

INVENTORY

JOEL ESTES COLLECTION

# 225

COLORADO HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
AUGUST 1984  
PREPARED BY CLARK HATHAWAY

INVENTORY: JOEL ESTES COLLECTION

INTRODUCTION:

Joel Estes, born near Louisville, Kentucky on May 25, 1806, was the son of Peter and Sarah Estes. Peter and Sarah Estes had moved to Kentucky from Virginia where several generations of the Estes family had lived.

On November 12, 1826, Joel married Sarah Stollings of West Virginia. Joel and Sarah lived in Missouri throughout the 1820's. Indeed, Joel Estes was one of the first plantation owners in that state.

The Estes had six children, four boys and two girls. In 1859 the family moved from Anderson County, Missouri to Colorado. Initially the family settled in Auraria along the banks of Cherry Creek. It is said that Estes brought the first herd of cattle across the plains on this trip. It is further stated that two of his daughters, Sarah and Mary Jane, were the first unmarried white women in the state.

Described as the "William Penn of the West," Joel Estes moved from Auraria to near present day Golden and finally to Fort Lupton where he established the first claims club in Colorado.

While on a hunting trip during October 1859, Estes along with his son Francis Joel Estes, discovered the mountain park which would bear his name. Exploring along the Little Thompson River Joel came to the top of a plateau which overlooked the Park. Joel and Francis camped at that site during the winter of 1860. The following spring the entire family moved to Estes Park, remaining there until 1868.

The site acquired its name when William Byers, founder of the Rocky Mountain News, visited the Estes family in 1864. Upon his return to Denver, Byers wrote an account of the Park and called it Estes Park.

Ill health forced Joel Estes to move to a lower elevation in 1868. He relocated to New Mexico, returned to Colorado, and passed away at the age of seventy-one in Farmington, New Mexico on December 31, 1875. Sarah Stollings Estes died in Thurman, Iowa on August 6, 1882. She was seventy-six at the time of her death.

INVENTORY: JOEL ESTES COLLECTION (Cont.)

SIGNIFICANCE:

The collection contains typescript copies of correspondence pertaining to a proposal to erect a memorial to Joel Estes, the discoverer of Estes Park (1921-1927), and narrative histories of the Estes family.

PROVENANCE:

The original material was donated to the Colorado Historical Society by Harry Ruffner, grandson of Joel Estes. The collection was donated in the 1920's.

INVENTORY: JOEL ESTES COLLECTION (Cont.)

FF 1: Correspondence, 1921-1927 (typescript copies)

FF 2: Family histories (typescript copies)