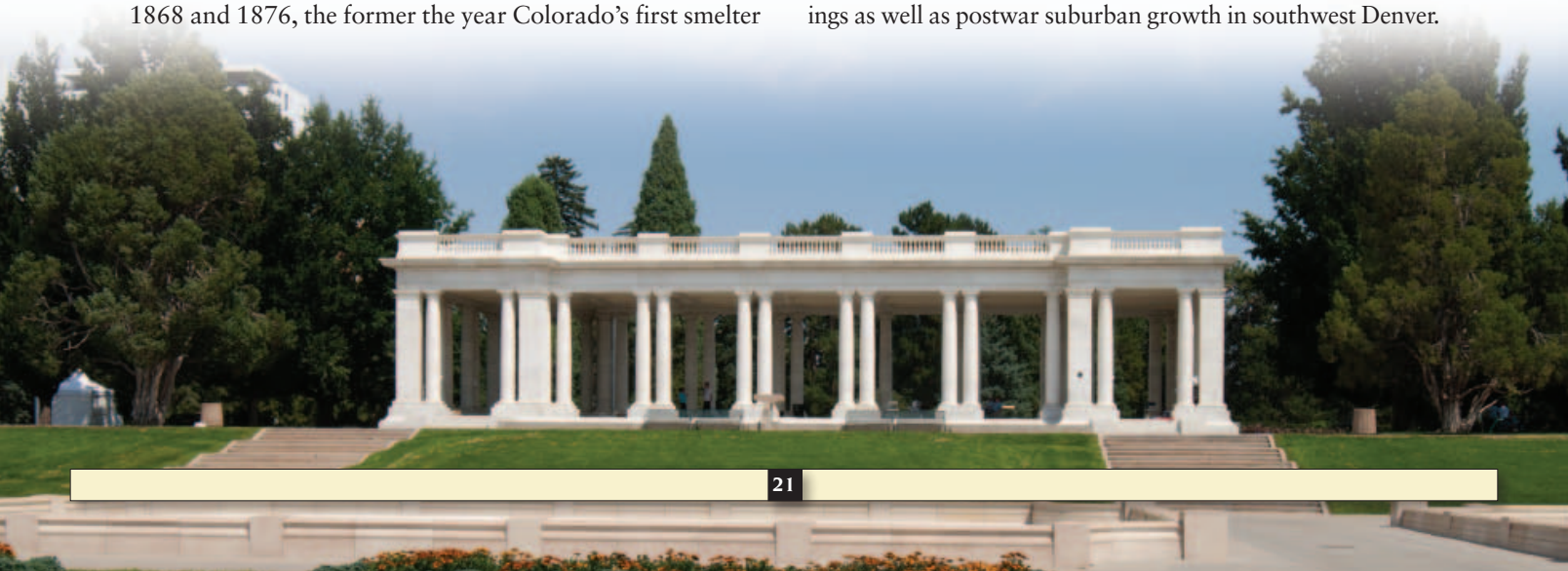
Today, Cheesman Park is a favorite place for all sorts of activities. As they walk through the park, few realize what lurks so close beneath their feet. While the Denver-man skeleton now rests in quiet repose at Mt. Olivet, what of the restless dead left behind?

As more and more people throng to downtown Denver's annual Zombie Crawl, what might become of those so callously treated by McGovern's hands, so casually forgotten by the city they helped to prosper?

For Further Reading

The best source about the cemetery at today's Cheesman Park is Louisa Ward Arps, *Cemetery to Conservatory: A History of the Land Around Denver Botanic Gardens, 1859–1978*, published by the Denver Botanic Gardens in 1980. See also Phil Goodstein's *The Ghosts of Denver: Capitol Hill* (Denver: New Social Publications, 1996) and Annette Student's *Denver's Riverside Cemetery: Where History Lies*, 2006.

SHAWN SNOW is tour director and manages adult programming at History Colorado, and he leads tours of Denver, the state, and the region. His publications include *Denver's City Park and Whittier Neighborhoods* (Arcadia Publishing, 2009) and an essay in *Denver Inside and Out* (History Colorado, 2011) entitled "'A Premonition of Our Future Grandeur': Building Denver's First Schools." He is continuing his research on the architecture and history of Denver's public school buildings as well as postwar suburban growth in southwest Denver.



Cherry Creek floodwaters rush past the Larimer Street bridge and City Hall on July 25, 1885.

Inventing Cherry Creek

150 Years of an Urban Landscape

This is the story of a river that gets little respect. Cherry Creek, one of the two rivers running through Denver, is a slight river, shallow and sandy. In its natural, undammed state it bears little water at all, unless heavy rains swell its current. Yet Cherry Creek has held a place in Denver's collective mind far larger than its slight demeanor might suggest. Throughout the city's early history, Denverites minced few words describing what, precisely, was wrong with Cherry Creek.

BY B. ERIN COLE

This essay is adapted from the author's "Inventing Cherry Creek: 150 Years of the Making of an Urban Environmental Landscape," one of eleven essays in the Colorado Book Award finalist Denver Inside and Out, *published last year by History Colorado.*

In July 1876 a *Rocky Mountain News* reporter, describing the damage wrought by a flood that tore through Denver's central business district a month prior, derided Cherry Creek as

> wholly and entirely worthless and valueless, and not only worthless but an eyesore and a public nuisance...[a] most terrible and destructive monster, dangerous to life and property...Cherry creek is neither useful nor ornamental to the city... it is an expensive and dangerous nuisance in our midst, which should be abated.

In 1903 historian Jerome Smiley called it Denver's "blighting blemish." Reporting on the 1912 flood that killed three and injured six, *The Denver Post* scorned the "insipid, uninteresting, and dirty little stream known as Cherry Creek."

Strong words for a creek that, today, seems innocuous. The creek's present-day appearance belies the danger it has posed over the last 150 years. Water has breached the creek's banks at least fifteen times since Denver was founded in 1858. Four of those floods were catastrophic.

A great deal of work has turned Cherry Creek from the "destructive monster" of 1876 to the meek stream of today. The current landscape of Cherry Creek is a direct result of efforts over the last 150 years to retard its heaviest floods. It's a calm, pleasant place because millions of dollars and thousands of hours of labor were spent making it that way. The 6.7 miles of Cherry Creek that flow in Denver now constitute one of the most controlled and constructed landscapes in the city. Cherry Creek is more than a river; it is a nexus of concrete and clay, water and grass, the natural and the unnatural, all deliberately placed, planted, or engineered to turn the city's deadliest enemy into benign green space.

Over much of the last 150 years, Cherry Creek was an impediment to Denver's image— an obstacle in the way of making a great city. In the late nineteenth century, the creek was unsuitable as a drinking water source. Denverites used it as their dumping ground for trash, and dead animals fouled the waters—all of which disturbed city leaders' efforts to sell Denver to outsiders. In the mid-twentieth century, traffic engineers trying to retrofit the central city for the automobile lamented the fact that Cherry Creek got in the way of widening Speer Boulevard. In the 1970s, urban environmentalists trying to improve the city's recreational assets essentially ignored Cherry Creek in favor of the South Platte River.

Cherry Creek was dry when miners, land speculators, and settlers arrived at its confluence with the South Platte River in November 1858. This led early residents to misread what kind of river it was. They built right up to its banks

The Rocky Mountain News *of July 16, 1912, lamented the city's futile attempts to tame Cherry Creek.*

and even put structures right in its bed, leaving businesses, homes, and churches vulnerable to any rises in the creek's waters. Floods, particularly the one in May 1864 that killed nineteen and destroyed many buildings (including the early home of the *Rocky Mountain News*), turned Cherry Creek from an inconsequential dry channel into an enemy for the city to defeat.

Most Denverites agreed that Cherry Creek's waters needed to be controlled, but there were conflicts over the best way to do it. Proposals to modify Cherry Creek generally fell into two categories: "turning" the creek—that is, rerouting its bed so that it bypassed the city of Denver entirely—or building flood-control walls along its bed. Denver's city council heard proposals to turn Cherry Creek as early as 1867, but the idea didn't garner popular support until after the May 1875 flood. The details of each "turning" proposal differed, but they agreed that the best way for Denver to neutralize the threat of Cherry Creek was to build it a new bed. Most plans called for Cherry Creek to be diverted southeast of the city limits. Its waters would then flow around Denver on the east and into Sand Creek, eventually joining the South Platte River north of the fledgling city at a point far removed from houses, buildings, and streets.

These proposals were obviously unsuccessful. Plans to turn or wall the creek were presented to city council between 1875 and 1904, but the city was unable to enact most of them due to issues over financing, disagreement over who owned the creek bed, or the sheer difficulty of the

engineering. By the end of the nineteenth century the city had built flood-control walls near City Hall and the central business district, but much of the creek's bed within the city limits remained intact. Yet, it's clear that Denverites were always determined to control the creek rather than building their city to accommodate it.

Efforts in the first half of the twentieth century were much more successful. The city gained title to the creek's bed, walled its banks within the city limits, and erected small dams, levees, and other retaining structures. In the late 1930s and 1940s, the federal government built the Cherry Creek Dam just south of the city to regulate the creek's flow. Denver was no longer defenseless from the creek's seasonal fluctuations.

Efforts to modify the creek were more effective after 1900 thanks in part to changes in Denver's legal and governmental status. Personality also played a role: Robert Walter Speer, an extraordinarily powerful mayor, ran Denver between 1904 and 1912 and again from 1916 to 1918. Influenced by the burgeoning "City Beautiful" movement, Speer improved the city's infrastructure and appearance. Another change was the growing willingness of state and federal governments to spend money on flood-control improvements in metropolitan Denver. Colorado helped Denver channelize Cherry Creek and build a scenic boulevard along its banks, and the federal government built Cherry Creek Dam.

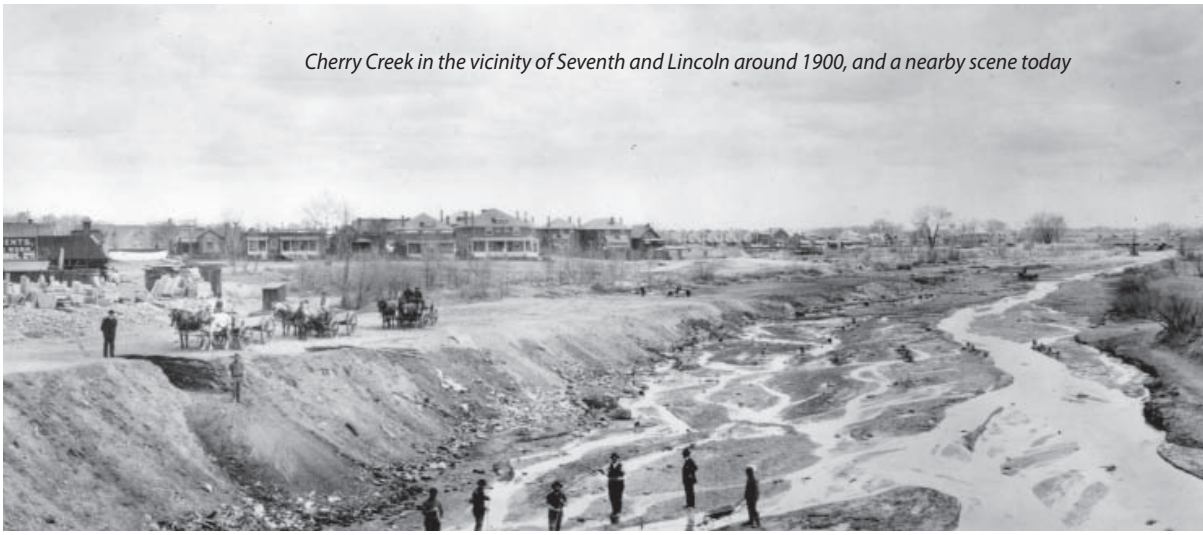
Together, these efforts transformed Cherry Creek's appearance. As early as 1919, its bed lay between two ten-foot reinforced concrete walls, eighty feet apart. While the creek's water levels still fluctuated, small dams within its bed controlled its course through Denver. Water was diverted to the creek from city ditches to make it more attractive, covering its sandy bottom with a solid, calm "sheet of water," as the city newsletter *Denver Municipal Facts* described it in 1910. Trees and shrubs lined Cherry Creek's banks above the retaining walls, but little vegetation remained in the creek's bed. Cherry Creek became a planned, controlled environment.

In the process of becoming a valued asset for this "city of nature," Cherry Creek lost much of what made it a natural environment. Other parts of the city were improved by adding nature to them, by building parks and planting trees. But Denver improved Cherry Creek by removing it from nature, channelizing it in concrete and building a road along its banks. When people talked about Cherry Creek's beauty in the Speer era, they referred to its new concrete banks and the scenic, winding path of Speer Boulevard.

Few questioned the merits of beautifying this former open sewer. In a time of massive investment in roads, parks, municipal buildings, and other infrastructure, the Cherry Creek project was among the most necessary initiatives, and the most successful. As a writer in *Denver Municipal Facts* argued in 1910,

> No semblance of Cherry Creek as it looked five years ago—a muddy, ragged stream, flowing through dumps of ashes, tin cans and other refuse and rendering it an eyesore to all who passed that way—is visible to us in the picture of today. Such a complete transformation of conditions is one of the remarkable achievements resulting from the movement in behalf of civic improvement and beauty.

With Cherry Creek Dam and Reservoir complete in 1950, Denver could largely ignore its historic foe. The city's flood-control system was now in place, and Denverites paid little attention to the creek between 1950 and 1970.



Cherry Creek in the vicinity of Seventh and Lincoln around 1900, and a nearby scene today

Denver faced other problems in the postwar era. Its suburbs were growing, but it was not. Newly established commercial centers around the metropolitan area challenged the primacy of downtown. Given the host of issues city leaders faced, it's

not surprising that they ignored Cherry Creek—a problem assumed to be solved. The infrastructure built during the Speer years was maintained, but little effort went into making the creek look attractive. Photos of Cherry Creek from the late 1960s show its bed crowded with rubble and choked with weeds. The trees and grass on its upper banks appear well maintained, but the creek itself is lost in a thicket of vegetation. Heavy traffic along Speer Boulevard made the stream less accessible, isolating Cherry Creek from the rest of Denver. At one point in the 1950s the city actually sought to cover Cherry Creek with concrete, to create six new traffic lanes for Speer Boulevard. The idea lost out to concerns over flood control, and it would have kept Cherry Creek's water from flowing into the South Platte, violating agreements Colorado had with other states in the South Platte River watershed.

At the end of the twentieth century, Cherry Creek was reinvented again—reborn as a locus of recreation and other activity. Ironically, it took another flood—this time on the South Platte River—to make Denverites think about Cherry Creek again. The June 1965 flood of the South Platte was the worst natural disaster in Denver's history. But the rebuilding of the areas damaged by the flood brought new attention to the degraded state of the city's rivers.

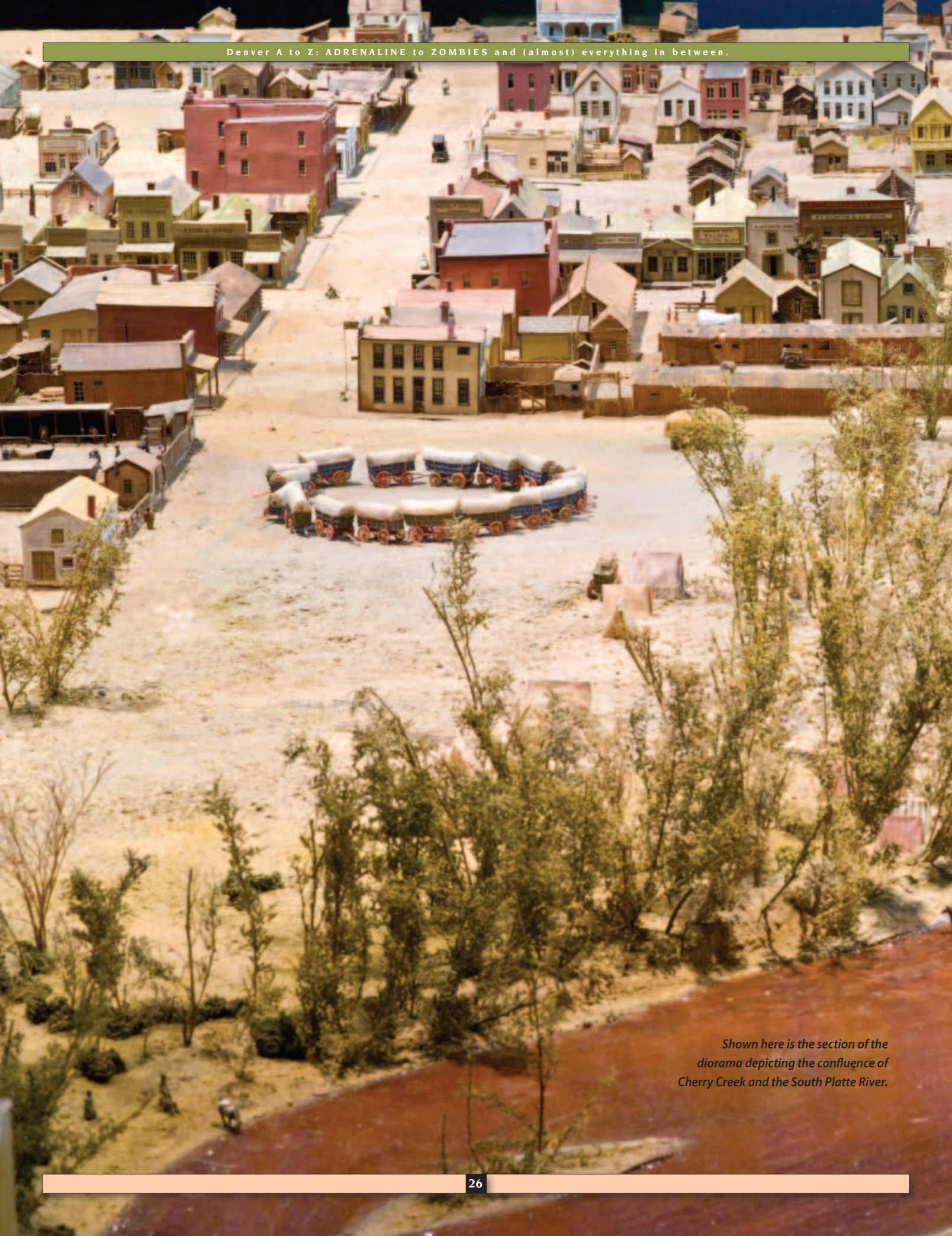
One of the most important developments to come out of the South Platte River flood was the creation of the Platte River Greenway, an effort led by state senator Joe Shoemaker to build a system of parks and trails along the river's banks. The restoration of the South Platte, city planners wrote, would not only bring beauty to a long-ignored part of the city but also turn it into a "significant natural amenity…[with] the potential to become the cohesive force which draws the region's citizens together." Denver in the 1970s was a fragmented metropolis. Fights over growth, pollution, race, and other issues threatened to tear the city apart. Nature, the source of Denver's civic identity, could bring people together.

Cherry Creek, though, played an ambiguous role. The South Platte River could be restored to its former glory, but much of Cherry Creek, with its concrete channel and the dams built within its banks, could not. Environmental rhetoric in the 1960s and '70s celebrated the wild over the civilized, and Cherry Creek seemed far too compromised to be celebrated. But the attention paid to the South Platte inspired other civic organizations and city offices to propose improvements to the creek to "gain respect for Cherry Creek as the resource it is today, and to inspire this generation of Denver citizens to make Cherry Creek into a jewel of the Queen City." The rubble and overgrown vegetation in its bed were removed. A bike and pedestrian path was built along the creek's bed from the South Platte River upstream to Cherry Creek Dam. Along the creek's path through downtown Denver, benches, artwork, and fountains were installed. A park now graces the confluence of Cherry Creek and the South Platte River, once again bringing life to Denver's birthplace.

For Further Reading

For more about Cherry Creek's role in Denver, see Louisa Ward Arps' classic *Denver in Slices: A Historical Guide to the City* (Swallow Press, second edition 1998). For eleven essays about life in around Denver, see *Denver Inside and Out* (History Colorado, 2011).

B. ERIN COLE is the senior researcher at History Colorado. A fourth-generation native of the Western Slope, she is also a Ph.D. candidate at the University of New Mexico. She writes about race, sexuality, and urban planning in the twentieth-century urban West.



Shown here is the section of the diorama depicting the confluence of Cherry Creek and the South Platte River.

The original 1936 Denver diorama goes on view February 7 in its new state-of-the-art setting in the History Colorado Center lobby.

Not Just Your Granddad's Diorama

History Colorado's *Early Denver* Returns

This coming February will see the return of a History Colorado gem. The Early Denver *diorama, a 1930s-era public works project showing central Denver in 1860, dazzled visitors at the Colorado History Museum for almost seventy-five years. In the 1930s, the diorama broke new ground: funded by the Federal Emergency Relief Administration (FERA) and its successor, the Works Progress Administration (WPA), it provided badly needed employment to out-of-work historians, artists, architects, and craftspeople, and it helped kick off a period of creative activity that marked the first Golden Age of the Colorado Historical Society—today's History Colorado.*

Now, exhibit developers are restoring the diorama in a new state-of-the-art exhibit case in the lobby of the History Colorado Center. The setting will make a longtime favorite accessible to new generations.

BY WILLIAM J. CONVERY

In 1933, Franklin Delano Roosevelt became President of the United States and Adolph Hitler, Chancellor of Germany. Congress legalized 3.2 beer—to the relief of millions of down-and-out Americans who really needed a drink. *King Kong* premiered, as did Major League Baseball's All-Star Game. Michael Caine, Yoko Ono, Ruth Bader Ginsburg, and Quincy Jones were born. Calvin Coolidge and the heroic Alaskan sled dog Balto died. And in that fourth year of the Great Depression, the Colorado Historical Society faced oblivion.

The crisis was as predictable as it was unavoidable. The Depression left the Society, in the words of State Historian and chief curator LeRoy Hafen, in a "critical situation." As savings evaporated and businesses closed in the wake of the 1929 stock market crash, national unemployment jumped from under 9 percent in 1930 to almost 25 percent by 1933. Banks collapsed, school districts laid off teachers, homeless shelters were overrun, and out-of-work Denverites resorted to panning Platte River gravel in a desperate search for gold. Adding to the misery, the eastern plains experienced its worst drought in over forty years. Faced with a toxic combination of dwindling tax revenues and overwhelming demands for relief, Colorado's legislature saw few compelling reasons to fund the fifty-four-year-old State Historical Society. The cash-strapped legislature empowered the governor to suspend nonessential agencies for three months, slashed the Society's biennial budget by 36 percent, and considered abolishing the Society altogether. In a telling sign of shifting priorities, staffers from the Governor's Committee on Unemployment and the federal Civil Works Administration moved into now-vacant State History Museum offices, labs, and exhibit galleries.

Perhaps inspired by their new CWA tenants, Society officials took radical measures. Beginning in 1934, the Federal Emergency Relief Administration funded twenty-two field-

workers, who fanned across the state on the Society's behalf, collecting oral histories from surviving pioneers. After the success of that project, Relief Administration officials asked the Society for other ideas. Led by Hafen, museum officials suggested an ambitious series of dioramas depicting a variety of historical themes. These "life models" would help students and museum visitors "visualize history."

The dioramas opened a new chapter for the Historical Society. Museums had long used dioramas to portray events and landscapes. But the Colorado Historical Society was the first organization in the nation to deploy federal relief funds for historical projects. Museum staff laid out a multiyear plan to create forty-one dioramas. The first, depicting 1860 Denver, was also the most ambitious. Developers imagined a tableau measuring eleven by twelve feet. It would feature 350 miniature structures: cabins, frame and brick buildings, tents, bridges, outhouses, saloons, hotels, theaters, and an encampment of Arapaho Indians. Project supervisor Edgar C. McMechen, a Brooklyn-born writer, reporter, and former Denver Art Museum curator, envisioned a "Lilliputian town . . . thronged by figures of men, women and children in the costumes of the period, covered wagons, horses, mules, oxen, dogs, Indian warriors and their families." Seeking a high level of accuracy, historians spent six months researching photographs, manuscripts, directories, guidebooks, land deeds, and newspapers—in the process discovering dozens of previously unknown structures. Construction took an additional year and employed a sculptor, a moldmaker, and seven unemployed architects to model each of the pint-sized buildings.

Laid out at a scale of 1/16 inch to the foot, *Early Denver* portrayed in miniature the central business district of Denver and Auraria, from the south side of Larimer Street to the South Platte River and from the east side of Sixteenth Street

to Tenth. Craftspeople showed incredible creativity in their choices of materials. After laying down a base of window screen and plaster, they sprinkled birdsand into a shellac finish to give the streets a suitably gritty texture. Artisans fashioned dozens of ersatz cottonwood trees from ambrosia (a poetical name for ragweed) dipped in dye, and shrubbery from bits of baby's breath immersed in shellac. They made cardboard buildings with brown paper wrapping for siding and painted brick texturing. Paper sheets and flannel underwear hung from miniature laundry lines. Matchsticks became picket, board, and stake-and-rider fences and twine dipped in white lead emulated peeled cottonwood logs.

Planned, researched, and built between late 1934 and mid-1936, the *Early Denver* diorama provided much-needed employment to out-of-work historians, architects, and craftspeople. FERA and the WPA paid part-time workers $55 for each 88-hour month. Eunice Welch was a typical worker. Born in Colorado Springs, she graduated from high school just as the Depression set in. She learned woodcarving at the Denver Art Museum, taking classes on credit in hopes of future employment. She landed her first job on a WPA-funded Denver Art Museum project. Finishing that, she transferred to the Colorado Historical Society.

Welch produced scores of miniatures for the Denver diorama. After carving a diminutive wooden prototype of a covered wagon, she and other artisans crafted a caravan of cardboard buggies, stagecoaches, farming and mining wagons, even a ferryboat. The artists covered immigrant wagons with silk or cloth canopies. Armed only with a sharp craft knife, and without the aid of magnifiers, Welch carved a small army of people, horses, cattle, oxen, dogs, and even miniscule cats measuring less than 1/8 of an inch. Transformed into plaster molds, the figures were recast in lead before returning to Welch for painting. The artists modeled the figures' clothing from hats, dresses, walking sticks, and other objects from the Society's collection.

The WPA attracted the down-and-out, the self-taught, and the elderly with few prospects. But meager pay and stringent hours, and a slowly improving economy, made it hard for Society officials to retain skilled workers. Some of the workers left in 1939 when the WPA increased the number of required hours from 88 to 110 while keeping monthly pay at $55 (about $725 in 2011 dollars). State Historian LeRoy Hafen protested when Society officers considered letting

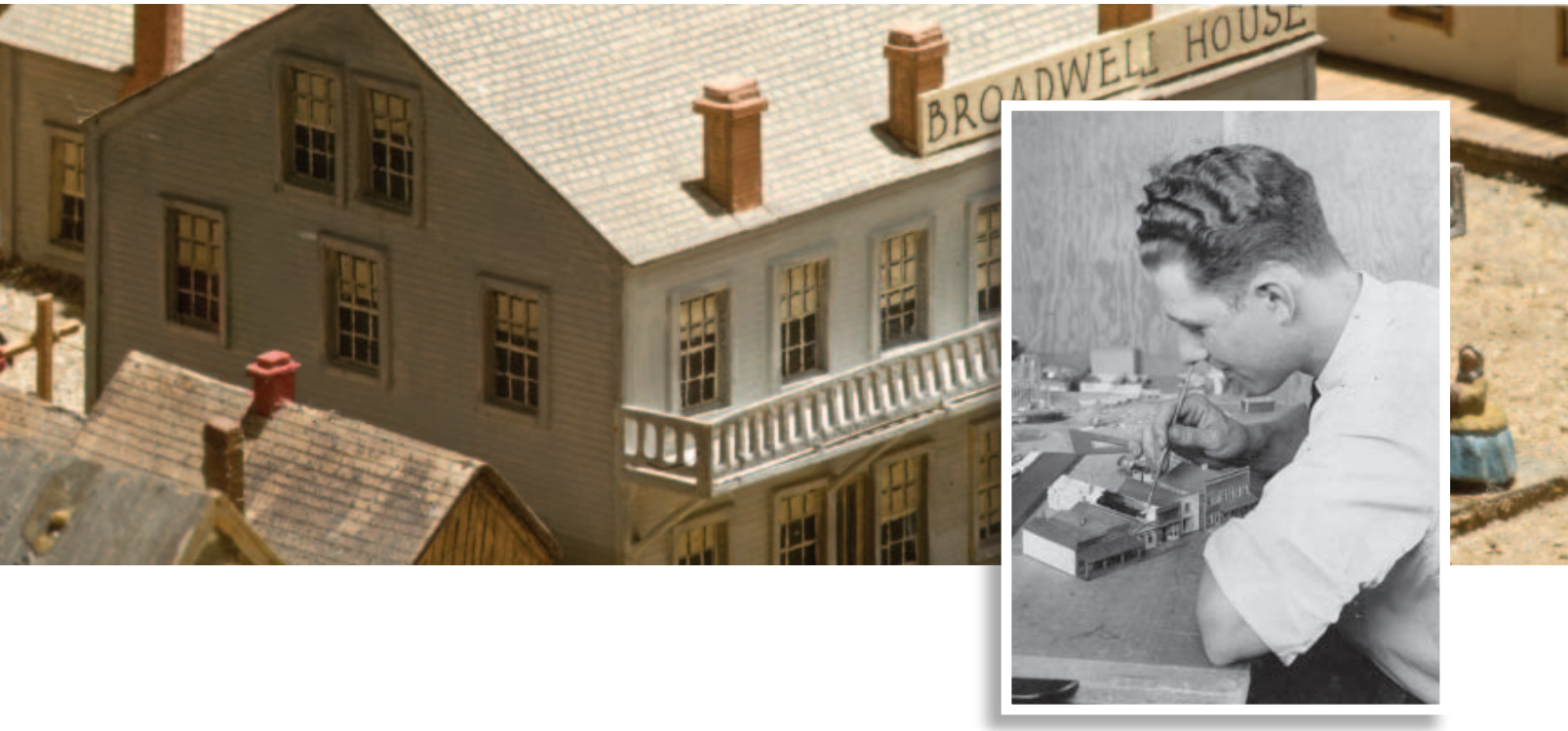
the project lapse. Such a move, he wrote, "would be very unfortunate and unwise. . . . It would throw out of work some twenty-five workers, most of whom have shown a very great interest in our work. . . ." Hafen offered to take two weeks' unpaid leave to help keep expenses down.

The Society weathered such crises until 1941, when growing wartime production created new private-sector jobs for skilled workers. In a 1979 interview, Eunice Welch Darley proclaimed, "I think that Mr. Hafen had in mind things that were needed in the Museum, probably for years, but no funding to help to get it done. And this came along . . . ." Although *Early Denver* was complete by 1936, Society staff went on to realize goals far beyond their initial dreams. By the beginning of World War II, federally subsidized workers had crafted forty-one dioramas, interviewed hundreds of old-timers, compiled 158,000 note cards of historical data, cataloged and indexed books and manuscripts, collected and bound state newspapers, drafted maps, made woodblock prints for educational outreach, and built exhibit cases, card files, and bookshelves. Artists created more than seventy drawings, portraits, and scenic paintings in crayon, oil, and watercolor. By 1938, Hafen could report that federal relief funding had enabled the Society "to make a better showing in the last two or three years than could ever have been possible otherwise."

The Society ultimately leveraged its state appropriation by almost a quarter of a million dollars' worth of federal relief work. Combined CWA, FERA, and WPA projects employed an average of thirty-five workers—and as many as sixty—each year between 1935 and 1941. Colorado Historical Society projects provided models for work throughout the nation, including the popular wildlife dioramas at the Denver Museum of Natural History (today's Denver Museum of Nature & Science).

More than seventy-five years have passed since the Denver diorama first sparked museum visitors' imaginations. Now, the diorama will reveal its stories to new audiences. "I think it's a way to embrace our past in a new light," said project lead Shannon Voirol. "Visitors *love* this diorama. They grew up with it, and it lets them imagine a place that they know existed but couldn't visualize without the diorama's help."

Along with History Colorado staff, conservator Judy Greenfield and Denver artist Carlotta Espinosa are working to reassemble the diorama—carefully cut apart to accommodate its 2010 move from the old Colorado History Museum—and restore components weathered by nearly three generations of display. Espinosa first worked on the diorama during an early 1980s restoration. Like the WPA craftspeople of the 1930s, she read primary documents and interviewed historians. The museum staff "wanted you to learn as much as you could. It was like going to school," she says. She relied on her own semi-frontier experiences as a kid in Fraser, Colorado, to help



Artist Carlotta Espinosa works on the diorama during its 1980s restoration. Espinosa returned to History Colorado to help prep the diorama for its new installation in the History Colorado Center lobby.

inform her work. The project gave her an appreciation of community in Colorado: "The *Denver Diorama* . . . shows the first integration. You can see the community of love coming together."

Espinosa returned to help History Colorado staff address the significant technical challenges of displaying the beloved but fragile diorama in the History Colorado Center's open, light-filled lobby, where it can only stay on view temporarily. The lobby's high traffic and intense afternoon sunlight posed a challenge for designers and conservators. To make the diorama accessible while protecting its integrity, exhibit developers combined low-tech solutions with high-tech ones. Light-blocking materials on nearby windows will mitigate direct sunlight. The display case will utilize a "SmartGlass" building material to control ambient light on the diorama throughout the day. (This is one of only two known uses of SmartGlass in a museum.) "We're using the best contemporary design and engineering to showcase this diorama," lead developer Shannon Voirol says, "while still observing best museum conservation practices."

At the same time, exhibit developers deliberately limited the amount of technology used to interpret the diorama. "We were very thoughtful about how much technology and interpretation we layered onto the diorama, Voirol says. "The simplicity of our design allows people to imagine themselves as part of the streetscape. Despite all the leading-edge technology at the History Colorado Center, we know that people still love dioramas. They like to place themselves in those early streets. We're trying to get people as close to a street-level view as we can." Street-level labels will identify pioneer thoroughfares, and panels will give context about early Denver and the New Deal projects that inspired the diorama in the first place.

"The more all of us learn about the people who made this diorama, the more impressed we are with their skill, craftsmanship, and research," Voirol says. The new setting for the *Early Denver* diorama promises to display that skill all over again.

For Further Reading

The Colorado Magazine, *Colorado Heritage*, and *Colorado History NOW* preserve the best descriptions of the *Early Denver* diorama and the Colorado Historical Society's other WPA projects. See Edgar C. McMechen, "Federal Project Work at the State Museum," *The Colorado Magazine* 15:3 (May 1938), 129–34; LeRoy R. Hafen, "History of the State Historical Society of Colorado, Part III, 1925–50," *The Colorado Magazine* 31:1 (January 1954), 37–68; Maxine Benson's history of CHS, "A Centennial Legacy," *The Colorado Magazine 57* (1980 annual), 23–30; and Modupe Labode's "New Deal for Old Stuff," *Colorado History NOW* (May 2005). The Edgar C. McMechen manuscript collection (MSS 742) and the Colorado Historical Society Correspondence Archives from 1933 to 1936, housed at the Stephen H. Hart Library and Research Center, contain an additional trove of unpublished records and descriptions.

WILLIAM J. CONVERY is Colorado's state historian and director of History Colorado's Exhibits and Interpretation division. His previous work includes *Pride of the Rockies: The Life of John Kernan Mullen* (Boulder: University Press of Colorado, 2000) and a profile of John M. Chivington in *Soldiers West: Biographies of the Military Frontier*, revised edition, edited by Durwood Ball and Paul A. Hutton (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2009). His most recent contribution to *Colorado Heritage* was "Freedom and Slavery in the Pikes Peak Country, 1859–61," in the November/December 2011 issue.

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You'll learn about the diorama's history, how it was made, and current efforts to prepare it for display at the History Colorado Center. Quiz our experts and see the diorama up close.

Discover the Denver Diorama

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