Changing of the Guard

High Altitude Hits
Fighting the KKK
Colorado’s Diversion Dilemmas
Stories of Resilience and Determination

If you have spent time with me, then you know I am electric with pride about my roots in southeastern Colorado. While it is a hardscrabble place forever shaped by some of the state’s most devastating historic chapters (the Sand Creek Massacre, Ludlow, and Japanese American internment), it is also a place of community care, metaphorical and literal grit, and underappreciated beauty. The people are tough but would drop everything to help a neighbor in need.

My love for this part of the state is just one of the reasons I am so enamored with the history of The Dry, a Black homestead community near Manzanola, founded by two purpose-driven sisters, Josephine and Lenora Rucker. It was the early 1900s, and they dreamed of a community where they could build a life free of racial discrimination. These strong women carved out a special place within the harsh landscape of Colorado’s short grass prairie. Despite the bleak water resources that gave the homestead its name, the Rucker sisters and the other Black families they recruited were able to establish roots fed by freedom, community, and resilience.

We recently opened an exhibition on The Dry at the History Colorado Center. This exhibit is only possible because of the steady stewardship of Alice McDonald, the last living resident of The Dry, who has shared her photos and stories with us. While there are no remaining homestead buildings, the Manzanola United Methodist Church was the spiritual home for residents of The Dry and continues to serve their descendants. Locals have been working to preserve this sole surviving structure connected to the homestead community with help from a History Colorado State Historical Fund award of $250,000 and additional support from the National Trust’s African American Cultural Heritage Action Fund.

Preserving Colorado’s Black history is essential work. In the face of racism and inequity, Black Americans—in Colorado and beyond—made significant contributions towards the aspirations and ideals of this country. The legacy of The Dry (one of just two Black homesteads in Colorado) demonstrates and inspires hopeful determination. In their honor, our preservation work must move quickly, while we still have elders connected to these legacies and the structures to tell the stories.

Your support of History Colorado enables our fearless and robust work to preserve and interpret all of Colorado’s history.

Dawn DiPrince
Executive Director

We acknowledge that the land currently known as Colorado has been the traditional homelands of Indigenous peoples since time immemorial. We are grateful to work in partnership with the forty-eight sovereign nations who continue to call this land home. Together, we plan exhibits; collect, preserve, and interpret artifacts; do archaeological work; and create educational programs to share the history of Colorado.
Join us every 2nd Saturday for family-friendly fun! Watch veterinarians at work, explore virtual reality, dig into our rooftop greenhouses, play in our Kid’s Mock Vet Clinic and Kid’s Kitchen, take a cooking class, or listen to the scientific sounds of the South Platte River.

It’s free. Come visit.

CSU Spur is free and open to the public from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday-Friday and from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. on the 2nd Saturday of each month.
**A Correction**

I read with interest the article “ Sanctuary, Refuge, and Shelter” in the most recent issue of The Colorado Magazine. I took note of an inaccuracy in this informative article. It stated that Lt. Governor George L. Brown was a featured speaker at a civil rights symposium which occurred in 1970. However, Brown was not elected Lieutenant Governor until 1974. He then served in that office until January 1979. Prior to holding this office he served in the Colorado legislature, as a Representative from 1955 to 1957 and as a Senator from 1957 until he became Lieutenant Governor in 1979. So his participation in the civil rights symposium would have been while he was still a Senator. I would welcome an in-depth article about this extremely interesting man.

—Mark McGoff, via email

**History Colorado replies:** Thank you for bringing this to our attention. We have corrected the online version of this article and apologize for the misstatement.

**Big Ed Johnson’s Legacy in Colorado**

Governor Edwin Johnson declared martial law in Colorado and closed the state’s borders to migrant workers from nearby states in 1936. Johnson and others feared what he called “an invasion” of “alien and indigent persons” who would take jobs away from white Coloradans during the Great Depression. It’s a story History Colorado told in the episode “A Line in the Sand” on our podcast.

**Ben’s Super Market**

Jason L. Hanson’s article, “More Than Ephemeral,” (Winter/Spring 2023) is excellent. Allow me to suggest a footnote: About the time the Japanese Americans were released from Amache, a group of influential Coloradans proposed an amendment to the state constitution prohibiting non-citizen immigrants from owning land. Governor Vivian opposed the amendment along with several legislators, and together, they were able to defeat the amendment. Without the work of Governor Vivian and his allies, Ben’s Super Market would not have happened.

—Paul Bonnifield, via email

**The Colorado Book Review**

I was grateful to see articles from The Colorado Book Review appearing in The Colorado Magazine Online. For more reviews and information about The Colorado Book Review, please visit the Denver Public Library’s website at history.denverlibrary.org.

—Tom Noel, via email

**Love for The Colorado Magazine**

We read each Colorado Magazine from cover to cover! The articles are excellent and we will continue to be members just to receive the magazine (if for no other reason).

—June Krantz, via email

**Revolt 1680/2180: Runners + Gliders now on view at the History Colorado Center**

I’m really looking forward to seeing this exhibit! Such an original way to engage with history, native culture, and sci-fi all at once!

—Megan Catherine, via Facebook

**On John Fielder’s Colorado Catalog Coming to History Colorado**

In June, History Colorado announced that famous Colorado nature photographer John Fielder would make his 6,000 images permanently available to the public by donating them to the History Colorado collection.

His photos would have been just like [William Henry] Jackson’s, but for all the trees that had grown up in the 100 years between them, and the cleaner air during Fielder’s photos.

—Dan Smith, via Facebook

What an amazing gift from the amazing photographer John Fielder to all of us in Colorado! On top of his many years of dedication to conserving the beauty and ecology of our state! Thank you John! And History Colorado!

—Río De La Vista, via Facebook

**Coming to History Colorado**

The Colorado Center
Revolt 1680/2180: Runners + Gliders

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**Coming to History Colorado**

The Colorado Center
Revolt 1680/2180: Runners + Gliders
A round this time three years ago, many of us were just emerging from a months-long lockdown. We were trying to keep ourselves safe from Covid-19, then a largely mysterious and terrifying new disease. Daily life in Colorado and countries around the world was far from normal. Many of us lost loved ones. Many of us worried our lives would never be the same again.

Meanwhile, Dr. Ramnik Dhaliwal was trying to figure out how to keep himself and his family safe while working to save lives. Recently, Dr. Dhaliwal donated his hospital gear from those early days, including his personal protective equipment (PPE), to History Colorado’s collection. His donation includes masks and surgical gowns he bought to protect himself and his family at a time of uncertain availability.

He also included candid photos from the emergency departments of several Denver-area hospitals where he was working, video diaries recorded at the hospitals and at home in the first months of the pandemic, and this reflective interview in the hope that future generations will be able to appreciate the sacrifices health care providers and front line workers continue to demonstrate as the world recovers from Covid’s upheavals.

We sat down with Dr. Dhaliwal to recall those early days of the pandemic:

What was it like being a doctor in the emergency department three years ago?

At first it was unclear what this was. We knew it was a viral infection, but it was spreading like gangbusters. Practically overnight, we went from normal caseloads and seeing the usual gamut of patients to being fearful of going to work. Very quickly, the question became how do I protect myself? That’s when I decided to start buying my own personal protective equipment. I didn’t want to trust that it would always be available in the hospital.

Many of us lost our normal daily routines during lockdown. What was it like as you kept going to work to help save lives?

My household consisted of myself, my wife who is a pediatrician, our two young children and their elderly grandparents. So my ritual was focused on trying to protect them while still treating the people who needed my help. I put on my scrubs, mask, goggles—a uniform that was already different from what I wore before the pandemic. And seeing patients was different too, because we lost a huge amount of that human interaction due to that distance and that fear. Coming home was the ritual in reverse—I’d have to strip down in the garage, sprint across the yard and hop in the shower before I could hug my kids or say hi to my family.

How has Covid changed your job?

One of the biggest lingering challenges didn’t necessarily come from Covid, but instead from the political divide the pandemic exacerbated. We still see massive and unfortunately growing mistrust of doctors and the medical profession. People requesting treatments that we knew weren’t effective. And a shocking increase in the number of people who posed a physical danger to staff, not just because of the disease they were contagious with. And it has taken a toll on our job. There was a mass-exodus of healthcare workers during the pandemic, and the whole system is still weak. We all had to come to terms with the idea that we could die.

What’s your prescription for collective recovery from the pandemic?

I think people need to think—really think—about others more. The pandemic showed us that we’re resilient, but also that we’re so much more resilient together. If we could come together to support our neighbors and essential workers during the worst of the lockdown, why not in better times too?
It was the summer of 2021. I was cycling with my supplies stuffed into a waterproof wet-bag strapped onto my bike rack along the steep ridgeline of the Blue Mesa Reservoir near Gunnison, Colorado. Cars swooped by me so fast that their tailwinds pushed me into the roots of the aspens lining the highway. Alone, and on day three of a bikepacking trip from Denver to Delta, I was taking a break at one of the viewpoints when a retired couple from Texas chatted me up. They asked where I cycled from and where I was going. After I explained my route the woman gasped and offered to hitch me to the next town. I was feeling the struggle, and by this time in my life I’d learned to trust help and to be okay with hitchhiking. I took them up on their offer, and as the couple drove me twenty miles closer to my final destination, the man looked back at me through his rearview mirror “You do this alone?” I met his gaze in the mirror, “Most of the time yeah, I’ve had good luck with people, most just want to help.” I got the impression that he asked because I was a solo female cyclist riding through some of Colorado’s most remote terrain. But maybe that was a big leap in thought? Either way, they dropped me off at the next town and shaved two hours off my total time on the bike that day. I was able to pull up to my final destination in time for celebratory Jell-O shots with my awe-insome Deltoid friends.

Fast-forward to the summer of 2022. I was swapping ideas with my work cohort at History Colorado and looking back fondly at that biking adventure. I boasted I had just completed a 130 mile round trip bike ride from Denver to Colorado Springs the previous Sunday, and was promptly offered an assignment: write about bikes and relate it to history. While I inadvertently oozed confidence in my cycling capabilities, it turned out this assignment was not low hanging fruit for me. The first couple of full length drafts were scrapped. The assignment morphed from nostalgic weaves of feminism, the mechanical history of cycling, to trash alley cycling grunge. So I started over. Then I started over again. Turns out I have lived bike experiences that should not be put into print, and apparently needed my editor to look me in the eye and tell me that. But by the time I finished this article, I was officially dubbed the bike expert. This is my bike story. The ride you’re about to join me on is intended to give you chuckles and hopefully lend a different perspective on bike history and cycling in Colorado.
A TRANSPORTATION REVOLUTION

I took for granted, while living in the bicycle mecca of Colorado, that historically speaking, bikes weren’t always a common display of aerodynamic finesse. How did bikes become such a part of the urban landscape that they almost blend into peripheral vision for city dwellers like me? Before writing this article, my bike knowledge of weight and frame styles was limited to fairly modern examples. I had little contextual understanding of historic bike frames. I think the tall-wheeled penny farthing frame is probably what came to mind when I’d imagine “old” or “vintage” bikes. Come to find out, my own vintage bikes have a slightly more evolved frame style than those turn of the twentieth century models of my imagination.

I have a twenty-pound, 2001 steel framed, nine speed Talladega Bianchi. Her name is The Princess Bianchi, (yes, framed, nine speed Talladega Bianchi. By the 1960s, American bike producers were manufacturing eight- and ten-speed models that were more affordable than their imported European counterparts. They were heavy, but offered more diverse land coverage than the clunky single speed cruisers of the era. To help put the evolution of bikes into perspective for modern cyclists like myself who are accustomed to sixteen pound bicycles, the Schwinn Varsity, weighing in at forty pounds, was considered lightweight in the 1960s. Perhaps this is why bicycles from the early twentieth century are either in museums, or decaying in scrap yards, or are collecting dust in garages or personal cabinets of curiosities. I have yet to see one on the road. I digress, but the point here is that bikes have come so far in terms of frame aspects, weight, and materials for the sake of improving the feel of the ride itself.

A SOCIAL LIFE ON TWO WHEELS

Cycling was historically, and continues to be, a social activity. As much as I pride myself on cycling solo most of the time, in reality, I came back to biking in my adult years so I could ride with friends who loved the sport and wanted to hear my famous one-liners on the road (I’m just kidding, they actually have no choice but to hear my jokes). I may be weary, but I’ll make you laugh as we crank up a hill together!

Nevertheless, there’s still cultural mysticism surrounding the lone cyclist. Epic solo rides have made the news for nearly a hundred years. The young Canadian, Montreal native, Stanley Mathias, rode from Denver to Salt Lake City in 1928. Relative to my bikepacking journey (which certainly had some unexpected turns), less than $3,300 seems like a small fraction of the months on the road. While not cheap in aggregate, breaking costs down day by day keeps cycling a cost-effective alternative to the daily grind. This is true especially with in a trip to a weekly vacation on a beach or campground. Designers bikes don’t need to be the entry point. A bike with gears, good tires, and a fairly comfortable fit will travel long distances and get you where you want to go. After all, protecting one’s wallet from bruising is certainly part of making it a comfortable ride.

Mathias was a solo cross continental bike traveler, a fairly new style of adventure in the early twentieth century. Over the course of the 1900s, bikepackaging became mainstream in the United States. The famous European Tour De France already existed, launching in 1903, but the United States was still catching on to touring cycling. But by the 1970s, the craze had taken hold. In 1972, 1973, and 1974 bicycles outsold cars. In 1976, to commemorate the nation’s bicentennial, thousands of new bicycle buyers came together for an epic journey known as the Bike-Centennial. The most audacious of all bikers, traversed the United States from Oregon to Virginia.

There were two kinds of tickets available for that early Bike-Centennial trip-in-camping and out-camping. It was $8 a day for the outdoor version and just $4 more for the indoor version (which wasn’t luxurious by any means). The indoor cyclists slept in libraries, dorm rooms, churches, and the like while their outcamping counterparts slept in farm fields or parking lots. Keeping in mind the overall expense of the trip for eighty-two days, cyclists would either pay $656 or $984 respectively, or about $3,432 and $5,148 today.

Reading Rosen’s chapter on monumental cross country rides like the Bike-Centennial woke up parts of my brain that recall more socially oriented bike experiences which I had suppressed after being caught up in Colorado’s Triple Bypass COVID-19 kerfuffle in 2020. I felt justified in my wariness of group rides after losing out on the ride and my registration fee. (Yes, next time I get rider insurance!)

The Triple Bypass was the first supported event I had ever signed up to ride. I loved the idea of cycling crews feeding me bagels, peanut butter, and Bobo bars while I cycled around with a bunch of like-minded bike enthu siasts. And it was a trusted event, dating back to 1988 when a small cycling cohort thought it might be fun to try a wild climb up three mountain passes—Juniper Pass (11,049 feet), Loveland Pass (11,991 feet), and Vail Pass (10,666 feet)—in a single day. The summer of 2023 marks its thirty-fifth anniversary. Thousands of cyclists sign up every year. And it’s just one of the cycling events in Colorado each summer that draws cyclists in from all parts of the globe.

Hindsight being 20-20 (pun intended), in the summer of 2020 I should have guessed that the close proximity of cycling in large groups made the Triple Bypass ride impossible to keep open to the public. I remember sitting in the Best Buy parking lot in Lakewood when I got the email that the event was canceled. The cancellation left me wary of big box cycling events, despite their often philanthropic goals. Instead, driven outdoors by the pandemic, I rode my own routes unsupported and alone. But solitude can be wonderful. Bikes, not COVID, taught me that.
That summer, rather than bagging the three peaks of the Triple Bypass, I committed to riding to the summit of Mt. Evans solo. But instead of driving to Idaho Springs and riding up Mt. Evans from there following the route of the annual Bob Cook Mt. Evans Climb, I rode from my front door in Lakewood to the top of the 14,200 foot peak and then back home. At the time it was very important to me that I separated myself from the event cyclists who shuttled down the mountain afterwards for free beer and pizza. Anyone who has ridden Mt. Evans knows the worst part isn’t the climb, it’s the descent down the treacherous, altitude-worn road that event cyclists avoid by simply shutting down in a bus. But even that ride wasn’t enough. Still looking for escapes during the pandemic, I bike-packed from Denver to Delta, from Denver to Paonia, and from Denver to Salt Lake City, each in its own separate journey. Instead of the masses of cyclists who support local businesses along my routes. (By the way, Brother’s Deli in Idaho Springs is a Colorado treasure that serves up delicious sandwiches to fuel a climb through the high country.) I didn’t start cycling till I was thirty. And I wasn’t a professional athlete in my twenties either. People I’d seen in the road only strengthened this sentiment. I met a man riding across my twenties either. People I’d seen in the road only strengthened this sentiment. I met a man riding across

TRANSPORTATION TO TOY

I’m not anti-social even though I often ride alone. I did try to create my own personalized cycling buddy in the form of my now ten-year-old son. I envision grand bikepacking trips with him as he grows into adulthood, but we need to start with a simple overnight bikepacking trip to Bear Creek State Park before I can prime him for a multi-day trip. But I couldn’t help myself. I started planting the bikepacking seed three years ago.

In the spring of 2020, with public school shut-downs and while remote working, I set out to finally teach my son to ride the bike I got him for Christmas. It was permanently parked in his closet, but I had hoped that he would be ready to go once he learned to ride. I carefully set up time in between his remote classes during the day to introduce the sport to him. It was a lonely time, but we made the very best of it. I wanted him to use his bike for enjoyment. For fun. Three years later, while I still have some grandiose plans to ride across the United States in 2021, so perhaps history doesn’t fully repeat itself but it does rhyme. The historical trend indicates that out two-wheelied ma- chines are keeping up with the times. I know first-hand why Colorado is one of the top sports-cycling spots in the country. Our state’s epic mountains and famous group rides like the Triple Bypass or Ride the Rockies help con- firm that impression. Unsurprisingly, the city of Denver recently ranked in the top ten friendliest bike cities from data sourced from the U.S. census bu- reau, the U.S. Department of Trans- portation, the U.S. National Centers for Environmental Information, Walk Score, Rails-to-Trails Conservancy, Vision Zero Network, Google Trends, and Yelp. What a mouthful of data. Writing this article broadened my thinking as old bikes are. They’re machines, certainly, but something else exists inside the frame. It’s almost like a wavelength carried through the manufacturer, the excitement from the mechanic who opened the bike box, or the finesse of the last person who polished the frame. Bikes have a soul. People have adapted their bikes to suit different ideas of what bikes should be and do. They were originally intended to solve a transportation is- sue, but over time, they became a way to be together or, in the case of long solo tours, to recharge in solitude. For many,they proved to be integral to the early childhood experience of geo- graphical autonomy. Most will learn to cycle before they learn to drive. Bicycles soften our footprint on the planet, make us look goofy, but also sometimes cool. Bikes simply won’t be defined by one subculture, one demo- graphic, one frame style, or the many personalities who hop onto the saddle. Bikes are the tool of the user. Behold- en to their people. But they still seem to have minds of their own. From people craving either the solitude or the social connectivity of cycling, to retirees looking to get around town with ease, to adaptive mountain bikers searching for adventure, to those who just want to feel the breeze and see the sights, there is a bike waiting for you to take it home and give it a name. It’s not—it’s never—too late.

Bikes have lived somewhere between toy and transportation for over 100 years. History Colorado Collection, 93.322.587

n nine years old. I didn’t know children could bike across the country as young as nine years old—but when the pandemic quarantined, I knew seven was the perfect age for my own child to start training. I carefully set up time in between his remote classes during the day to introduce the sport to him. It was a lonely time, but we made the very best of it. I wanted him to use his bike for enjoyment. For fun. Three years later, while I still have some grandiose plans to ride across the country with him in celebration of a national holiday, I would settle for an overnight bikepacking trip. In trying to create my adventure buddy early on, I set out with the kiddo on three separate bike training sessions in the spring of 2020. I re- member assuring my still-learnin- son that he didn’t have to take off on his own, he just had to get used to sitting in the saddle and holding the handle bars even if his feet were planted on the ground. Witheach attempt, his body learned something new. I re- minded him that he was getting used to being on a bike. He didn’t have to be perfect right away. Finally after sev- eral attempts, on a sunny day in April, I took my son to a little gravel loop park that encircles a goat grazing patch

in Wheat Ridge. I kept running next to him and holding the bike while he pedaled and I could tell that he felt himself handling the bike. I was grate- ful that bikes were no longer made from forty pounds of steel. I don’t think I could have pushed him along if his bike tipped the scales like its pre- decessors.

I painted as I ran along next to him, lap after lap on the gravel loop, holding his handlebars and steering him so he could feel flight. He finally said to me matter-of-factly, “you can let go now.” I didn’t believe him, I was probably only talking about his bike, I felt an entire lifecycle of parenting wash over me when I took my hand off the saddle. He took off and pedaled freely around the loop. Witnessing his first experience of personal freedom and his pride brought me straight to a bout of ugly crying. He didn’t hear my weepy, smarter, chortle of hap- py tears: He was too busy yelling and exclaiming how well his physical mobility and speed unlike anything he had likely felt before. The following summer he did his first twenty miles and let me know in his funny string of conscious- ness “I’m cooking like chicken momo” The boy can ride and my hope is that I don’t over-impose my hobby onto him so he will join me in bike ride bliss. He named his first bike “The Cherry Flavor” for the kids, but I’m not sure if any demographic of cyclist appreciates it the way a child does—especially that first time that they take flight.

CYCLING INTO THE FUTURE

In Colorado, cycling is often praised as an ideal mode of green transportation. But it’s still an after- thought to most people with access to a car, just like it was in the early twentieth century. However, broaden- er sales trends indicate that certain bikes are as popular today as they were when they outsold cars in the 1970s. E-bike sales outstripped E-vehicles in the United States in 2021, but it does rhyme. The historical trend indicates that out two-wheelied ma- chines are keeping up with the times. I know first-hand why Colorado is one of the top sports-cycling spots in the country. Our state’s epic mountains and famous group rides like the Triple Bypass or Ride the Rockies help con- firm that impression. Unsurprisingly, the city of Denver recently ranked in the top ten friendliest bike cities from data sourced from the U.S. census bu- reau, the U.S. Department of Trans- portation, the U.S. National Centers for Environmental Information, Walk Score, Rails-to-Trails Conservancy, Vision Zero Network, Google Trends, and Yelp. What a mouthful of data. Writing this article broadened my thinking as old bikes are. They’re machines, certainly, but something else exists inside the frame. It’s almost like a wavelength carried through from the manufacturer, the excitement from the mechanic who opened the bike box, or the finesse of the last person who polished the frame. Bikes have a soul. People have adapted their bikes to suit different ideas of what bikes should be and do. They were originally intended to solve a transportation is- sue, but over time, they became a way to be together or, in the case of long solo tours, to recharge in solitude. For many,they proved to be integral to the early childhood experience of geo- graphical autonomy. Most will learn to cycle before they learn to drive. Bicycles soften our footprint on the planet, make us look goofy, but also sometimes cool. Bikes simply won’t be defined by one subculture, one demo- graphic, one frame style, or the many personalities who hop onto the saddle. Bikes are the tool of the user. Behold- en to their people. But they still seem to have minds of their own. From people craving either the solitude or the social connectivity of cycling, to retirees looking to get around town with ease, to adaptive mountain bikers searching for adventure, to those who just want to feel the breeze and see the sights, there is a bike waiting for you to take it home and give it a name. It’s not—it’s never—too late.
HIGH ALTITUDE HITS

SIX INCREDIBLE SONGS RECORDED AT CARIBOU RANCH

Some of the most iconic musicians of the 1970s and ’80s came to record among the soaring peaks and high-mountain valleys around Caribou Ranch.

BY MEGAN FRIEDEL

The Colorado high country has a special place in music history. For more than a decade, Caribou Ranch, a recording studio built in an abandoned barn tucked into the foothills above Nederland, Colorado, cranked out some of the most recognizable and most influential records of the 1970s and ’80s. Producer Jim Guercio began building the Caribou Ranch recording studio in 1971, on the former Van Vleet Arabian Horse Ranch. Once the studio was completed the following year, it quickly became a premier destination for the best musicians of the era, including Stephen Stills, John Lennon, Elton John, Stevie Wonder, Michael Jackson, Stephen Stills, John Lennon, Elton John, and an expert in Colorado’s musical history.

1. “ROCKY MOUNTAIN WAY,” JOE WALSH

In the spring of 1972, guitarist Walsh was the first musician to record at Caribou, while the studio was still under construction. He had just moved to Colorado, where he formed his group, Barnstorm; he later joined the Eagles for construction. He had just moved to Caribou, while the studio was still under construction. He had just moved to Caribou, while the studio was still under construction. He had just moved to Caribou, while the studio was still under construction. He had just moved to Caribou, while the studio was still under construction. He had just moved to Caribou, while the studio was still under construction. He had just moved to Caribou, while the studio was still under construction.

Joe Walsh

2. “ROCK AND ROLL, HOOCHEE KOO,” RICK DERRINGER

Fans of “Dazed and Confused” will instantly recognize this iconic, guitar-driven 1970s rock tune. Though it was first released in 1970 while Derringer was a member of the band Johnny Winter And, it’s the Caribou Ranch version that made earworm history, recorded at the studio in 1975 for the musician’s first solo album, All American Boy. Derringer played nearly all the instruments on this recording: guitar, bass, tambourine, and lead vocals, with only drummer Bobby Caldwell and keyboardist John, Stevie Wonder, Michael Jackson, and an expert in Colorado’s musical history.

RICK DERRINGER

3. “SOMEONE SAVED MY LIFE TONIGHT,” ELTON JOHN

The British musician recorded three albums at Caribou Ranch: Caribou (1974); Captain Fantastic and the Brown Dirt Cowboy (1975); and Rock of the Westies (1975). This highly personal track, arguably the best on the album, details the pianist’s suicide attempt in 1968 and was written by John’s longtime lyricist Bernie Taupin and recorded at Caribou in August 1974. The song’s anthemic chorus features the classic Caribou Ranch sound: high vocals that studio engineers claimed were made possible by the thin air at the ranch’s nearly 9,000-foot elevation in the Rocky Mountains. At 6 minutes and 45 seconds, it was not an obvious contender for a hit, yet it charted at No. 4 on the US Billboard Top 100.

ELTON JOHN

4. “GIVE A LITTLE BIT,” SUPERTRAMP

The progressive rock-turned-pop band recorded their fifth album, Even in the Quietest Moments..., at Caribou Ranch during the winter of 1976–1977. Like many albums recorded at the ranch, the cover reflects the mountain setting: a grand piano topped with snow, photographed at nearby Eldora Mountain ski resort. This track, which became an international hit, opens with a now-iconic acoustic guitar riff recorded in the studio’s elevator—and closes suddenly to cut off an inopportune wail by Frank, the studio cat, that was inadvertently caught on the tape.

SUPERTRAMP

5. “DEVIL’S SWEET,” CHICAGO

No Caribou Ranch list would be complete without a shout-out to Chicago, who were produced and managed by studio founder Jim Guercio from 1968 to 1977. “Devil’s Sweet” is an unusual deep cut from Chicago VII, which was recorded and mixed at Caribou in the fall of 1973 and marked an ambitious turning point for the band, who showcased their jazz influences on the double album. This ten-minute instrumental track, written and led with tenacity by drummer and founding member Danny Seraphine, is a stunner, highlighting Chicago’s virtuosity and musicianship, with nary a Peter Cetera vocal in sight.

CHICAGO

6. “SHINING STAR,” EARTH, WIND & FIRE

Inspired by a walk that singer and songwriter Maurice White took under the night skies at Caribou, this track, co-written by vocalist Philip Bailey and keyboardist Larry Dunn, was indeed a star, charting at number one in the United States. But at the time of White’s walk in September 1974, during the band’s three-week recording session at the ranch, the soon-to-be soul-funk-R&B superstars had yet to break through to pop radio. The a cappella outro features White and Bailey’s classic harmonies, which the pair recorded twenty times and layered to sound like a full chorus of voices.

EARTH, WIND & FIRE

MEGAN FRIEDEL is Head of Archives and Collections for University of Colorado Boulder Libraries. She’s also a local musician and an expert in Colorado’s musical history.
We are a product of history, our lives and our communities shaped by those who came before. In some cases—and in some places—we choose to spotlight and elevate certain individuals from our collective past to recognize their significant contributions to our communities, so that we may continue to draw inspiration from their example. Whether they are statues cast or carved to stand for generations, the names we give our parks and public buildings, or what we call natural landmarks, every monument is an instrument designed to transmit the stories, knowledge, and perspectives of one generation in a lasting way that we hope will benefit our descendants. In creating monuments, we inscribe our shared history on the landscapes and cultural spaces that provide the setting for our daily lives. But what happens when generational values shift about who, or what, deserves to be commemorated? This is the question many of us in museums, historical organizations, city governments, and local communities throughout the nation have confronted with growing urgency over the past decade. In Colorado, it recently took the form of an eight-foot-tall bronze sculpture of a Union cavalry soldier toppled during the protests for racial justice that erupted during the summer of 2020 in the wake of George Floyd’s murder. As the monument fell from its pedestal in front of the State Capitol, it raised a number of questions about how we should commemorate our shared history and what we owe to the people of the past who left us their guidance in the form of monuments. Questions that go to the heart of who we want to be.

In 1909, the bronze figure of a dismounted Union cavalry soldier was installed outside the Colorado State Capitol, Colorado’s contribution to the nationwide wave of monuments installed to commemorate the aging veterans of the Civil War and advance certain narratives about the meaning of their sacrifice. “On Guard,” as the artist John Dare Howland formally designated his work, occupied a place of honor. The bronze soldier stood sentry on the west side of the State Capitol, casting his fixed eyes over the Capitol’s “front lawn” in Denver’s Civic Center and beyond toward the sun setting over the Rocky Mountains on the horizon. Plaques affixed to the pedestal of the monument listed the engagements Colorado troops had fought in throughout the Colorado Territory and beyond, highlighting the state’s role in the national conflict. And there it stayed, more or less without change, standing silent guard over Civic Center through blizzards (like the
Among the most iconic, it was the bloodiest day in Colorado history. The betrayal of the Cheyenne and Arapaho people on Colorado’s eastern plains who had been promised protection by the Army. The soldiers murdered more than 230 women, children, and elders as they tried to run for safety. Upon their return to Denver, the troops paraded in celebration, proudly displaying trophies from the battle—some taken from the bodies of the dead.

The Sand Creek Massacre, as it quickly came to be known, was the bloodiest day in Colorado history. The betrayal of the Cheyenne and Arapaho by the US government touched off decades of violence and warfare across the West that ultimately resulted in the government forcibly removing the region’s Tribes from their homelands and making various efforts to eradicate them completely.

The US Army and Congress both investigated and quickly condemned the attack. Congress’s 1865 “Report of the Joint Committee on the Conduct of the War: Massacre of the Cheyenne Indians” was the first to officially call it a massacre. But many of the people of Denver and in other communities throughout Colorado refused to accept that their relatives and friends had taken part in such a dishonorable action. When the “On Guard” monument was installed, its pedestal included a ring of the monument’s granite pedestal, “On Guard”—those attempts to augment flawed history don’t seem to carry the same weight as the original, and it never sat right with some people. To date, we can only guess at the exact motives of those who toppled the monument, but for many observers the action read as an attempt to topple any vestigial apologetism or pretense that Sand Creek can be understood as anything but an intentional, brutal, state-sanctioned, massacre of Indigenous people.

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ignoring Sand Creek as a battle, the monument’s designers mischaracterized the actual events,” and noting that, thanks to the persistent advocacy of Tribal descendants of the attack and others, there was now “widespread recognition of the tragedy as the Sand Creek Massacre.”

But additional plaques—those attempts to augment flawed history with more information or correction—don’t seem to carry the same weight as the original, and it never sat right with some people. To date, we can only guess at the exact motives of those who toppled the monument, but for many observers the action read as an attempt to topple any vestigial apologetism or pretense that Sand Creek can be understood as anything but an intentional, brutal, state-sanctioned, massacre of Indigenous people.

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Standing in front of the Capitol made the monument a focal point for generations of protests. Chicano activists incorporated it into their civil rights protest in March 1974. Credit Juan Espinoza, History Colorado. 2016.87.101

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many of our visitors and for people throughout Colorado. In fact, despite all the suggestions that controversial monuments ought to be in museums, we could not find an applicable example to follow from another museum. As far as we could tell, we were the first museum in the nation to attempt it in the aftermath of that summer’s protests for racial justice.

Without established best practices or a playbook to follow, our Exhibition Development team devised a three-part interpretation strategy to present “On Guard” to our visitors and encourage them to consider it from a variety of perspectives. First, we shared some background on the actual events the monument was meant to commemorate. In this case, that meant a brief discussion of the actions of Colorado troops fighting for the Union during the Civil War, including the Sand Creek Massacre and participation in the Indian Wars. Second, we spotlighted the creation of the monument itself. “On Guard” was installed in 1909 after Denver’s city leaders had been embarrassed to realize, while hosting a reunion encampment of the Grand Army of the Republic, that the city did not have a monument honoring the veterans’ sacrifice and victory. Although Civil War monuments are not as common in Colorado as they are in states further east, Colorado joined those states in installing “On Guard” as part of a large wave of Civil War monuments being erected nationwide as the generation who fought in the war was passing away.

Finally, we knew that displaying a toppled monument meant we had to address the meaning of the monument today. We also knew that this was not for us to say. In recent decades, museums have recognized that we exist within spectacularly multifaceted and intersectional communities and can no longer credibly claim or even aspire to be the all-knowing voice of community hegemony anymore. So we solicited statements from multiple stakeholders, including veterans, Tribal representatives, artists, historians, and others, on what the monument meant to them. We heard that it was a tribute to those who have served and sacrificed in the nation’s armed forces, a reminder of atrocities committed against Indigenous peoples, a symbol of white supremacy and injustice, a casualty of destructive lawlessness, and more.

Operating from a fundamental belief that creating space for civil conversation about our different views is part of how we embrace our shared destiny and find our way forward together, we welcomed the public to join the conversation and created space for visitors to share their views. We wanted to give people a chance to think about what history they would like to see in their public spaces, and what the purpose of such public commemoration should be. We asked visitors to respond, if they felt so moved, to two questions: 1. Do we need monuments? 2. What do you think their purpose should be?

By far the most common sentiment our visitors offered—often in careful handwriting sized to fit complex ideas on the sticky notes we gave them to stick up on a wall facing the monument—was that monuments are critical pieces of social memory. Visitors overwhelmingly agreed that historic statues and other monuments should remind Americans of both the good and bad aspects of our history, and that in remembering, we may build upon the good and avoid repeating bad choices.

Other visitors tackled the question of what society should do with statues honoring values that we no longer agree with, or those commemorating moments most would prefer to forget. Visitors generally wanted these monuments to reside in museums where they can be properly interpreted and put into context. Erasing these monuments entirely from view, they argued, opens society up to repeating the mistakes of the past.

A notable, though small, percentage of commentators disagreed with the idea that we need monuments to remind us of the good and bad in American history. But their disagreements came from very different places. For some, monuments inherently reinforce the dominant culture’s values and version of the past at the expense of underrepresented voices and should therefore all be removed and not replaced. For others, monuments should honor sacrifice and heroism, and should encourage us to reflect on the times in which Americans have lived up to their values and the nation’s promise. Monuments, according to this latter group, should not dwell on the dark moments in the nation’s history or focus on what a few deemed “overly negative” depictions of the past.

All of the protest and controversy and discussion about monuments has not stopped us building them. A new monument to Major General Maurice Rose, son of a Denver rabbi, student at Denver’s East High School, the highest ranking Jewish officer in the US Army during World War II and the highest ranking officer killed in combat, and namesake of Rose Hospital was recently installed in Lincoln Veterans Memorial Park in Civic Center. Likewise, the City of
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Denver recently installed, at the urging of Colorado Asian Pacific United, a new historic marker commemorating the city’s historic Chinatown, replacing the white-centric text that had marked the place.

Ideally, to commemorate the actions of our predecessors in a place is to imbue the place with the story of that person or the collective individuals who achieved something worthy of remembrance, recognizing their contributions to and impact upon our world long after they have passed. But monuments also carry forward the flaws and shortcomings of those imperfect predecessors, and those who admired them, to be confronted by successive generations.

In such cases, residents and city leaders might consider whether the monument is achieving its original purpose or playing a constructive role in creating meaningful landscapes for our daily lives. This is especially important given the historical and current power structures that have prioritized Euro-centric, white, male, straight, abled perspectives in the naming process, to the exclusion of Indigenous people, people of color, women, LGBTQ+ people, people with disabilities, and other historically marginalized people. When the societal context has changed over time to the extent that there is strong evidence that retaining the name would be detrimental to promoting the values held by a community, it is appropriate to consider giving ourselves new monuments to look up to.

When the Colorado State Historian’s Council, which is a group of five esteemed historians from throughout Colorado, was asked by the City of Denver to guide its consideration of how to review and potentially address problematic place names woven into the city’s historic fabric, we developed a set of questions designed to ground and guide these conversations. The following questions were developed along with Nicki Gonzales, Jared Orsi, William Wei, and Ariel Schnee as part of that process. As communities throughout the nation vet the monuments and place names that proclaim historical narratives in their public spaces, we hope that asking these questions will generate a richer evaluation of controversial monuments.

The Scales of Justice:
Which misdeeds overwhelm a person’s good deeds? What qualities and achievements do we wish to honor? Which cannot be overlooked or balanced out?

Contributions of the Commemorated:
What was the significance and impact of the person’s contribution to the contemporary community? In their failures, those we commemorate were often men and women of their time. But in their successes, they were often visionaries well ahead of their time in ways that continue to reverberate today.

Beliefs Versus Action:
Did the honored person express their problematic views consistently through action or did they hold their views more privately? Are we prepared or qualified to judge what is in a person’s heart, or to judge them for it? Societal Context: How has society changed in our views of who or what is being honored? Judgments about a person’s character or the meaning of events can change over successive generations. What deference is due to the people whom our predecessors honored (as one day our choices will be similarly examined)? What obligation do we have to continuously interpret—and when necessary reinterpret—their actions or did they hold their views more privately? Are we prepared or qualified to judge what is in a person’s heart, or to judge them for it?

Context: How has society changed over successive generations. What deference is due to the people whom our predecessors honored (as one day our choices will be similarly examined)? What obligation do we have to continuously interpret—and when necessary reinterpret—their actions or did they hold their views more privately? Are we prepared or qualified to judge what is in a person’s heart, or to judge them for it?

What Can We Learn:
Does the monument project a view of our shared history? Monuments provide an opportunity to confront and reflect upon the complex legacy that brought us to this place and time?

Erasure and Distortion:
What remedies are available? What can we learn from that choice? Does the monument harm the community? Does removing the monument have the effect of erasing history? Does preserving it distort history?

In the summer of 2020, as protestors took to the streets across the nation in the aftermath of George Floyd’s murder, Coloradans gathered in front of the Capitol. Once again, the monument was in the middle of events. James Peterson, History Colorado, 2020.64.21.

In 2014, Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribal members erected tipis on the Capitol grounds in commemoration of the 150th anniversary of the Sand Creek Massacre, not far from the monument that had proclaimed it a legitimate battle.
Current Meaning:
Have current residents created a contemporary meaning for monuments and place names that have positive value, irrespective of the original intent? People make their own meaning for places based on lived experiences. When those meanings are in opposition to one another, or to the name’s original significance, how do we determine whose meaning should be given preference?

F. Scott Fitzgerald famously concluded *The Great Gatsby*, his tragically all-American tale of striving for wealth and love in the 1920s, by reflecting on the ways in which we are inescapably shaped by history: “So we beat on, boats against the current,” he wrote, “borne back ceaselessly into the past.”

Monuments, attempts by one generation to enshrine certain narratives and values for generations to come, are part of this current. But they have a permanence that human lives do not. Their goal is often perpetuity, perhaps because the creators of monuments know that nothing—not individuals, the communities they form, nor the nations they build—remains fixed and unchanging for long.

And that’s OK, says Lonnie Bunch III, the Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution, which is the nation’s official and most venerable keeper of our collective knowledge and shared history. “There is nothing wrong with a country recognizing that its identity is evolving over time,” Bunch told the *New York Times* in 2020, suggesting that some monuments ought to be removed or recontextualized. He added that “as this identity evolves, so does what it remembers. So does what it celebrates.”

How we choose to remember our shared history in our public spaces sometimes raises difficult but important questions that go to the heart of who we want to be as a community and what sort of place we want to live in. Many of us who practice historical work in public view believe that our shared history can help guide us to a brighter future. But people must be able to draw meaning, inspiration, and lessons from the historic reminders—big and small—that surround them. When that history can no longer serve those purposes, as new insights and interpretations arise and new information is brought to light, the people of a community, who are the keepers of all history, might understandably seek to revise or refresh the stories they call upon for inspiration and guidance.

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COLORADO'S FORGOTTEN DIVERSION DILEMMA
BY MICHAEL WEEKS

The Colorado-Big Thompson project was at the center of a fierce debate that shaped Americans’ relationships to their national parks.

Few visitors to Rocky Mountain National Park will ever visit the East Portal. And why would they? Located just a few miles south of Estes Park, the East Portal contains no views of snow-capped peaks or broad valleys teeming with wildlife. Instead, it is framed by low-lying hills and power lines that draw energy from water flowing out of an odd-looking tunnel and pooling into a nondescript reservoir. It is, compared to some of the area’s more breathtaking vistas, an unremarkable landscape with seemingly little connection with the one drawing hordes of sightseers and adventurers into nearby Rocky Mountain National Park.

Yet appearances can be deceiving. Even while unsuspecting visitors explore one of the nation’s iconic landscapes, the tunnel is redirecting the natural flow of the Colorado River underneath the Continental Divide. Many outdoor-oriented members of the Colorado Mountain Club looking into what was once the headwaters of that river would recognize immediately. The supporters’ side included farmers, industrialists, local boosters and scientists. In the midst of a decade characterized by drought and depression, they argued that C-BT water would rescue the region’s agricultural economy from collapse by the simple act of moving water from a region that possessed it in comparative abundance to one desperately needing it.

On the other side were conservationists and nature-lovers who complained bitterly that the Adams tunnel would desecrate Rocky Mountain National Park. They wrote protest letters, pamphlets, and editorials, and appeared before hearings in Congress and the Department of the Interior. Some complained that the tunnel was a commercial intrusion into a national park. They excoriated the business interests and town developers for wanting to scar a landscape set aside for preservation and the enjoyment of the American people. They worried that it would set a precedent for the exploitation of other national parks. Other conservation-minded opponents argued that the tunnel violated the need to preserve wild places for the sake of wilderness. To remove water from the woods and pump it onto the plains, they said, would be to fundamentally alter fragile western ecosystems. The war of words reached such a fever pitch that historian Donald Swain says that the C-BT offered one of the most consequential examples of water project opposition in American history.

It’s not news that water is central to life, and that’s especially true here in arid Colorado. Access to water and the sanctity of public lands—issues that defined the fight over the Colorado-Big Thompson Project—resonate perhaps more than ever as climate change challenges our ability to engineer around aridity. Vitriolic discussions over water use for agriculture, for growing cities, for energy development, and for recreation are happening with just as much ferocity today as they did nine decades ago. Colorado’s central urban strip continues attracting residents at a breakneck pace, in part due to the outdoor lifestyle afforded by such close access to public lands. Cities on the Front Range are still buying C-BT water rights from farmers on the Western Slope, even as the oil and gas industry injects some of that same water thousands of feet into the earth to be lost to underground hydraulic fracturing.

No matter what the use, hardly anybody gets to use water in Colorado without a fight. It’s as true today as it was in 1933, when the Colorado-Big Thompson project threatened to forever change one of the nation’s most prominent protected landscapes: the snowy peaks and verdant valleys of Rocky Mountain National Park.

ORIGINS OF CONFLICT

Ever since gold’s discovery near Denver in 1858, Front Range residents have far outnumbered those living in the western half of the state. But eighty percent of the state’s precipitation falls west of the Continental Divide, creating a problem for the many urban Front Range residents who live in a much drier climate. So, as Colorado’s population grew throughout the late 1800s, it did not take long for the water-starved majority to devise methods for circumventing geographic barriers.

Moving water underneath or around a mountain from one watershed to another—a process called transmountain diversion—was nothing new when the C-BT controversy emerged.
Circumstances brought the potential of a massive hole through the national park into public consciousness. In 1915, Franklin Lane, Secretary of the Interior, sought to ensure the legality of water projects within park boundaries. As a former attorney of the Interior, he was obligated by the fact that water diversions might present too many obstacles to water development. So, the wily national might present too many obstacles for diversions at Grand Lake and other lakes within said park which may be necessary for the development and maintenance of a Government reclamation project.

That language offered a legal jus-tification for diverting water through the park. However, the following year Congress muddied the waters a bit. In 1916, legislators approved the Organic Act, a lengthy bureaucratic document which, among other things, established the National Park Service. According to the Act, that new agency’s mission was to “conserve the scenery and the natural and historic objects and the wildlife therein and to provide for the enjoyment of the same in such manner and by such means as will leave them unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations.” For conservationists and park service employees, the Organic Act was a manifesto for resistance to all kinds of commercial development. Certainly, they reasoned, dynamiting a tunnel through the length of Rocky Mountain National Park would impair the public’s enjoyment and break the illusion of standing in an untouched wilderness. Circumstances brought the potential of a massive hole through the national park into public consciousness during the 1930s as Colorado Range farmers. In 1934 the Bureau of Reclamation agreed to conduct engineering studies in advance of a project proposal. Reclamation Commissioner John C. Page followed up with a letter to Acting Park Service Director Arthur Demaray requesting entry. Demaray refused.

In a formal letter of denial addressed to Secretary of the Interior Harold Ickes, Demaray penned the opening arguments in the fight over the tunnel. He complained that engineering studies taken in the park could create “scars and unsightly debris.” According to Demaray, such surveys and any tunnel which might be built required constructing access roads and trails to “places where roads and trails should not rightfully go.” Demaray’s letter rhetorically transformed a local irrigation project into a national issue, pointing out that conservationists had fought to keep national parks “invio-lated from such projects,” and that the proposed survey could be “an opening wedge in a hard-won wall of protection which surrounds our park system.” In response, Ickes, a noted supporter of national parks, nonetheless authorized the engineering surveys, believing that he was obligated by the fact that water diversions projects were embedded in Rocky Mountain’s founding legislation.

CONSERVATIONISTS MAKE THEIR CASE

Following Ickes’ approval, conservation forces quickly mobilized in opposition. Organizations such as the Sierra Club and the Wilderness Society mailed flyers to their supporters and
ably resonate with today’s Coloradans
between Estes Park and Grand Lake.

traveled across the Continental Divide
stunning views to motorists as they
built Trail Ridge Road, which offered
was motivated in part by the recently
Park nearly doubled to 650,000. This
visitation to Rocky Mountain National
Project between 1934 and 1937, annual
considered the Colorado-Big Thompson
Depression. As the federal government
crushing economic collapse of the Great

bers as many sought escape from the
draw patrons in record num-
organizations, and scientists wrote op-ed

The arguments made by conservationists in
opposition to the tunnel probably resonate with today’s Coloradans
who enjoy recreating in the state’s public lands. Letter writers universally expressed
concerns that a massive engineering
project inside park borders would mar
the scenery and set the stage for simi-
lar projects in national parks elsewhere.
Most protestors extolled the uniqueness
of the landscape inside Rocky Moun-
tain National Park, arguing that it was
the highest expression of nature and

The most likely author of that pam-
phlet, Robert Sterling Yard, took the
protest a step further, by arguing that
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national parks were areas “dedicated to
the service and enjoyment of the people
of the United States as a whole and not
to any narrow interests of any particular
locality.” Frank later emphasized that
it would be the “primeval qualities” of
the park which would be compromised
should local “narrow interests” prevail.
Letter writers Laurel and Lincoln Elli-
on of Montana cited national interests

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During the same period, Yard became increasingly concerned that parks such as Rocky Mountain were being overrun with tourists who seemed more interested in driving through than in enlightening their minds. Though not the same as boring a hole through the mountain or clearcutting a forest, Yard regarded the assault of asphalt and autos as commercial invasions just the same, since they encouraged visitors to rapidly consume landscapes while disregarding their geologic or biologic value. For Yard, blasting holes through the park and the proliferation of roads were two sides of the same coin. Both compromised the core mission of national parks.

By 1930, Yard concluded that the best way to preserve the scientific and scenic qualities of the nation’s iconic parks was to promote vast roadless tracts called wilderness areas. So, in 1935, even as the first tunnel engineering surveys were getting underway, he helped to form the Wilderness Society. According to the Society’s first publication, wilderness areas are “virgin tracts in which human activities have never modified the normal processes of nature. They thus preserve the native vegetation and physiographic conditions which have existed for an inestimable period. They present the culmination of an unbroken series of natural events stretching infinitely into the past, and a richness and beauty beyond description or com-
pare.” In short, Yard and his allies argued that the proposed tunnel would do more than deface park scenery; it would vio-
late the fundamental laws of nature. To restore nature’s balance, Rocky Mountain needed less construction and more wilderness.

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The most common protest expressed by Robert Sterling Yard and his conservationist allies was that the C-BT prioritized local needs over national ones. Yard’s Wilderness Society colleague Bernard Frank expressed that sentiment when he wrote that the national parks were areas “dedicated to the service and enjoyment of the people of the United States as a whole and not to any narrow interests of any particular locality.” Frank later emphasized that it would be the “primeval qualities” of the park which would be compromised should local “narrow interests” prevail. Letter writers Laurel and Lincoln Ellion of Montana cited national interests as well, claiming that the country’s need for outdoor recreation in “unspoiled nature…should take precedence over such local demands for irrigation and water power.” In an editorial in the New York Times, former National Park Service Director Horace Albright chimed
in with similar reasoning. He cited the five million tourists who had visited Rocky Mountain National Park since 1915, the 550,000 travelers who entered the park in 1936, and the seven-and-half million dollars spent by park visitors, arguing that the C-BT would destroy “the natural charm of the landscape.” He concluded that “private interests should give way to the general good.”

The arguments against the tunnel put forth by conservationists resonate in Colorado today. Presently, there are forty-two wilderness areas in the state, most of which have been designated since Congress passed the Wilderness Act in 1964. Each wilderness is intended to minimize human impacts by restricting all forms of mechanized travel. In fact, four of these wilderness areas border Rocky Mountain National Park. Moreover, much of the park has been managed as wilderness since 1974. At the same time, the visitor’s desire to motor through has only increased. It took twenty years for total park visitation to hit the five million mark. Today, nearly that many people tour the park by car annually. Those numbers are especially evident when spontaneous traffic jams occur at sites where elk or moose grace the roadside. Whether those scenes support or violate the conservation mission of Rocky Mountain National Park remains the subject of sometimes heated debate.

**MAKING THE CASE FOR THE C-BT**

Let’s return now for a moment to the East Portal, where Colorado River water flows out of the Alva B. Adams Tunnel and exits Rocky Mountain National Park. From there the water plunges 2,900 feet through twelve reservoirs and over one hundred miles of canals before it is available to farmers, municipalities, and businesses in Northern Colorado. In 1937, the intended beneficiaries of that water needed to address some of the arguments made by conservationists, even as they directed the debate away from the sanctity of national parks and toward economic benefit. Would the C-BT bring enough benefit to justify its price tag, estimated to be $44 million in 1937? To gain Congressional support and to counter conservationists’ arguments that the Adams Tunnel would desecrate a national treasure, they had to make the case that the C-BT would bring substantial economic benefit to the nation.

Among the many people clamoring for the C-BT, Ralph Parshall stands out. While Parshall was not the loudest voice in the debate, his arguments and evidence were perhaps the most convincing. A resident of Northern Colorado himself, Parshall graduated at the top of his engineering class at Colorado Agricultural College (CAC)—the forerunner of Colorado State University—in 1904. After completing a master’s degree at the University of Chicago, he was hired by his alma mater in 1907. As a professor at CAC, Parshall engineered reservoirs, dams, and irrigation canals in Northern Colorado. Then, in 1913, Parshall took a position as an irrigation engineer with the USDA’s Bureau of Agricultural Engineering where he worked for the next forty years. While at the USDA, Parshall’s office and lab remained on the campus of CAC where he collaborated with students and faculty throughout his career.

By the time the C-BT came into public consciousness in the 1930s, Parshall was a well-known figure due to his namesake invention, the Parshall Flume. That innovation made water distribution to agricultural users more equitable wherever it was installed as it increased measurement accuracy in canals and ditches by up to thirty percent. This helped farmers to know how much water they were receiving and prevented water users from taking more than their allotted shares. By 1935, Parshall had also distinguished himself as a pioneer of snow surveys and for developing devices to remove debris from irrigation canals. Combined, Parshall’s work enabled farmers to plan their operations effectively since they could predict the quantity of water available to them. He also earned the respect of individual farmers since he frequently supervised the design and installation of his inventions on their land. Consequently, when the USDA needed a knowledgeable and well-respected figure to prepare an economic analysis of the C-BT, Parshall was a clear choice. He possessed an unsinkable reputation as a skilled irrigation engineer with intimate knowledge of the Northern Colorado landscape. Parshall’s Agricultural Economic Summary Relating to the Colorado-Big Thompson Project came out in January 1937. It contained a dizzying array of economic data collected by Parshall and his team of researchers. They compiled statistics on value, acreage, water rights, and loan status for every irrigated farm in the region. They also collected precipitation records, breaking down the quantity of water available for every irrigation district and mutual irrigation company in the C-BT’s service area. Parshall went to pains to show how C-BT water would be an affordable and effective solution to the region’s water woes.

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Even as the data spoke loudly, Parshall’s applied understanding of Northern Colorado’s irrigation-dependent farmers amplified statistics. Aware that a massive Reclamation project might be viewed as a government handout in the midst of the Depression, Parshall characterized the region’s farmers as “hardy, self-reliant American farmers and townpeople” who needed additional water to “stabilize the present economic achieve-
extending his analysis far beyond the $44 million price tag. But Parshall gains made possible by irrigation were greater than could be grown without irrigation.”

In Parshall’s analysis of the seventy million worth of property value to Northern Colorado, he concluded that land values increased with irrigation. Consequently, according to Parshall, the economic structure and economic development. The additional application of water to high value crops might make the difference between breaking even and crushing debt. By reformulating its strategy, the company published reader-friendly versions of scientific articles showing how their beet harvests would increase with just a little more water. In 1936, the company’s sugar beet growers knew that, if water were available, the company’s beet sugar revenues would result in an average annual income increase of $400 per grower. To make the national case for the C-BT, Great Western employed lobby ing. In 1937, Amest shifted from taxes to water. Great Western also took to the airwaves to make its case. In cooperation with other western beet sugar companies, it paid the National Broadcasting Company (NBC) to do a series of short radio programs titled, “Sugar Beets Tell the World.”

The broadcasts emphasized how sugar beets grown on the irrigated regions of the West contributed to the American economy, providing figures on grower income, railroad shipments, resources used in refining beets into sugar, and the varied ways beet sugar was consumed. To hear Great Western tell it, beet sugar was essential to the American economy, and the C-BT was essential to the beet sugar industry.

Ultimately, the arguments made by Ralph Parshall, Great Western Sugar, and supporters of the C-BT proved successful. After spirited debate in June and July of 1937, Congress passed bills approving the project and authorizing an initial $900,000 in funding. The following year in an effort to protect their investment, the company’s ditches ran dry, and it had to beg local irrigation companies for water to complete its operations. So, the company always craved more water, either by cultivate relationships with its growers or through projects such as the C-BT. To energize local C-BT support, Great Western made liberal use of its growers’ magazines, the Sugar Cane, which to Parshall. gains made possible by irrigation were greater than could be grown without irrigation.”

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During the early 1950s, Congressional legislators proposed a series of large-scale projects called the Colorado River Storage Plan, to be constructed for irrigation, power, and flood control at various locales along the river.

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MICHAEL WEEKS is a lecturer in the Department of History and Political Science at Utah Valley University. He is the author of Cattle Cate Bapal: Meat and Industrial Agriculture in Northern Colorado.
How Philip Van Cise took on the KKK and helped end the Klan’s reign of terror in Denver.

BY ALAN PRENDERGAST

They snatched Patrick Walker two blocks from his shop. A 25-year-old optician and active member of the Knights of Columbus, the Catholic fraternal organization, Walker had seen men loitering outside his eyewear store for the better part of a Saturday evening. They were gone when he locked up and walked south on Glennarm Place. But as he approached 21st Street, five men poured out of a car, guns drawn, and hustled him into the vehicle.

They drove north, past Riverside Cemetery, into sparsely populated farmland on the edge of the city. They took him into an isolated shack and asked him questions about his religion. Evidently not happy with the answers, they beat him with the butts of their revolvers, inflicting deep cuts and bruises on his head and shoulders, and told him to leave town. One of the men told Walker that they were KKK and were “looking for a man who had been doing some rotten stuff around town.”

Before he lost consciousness, Walker managed to tell the men that he had done nothing wrong.

The police declared themselves baffled by Walker’s story. He could not identify any of his assailants, even though only one of them wore a mask. No identification, no arrest.

They snatched Ben Laska outside his house. The son of Russian Jewish immigrants and a former vaudeville artist, the 49-year-old defense attorney was known for performing magic tricks. By 1925 he had become the Grand Dragon’s personal attorney.

The investigation went nowhere. Laska eventually made his own peace with the Klan, a fear as amazing as any of his magic tricks. By 1925 he had become the Grand Dragon’s personal attorney.

The beatings were anomalies. Grand Dragon Locke understood that the threat of violence was more palatable and often more effective than actual bloodshed. Get physical, and your foes may feel the need to respond in kind, while your more squeamish followers jump ship. But a well-placed threat, emanating from the unassailable depths of the Invisible Empire, could work wonders. It could instill fear in your enemies and inspire awe in your supporters at the same time.

The intimidation campaign was like the Empire itself, elusive yet ubiquitous. On the night of November 10, 1923, less than two weeks after the assault on Walker, eleven crosses were ignited at locations across the city. One was on the steps of the Capitol building; another, on the threshold of the Black neighborhood known as Five Points; others at parks and green spaces across the metro area. Alarmed city council members demanded an investigation. Mayor Stapleton and police officials downplayed the incident; they said they weren’t convinced there had been any crosses and didn’t see anything to investigate. A few weeks later, a string of crosses blazed in the foothills west of Denver, visible for miles.

Van Cise was formally awarded a Distinguished Service Medal for his work as an intelligence officer in World War I in a 1922 ceremony, while his wife, Sara, and children Eleanor and Edwin looked on. Courtesy of the Van Cise Family. 
Caravans of Kluxers drove through west Denver neighborhoods on Friday nights, hooting and honking, mocking Jewish residents and their Sabbath.

Caravans of Kluxers drove through west Denver neighborhoods on Friday nights, hooting and honking, mocking Jewish residents and their Sabbath. Klansmen teamed up with hellfire Protestant ministers to host lectures on the Catholic menace. The Knights of Columbus were vilified as the advance guard in the Pope’s master plan to take over America; a fake Knights of Columbus oath, which bound the initiates to wage war on “all heretics, Protestant and Masons” to the point of annihilation, circulated widely among the credulous. Possibly because they were more numerous, the harassment seemed to be directed at Catholics more than other groups. A savage KKK missive to the Denver Catholic Register held the group together. Locke heartily supported, emphasized “klannishness” — the concept that Klansmen must support each other in all endeavors. That meant voting for the “right” candidates, regardless of their party affiliation, and patronizing Klan businesses. It also meant shunning businesses that employed or catered to Blacks, Catholics, Jews, and other “wrong” types until they knuckled under or were driven out of business.

In Colorado, Klansmen were encouraged to advertise their businesses at KKK meetings, paying two dollars for the privilege of having a slide with a company logo projected on a screen for a few moments every week for three months. Members also to let other klansmen know their shops were Klan-approved by putting signs in the window that proclaimed they were “100% American” or TWK (Trade With Klansmen) — or simply by announcing that they offered “Kwik Kar Kare” or some other KKK-branded service. Extensive lists were drawn up of businesses to be boycotted, including the Neusteter’s department store, owned by Jews. Many prominent businessmen embraced klannishness, including Gano Senter, owner of several restaurants downtown and a grand titan of the KKK. A virulent anti-Catholic, Senter posted signs in his Radio Café announcing, “We serve fish every day — except Friday,” and welcoming those in the know to a “Kool Kozy Café.” His wife, Lona, was an auxiliary devoted mainly to charity work. The Senter’s café quickly became a central gathering place for prominent Kluxers, who socialized in the upstairs cigar room.

The Klan’s objectives were much more than larger than the Kiwanis Club. “It may call itself Klan, but in reality it is a mob.” One of Stapleton’s first appointments was Rice Means, the manager of the Stapleton administration had promoted klannishness — one city agency after another. The result wasn’t pretty. It resembled the work of an army of carpenter ants, burrowing its way inside the bole of a maple tree and hollowing it out, leaving behind a pile of sawdust and a stately husk, ready to collapse.

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edly being groomed for higher things by Locke. Stapleton soon named him as city attorney, filling the mantle of safety post with another Klanman, Reuben Hershey. Over at the police department, Stapleton retained the services of the sitting chief, Rugg Williams, for several months, despite mounting pressure from Locke to replace him with someone of the Grand Dragon’s choosing. Williams was a placeholder at best; word was that Locke to replace him with someone of pleton retained the services of the sit -

Over at the police department, Sta-

Reuben Hershey.

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more as a taciturn, humorless accoun-
tacled and owlish, who came across

in 1918. He was a slight man, bespec-

six-year term as a district court judge

member, Morley had been elected to a

grand jury in the criminal division at the

start of the year. Morley took a klannish

tentative to empanel a new grand

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start of the year. Morley took a klannish

approach to the process. He selected,
of the twelve names that had been ran-
domly selected for jury duty and issued

subpoenas, summoning a Klan-ap-

proved squad of replacements. Morley

insisted that they hire the district at-

dorn's defense; he seemed

Van Cise’s closing argument in the

Brindisi case was a memorable one. He

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Van Cise recognized that the recall process might be the best chance of stopping the Klan in its takeover of city government. A successful criminal prosecution of the group was unlikely — not in Morley’s courtroom, surely, and not on Candlish’s watch. He had to find a way to take the intel he’d gathered on the Klan leadership and deliver it, all neatly tied in a bow, to a higher court: the citizens of Denver.

• • •

A public official looking to spill secrets in Denver had many niche publications to choose from, including a Black weekly, a Jewish weekly, and a Catholic weekly. But of the four major dailies in town, only one had shown any appetite for going after the Klan. The Rocky Mountain News and the Denver Times, both owned by the same company, had Kluxers in management and were largely mute about the organization. The Denver Post blew hot and cold; at Klan meetings, Locke bragged of having taken one of the paper’s owners, Harry Tammen, for a ride one night and “made him a Christian.” Another insider account had it that Locke had ordered Tammen’s partner, Frederick Bonfils, to retract an unflattering story and run another one praising the Klan — or else his newspaper building would become “the flattest place on Champa Street.”

With the other newspapers so compromised, that left the runt of the litter, the Denver Express. Owned by the Scripps-Howard chain, the paper had a puny circulation and no showcase Sunday edition. It lured working-class readers with celebrity gossip, puzzles and contests. But led by editor Sidney B. Whipple — a short, skinny Dartmouth grad in his mid-thirties, who’d been a foreign correspondent in prewar London and found journalism too exciting a vice to give up — the Express did more investigative reporting on the Klan than anybody else. Initially an earnest supporter of Stapleton, Whipple had spent considerable time and ink repenting his decision and tracing the mayor’s unsavory connections.

On March 27, 1924, the Express dropped a bomb on City Hall — the first installment of a week-long series entitled “Invisible Government.” The exposé peeked under the sheets and named names. Outed as Kluxers: Mayor Stapleton. Manager of Safety Hershey. City Attorney Means. Chief Candlish. Judge Morley. Police magistrates Albert Orahood and Henry Bray. Carl Milliken, Colorado’s Secretary of State. “At least” seven police sergeants and twenty-one patrol officers. And “nearly all, if not all, of the present country grand jury now in session.”

The report didn’t identify its sources, but Van Cise’s fingerprints were all over the piece. Among other giveaways, the article mentioned that Dr. Locke was planning to put a Klansman in the governor’s office, and that the district attorney had been approached about the job and turned Locke down flat. By nightfall the series was the talk of the town — and an emerging crisis for the Klan. If this was the opening salvo, what was in store for the next seven days? That evening Locke’s office had a steady stream of visitors — mostly men huddled in overcoats with their hats pulled low. At ten o’clock an Express reporter confronted Judge Morley as he emerged from the building. Why was a district judge paying a call on the Grand Dragon at such a late hour? Morley said that he’d been feeling ill and decided to consult his physician.

Klan members stage a Memorial Day parade in downtown Denver on May 31, 1926. Tens of thousands were expected to attend; less than 500 showed up. History Colorado Collection, PHROP13743
The next morning two men barged into the Express office and demanded to see the editor. They showed Whipple an arrest warrant and told him he was summoned to appear before the grand jury. The panel had been dormant for weeks, but the Express series had brought it back to life, for Whipple had obtained the information it was publishing. Before they took him away, Whipple told an assistant to call Van Cise and let him know he was being arrested.

Van Cise was waiting at the courthouse when Whipple and his escort arrived. He followed them as they went upstairs to the grand jury room and went inside. Two Klansmen stationed by the door tried to bar the district attorney from entering. He pushed past them and went in. He was succinct. The grand jury, he informed the panel, has now said, “and notwithstanding the additional erroneous instructions to this hand-picked, notwithstanding the additional erroneous instructions to this hand-picked, august source. His dogged coverage provided by a well-informed anonymous source. His dogged coverage made him and his small paper finalists for each juror and one for the judge. Van Cise stood up.

In the wake of the Express series, eleven of the newspaper’s largest advertisers were told to stop doing business with the paper or face a Klan boycott. Several compiled, costing the newspaper substantial revenue.

“Notwithstanding what this court has now said,” he began, “and notwithstanding the additional erroneous instructions to this hand-picked, so-called grand jury, I now have the pleasure of serving both the court and all the jurors with writs of mandate from the Supreme Court of Colorado, ordering you to hold no further sessions of this jury without the presence of the district attorney.”

The writs were handed out in dead silence. Morley read his copy and turned to his grand jury. “Gentleman of the jury, you are excused for one week,” he said. “The court will be in recess.”

Morley’s attempt to challenge the order was argued in the Supreme Court at the end of the week. The law was on Van Cise’s side, the decision unanimous in his favor. By that point the grand jury’s term had expired, with no indictments issued against anyone.

In the wake of the Express series, eleven of the newspaper’s largest advertisers were told to stop doing business with the paper or face a Klan boycott. Several compiled, costing the newspaper substantial revenue. But Whipple kept sticking his nose in the Klan’s business and pushing for the mayor’s recall, drawing heavily on information provided by a well-informed anonymous source. His dogged coverage made him and his small paper finalists in the reporting category for the 1925 Pulitzer Prize.

Van Cise savored his victory over Morley’s grand jury. It showed that the Klan could be beaten; its influence had not yet reached the highest court in the state. But the most important battles were still ahead, the mayoral recall and the statewide elections in November — battles that would be fought in the streets and the voting booth, not in court.

As it turned out, the Invisible Empire had the numbers and the strategy to prevail. Stapleton easily fended off the recall, Rice Means became a U.S. Senator, and Clarence Morley became the governor of Colorado. But that stunning wave of victories was only the prelude to an even more astonishing series of political defeats. Just months after the election, the Colorado Klan’s leadership would be mired in scandal and internecine warfare. In his last days in office, Van Cise would make a crucial contribution to the group’s rapid collapse, filing felony charges against Grand Dragon Locke and laying the groundwork for other damaging revelations to come.

Editor’s Note: This article is an excerpt from GANGBUSTER: One Man’s Battle Against Crime, Corruption, and the Klan by Alan Prendergast, a nonfiction account that draws on archival records of Van Cise’s war on the Klan.

ALAN PRENDERGAST is a Denver journalist whose stories on the justice system have appeared in numerous local and national publications. His book Gangbuster was published in March 2023.
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