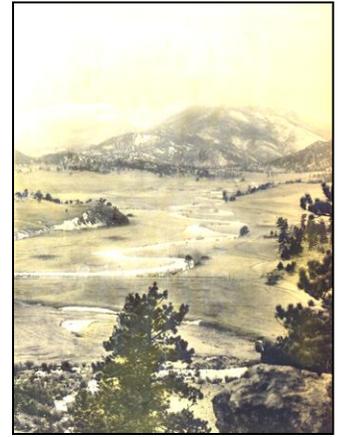


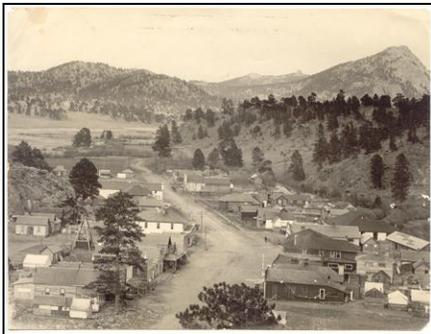
Tracks In Time: A Brief History of Estes Park

The history of Estes Park begins with the formation of its wild, natural beauty. About 70 million years ago, massive forces pushed tectonic plates against one another, creating the remarkable Rocky Mountains. Over millions of years, massive glaciers carved out local landmarks such as peaks, meadows and valleys, creating the beautiful landscape we enjoy today.



The first people in the area were ancestors of today's American Indians. They stayed in the Estes valley for the summer to hunt mammoth and other large mammals like giant bison. In more recent times, the Ute migrated seasonally from what is now North Park to use the land as a summer hunting ground. Several other Native American tribes came to the area seasonally even though the hunting bounty could only sustain two tribes at a time. Oral histories exist as a result of Arapaho explaining their inhabitation of the land until just before the arrival of Anglo settlers. Fur-trapping mountain men and Anglo explorers more than likely came to the area although there are almost no written accounts left behind.

William Byers, editor of the *Rocky Mountain News*, first applied the name "Estes Park" to the area in honor of Joel Estes. Arriving in 1859, Estes settled here with his family to raise cattle until 1866 when he moved to seek a more favorable climate.



The Homestead Act of 1862 offered up to 160 acres of land for the cost of filing the paperwork if a house was constructed and the property was labored upon. In the 1870s, surveys of Estes Park brought homesteaders to the area who attempted farming, ranching, logging and mining. Most of the early ranchers (Evans, MacGregor, James, and Sprague) found it more profitable to become proprietors to the growing number of visitors in the area as words of beauty and adventure reached all the way to Europe.

After the 1905 platting of downtown Estes Park, the village thrived and set ground for much of what the town looks like today. Access to the area was vastly increased with the road improvements funded by the Stanley Hotel owner, F.O. Stanley, and the natural surroundings would be protected for posterity with the dedication of Rocky Mountain National Park in 1915. The incorporation of the Town in 1917 formed a local government that regulated large projects like the Colorado-Big Thompson Project in the 1940s and the formation of Lake Estes in 1949, and helped Estes Park recover from disasters such as the Big Thompson Flood of 1976 and Lawn Lake Flood of 1982.

Visit the Estes Park Museum to learn more about the people, structures, and events that constitute our rich and colorful history. Located at 200 Fourth Street on the Corner of Highway 36, museum admission is free.

Museum Hours:

May to October

Monday-Saturday 10:00-5:00

Sunday 1:00-5:00



November to April

Friday-Saturday 10:00-5:00

Sunday 1:00-5:00