

THE

HISTORY COLORADO | SUMMER 2020

THE COLORADO

MAGAZINE

HISTORY IN MOVEMENT

Hecho en Colorado / "We can't afford to fail this time" / Among the Eternal Snows

**If history isn't relevant
and doesn't inform our present and future,
then it's just trivial pursuit.**



We've had front-row seats to incredible and fast-moving history in the making over the past 18 weeks—from a pandemic unprecedented in our lifetimes to protests in the heart of Colorado and across the nation. As stewards of our shared past, we always advocate for society to examine our current events, fears, and turmoil through the lens of history. This year has made this ideal an imperative.

“Although it will be a monumental task, the past

is replete with examples of ordinary people working together to overcome seemingly insurmountable challenges,” writes Lonnie G. Bunch, Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution and founding director of the National Museum of African American History and Culture. “History is a guide to a better future and demonstrates that we can become a better society—but only if we collectively demand it from each other and from the institutions responsible for administering justice.”

As we collectively grapple with our present and confront our past, History Colorado will be exploring all of the complexities of our American democracy with an initiative called **This Is What Democracy Looks Like**. Exhibitions across multiple venues that explore what democracy means, artwork that adds new dimensions to the “unfinished work” of democracy that Abraham Lincoln called on us to continue, and programs that probe the deepest questions of our shared DNA as Americans will create experiences as dimensional, provocative, sweeping, and interactive as democracy itself.

Beyond our beloved programs and exhibits, History Colorado is an active partner in our neighborhoods and communities across Colorado. We don't just collect history and reflect on it. We're working, along with Coloradans throughout the state, to build a widely inclusive history that enables us to better understand the many layers of our collective yet richly diverse story. We know that illuminating the truths of our past—even and especially when it's hard to look at—is essential to our ability to move forward, and those truths are the seeds of a just and equitable future.

Steve W. Turner
Executive Director and State Historic Preservation Officer

In the spirit of healing and education, we acknowledge the 48 contemporary tribes with historic ties to the state of Colorado. These tribes are our partners. We consult with them when we plan exhibits; collect, preserve, and interpret artifacts; do archaeological work; and create educational programs. We recognize these Indigenous peoples as the original inhabitants of this land.

THE COLORADO MAGAZINE

HISTORY COLORADO

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Colorado Heritage (ISSN 0272-9377), published by History Colorado, has been newly retitled *The Colorado Magazine*; new ISSN forthcoming. The magazine contains articles of broad general and educational interest that link the present to the past, and is distributed quarterly to History Colorado members, to libraries, and to institutions of higher learning. Manuscripts must be documented when submitted, and originals are retained in the Publications office. An Author's Guide is available at HistoryColorado.org. History Colorado disclaims responsibility for statements of fact or of opinion made by contributors. | Postage paid at Denver, Colorado

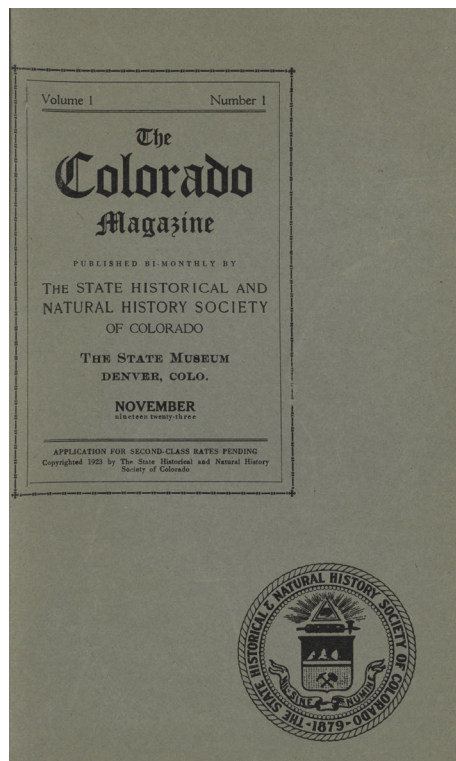
THE COLORADO MAGAZINE

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HANDS-ON HISTORY SUMMER CAMP AmeriCorps interns, El Pueblo History Museum
left to right / Cheyenne Romero, Diego Archuletta, Nizhoni Valdez, Alejandro Otero, Torie Perez
Summer Camps opened at History Colorado museums across the state with full public-health and safety guidelines in place.

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(RE) INTRODUCING THE COLORADO MAGAZINE

by JASON L. HANSON

WHEN THE EDITORS OF *THE COLORADO MAGAZINE* sat down to pen a welcome to readers in 1923, they gave notice that the State Historical and Natural History Society (it was all one organization back then) was launching “a regular publication of a more ambitious character.” Four decades after its founding, they explained, the society was “actually doing things of real value, of real importance to the state,” and they intended the magazine to deepen that work. As for the publication’s name, they noted that “names more suggestive of the work of the Society were considered as being too long.”

It was a tumultuous time to launch a new publication. Colorado was mired in a recession triggered by the collapse of agricultural and mining prices after World War I. The Ku Klux Klan was on the rise with a racist message of nativism and white supremacy. Prohibition was the law of the land. So the editors got to work. They published articles that looked to Colorado’s past for guidance they might apply to the present, chronicled “History in the Making” (for which we’re deeply grateful today), and kept readers apprised of the organization’s endeavors.

Today, we’re reclaiming that legacy. The magazine you love as *Colorado Heritage* is reassuming its original name as *The Colorado Magazine*.

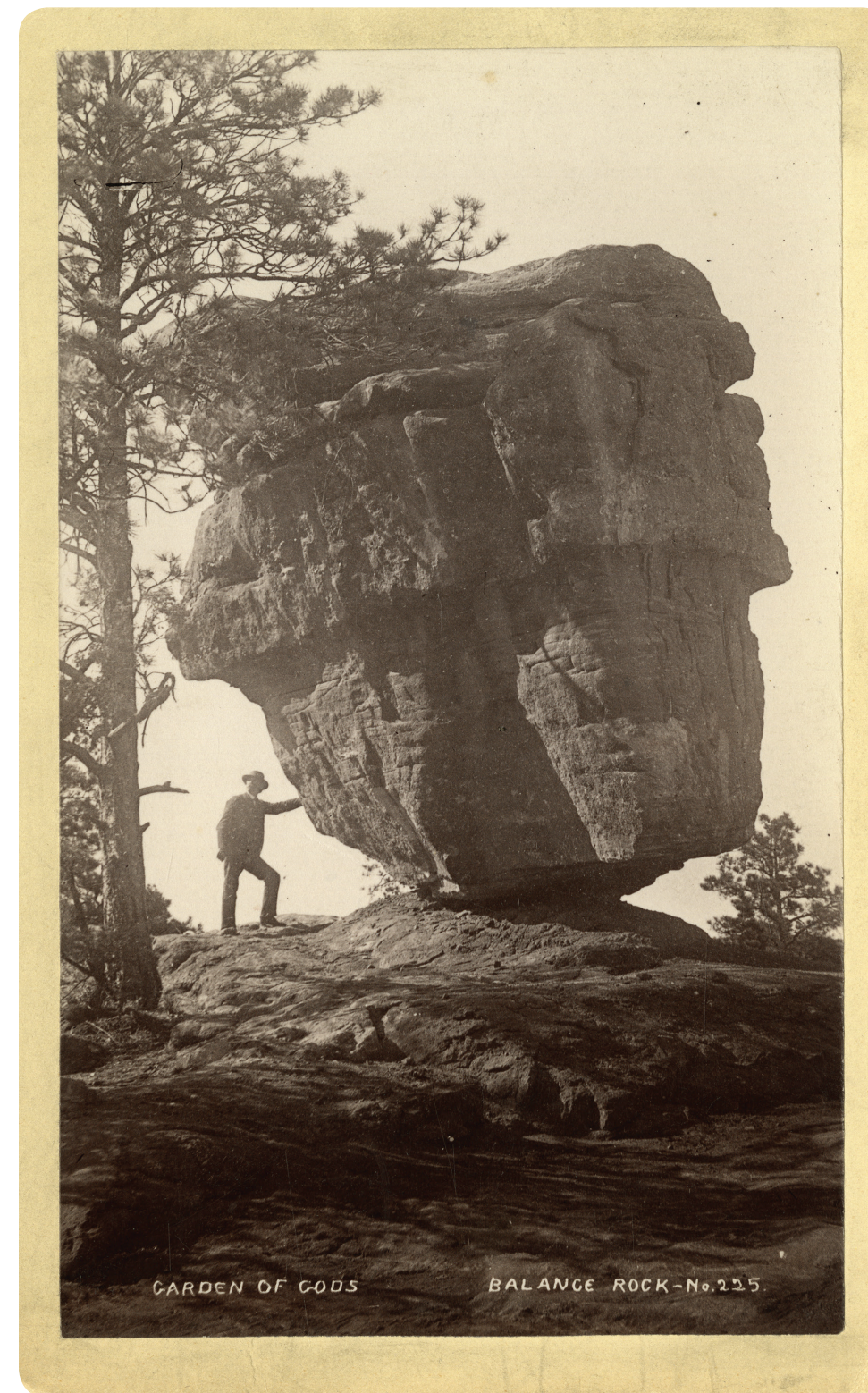
Rest assured that we’ll still be delivering the content you’ve enjoyed: features that delve deep into Colorado history, insightful articles that connect the past to our present, the latest in historic preservation, news of our newest exhibitions around the state, and all the ways you can connect with History Colorado.

So why the change?

While we don’t have a record of the longer names the founding editors considered, we think they got it right with *The Colorado Magazine*. It’s an elegantly simple assertion that, as the state historical society, History Colorado serves our entire state and all the people who call—and have called—it home. We draw strength and inspiration from those who came before, and we call on their wisdom and example to illuminate our present and light the way to a brighter future. At the same time, while many of us draw strength from our “heritage,” that term is used too often lately to divide, to emphasize our differences.

The Colorado Magazine is a publication for all Coloradans. In these pages, we’ll document, explore, and share the experiences that join us together as Coloradans, bringing you compelling original scholarship, insights, and perspectives on how we got to now.

We welcome you along on the journey. ■



ONE OF THE MOST ICONIC FIGURES in the Garden of the Gods nature park, Balanced Rock didn’t become part of the park until twenty-three years after it was established in 1909.

Weighing 700 tons and rising 35 feet above its precarious base, Balanced Rock rose to fame in the 1890s when fourteen-year-old Curt Goerke started charging visitors 25 cents to have their photo taken with it. The young Goerke’s business was so lucrative that his father quit his job and spent \$400 to buy Balanced Rock, along with the surrounding “mushroom park.” For years the Goerkes continued taking photos of tourists atop one of their four burros. To discourage people from taking their own photos for free, they built a two-mile-long fence around the property and another around the rock itself.

Over time, local residents grew outraged at the Goerkes’ fences and promotion of the natural wonder. The City of Colorado Springs forced the Goerkes to sell the land back to the city for \$25,000 in 1932. With the land back in city hands, the fences came down and Balanced Rock became part of the Garden of the Gods for all to enjoy. ■

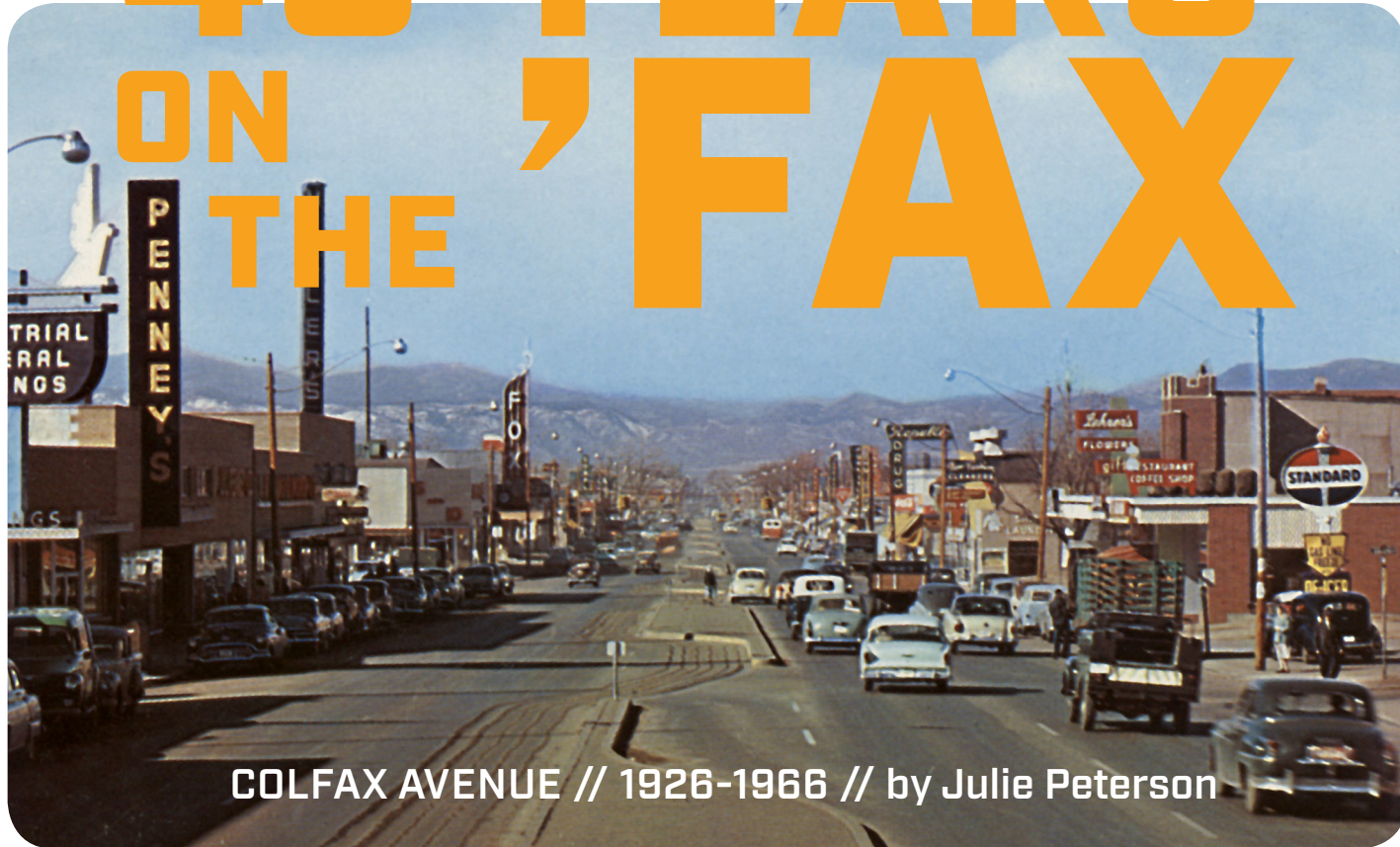
—Keegan Martin

GARDEN OF THE GODS, BALANCED ROCK

J. L. Clinton, 1890-1900 / from History Colorado’s collection, 95.200.11

Order prints or view more of the images from our photography collection: h-co.org/collections

40 YEARS ON THE 'FAX



COLFAX AVENUE // 1926-1966 // by Julie Peterson

WHEN IT COMES TO WITNESSING HISTORY, COLFAX AVENUE MAY BE ONE OF THE BEST PLACES IN COLORADO TO GRAB A FRONT-ROW SEAT.

Often referred to as the **longest, wickedest street in America**, the twenty-six-mile stretch of pavement from Aurora to Lakewood has long been the main east-west thoroughfare through Colorado.

Part of the coast-to-coast US Highway 40, “the 'Fax” has borne visitors traveling west into the Rocky Mountains, supported a thriving tourist industry, and provided space for demonstrators to speak out on issues they care about—from the first PrideFest in 1974 to the protests for Black lives and against police brutality today.

FORTY YEARS ON THE 'FAX opened June 29 // History Colorado Center, Denver

FORTY YEARS ON THE 'FAX: COLFAX AVENUE 1926–1966 shares the story of this street during the heyday of tourism in the mid-twentieth century. The new exhibition at the History Colorado Center takes visitors on a nostalgic ride down the 'Fax through the '50s and '60s, with stops at the quirky and memorable places that cemented the street's worldwide reputation.

Jonny Barber, founder of The Colfax Museum and guest curator of the exhibition at the History Colorado Center, spoke with me about the new exhibition, and why preserving the history of “Colorado's Main Street” matters.



Why do you think it's important for people to learn about the history of Colfax Avenue?

A lot of people—especially young people—aren't aware of Colfax Avenue as a hopping tourist destination. Really only people who have lived in Denver for a long time remember that streetcars, fine dining, and dinner clubs once lined Colfax. I think it will be great for people to see the street in a new light.

What about this exhibition do you think will resonate the most with visitors today?

Forty Years on the 'Fax shows the rise of car culture. Now, in the era of coronavirus, there has been talk about the resurgence of the family road trip because people are concerned about air travel. Being in your own car allows you to travel while practicing social distancing. The artifacts we're featuring represent that classic road-trip era: roadside kitsch, neon signs, and things that catered specifically to an automobile experience.

When you think of this new exhibition at History Colorado, what are you most excited about?

I'm excited to see the Colfax Museum collection take on a new life at History Colorado. A lot of these objects have never been displayed together before, since the museum moved from place to place after opening in 2017, only to be flooded once we found a new location in 2019.

As you've collected objects for The Colfax Museum, I'm sure you've heard lots of great stories from people about their memories of the street. What's one of the best ones you've heard?

Colfax Avenue history is jam packed with great stories, urban legends, and tall tales. Uncovering the truth behind the myths isn't always easy. Oftentimes people coming to visit The Colfax Museum helped to discern the truth from the fiction. A very lively thread had started on our website about Bob Dylan's legendary appearance with the Smothers Brothers at the Satire Lounge on East Colfax when he was only 19. Some people argued that Dylan never appeared at the Satire at all, let alone with the Smothers Brothers. Others told the story that



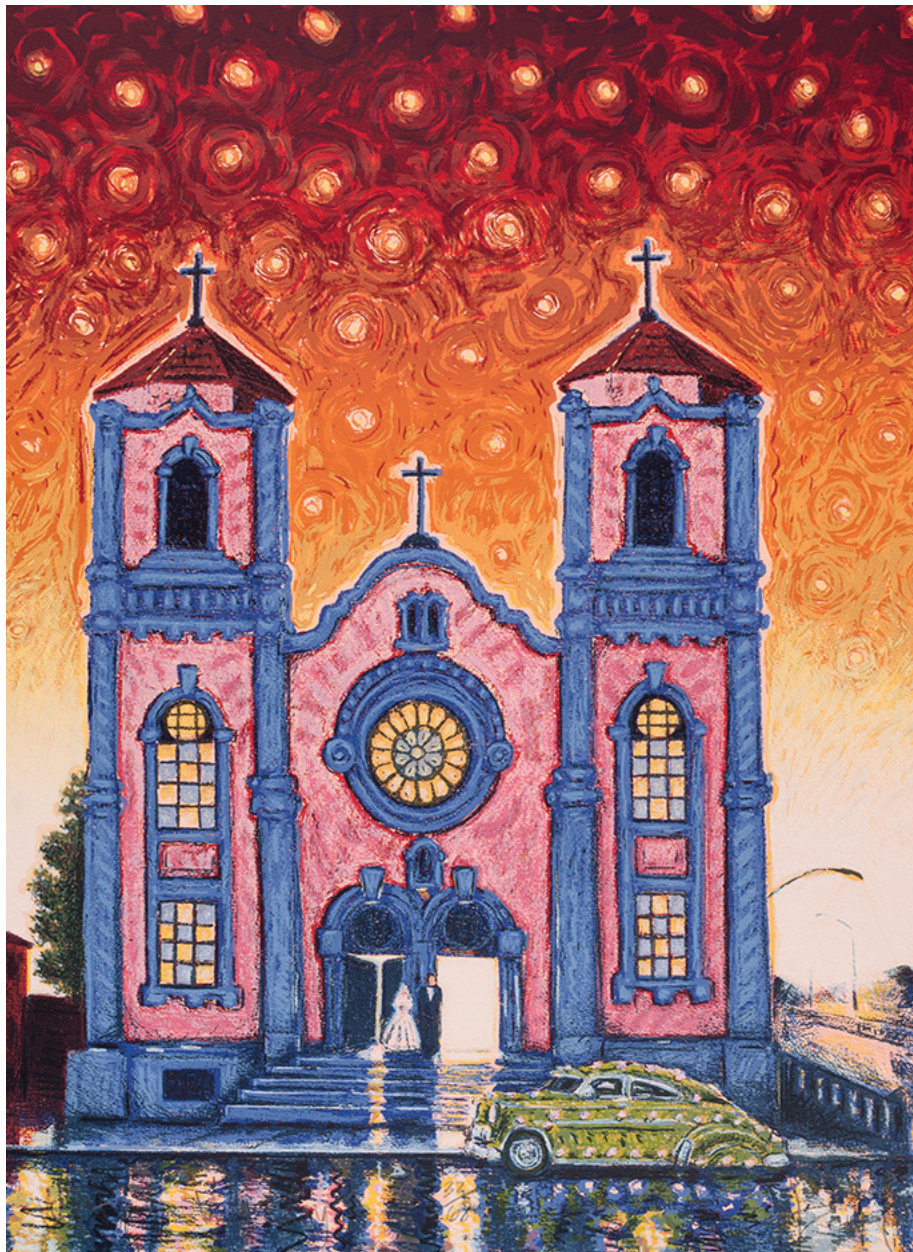
Denver folk legend Walt Conley (who also hosted the show in question) let a young Dylan sleep on his couch while he was in town. The story contends that when Walt woke up one morning, Dylan was gone, and so were some choice records from his collection. “This is definitely fake news!” said most people on the thread. So imagine my surprise when, after showing a busload of elderly tourists around The Colfax Museum, a man named Bob piped up to share one of his favorite Colfax stories. Turns out he was Walt Conley's roommate and was in the house that morning when Bob Dylan disappeared with the records! ■

PHOTO / left page / Postcard of East Colfax Avenue, 1962. Courtesy Colfax Museum, Inc.

PHOTO / right page / Neon Bugs Bunny Motel, Colfax Avenue, 1983 / by Reed Weimer

PHOTO / right page / Neon Red Ram Bar, Colfax Avenue, 1983 / by Reed Weimer

JULIE PETERSON is the lead developer of *FORTY YEARS ON THE 'FAX: COLFAX AVENUE 1926–1966*. Since coming to the History Colorado Center in 2017 with a degree from the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, she has also served as lead developer for *WHAT'S YOUR STORY?* and *ZOOM IN: THE CENTENNIAL STATE IN 100 OBJECTS*, both on view at the History Colorado Center.



HECHO EN COLORADO

Artists Shaping History & Culture
INTERVIEW WITH ADRIANNA ABARCA, LATINO CULTURAL ARTS CENTER

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH THE LATINO CULTURAL ARTS CENTER, THE HISTORY COLORADO CENTER IS PRESENTING HECHO EN COLORADO – OR MADE IN COLORADO – AN EXHIBITION OF SOME SIXTY WORKS THAT HIGHLIGHT THE ARTISTIC AND INTELLECTUAL CONTRIBUTIONS OF NATIVE, MEXICAN, AND CHICANO ARTISTS TO THE STATE OF COLORADO.

At the core of the Latino Cultural Arts Center is The Abarca Family Collection, which began in 1970s Denver with Luis and Martha Abarca. As the family business, Ready Foods, grew in size and profitability so too did Luis and Martha's passion for the arts. "My father would go to the artists' studios on weekends to hang out and encourage them," their daughter Adrianna Abarca says. "If he had a few extra bucks in his pocket he'd buy their art and hang it in the offices." The founder of the Latino Cultural Arts Center, she now carries on her parents' legacy.



ADRIANNA ABARCA, Guest Curator and Director of Latino Cultural Arts Center

IMAGES / from top, left to right / featured detail of the following artworks / *Quintin Gonzalez*, Justicia; *Arlette Lucero*, Ix Chel; *Carlota Espinoza*, Frida; *Carlos Fresquez*, Westside Wedding; *Carlos Sandoval*, La del Valle; *Armando Silva*, Amor de Mis Amores. All artwork is Courtesy of The Abarca Family Collection, Colorado.



IMAGE detail / Josiah Lee Lopez, Heros Re-visited; Courtesy of the Abarca Family Collection, Colorado

“Even though my father was not Chicano,” she says, “he raised his kids in a town that had a heavy Chicano identity. Personally, I’ve been greatly inspired by the Chicano Civil Rights Movement and the foundation that my parents created with the art collection. In the end, it all comes back to how it first started: I’m following in my father’s footsteps in encouraging artists to develop their talent and guide us towards a more socially just world.”

From the collection’s modest beginnings, she says, “it expanded to include a broad array of Mexican and Mexican American folk and fine art, textiles, and literature, but it all began with the Chicano painters in Denver.” Now, a part of that interdisciplinary and intergenerational collection of today’s artists is at the heart of *Hecho en Colorado*, which is guest curated by Abarca and on view through January 10, 2021.

For the last twenty years, Adrianna Abarca has taken the lead in building the collection. “I collect mostly representational art: works that are identifiable, more familiar, more relatable as cultural components of Chicano/Mexican communities.” *Hecho en Colorado* features art forms that depict and draw from both urban and rural experiences and reflect both ancient and contemporary traditions. Up-and-coming artists are juxtaposed with prominent figures such as Carlota Espinoza, Ramon Kelley, Carlos Fresquez, and David Ocelotl García.

Hecho en Colorado features wide-ranging works across artistic traditions and forms of expression that highlight the outsized artistic achievements of a dynamic and powerful community shaping history and culture in Colorado. It welcomes visitors in the History Colorado Center’s ground-floor Ballantine Gallery, directly adjacent to the giant atrium space of the museum’s Anschutz Hamilton Hall, with an array of color.

“Some of the art, including sculpture, textiles, and poetry, reflect

well-known topics and figures in the community such as music and dance, low-rider culture, or other day-to-day celebrations,” says Abarca. For example, Carlos Fresquez’s dazzlingly colorful print of a wedding scene at St. Cajetan’s Catholic Church (today a part of the Auraria Campus) is featured. Fresquez also paints cars and car culture—an urban motif that appears in other works on view. Also represented is el Día de los Muertos, a time of celebrating lost loved ones, with imagery that’s become iconic of Mexican American culture.

Of the artists, Abarca says, “some are self-taught, others formally educated. Some are more well-known than others.” *Hecho en Colorado* is a lively mix of traditional works with other works by artists her father never had the opportunity to meet. In a section of portraiture, images show the Indigenous roots of the state. “Some of the featured art goes back to pre-Columbian times while others are more contemporary.” Of the photography on display, she says, “It’s valuable in that it captures the

richness and boldness of cultural expressions in the community that have been passed on for generations. Living in Colorado adds a distinct flavor to our experience because of the historic merging of cultures.”

As Abarca explains, “Parts of Colorado were previously Mexico and before that it was under the rule of Spain. That has an impact on how we see ourselves and how we express ourselves. We’re not independent of our surroundings; we’re very much a product of our geography. And it’s only recently that some of the major institutions are starting to recognize the contributions of our people. This exhibition is a product of the Chicano Civil Rights Movement, which is celebrating its fiftieth anniversary, because it inspired a lot of the artists to create and to preserve cultural traditions.” Abarca was on the committee that formed History Colorado’s exhibition *El Movimiento: The Chicano Movement in Colorado*, that’s housed on the museum’s second floor.

Among the other Denver artists in *Hecho en Colorado*, Abarca describes painter David Ocelotl García as a very important one. “He’s inspired and influenced by the Mexican master muralists; a lot of his art is for the people. His work has historic and cultural roots and brings a lot of joy. So I would call it ‘populist’ art for the masses, as opposed to elite art.” Also represented is muralist and visual artist Carlota Espinoza, whose myriad commissions throughout Denver are well-known to many. The exhibition bridges the rural and urban divide by including artist Sofia Marquez, who is also an architect and rancher. Her drawing *Vaqueros para Siempre* features male and female vaqueros (cowboy and cowgirl), and ranching is a long tradition in her family, some of the original inhabitants of the San Luis Valley.

In all, *Hecho en Colorado* is just the beginning for the Latino Cultural Arts Center’s programming. The center

is on the verge of something truly special in the history of Denver that will elevate the artistic and intellectual contributions of the Latino and Chicano communities to a national level. In January 2022, the center will open Las Bodegas, an integrated community arts center where artists, young people, families, and the public can seek learning opportunities that speak to their histories, interests, and passions. The LCAC encompasses four columns of learning: visual arts, performing arts, culinary arts, and music and spoken word. The center’s vision will live through every dance move, brushstroke, and music beat.

The History Colorado Center, and specifically the Ballantine Gallery, has become the leading space in Denver where such initiatives are given voice—and, more to the point, given their own voice. As an effort built around co-creation and co-authorship, the opening of the gallery last fall mirrors several ongoing initiatives at History Colorado. They include the Museum of Memory project, which lets communities reframe challenges and struggles into histories of resilience and pride; *This Is What Democracy Looks Like*, a series of upbeat provocations and challenges that inspire renewed participation in election-year democracy; the Women’s Vote Centennial Colorado, a grassroots effort to examine the power of voting through contemporary voices and topics; and the Year of La Chicana, a community partnership that connects the core issues of the Chicano Movement with issues of social justice, identity, and inclusion.

Hecho en Colorado includes Friday morning small-group Cafecitos that grant exclusive access to curator-led tours for groups who register in advance. For larger audiences, artists discuss their influences and experiences in virtual events sponsored by AARP. ■

JOIN US FOR A Cafecito

Enjoy *Hecho en Colorado* on a carefully curated intimate tour, designed for groups of ten or less.

Gather for coffee, socialization, and a guided tour of the exhibit.

ideal for community, family, and small groups seeking ways to learn and share experiences together.

Singles welcome to sign up and join a tour. Every Friday morning.

Call 303/866-2394 or visit HistoryColorado.org/exhibit/hecho-en-colorado to reserve your space.



DENVER in the MOVEMENT for BLACK LIVES



BY
**ANTHONY
GRIMES**

the disCourse features pieces—both in print and online—where writers share their lived experiences and their perspectives on the past with an eye toward informing our present.

In this article, Anthony Grimes, one of the founders of BLM5280 and the Denver Freedom Riders, reflects on how the Black Lives Matter movement came to Denver, and where it might go from here.

PHOTO / Protester, Black Lives Matter protests, Civic Center, Denver / by James Peterson

“Our hope overwhelmingly lies in our chance for freedom in our lifetimes, the logical conclusion of justice, above any noble ideals about democracy.”

ROOTS OF THE MOVEMENT

When the authors of the United States Constitution wrote those famous words in 1787, “We the people,” they did not mean *all people*. They did not mean to include the enslaved Africans they looted, or the Indigenous people whose land they stole and bodies they tortured, or the women they silenced. They meant white, male property owners. The rest of us were left out.

The deaths of Black people at the hands of police officers is but the tip of the iceberg of a bigger societal problem. Our freedom movement ancestors have long thought of racism as a deadly malaise that has infected US society at every possible level—the police force, public schooling, corporations, even capitalism itself. Under European colonialism, which started in the era of Spanish conquests to “the New World” and was often endorsed by the church, the US has leveraged its military to export violence globally. Ask the hundreds of innocent civilians in places like Yemen, Pakistan, and Somalia who were killed by drone strikes under the Obama administration.

All of these forces are like one big powder keg, ready to explode at any moment. The spark ignites occasionally. More surprising than the recent uprisings in Minnesota,

and now all over the world, is that it doesn’t explode more often. A hypocritical and inflamed democracy caused James Baldwin to ask, “Do I really want to be integrated into a burning house?” It is a marvel that most Black people still fight for this country at all—and that our prevailing demand is justice, not war. If Black people had chosen a more radical politic of revenge and racially based terror akin to the KKK, there may well have been a civil war during every generation of our existence here. A few burned buildings and looted corporations, as much attributable to white extremist groups as anyone, are hardly anything compared to the destruction we could have wrought.

Our hope overwhelmingly lies in our chance for freedom in our lifetimes, the logical conclusion of justice, above any noble ideals about democracy. This hope is rooted in a Black prophetic tradition—or as the great Vincent Harding coined it, “The River”—the Black-led, multicultural, and intergenerational freedom fighters who have fought



PHOTO / Black Lives Matter, Elijah McClain protest, Aurora / by James Peterson

for justice at every milestone of America’s history. Captured Africans sank their slave ships, abolitionists preached against the bloody stain of slavery in a “free land,” marches and sit-ins in Nashville, Selma, and Washington, DC, inspired revolutions from South Africa to Palestine, from Poland to East Germany, from Tunisia to Sudan, and uprisings in Baltimore and Ferguson changed the global narrative: Black Lives Matter! For the first time in the European colonial experiment, this affirmation of Black life has entered the mainstream zeitgeist with tremendous force. As we consider where we go from here, let us remember that in so many ways, this city has been here before.



PHOTO / Black Lives Matter protests, in front of State Capitol, Denver / by James Peterson

THE MOVEMENT COMES TO COLORADO

Shortly after Mike Brown was murdered in August of 2014, I flew into Ferguson, which was by all accounts a battlezone, to join the uprisings. As I witnessed teenagers on street corners sharing their stories and riveting critiques of a failed democracy, I was undone and remade time and again. Shortly after returning back home, I started leading “Freedom Rides” modeled after those of the 1950s and ’60s. Our group, a mixed collective of rabble-rousers and poets and preachers and concerned Americans, would travel back and forth to Ferguson and eventually to Baltimore, to stand together with the people and bring back some of the prophetic fire of social rebellion. Our unlikely troupe included young people—the likes of Howard student

Kamau Wasset and high school senior Corean Adams, to white pastors like Jason Janz, to Denver’s own artists and poets. We would grow to call ourselves the Denver Freedom Riders (DFR).

Later that fall, my friend Antwan Jefferson and I drafted a letter to Mayor Hancock and other city leaders titled “Our Vision for a New U.S. Society.” In it, we detailed an analysis of the ways in which our city was complicit in our nation’s quest to deny Black people our humanity. We included the many names of unarmed victims of police brutality—the Marvin Bookers and Jesse Hernandezes of Denver. Though we did not yet use defunding language, we ended the letter with a list of demands focused on redistributing the power of our city from police and city bureaucrats to the people, especially youth of color, and a warning: *We are prepared to shut down the entire city if these demands are unmet.* In the event that they read our letter as child’s play, we

“As I witnessed teenagers on street corners sharing their stories and riveting critiques of a failed democracy, I was undone and remade time and again.”

quickly gathered hundreds of people to do a sit-in at the mayor’s office.

Denver Freedom Riders matured into a formidable organization and became a central hub of the Movement for Black Lives. The power of our collective was in the fact that we represented a significant cross-section of other people working on overlapping issues, but driven toward a common cause. On Martin Luther King Day of 2015, through the help of Evan Weissman and Warm Cookies of the

Revolution, we hosted an organizing and direct-action conference at the McNichols Building where nearly 2,000 people joined, representing some of the best and brightest young minds in our city.

From here, we led a series of conversations with city leaders and directed protests and nonviolent civil disobedience actions locally and nationally, as well as rapid responses to subsequent unjust murders. The seeds for Black lives truly mattering in Denver were sown once again. As the heat of the moment slowly faded over time, though, it became more and more apparent that our city wasn’t willing to go far enough. We envisioned revolution; they settled for reform. The homeless have suffered because of this decision. The unchecked greed of corporate development has continued. And, worst of all, people have died.

If you are reading this moment as protest, perhaps its significance has gone over your head. This is,

again, a revolution. In fifty states and eighteen countries, more people showed up for Black Lives Matters demonstrations in a single day than for any other in world history. These are the forgotten ones—African descendants all over the world, and the people who stand with us—saying in one overwhelming chorus, “No more.” And the people have the potential to reshape and redefine this nation at its core, finally giving birth to America’s conscience.

We have never known a US society that was not defined by white supremacy, so perhaps this alone engenders fear among those who stand to lose the benefits gained under a “white is right” mentality. We know our rejection of the status quo stokes the ire of the establishment and the extremist right, and there is great risk in the retaliation of it all. But better to risk in this struggle than to risk our futures being determined by those who could never love us. ■



ANTHONY GRIMES is a Denver native, filmmaker, and visionary who has been instrumental in forming movements that shape culture in a variety of arenas. He founded the Denver Freedom Riders to support the Ferguson and Baltimore uprisings and was honored as the keynote speaker in the 2014 MLK Parade in Denver, as well as for the United Nations’ Decade for People of African Descent inaugural conference in the Netherlands in 2015. Grimes has led delegations internationally to call for change in human rights offenses.

READ AN EXPANDED VERSION OF THIS ARTICLE AT h-co.org/DenverBLM

We Can't Afford to Fail This Time

by Nicki Gonzales



DR. NICKI GONZALES is a member of History Colorado's State Historian's Council and an Associate Professor of History and Vice Provost for Diversity and Inclusion at Regis University.

ON THE EVENING OF JULY 12, 1967, IN NEWARK, NEW JERSEY, TWO WHITE POLICE OFFICERS BADLY BEAT A BLACK CAB DRIVER NAMED JOHN WILLIAM SMITH IN THE COURSE OF ARRESTING HIM FOR A TRAFFIC VIOLATION.

News of this spread like wildfire through the African American community, and angry crowds gathered outside the police station. Though Smith was injured, but not dead, riots erupted across the city that night. By the time order was restored on July 17, whole blocks lay smoldering and twenty-six people, mostly African Americans, lay dead.

The riot in Newark was one of the most violent flashpoints in what became known as the “long, hot summer of 1967,” in which simmering racial tensions boiled over into the streets all across America. In all, 164 race riots consumed many of the nation’s largest cities and smaller towns. The violence in Newark, and a riot in Detroit later that month, stand out as the two most destructive and deadly urban uprisings, with 82 percent of the deaths reported in those two cities alone. According to a government study, the “overwhelming majority of the persons killed or injured in all of

the disorders were Negro civilians.” Though the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965 brought hope to many, the plight of African Americans in the northern and western cities remained defined by poverty, unemployment, lack of educational opportunities, and toxic policing. In short, systemic racism shaped all facets of black lives. Voting rights meant little when daily survival was a constant struggle.

President Lyndon B. Johnson—whose War on Poverty and Great Society programs aimed to eradicate poverty and level the playing field for marginalized Americans—could not accept that his programs were failing to solve the problems of America’s inner cities. By 1967, cities exploded for the third consecutive summer as communities raged against generations of oppressive systems and discrimination. “Race riots,” as they came to be known, had become an oft-debated topic, and by 1966 white Americans’ support of civil



PHOTO / Demonstrators at the 1963 March on Washington carry signs with demands that continue to echo—and remain unfulfilled—for many Americans today / Warren K. Leffler / Courtesy of the Library of Congress

rights causes began to wane, as many felt that LBJ’s civil rights agenda was moving just a little too fast and as they perceived a more radical turn in the civil rights movement.

That same year, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. sat down with journalist Mike Wallace to discuss the race riots. “I think that we’ve got to see that a riot is the language of the unheard. And, what is it that America has failed to hear? It has failed to hear that the economic plight of the Negro poor has worsened over the last few years.... I would hope that we can avoid riots because riots are self-defeating and socially destructive.” While he never compromised his commitment to nonviolent resistance, Dr. King expressed an understanding of why African American communities were

rising up. Communities that had been ignored for too long were essentially doing whatever they could to get the attention of their leaders, and in 1967 they had the ear of a sympathetic president who was willing to listen and respond.

In a nationally televised address, LBJ announced that he would be answering Michigan Governor Romney’s call for federal troops, and three days later, on July 27, in another national address, LBJ announced that he would be creating the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders. The commission consisted of eleven members, including a governor, a mayor, congressional members, the NAACP’s executive director, and a chief of police. Known as the Kerner Commission, the group was tasked with studying

the urban crisis and answering three questions: “What happened? Why did it happen? What can be done to prevent it from happening again?” Johnson spoke passionately to the nation that night, making clear his genuine desire to address the problems of the inner city. After all, he still had dreams of being the president who fed the hungry and clothed the poor.

After seven months of extensive inquiries, interviews, and visits to America’s charred cities, the commission published its findings on February 29, 1968, concluding that “[o]ur nation is moving toward two societies, one black, one white—separate and unequal.” Further, it stated that “[s]egregation and poverty have created in the racial ghetto a destructive environment totally

Fifty-two years ago, the Kerner Commission concluded that systemic racism lay at the root of racial inequality and that the only way to address it was to confront it through compassionate action, open minds, and sufficient resources.

unknown to most white Americans. What white Americans have never fully understood—but what the Negro can never forget—is that white society is deeply implicated in the ghetto. White institutions created it, white institutions maintain, and white society condones it.”

In language now prophetic, the commission warned that “To pursue our present course will involve the continuing polarization of the American community and, ultimately, the destruction of basic democratic values. The alternative is not blind repression or capitulation to lawlessness. It is the realization of common opportunities for all within a single society. *This alternative will require a commitment to national action—compassionate, massive and sustained, backed by the resources of the most powerful and the richest nation on this earth. From every American it will require new attitudes, new understanding, and, above all, new will....* Violence and destruction must be ended—in the streets of the ghetto and in the lives of people.” (emphasis added)

Despite his earlier desire to heed the recommendations of the Kerner Commission and take necessary actions to address inner-city problems, President Johnson was a changed man by February of 1968. The Tet Offensive in Vietnam had demoralized a nation already weary of war and had claimed the president and many of his Great Society dreams as its casualties. After the commission issued its report, Johnson did his best to downplay it,

while many white Americans refused to accept its conclusion that racism had created the problems of the inner cities. The assassinations of Dr. King and Bobby Kennedy followed, and that summer, Americans stood by as the Democratic Party crumbled and as Richard Nixon’s “law and order” campaign carried him into the White House. The Kerner Commission’s findings would fade into the background, as the nation shifted its attention to mourning the loss of two beloved leaders, ending the war in Vietnam, and, in time, Watergate.

Thus, fifty-two years ago, the Kerner Commission concluded that systemic racism lay at the root of racial inequality and that the only way to address it was to confront it through compassionate action, open minds, and sufficient resources. Yet, we failed. We failed, as a nation, to acknowledge the commission’s findings and heed its warnings. We failed, in 1968, to confront the issue of race in America. And, we have failed many times since then.

Today, as we mourn the tragic murder of George Floyd at the hands of police, we find ourselves in a position eerily similar to America in 1968. And 1992. And 2014. We know that systemic racism continues to threaten the lives of black men and women. We once again find ourselves taking to the streets to protest 400 years of institutional racism, which has taken the form of toxic police culture, persistent poverty, unequal educational opportunities, mass incarceration, and disparities in

access to health care. Now is our opportunity to change the narrative and to learn from the failures of the past. We must have the moral courage to confront America’s original sin and commit to the long, hard work of individual and societal change, while demanding that our leaders dedicate the necessary resources to address systemic racism on all levels. In the words of rapper and activist Killer Mike, who has been a powerful leading voice in the black community over the past few days, “we must plot, we must plan, we must strategize, organize, and mobilize.”

We simply cannot afford to fail again. ■

FOR FURTHER READING

Alice George, “The 1968 Kerner Commission Got It Right, But Nobody Listened,” *Smithsonian* magazine, March 1, 2018, [smithsonianmag.com/smithsonian-institution](https://www.smithsonianmag.com/smithsonian-institution).

“Our Nation Is Moving Toward Two Societies, One Black, One White—Separate and Unequal: Excerpts from the Kerner Report,” *History Matters*, [historymatters.gmu.edu](https://www.historymatters.gmu.edu).

Lyndon Baines Johnson, Address to the Nation Regarding Civil Disorder, July 27, 1967, MP594, LBJ Library, Austin, TX.

Martin Luther King, Jr., interview with Mike Wallace, *CBS Reports*, September 27, 1966.

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AMONG the ETERNAL SNOWS

Naturalist Edwin James and
His 1820 Ascent of Pikes Peak *by Phil Carson*

LATE IN THE AFTERNOON ON JULY 14, 1820, 22-year-old naturalist Edwin James and two companions surveyed the world from their perch atop the summit of the “Highest Peak” marked on their map. James scribbled in his journal, which remains unpublished, that “the last part of the ascent was less difficult than I expected to find it” To the west, he could see two valleys that he correctly surmised held the headwaters of the Arkansas and South Platte rivers. The lesser mountains below him were white with snow from a summer storm. Overhead, amazing him, vast clouds of locusts rode the wind. The men saw no sign of the humans who’d preceded them, only the tracks and bones of bighorn sheep.

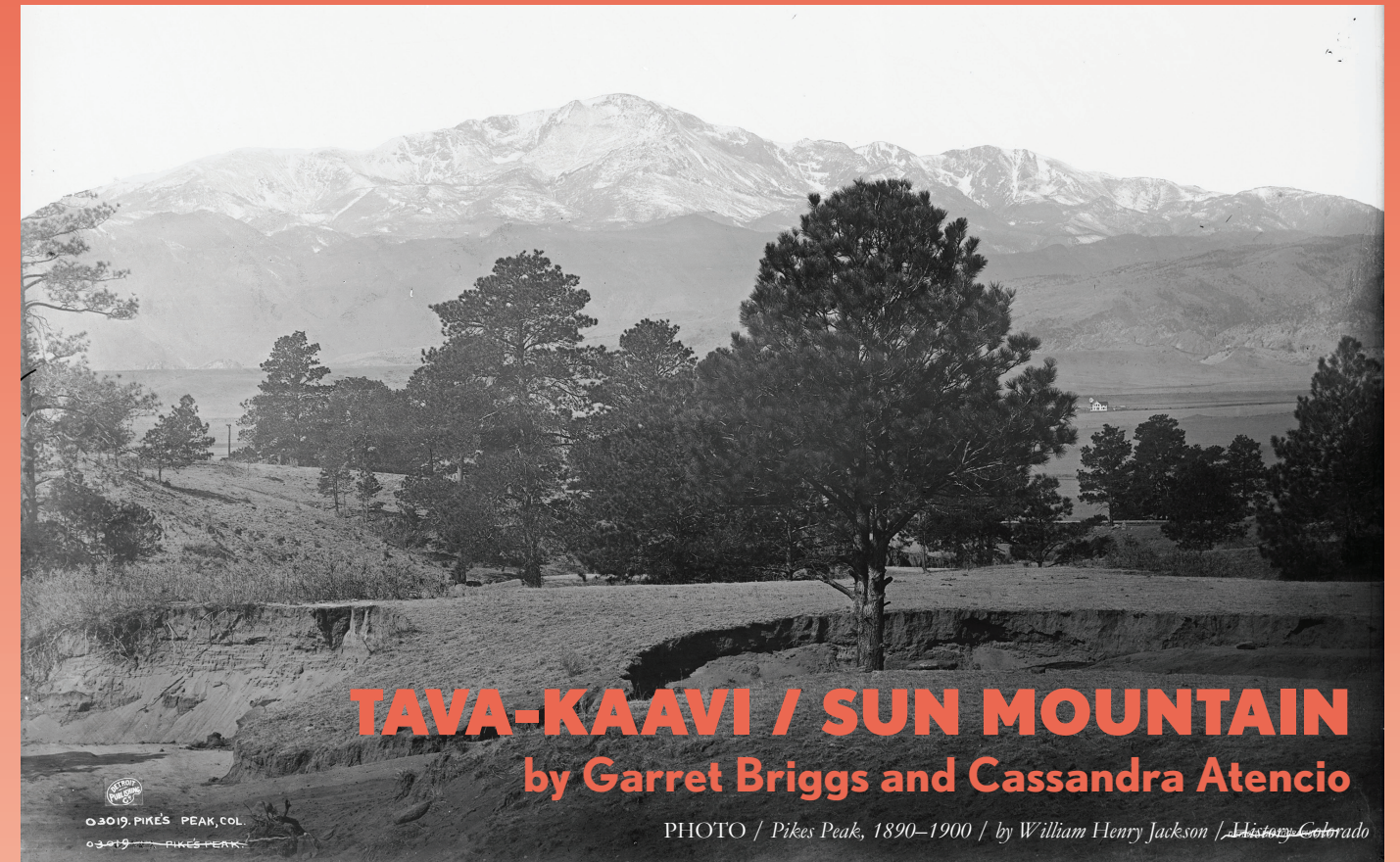
The trio stayed but half an hour on the summit as daylight waned, the mountain cast a massive shadow, and the temperature dropped. James had another reason to descend. Below, Major Stephen Long waited impatiently. Long had given James only three days to explore the mountain and return to the expedition’s camp on Fountain Creek. Upon James’s return, the major would head south to the Arkansas and turn east for home.

Two Hundred Years Ago This Summer, a Member of the Long Expedition Leaves an Account That Melds Science with Adventure

As we look back from a distance of 200 years, unpublished documents in James’s own hand yield still-fresh details about the Long expedition’s lofty goals, its practical accomplishments, and its fraught human dynamics during that long-ago summer. James’s climb stands out not for the ascent itself, but because it combined adventure and science. He returned with the first specimens of previously undocumented alpine flora from the Rocky Mountains. Those who preceded the Long expedition—Lewis and Clark in 1804–06, Pike in 1806–07—did not take scientists (or artists) into the western wilds. And James’s first-hand, summit observations of the sources of the Arkansas and South Platte crucially fulfilled Long’s marching orders and, in the process, improved contemporary maps of the western extent of Louisiana Territory.

In fact, the scientific and artistic work accomplished on Long’s expedition is perhaps the unique contribution of his historically maligned expedition to the Rockies in 1820. Long himself pressured the U.S. War Department to recognize the value of taking scientists on military exploring expeditions. For his 1820 expedition, Long enlisted James as botanist, geologist, and “surgeon” and the respected Thomas Say as zoologist and ethnographer. James and Say’s work contributed to the contemporary maturation of a uniquely American approach to science, independent of its former reliance on European experts.

Long’s superiors grasped that visual renderings conveyed both the wonder and the value of exploring western lands and thus the expedition took two artists: landscape painter Samuel Seymour and assistant naturalist and artist Titian Peale. They returned with the first visual images of this region’s stupendous scenery and unique creatures, marking the birth of western American art, a genre of expression and documentation that stands categorically apart from the region’s Indigenous petroglyphs and pictographs. Even Long’s view of the high plains as a “Great American Desert”—then considered blasphemy to a young, westward-looking nation—may someday seem prophetic. Today, overreliance on underground aquifers is lowering the water table, climate change accentuates our semi-arid environment, and thirsty Front Range cities snatch up agricultural water rights in the Arkansas and South Platte valleys.



TAVA-KAAVI / SUN MOUNTAIN by Garret Briggs and Cassandra Atencio

PHOTO / Pikes Peak, 1890–1900 / by William Henry Jackson / History Colorado

THE NUUCHIU (pronounced New-chew, meaning “the People”), or the Utes, are the longest continuous Indigenous inhabitants of what is now Colorado. According to Nuuchiu oral history, we have no migration story and our people have been here since time immemorial—when they were placed within their homelands, on different mountain peaks, to remain close to their Creator. Nuuchiu Ancestors, in order to maintain transmission of cultural knowledge, taught generations through oral history about the narratives and the names ascribed to geophysical places and geological formations within their aboriginal and ancestral territory.

Pikes Peak is the highest summit of the Southern Front Range of the Rocky Mountains. At 14,115 feet, it is a colossal landform where Mother Earth meets Father Sky. More than a well-known tourist destination, among the Nuuchiu it is a place of reverence. According to the oral history of the Kapuuta (Kah-poo-tah) and Mouache (Mow-ah-ch), two of the twelve historic bands within the Nuuchiu Nation, Pikes Peak is one of the places where the Creator placed their Ancestors.

The Mouache and Kapuuta refer to Pikes Peak as Tava-kaavi (Tah-va-kaav). In the Mouache and Kapuuta vernacular of Colorado River Numic, a dialect of the Uto-Aztecan language family, Tava-kaavi translates as “Sun Mountain.” Pikes Peak was named Sun Mountain because it is the first landform on the eastern side of the Rocky Mountains to greet Grandfather Sun each morning.

Pikes Peak is located in an area where the Mouache and Tabeguache (Tab-e-gwat-ch) territories overlapped. While the Mouache frequented the eastern side, the Tabeguache visited the western side, and the Kapuuta occupied the southern portion during their seasonal rotation to harvest plants and hold ceremonies on the summit.

Tava-kaavi is a traditional cultural property and viewed as an ancestral place of origin to which the Nuuchiu are still connected. Although Edwin James is famous for his ascent in 1820, Nuuchiu Ancestors were the first to summit Tava-kaavi due to their placement by the Creator. To honor the cultural significance of Tava-kaavi, Nuuchiu spiritual practitioners maintain the tradition of visiting the summit and making offerings and prayers at certain times of the year. Although the three Nuuchiu bands were physically removed by force from their ancestral and aboriginal territory, the spiritual significance and teachings pertaining to Tava-kaavi remain within the oral history, prayers, and souls of their descendants—the members of the Southern Ute and Ute Indian Tribe. Tava-kaavi is deeply rooted in our traditional way of life and is a permanent fixture within our identity and lifeways as Nuuchiu. ■

GARRET BRIGGS, NAGPRA Coordinator, Southern Ute Cultural Department, with CASSANDRA ATENCIO, NAGPRA Coordinator, Southern Ute Cultural Department

Of course, James’s notion that he might be the first human atop Pikes Peak is, in retrospect, naïve, given more than 12,000 years of habitation in the region. Today, Ute, Pawnee, Kiowa, Arapaho, and Apache elders recount centuries of spiritual connection with Pikes Peak. James merely made the first recorded ascent of Pikes Peak—in fact, the first recorded alpine ascent in North America.

It is unlikely that Spaniards who routinely traversed this region prior to the Long expedition made such an ascent. From the early 1600s to the early 1800s, Spanish hunters, traders, and government expeditions traversed Nuevo Mexico’s northern frontier, at first for imagined riches, then for trade, diplomacy, and war. They named the massif the Sierra del Almagre, but scaling it offered no practical benefit, only danger.

Placed in context, then, James’s ascent may be seen as an iconic act at a time when written documentation by a scientist was dubbed a “discovery.” Less than a generation after President Jefferson’s purchase, Louisiana Territory was so vast and poorly mapped that Spain and the United States haggled for a decade over where Louisiana ended and Nuevo Mexico began.

By 1820, European interest in mountaineering had manifested in America. An ascent of New Hampshire’s Mount Washington in 1784 made it “the first American climb to be documented first hand,” writes David Mazel in *Pioneering Ascents: The Origins of Climbing in America*. Thus the notion that science and adventure might dovetail preceded James. In November 1806, Lieutenant Zebulon Pike had geographic and

undoubtedly romantic motivations when he failed to ascend “to the high point of the blue mountain”—the “Highest Peak” in his subsequent report—“to be enabled from its pinical [sic], to lay down the various branches and positions of the country.” Pike’s ascent of a modest foothill southeast of his objective left him certain that “no human being could have ascended to its pinical.” Pike’s 1810 report literally put the iconic mountain on the map: Influential mapmaker John Melish incorporated Pike’s outsized



MAP / detail / *Chart of the Internal Part of Louisiana, Pike, 1810* / by Zebulon Pike

“It is our intention to ascend this or whatever other mountain we may find to be the highest.”

image of it in his highly respected map of America, published in 1816. This image caught James’s eye, and he seems to have understood intuitively that a high Rocky Mountain summit would yield botanical and geological revelations.

Though the War of 1812 had dampened official American interest in exploring beyond the nation’s western frontiers, Long helped revive such interest by leading a cadre of scientists on the ill-fated Yellowstone Expedition to the upper Missouri River in 1819. That expedition sought to stymie British and Canadian traders’

influence with the region’s natives, but it ended as its steamboats struggled in the turbid Missouri and Congress cut its funding. In early 1820, Secretary Calhoun—eager to resume exploration, but strapped for funds—ordered Long to reconnoiter the Platte and Arkansas headwaters in the Rockies. Long had proposed a more ambitious reconnaissance of the Great Lakes, so Calhoun’s orders and paltry funding represented a frustrating setback to his career ambitions.

Nonetheless, Long, a 35-year-old Dartmouth graduate, engineer, West Point instructor, and member of the elite U.S. Army Corps of Topographical Engineers, confirmed to Calhoun that he would ascend the Platte and travel south along the Front Range to measure Pike’s “Highest Peak.” The expedition would then split in two, one party to descend the Arkansas, the other to locate and trace the elusive Red River. He would return to civilization by fall.

Philadelphia’s renowned scientific community recommended that Long hire James as botanist, geologist, and “surgeon,” and he did so. James wrote to his brother John, reflecting contemporary prejudice, that he would be taking “a five years’ walk among savages and pagans.” Upon meeting Long in Pittsburgh, James wrote his brother: “I find Long has the appearance of a pretty clever fellow . . . I believe he has formed a pretty good opinion of me, as to be sure he ought to do.” Three weeks later he wrote his brother again. “I expect to pass my summer most delightfully.”

By early May, however, James had learned of Long’s expedited schedule and expressed his own ambitions. “If you will look at Mellish’s [sic] map you will see . . . [near] the source of the Arkansas a peak which is thought to be the highest in the neighborhood. It is our intention to ascend this or whatever other mountain we may find to be the highest . . . I am sorry to say that we shall make such a hasty business of it . . . But it is useless to rail . . .” Yet, rail he did. In one last letter to his brother before departing the Missouri for the mountains, James wrote: “We shall make the greatest possible dispatch for our commanding officer has not the least affection for the service and is in the utmost anxiety to return.” A seed of conflict had taken root.

Long and a gaggle of scientists and soldiers, twenty in all, departed Engineer Cantonment on the Missouri on June 6. All were mounted and armed; none had experience in high plains warfare. Captain John Bell kept an official journal. Lieutenant W. H. Swift served as assistant topographer. James and Say took charge of natural history. Seymour and Peale created a visual record. (Peale’s marksmanship contributed to his duties; contemporary naturalists shot their specimens, then sketched and preserved them.) Various men served as interpreters, baggage handlers, and hunters. They took two dogs, Buck and Caesar. (Both would perish on the plains.)

The topographers took sextants and compasses, and the artists brought notebooks, pencils, pens, ink, and pigments. Provisions included 450 pounds of hard biscuit, 150 pounds of parched corn meal, 150 pounds of salted pork, five gallons of whiskey, and modest amounts of coffee, sugar, and salt—meager stores for a three-month journey. They counted on shooting game. The group also took knives, flints, awls,



IMAGE / Edwin James’ specimen of *Aquilegia coerulea* James from New York Botanical Garden / Courtesy of the C.V. Starr Virtual Herbarium and the National Science Foundation

scissors, mirrors, tobacco, and beads to curry favor with Plains tribes and undercut the influence of British and Canadian frontiersmen.

As the expedition ascended the Platte, Bell led a single column of packhorses and baggage men, flanked by riflemen. The scientists, artists, and hunters fulfilled their duties as they saw fit. Long brought up the rear, keeping an eye on his men and horses. The group rested in camp on Sundays. The expedition encountered in succession the Grand Pawnee nation, the Pawnee Republics, and the Pawnee Loups, who warned that Plains Indians would decimate the tiny group. Long conscripted two French Canadian hunters—Joseph Bijeau and Abraham Ledoux—as

guides. Though James early on used the term “savages,” once face-to-face he grew more respectful. Long flew the twenty-three-star American flag and professed friendship.

As they rode up the Platte, the men encountered prairie dogs, rattlesnakes, wolves, wild horses, elk, and “incalculable numbers of Buffalo.” (In the expedition’s official report, James would suggest a law against slaughtering buffalo, as he came to understand that the herds sustained the Plains’ nomadic peoples.) Violent thunderstorms soaked them. Scorching sun induced brutal headaches and blistered skin. Bell noted that “the dull uninteresting monotony of prairie country” had set in—until June 30. “The mountains are dis-

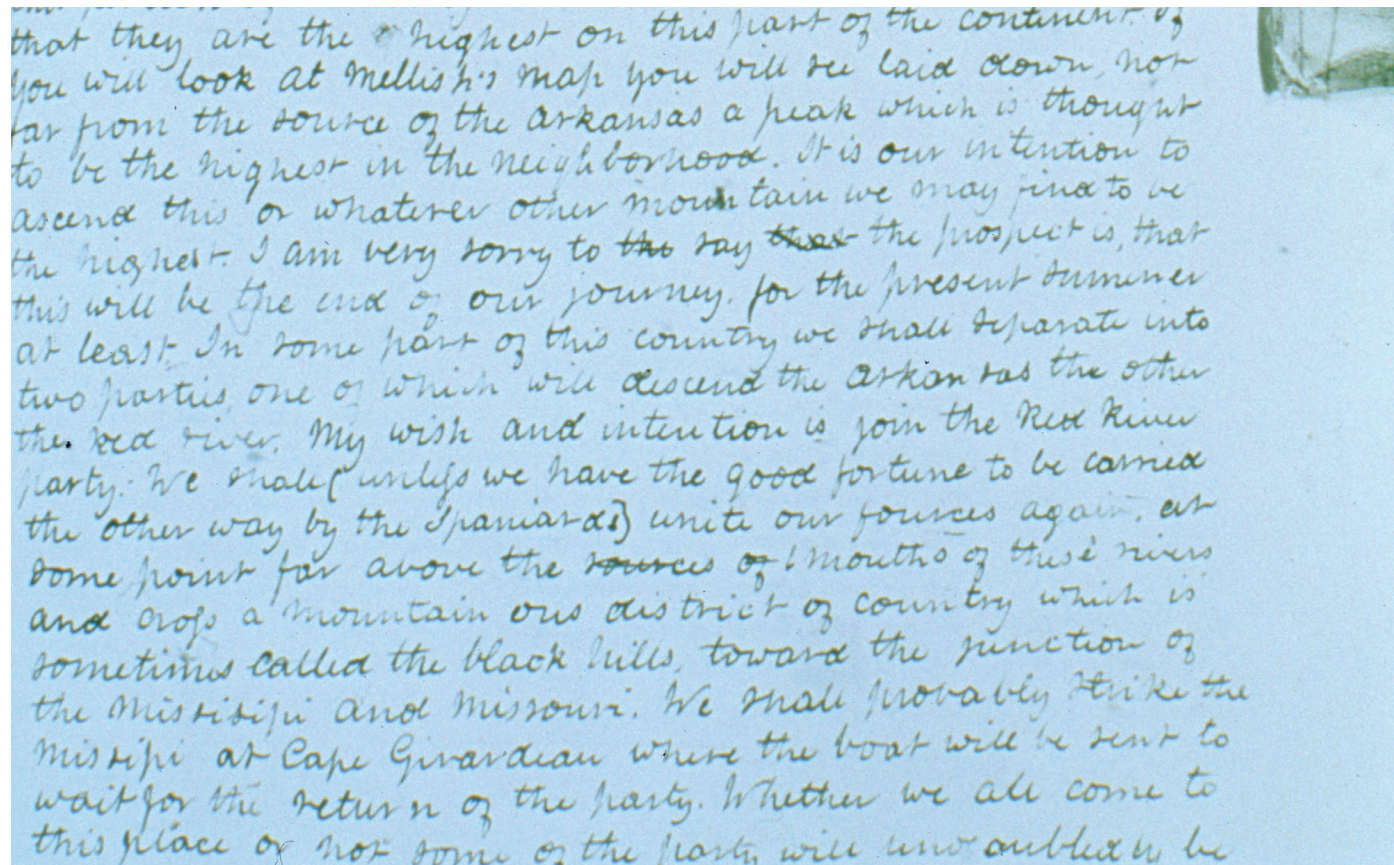


IMAGE / Close-up of James's handwriting in his journal, May 10, 1820 / held by the Butler Library, Columbia University, New York

tinctly visible and probably about 60 miles distant," James scribbled in his journal. "They appear to rise abruptly from the plain and to shoot up to an astonishing altitude." This mountain would be named "Long's Peak" by John Fremont twenty-two years later in honor of its "discovery." The Arapaho people had long known it (and adjacent Mount Meeker) as Nenísótoyóú'u, or "The Two Guides." Arapaho tradition includes knowledge of the peak's summit.

To seek Pike's "Highest Peak" the expedition headed south, "having on our right the range of snow cap'd mountains, on our left an extensive barren prairie, almost as sterile as the deserts of Arabia," Bell noted. On July 7, Long paused "to give the Scientific gentlemen opportunity of making the necessary investigation for an illustration of the natural history of this new, and heretofore, unexplored region . . ." Bell observed that, in contrast to his orders, "the Commanding officer does not intend that the

party shall proceed to the source of the Platte—but are now to proceed along the base of the mountains to the South [to reach] the Arkansas river, on the way, to examine particularly the high Peake of the Mountains described by Pike . . ."

Three days later, near today's Air Force Academy, James collected a previously unknown flower later named *Aquilegia coerulea* James—the blue columbine, declared Colorado's state flower in 1899. The next day, Bell noted, the expedition crossed "a number of well beaten Indian traces." This region was hardly the virgin wilderness of American myth. Long encamped just south of present-day Fountain, Colorado. In the expedition's official report, James later wrote, "As one of the objects of our excursion was to ascertain the elevation of the Peak, it was determined to remain in our present camp for three days, which would afford an opportunity for some of the party to ascend the mountain." In his journal, which

was government property, James diplomatically wrote: "It is certainly to be regretted that a longer time is not allowed us to examine and admire these glorious palaces of nature, but so it is and so let it be."

But James's frustrations got the better of him in camp that evening, and the young naturalist confronted his commanding officer. In a post-expedition letter to his brother, he wrote: "I remonstrated, requesting a longer time, but no more could be allowed me." Quite possibly, the other "Scientific gentlemen" didn't want to anger Long by appearing to take sides. Perhaps rationalizing, James wrote in his journal that "as we could see large quantities of snow about the upper part of it, and as our guide assured us that the Indians had made many unsuccessful attempts to ascend it I could not persuade [sic] any of the Scientific [members] of our party to accompany me."

In his journal for July 13, James wrote: "This morning . . . being fur-

"At this time I thought it would be impossible for us to gain the summit. We were already nearly half a mile above the commencement of the snow, but the top of the Peak was still far distant and the ascent more rapid than ever."

nished with provisions and two men to accompany me, I set off to explore a part of the mountains to the N.W. of our encampment, which seemed to be very high and not entirely inaccessible." Topographer Swift and the guide, Bijeau, accompanied James to the mountain's base at today's Manitou Springs to ascertain its elevation. Two riflemen remained with horses for the return ride.

James, rifleman Joseph Verplank, and baggage master Zachariah Wilson began hiking up Ruxton Creek through Englemann Canyon. "At 3 o'clock we commenced ascending the mountain . . ." James scribbled. (Modern climbers will wince at this cavalier start.) "We found it almost impossible to proceed on account of the ruggedness of the ascent and the great quantities of crumbled granite. . . . After laboring over about two miles of this almost impossible tract we laid down to rest for the night, having found few plants . . . to reward us for our toil."

"This morning we suspended our blankets, provisions and what else we could dispense with . . . and set off at an early hour hoping to arrive at the summit by noon," James wrote. "After walking about half a mile over the same rugged and difficult road as yesterday we . . . found the way much less difficult and dangerous. At about eleven o'clock we reached the base of the last hill which is steeper and higher than any other in the neighborhood.

"At this place I was not a little surprised to find a change in the character of the rock which . . . I had

decided should be granite," James scribbled. "It contains no mica and has a much even fracture than most varieties of granite. It continues the same to the summit which we gained at about 2 o'clock p.m. . . . During this day's excursion [I] found many beautiful [sic] plants wholly unknown to me. The number of unknown plants collected amounts to about 30, many of them confined to the region above that in which I first observed ice and snow." (James's journal still bears the outlines of flowers he pressed between its pages.)

"After about 3 hours of laborious climbing we came to the extreme boundary of the timber. Above this the inclination of the surface is greater but the ascent is less difficult, the surface being less obstructed by detached masses of rock. Soon after the entire disappearing of the timber commences a region of astonishing beauty, and of great interest to a Botanist[.] . . . [including areas] . . . closely covered with a thick carpet of short but brilliantly flowering plants . . ."

"At about 2 o'clock p.m. we became so much exhausted with fatigue that we could proceed no farther, and accordingly we halted by a small stream to rest and eat At this time I thought it would be impossible for us to gain the summit. We were already nearly half a mile above the commencement of the snow, but the top of the Peak was still far distant and the ascent more rapid than ever.

"After a rest of about half an hour we concluded to proceed as though we were convinced that if it was possible for us to reach the

summit in that afternoon, it would be wholly beyond our power to return the same night to the place where we had left our baggage. We accordingly resumed our toilsome march and proceed slowly towards the summit. I found it impossible to go forward rapidly as my attention was constantly occupied by the occurrence of new [plants]."

James's chronologically challenged narrative ends here. Note that he refers both to resting at 2 p.m. and attaining the summit by 2 p.m. It's likely they reached the summit at 4 p.m., as he stated later in Long's official report. As he references the summit early in this passage, James probably wrote much of it on the summit.

James provides a few more details in a testy, post-expedition letter to his brother. On October 26, 1820, he wrote: "With an infinitude of exertion and toil I arrived . . . at the summit of what has been considered the highest peak in this part of the range. The snow extended according to my estimate 1,500 feet down from the summit. This peak had among the french hunters . . . and among the Indians the reputation of being inaccessible. My ascent of it was accordingly thought an Exploit by our party. My want of time deprived me of much pleasure which I should otherwise [have] found in this task."

In the expedition's published report, James offered more details on his summit perspective: "The view towards the north, west, and southwest, is diversified with innumerable mountains, all white with snow." The scene reminded him of his home



IMAGE / Portrait of Edwin James / History Colorado

state of Vermont's Green Mountains in winter. A summer snowstorm had just preceded them. "Immediately under our feet on the west, lay the narrow valley of the Arkansas, which we could trace running towards the northwest. On the north side of the Peak [stretched] . . . a woodless and apparently fertile valley . . . [which] must undoubtedly contain a considerable branch of the Platte. To the east lay the great plains, rising as it receded, until, in the distant horizon, it appeared to mingle with the sky . . ."

Parsing the clues to James's route in his unpublished journal and published report is tempting but produces only speculation. Based on their start at Manitou Springs, it's clear that James and his companions began by ascending Ruxton Creek through Englemann Canyon, as does today's cog railway. It's also clear that he finished his

climb on the rounded shoulder of Satchett Mountain, southeast of the summit, as traced by the cog railway. James's route between Englemann Canyon and the shoulder of Satchett Mountain remains unknown. If he reached the tiny lake known today as The Crater, southeast of the summit, he would have encountered extensive fields of alpine wildflowers that persist to this day on the north flank of Satchett Mountain. Perhaps that is where he secured his specimens of alpine flora.

One other detail in the expedition's official report may intrigue mountaineering historians. "We had not been long [on the summit] . . . when we were rejoined by the man [Zachariah Wilson], who had separated from us near the outskirts of the timber. He had turned aside and lain down to rest, and afterwards pursued the ascent by a different route." I suggest that the only feasible "different

route" was a variant on Fred Barr's early twentieth-century trail up the mountain's east face.

Mindful of impending nightfall and Long's deadline, the trio began descending about 5 p.m. and had a few hours to reach timberline and huddle overnight around a campfire. The next day, as they approached their first night's campsite, they detected smoke then a small forest fire—ignited by the campfire they'd left burning. They rejoined their comrades at present-day Manitou Springs. James wrote later: "A large and much-frequented road passes the springs and enters the mountains, running to the north of the high Peak. It is travelled principally by the bisons, sometimes also by the Indians. . . ." This ancient trail is paralleled today by Route 24 up the aptly named Ute Pass.

The men rode hard for Long's camp on Fountain Creek, reaching it just before dark. Swift had measured the "Highest Peak" at 11,507 feet elevation—nearly as far under the mountain's actual elevation of 14,115 feet as Pike's estimate of 18,581 feet was over it.

Long broke camp at first light and the men rode relentlessly for the Arkansas River, "through a dry barren [sic] country destitute of water herbage and game," Bell noted. The major camped on the Arkansas for two days to allow James and others to ascend the river, though it was clear they would not reach its source. Two small parties followed an existing "trace" to the formidable barrier of present-day Royal Gorge, where they turned back. James's perspective from the summit of the "Highest Peak" remained the only information the expedition would gain to fulfill Calhoun's orders to locate and explore the Arkansas and South Platte headwaters.

On July 19, the expedition descended the Arkansas towards home. Near present-day Pueblo, Long honored James "by nameing the High

Peake, 'James Peak' believing him to have been the first American that ever ascended to its sumit," Bell wrote. James's spirits flagged as he wrote in his journal. "This morning we turned our backs upon the mountains . . . It is not without a feeling of regret that our only visit to these 'palaces of nature' is now at an end. . . . Fifteen hundred miles of drearie [sic] and monotonous 'prairie-crawling' in the heat of summer are between us and the ease and comfort of inhabited countries. . . . [The Arkansas valley] is arid and sterile and must forever remain desolate." This assessment influenced Long's subsequent map that labeled the high plains the "Great American Desert." For a westward-facing country soon to embrace a nationalist devotion to "Manifest Destiny" this view earned Long and his expedition two centuries of notoriety.

The rest of the expedition's travails were many, with James and others infected with tick- or mosquito-borne malaria. Unable to travel, James stayed behind in frontier lodgings. Perhaps this explains his pique at Long, as he expressed in letters to his brother. "You will probably expect in this letter some account of my adventures," he wrote, but "I am full of complaining and bitterness against Maj. Long on account of the manner in which he has conducted the Expedition and if I cannot rail against him I can say nothing. We have travelled near 2,000 miles through an unexplored and highly interesting country and have returned almost as much strangers to it as before. I have been allowed neither time to examine and collect, or means to transport plants or minerals."

Having complained, however, James warmed to bragging of his exploits, before plunging again into vitriol. "I have however seen many strange things. I have moreover seen the Rocky Mountains and shivered among their eternal snows in the middle of July, which every man

has not done. I have also lived many weeks without bread or salt, gone hungry for a long time, eaten tainted horse flesh, owls, hawks, prairie dogs and many other uncleanly thing[s]. . . . Maj. Long has left me with 28 doll.s, ragged and destitute, to winter as I can in the western country."

Despite James's resentments, he acquiesced in Long's request that he pen the expedition's official report, *An Account of an Expedition from Pittsburgh to the Rocky Mountains* . . . , published in two volumes in 1823.

Today, the sheer volume of natural history work accomplished on the expedition has led to a reevaluation of its place in the history of western exploration. James collected nearly 700 plants, many previously unknown to non-Indigenous science. His friend and fellow naturalist, Say, returned with scientific descriptions of the coyote, the grey wolf, many insects and birds, and extensive ethnographic data. Seymour returned with perhaps 150 sketches, though fewer than two dozen survive. Peale produced more than 120 field sketches and managed to preserve nearly 60 zoological specimens. The two artists had tried to capture the unique grandeur they had witnessed, while embellishing it for eastern audiences.

Long went on to an extensive, useful career as an Army explorer and engineer. James served as an Army surgeon, studied the Indian languages of the Great Lakes, and worked as an editor for the New York State Temperance Society. He retired with his wife and son to a farm on the Mississippi River in present-day Iowa, where he assisted slaves on the Underground Railroad. His niece, Clara Reed Anthony, remembered him as "an eminent scholar, a radical abolitionist [sic] and reformer of great moral rectitude and unflinching courage. . . ."

Long's gesture bestowing James's name to the peak never stuck. Colonel Dodge's 1835 expedition to the Rockies and John Fre-

mont's subsequent visits in 1843–44 are credited with establishing "Pike's Peak" as the mountain's name. The "Pike's Peak Gold Region" advertised in 1858 guidebooks cemented that name. In 1866 botanist Charles Parry redressed the matter by assigning the name James Peak to a 13,294-foot mountain on the Continental Divide west of Central City. James never knew. He died in 1861, leaving an unpublished expedition journal and ninety highly personal letters as evidence—as if preserved in amber—of his youthful feat and his fierce ambitions in that long-ago summer.

FOR FURTHER READING

This article is based on two sets of unpublished documents in Edwin James's own hand. James's expedition diary, "Notes of a part of the Exp.n of Discovery Commanded by S. H. Long, Maj., U.S., Eng etc etc 1820 . . ." resides in the Rare Book and Manuscript Library at Columbia University's Butler Library. The "James Letters" to his brother reside in the Western Americana Collection at Yale's Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library. Two secondary sources offer diverse insights into the Long expedition: George J. Goodman and Cheryl A. Lawson's *Retracing Major Stephen H. Long's Expedition: The Itinerary and Botany* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1995) provides the best analysis of its route (minus the Pikes Peak climb) and botanical work; Kenneth Haltman's *Looking Close and Seeing Far: Samuel Seymour, Titian Ramsay Peale, and the Art of the Long Expedition, 1818–1823* (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2008) documents the crucial role of visual art in western exploration and analyzes Seymour and Peale's output as a romantic blend of documentation and fiction. ■

PHIL CARSON is a journalist and author. He retraced Edwin James's ascent of Pikes Peak by bushwhacking up the mountain, using botanical, geological, and descriptive clues in James's journal.

PRESERVING HISTORIC PLACES

LIFTS COMMUNITY SPIRITS AND THE ECONOMY

by MEGAN EFLIN



PHOTO / Iglesia de San Antonio Catholic Church, La Plata County

TODAY, History Colorado's State Historical Fund (SHF) continues to serve Colorado communities—particularly rural ones. “With so many challenges to our economy right now—especially in rural areas of our state, where more than 75 percent of our grants are currently allocated—we are eager to unleash the powerful economic and social impacts made possible by these awards,” says SHF director Tim Stroh, AIA.

In response, the SHF fast-tracked a number of grants and, after an expedited review period, awarded twenty-five historic “mini-

grants” (requests of \$35,000 or less) totaling \$618,234. Grant applicants and community partners matched the grant funding to create more than \$935,000 in total project impact.

The projects support significant resources around Colorado. From the rare Hispano adobe construction of the Garcia Ranch Potato Cellar (Conejos County) to the Iglesia de San Antonio Catholic Church (La Plata County), the SHF is acknowledging an urgency to help by awarding grants that will assist in restoring both sites.

On the Eastern Plains, New Raymer is one of the few towns still standing on the former railroad line from Sterling to Cheyenne. In 2017, the Truxaw & Kruger Grocery store there was listed as one of Colorado's Most Endangered Places; now it will be receiving an SHF grant, along with matching cash from local fundraisers.

Originally built for local banker Will E. Heginbotham, the town library in Holyoke (Phillips County) has been housed in the historic Heginbotham Home since the 1960s. Several SHF grants have been awarded to the property previously,

and new funds will help address Americans with Disabilities Act accessibility.

The Sugar City gates project in the town of Sugar City is a new awardee. Once home to the National Beet Sugar Company Factory, its impressive brick and wrought iron gates are a local landmark—a reminder of the factory's role in the town. The grant will fund a complete restoration of the gates.

In addition to awarding these projects, the SHF continues its operations during the COVID-19 pandemic. Between March 20 and April 20, it distributed nearly \$1,125,000 to ongoing grant projects throughout Colorado. It currently oversees more than 280 projects in fifty-two Colorado counties and provides technical assistance to all sixty-four counties. In doing so, the SHF is helping communities preserve their unique identity and generate economic activity through work on so many meaningful historic and cultural resources within Colorado. ■ h-co.org/ruralgrants2020



PHOTO / Truxaw & Kruger Grocery, Raymer

NEW LISTINGS

National Register of Historic Places // Colorado State Register of Historic Properties

Coronado Lodge / Pueblo (photo right) South Pueblo's Coronado Lodge (today's Coronado Motel) has provided lodging services since about 1940, and it holds a place in history for the role it played in travel and tourism in the era of segregation. The motel offered accommodations to both white and African American travelers as early as 1946, and it advertised from 1957 to 1967 in *The Negro Travelers' Green Book*, a guidebook that identified facilities hospitable to Black guests at a time when most Colorado Green Book lodging facilities were small “tourist homes” in private residences. In 1957, the Coronado became the second Colorado motel to be listed in the Green Book under owners Arthur H. and Hattie L. Copley, and it remained one of only three motels listed in it through 1967.

The Coronado is also a well-preserved example of a mid-century Pueblo Revival-style motel complex. The Pueblo Revival style had an eye-catching appearance designed to appeal to travelers by evoking the history and romance of the Southwest. The style is particularly appropriate for Pueblo, which historically has had a large Hispano population with ties to New Mexico.

Eleventh Avenue Hotel / Denver. Designed by British-born Denver architect Frederick Sterner in 1903 for mining and railroad entrepreneur John A. Porter, and expanded to the north in 1909, the building stands at the corner of Eleventh and North Broadway in downtown



PHOTO / Coronado Lodge, Pueblo

Denver. Built to accommodate the needs of working-class residents, the hotel was part of an early twentieth-century commercial building boom in Denver that resulted from a rapid influx of working-class men and women.

Additional listings

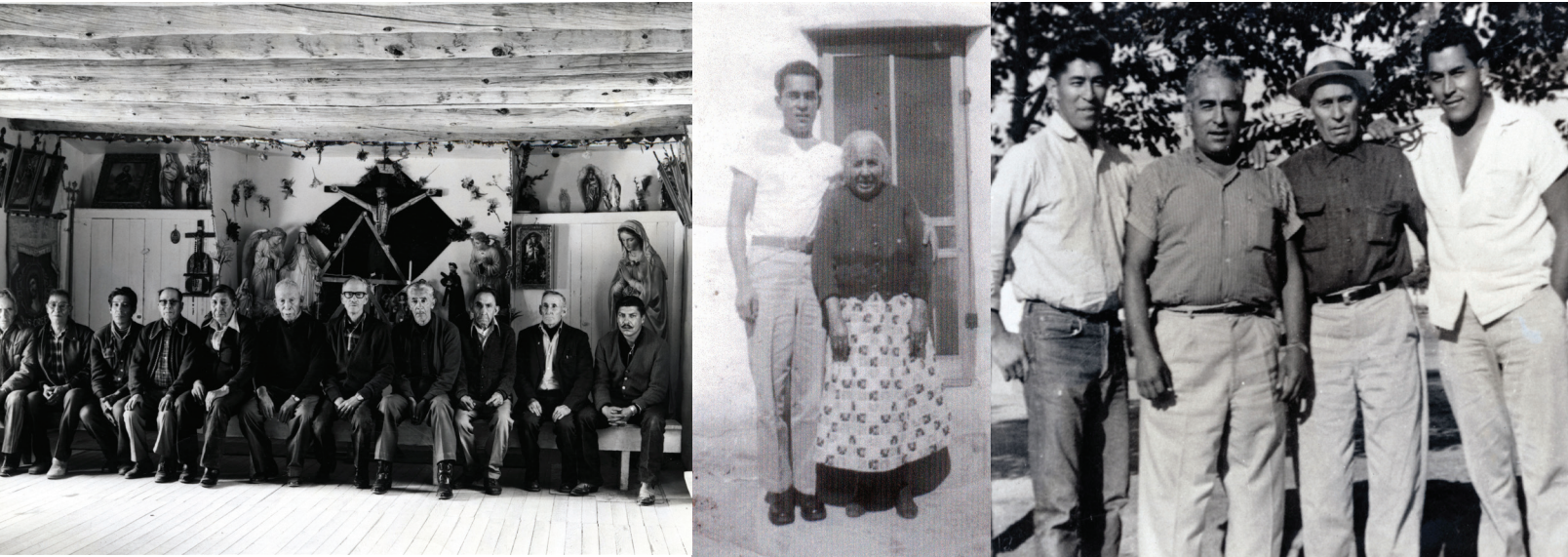
Smith-Eslick Cottage Camp, Grand Lake, Boundary increase.

Bayou Gulch, Douglas County, State Register of Historic Properties. ■

CAN TELLING A STORY CHANGE THE STORY?

by KRISTIN JONES, THE COLORADO TRUST

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PHOTOS / shared with History Colorado as part of the Avondale Memory Project

When the Colorado Department of Transportation first floated the idea of expanding I-25 through the Eilers neighborhood in Pueblo in 2002, at the cost of bulldozing several dozen houses, there was little organized resistance.

The neighborhood was a historically working-class neighborhood that grew up around two big local employers (and polluters): the smelter and the steel mill. Many of the surrounding mid-century houses were owned and occupied by related families who had fond memories of the church, school, and bar that formed the trinity at the soul of the community. They called it Bojon Town; “Bojon” is a slang word for Slovenian, reflecting the immigrant heritage of many of the families there.

But the neighborhood was isolated from other parts of town by industrial development and I-25, had suffered economically from the decline of the steel mill, and was prone to being overlooked by outsiders.

Joe Kocman, whose family has owned the Eilers’ Place bar for several generations, and his wife Pam were hardly thinking of starting a grass-roots movement for the preservation of Bojon Town when they reached out to the city. They just wanted a permit to build a garage at their house.

But the planner who showed up, Wade Broadhead, ended up taking an interest in the unique history of the place. With an eye toward a possible historical district designation, Bojon Town residents took part in a survey of the neighborhood in 2009—not just its architecture, but the stories of the people living there, too. The food, the weddings, the music.

That, in turn, invited the attention of a local writer, Dawn DiPrince, who had family roots in the area and wanted to save it from being disrupted or destroyed. She organized events for the community to come together and remember the past—“a collective remembering” she calls it, followed by the collection of oral histories, and then the creation of a piece of art to

preserve the neighborhood’s legacy.

The collective remembering was “just amazing,” said Pam Kocman. “I’ll remember it my whole entire life. Everybody knew everybody. What started happening was one person would read their memory, and another person would chime in with another story that went along with that memory.”

In the end, the neighborhood had not just a written history of their community, but a trove of oral histories, a video, and even a song, which was performed for an overflowing crowd at the library.

DiPrince said the finished product didn’t end up serving the purpose she had imagined.

“I had this kind of Pollyanna idea of ‘Let’s create a history of the neighborhood and demonstrate that this neighborhood has value, even though the real estate isn’t as valuable as they’ve seen in the past,’” said DiPrince.

It didn’t quite pan out that way. “Something even better

“This storytelling allows people to resist that narrative that they aren’t good enough.”

happened. The neighborhood, in telling their stories collectively and remembering those things—it rekindled their affection for the neighborhood. They became organized. They became activated,” said DiPrince. “The neighborhood came to be seen as a force to be reckoned with.”

The Kocmans and others formed the Eilers Heights Neighborhood Association. Together, they fought the highway expansion, and wrangled with the federal Environmental Protection Agency over what they saw as another potential threat to the neighborhood: its designation in 2014 as a Superfund site. The neighborhood came together to demand that the Superfund cleanup be completed quickly and leave the community in better shape than it was before.

STORYTELLING AS ACTIVISM

The storytelling initiative ended up being the first of several community memory projects that El Pueblo History Museum has conducted with the leadership of DiPrince, now the chief operating officer for History Colorado.

The effort has expanded to Denver, where Marissa Volpe of History Colorado has led an effort to collect stories in the Globeville and Elyria-Swansea neighborhoods—another Superfund site with a strong sense of community, also fighting against the destructive expansion of a large highway system.

It is part of the history museum’s efforts to include more voices and more perspectives in the history of the state.

Telling stories, said DiPrince, can be a precursor to community

activism, as it was in the Eilers neighborhood.

“If people are made to feel like their neighborhoods are a throwaway place, it becomes much easier for systems to throw their neighborhoods away,” says DiPrince. “This storytelling allows people to resist that narrative that they aren’t good enough.”

Storytelling can also be an outcome of activism.

The community of Avondale is about a 20-minute drive east of Pueblo, in a formerly agricultural area, later home to many employees at the Pueblo Army Depot, before it was decommissioned. A rotating team of residents has been working for years to achieve their vision for the community’s future, with support from The Colorado Trust’s Community Partnerships grantmaking strategy.

Part of Avondale’s plan includes recording the community’s history, with the help of El Pueblo History Museum. That work began with an event that asked residents to remember the houses they grew up in, and the things that happened in those houses.

A VISION FOR THE FUTURE

Avondale has struggled to keep its young families here lately.

“When we had the depot here, we had businesses, restaurants, gas stations. Three little bars. We don’t even have a grocery store. We have older people that can’t drive anymore and we don’t have a transportation system, so they can’t go to town for a medical appointment,” said Lynn Soto. “It’s sad to see our community like this.”

Soto is now the community coordinator for the group of residents in Avondale who are seeking to bring new life to the town. She said telling stories about the past is an important part of their overall mission, which is to fight a sense that the community has been neglected. Their remedy is to lavish attention on it.

“I would like for people to remember that we were a booming community at one time, and the things that we did have,” said Soto. “I hope that it opens people’s eyes that we can be better than where we were, and offer our kids something so that they could go to college and come back.”

Along with the storytelling project, the group has also supported local organizations that provide activities and services for today’s young families, like the Boys & Girls Clubs of Pueblo County and El Centro de los Pobres, which serves migrant workers. They’ve held trainings to help build the community’s advocacy skills, and ramped up language interpretation efforts aimed at encouraging more ties between English- and Spanish-speaking residents.

Back in Bojon Town, Pam Kocman says the storytelling was key to the neighborhood’s mobilization toward a shared vision.

All the houses in the neighborhood are still standing, and the plan to expand the highway there has been shelved.

“To be real honest with you, I think we would have been at the mercy of these huge government entities,” she said. “Without a coordinated effort, I think things would have been very different.” ■



PHOTO / Temple Israel, Leadville

TEMPLE ISRAEL LEADVILLE, COLORADO by AMY UNGER

JEW OF GERMAN ANCESTRY arrived early in Leadville's history. By the 1880s, as many as 300 Jews lived in Leadville, including merchant David May—founder of May Department Stores—and members of the Guggenheim family, whose investments in local silver mines contributed to what would become one of the country's biggest family fortunes.

For many years Leadville's Jewish community lacked a place of worship. So in January 1884, leading members of the community met to talk about building a synagogue. Shortly afterward, they formed Congregation Israel and started planning in earnest. The Hebrew Ladies Benevolent Society and other local Jewish associations united to support what would be the second temple built in Colorado after Denver's Temple Emmanuel, completed in 1875.

Early reports described a building of brick and stone, but by the time the congregation contracted with architect George E. King and builder Robert Murdoch in August 1884, plans called for a finely appointed wood-frame building that would be "an ornament to that neighborhood, and in fact to the whole city."

George Edward King arrived in Leadville in 1879 at age 26, designing the 1880 Lake County Courthouse and specializing in fine residences in the elaborate Second Empire style. Influenced by Gothic Revival architecture, King's

restrained design for Temple Israel featured pointed arch windows and doors, slim square towers topped by Star of David finials that flanked the entrance, and round windows at the gables.

Horace A.W. Tabor donated the building site at the corner of West Fourth and Pine streets in July, and the synagogue was rapidly finished in just two months. Temple Israel was dedicated on Rosh Hashanah, September 19, 1884, with Rabbi Morris Sachs of Cincinnati, Ohio, presiding. The Leadville Daily Herald praised the synagogue's elegant workmanship, stained glass windows, and handsome interior with its hand-painted gilt wallpaper and gas chandeliers with colored glass globes.

Leadville's mining industry waned in the early 1900s, and the congregation stopped holding services at Temple Israel around 1912. The building became a residence and radiator repair shop in the 1930s, housed local miners during World War II, and served as the vicarage for St. George Episcopal Church from 1955 to 1966. In 1992 the Temple Israel Foundation acquired the building and undertook a full restoration—completed in 2008 with assistance from the State Historical Fund. Today, Temple Israel is open to the public as a museum that explores Jewish life in Leadville during the 1880s and '90s. ■

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