

# COLORADO HISTORICAL SOCIETY

## COLORADO STATE REGISTER OF HISTORIC PROPERTIES NOMINATION FORM

**SECTION I**

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**Name of Property**

Historic Name FLOWERS STORE

Other Names CACHE LA POUFRE GRANGE #456

**Address of Property**

address not for publication

Street Address 2929 N. COUNTY ROAD 23

City BELLVUE

County LARIMER

Zip 80512

**Present Owner of Property**

(for multiple ownership, list the names and addresses of each owner on one or more continuation sheets)

Name CACHE LA POUFRE GRANGE #456

Address 2929 N. COUNTY ROAD 23

Phone 970/484-9143

City BELLVUE

State CO

Zip 80512

**Owner Consent for Nomination**

(attach signed consent from each owner of property - see attached form)

**Preparer of Nomination**

Name RON SLADEK, PRESIDENT

Date 23 NOVEMBER 2005

Organization TATANKA HISTORICAL ASSOCIATES, INC.

Address P.O. BOX 1909

Phone 970-221-1095

City FORT COLLINS

State CO

Zip 80522

**FOR OFFICIAL USE:**

Site Number 5LR.795

11/23/2005 Nomination Received

Senate # \_\_\_\_\_

House # \_\_\_\_\_

2/17/2006 Review Board Recommendation  
 Approval  Denial

2/24/2006 CHS Board State Register Listing  
 Approved  Denied

**Certification of Listing:** President, Colorado Historical Society

Date

**COLORADO STATE REGISTER OF HISTORIC PROPERTIES**

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**SECTION II**

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**Local Historic Designation**

Has the property received local historic designation?

no

yes ---  individually designated  designated as part of a historic district

Date designated \_\_\_\_\_

Designated by \_\_\_\_\_ (Name of municipality or county)

**Use of Property**

Historic COMMERCE/ TRADE /department store

Current SOCIAL/ meeting hall

**Original Owner** JACOB FLOWERS

Source of Information FORT COLLINS COURIER, 10 JULY 1884

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**Year of Construction** 1882

Source of Information FORT COLLINS COURIER, 10 JULY 1884

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**Architect, Builder, Engineer, Artist or Designer** UNKNOWN

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Source of Information \_\_\_\_\_

**Locational Status**

Original location of structure(s)

Structure(s) moved to current location

Date of move \_\_\_\_\_

**SECTION III**

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**Description and Alterations**

(describe the current and original appearance of the property and any alterations on one or more continuation sheets)

**COLORADO STATE REGISTER OF HISTORIC PROPERTIES**

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**SECTION IV**

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**Significance of Property**

**Nomination Criteria**

- A** - property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to history
- B** - property is connected with persons significant in history
- C** - property has distinctive characteristics of a type, period, method of construction or artisan
- D** - property is of geographic importance
- E** - property contains the possibility of important discoveries related to prehistory or history

**Areas of Significance**

- |   |  |  |
|---|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Agriculture                        | <input type="checkbox"/> Economics                     | <input type="checkbox"/> Landscape                 |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Architecture            | <input type="checkbox"/> Education                     | Architecture                                       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Archaeology – prehistoric          | <input type="checkbox"/> Engineering                   | <input type="checkbox"/> Law                       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Archaeology – historic             | <input type="checkbox"/> Entertainment/ Recreation     | <input type="checkbox"/> Literature                |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Art                                | <input type="checkbox"/> Ethnic Heritage               | <input type="checkbox"/> Military                  |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Commerce                | <input type="checkbox"/> Exploration/ Settlement       | <input type="checkbox"/> Performing Arts           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Communications                     | <input type="checkbox"/> Geography/ Community Identity | <input type="checkbox"/> Politics/ Government      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Community Planning and Development | <input type="checkbox"/> Health/Medicine               | <input type="checkbox"/> Religion                  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Conservation                       | <input type="checkbox"/> Industry                      | <input type="checkbox"/> Science                   |
|   | <input type="checkbox"/> Invention                     | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Social History |
|   |  | <input type="checkbox"/> Transportation            |

**Significance Statement**

(explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets)

**Bibliography**

(cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets)

**SECTION V**

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**Locational Information**

Lot(s) 1 & 3 Block 1 Addition ORIGINAL BELLVUE TOWNSITE

USGS Topographic Quad Map LAPORTE 7.5' (1979)

**Verbal Boundary Description of Nominated Property**

(describe the boundaries of the nominated property on a continuation sheet)

**COLORADO STATE REGISTER OF HISTORIC PROPERTIES**

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**SECTION VI**

**Photograph Log for Black and White Photographs**

(prepare a photograph log on one or more continuation sheets)

**SECTION VII**

**ADDITIONAL MATERIALS TO ACCOMPANY NOMINATION**

**Owner Consent Form**

**Black and White Photographs**

**Color Slides**

**Sketch Map(s)**

**Photocopy of USGS Map Section**

**Optional Materials**

**For Office Use Only**

Property Type:  building(s)  district  site  structure  object  area

Architectural Style/Engineering Type: 19<sup>th</sup> Century Commercial

Period of Significance: 1882-1948

Level of Significance:  Local  State  National

Acreage less than one

P.M. 6th Township 8N Range 69W Section 25 Quarter Sections NE NE SE SE

UTM Reference: Zone 13 Easting 485529 Northing 4497418

Site Elevation: 5118 feet

Property Name FLOWERS STORE

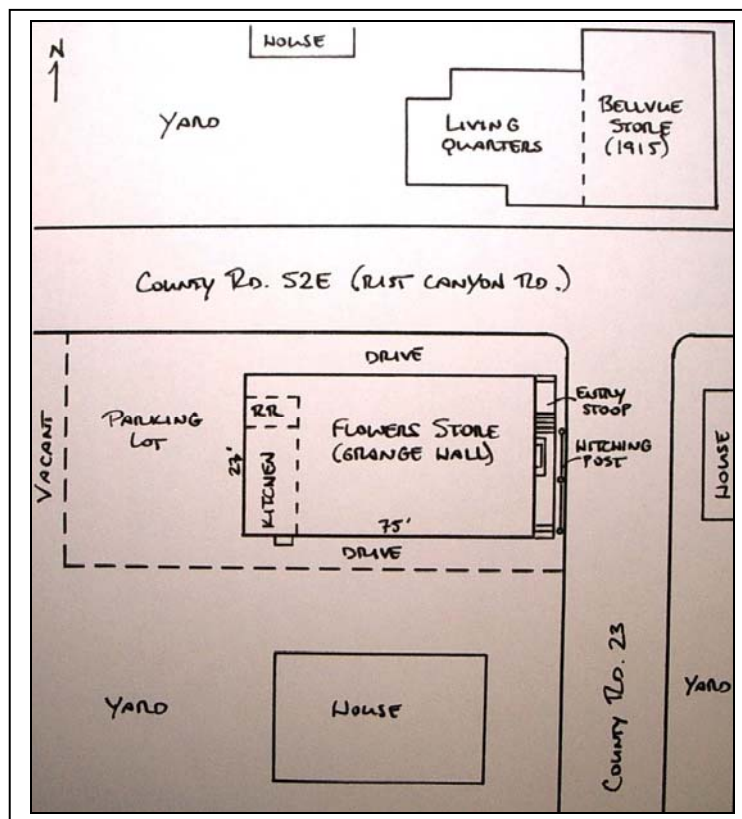
**DESCRIPTION and ALTERATIONS**

**Current Setting and Use**

The Flowers Store is located on the southwest corner of the intersection of County Road 52E and County Road 23 in the unincorporated town of Bellvue, Larimer County. At this location is a 50' x 190' parcel of land occupied by the 27' x 75' Flowers Store. The building is constructed almost to the eastern edge of the property, with narrow drives on the north and south and a small unpaved parking lot to the west. Since 1948, the Flowers Store has been owned and utilized by the Cache la Poudre Grange #456 as a regular meeting hall and for special community events.

Bordering the site to the north is County Road 52E, across which are the wood-frame Bellvue Store and residences; to the east is County Road 23, across which are a residence and vacant land; to the south is a residence; and to the west are a small vacant lot and a residence. The Flowers Store sits at the primary T-intersection in Bellvue, where it has for decades been one of the defining features of the town. County Road 52E (Rist Canyon Rd.), which runs along the north edge of the site, connects the town of Laporte to the east with Bellvue and then continues toward the west where it travels up Rist Canyon into the mountains. County Road 23, along the east edge of the site, runs due south from its intersection with County Road 52E through crop fields and pasture. This road formerly connected Bellvue with the community of Stout and its stone quarries several miles to the south. Since the 1950s, the original road, together with Stout and its quarries, have been inundated by Horsetooth Reservoir, with Horsetooth Dam rising above Pleasant Valley to the north.

**Site Diagram**  
(not to scale)



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### **Description of the Flowers Store**

The Flowers Store is a 27' x 75' rectangular building constructed in 1882 to house a pioneer mercantile business, the first to appear in the newly-formed town of Bellvue. Generally the building consists of a full basement and main floor supported by a stone foundation, and its exterior walls are constructed of locally-quarried red and grey sandstone. Along the two street elevations (north and east), the walls exhibit finely crafted rock-faced coursed grey sandstone ashlar. The side (south) and rear (west) elevations feature random coursing of squared grey sandstone rubble. Employing different shades of stone to achieve a decorative appearance, the building is ornamented with darker red quoins on the exposed southeast, northeast, and northwest corners. Alternating dark red and lighter grey blocks of stone, together with red sandstone banding, decorate the facade.

While the basement level of the Flowers Store is almost completely below grade along the south and west elevations, about 2/3 of its height is exposed along the north and east. When the building was constructed, and throughout the period of significance, the grade of County Road 23 along the north edge of the site was several feet lower than it is today. Originally the north basement wall was completely exposed, and the early window and door openings that provided light and direct access to the basement are still present although partly below grade. The exposed basement level along the east elevation is largely obscured by the front entry stoop and appears to have never included openings of any kind. Two small original windows were also present above grade on the south elevation during the building's early years. Today these windows are below grade, with just one stone lintel observable from outside the building.

The symmetrical facade of the Flowers Store faces east onto County Road 23 and is characterized by a concrete and sandstone main entry stoop, the building's primary entrance with two large flanking storefront windows, and stone ornamentation as described in greater detail below. A secondary main-floor entrance is found on the south elevation near the building's southwest corner. The only other entrance was the basement level freight door mentioned above, although this is now inaccessible due to the change in grade adjacent to the building. The building has a flat composition roof, bordered on the north, south and east by a short sandstone parapet wall. Projecting through the parapet along the south elevation is an iron flue pipe with a cap that contains the words "Ohio Draft." Rising through the roof at the central edge of the west wall is a short brick chimney.

#### **East (Front) Elevation Details:**

The symmetrical east elevation is the most heavily ornamented, given that it contains the building's primary facade. The main entrance is accessed from street level by way of a sandstone and concrete stoop. Six original sandstone steps rise from the north and three from the south to reach the concrete landing in front of the entry. This landing is somewhat arched and the concretework (which appears to have been in place for many decades) likely encases the remainder of the original stonework that formed the stoop. In front of the stoop to the east is a hitching post or rail constructed of slender vertical and horizontal logs. Attached to the stonework along the building side of the stoop are two slender pipe handrails that appear to be old but not original. An old, broken elevation marker that can no longer be read is inset into one of the sandstone treads close to the building wall. According to the USGS topographic maps, this was a benchmark showing the elevation at 5,124' above sea level.

Filling the main entry today is a modern panel door set into the original wood frame with a

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sandstone threshold below. The door is surrounded by modern wood paneling, with a sign identifying the building as the home of the Cache la Poudre Grange #456. Flanking the doorway are two tall sandstone pilasters constructed of alternating grey and red blocks with rock facing and scored edges. On either side of these pilasters are large storefront window spaces that have been filled with modern vertical wood paneling installed several decades ago due to repeated breakage of the windows by vandals. Attached to the paneling are signs identifying the other occupant of the building, the Bellvue Senior Center. Below the modern paneling are the original horizontal wood panels that supported the windows. These are in turn supported beneath by shaped sandstone sills. Stretching above the doorway and windows is the original wood cornice, which runs almost the entire width of the building. The parapet wall above is ornamented with alternating horizontal bands of grey and red sandstone, together with a red dentil course.

#### **North (Side) Elevation Details:**

Due to its street exposure along County Road 52E (Rist Canyon Rd.), the north elevation of the Flowers Store is also ornamented with finely crafted stonework on its partially exposed basement and main floor levels. The basement level was originally fully exposed until the grade of the adjacent roadway was raised several decades ago. Today the four basement window and door openings are filled with concrete blocks due to this grade change and because they were repeatedly broken by vandals. However they retain their red sandstone lintels and grey stone surrounds, and the larger freight door space has a heavy timber lintel that is also still in its original location.

On the main floor, the building contains no windows or entrances. Otherwise, this elevation is ornamented solely with its coursed grey rock-faced sandstone and darker red corner quoin blocks. A modern metal flue pipe rises vertically along this wall from the basement, projecting through one of the concrete block-filled window spaces, and terminating just above the short parapet wall. Adjacent to this pipe and high on the wall is a historic flue opening (the building was originally heated with pot-bellied stoves) that has been filled with a small metal plate. S-shaped iron tie bar plates are located at equidistant points along the upper portion of the wall, approximately 14" below the parapet cap.

#### **West (Rear) Elevation Details:**

Facing the rear parking lot, the west elevation of the Flowers Store is not ornamented, with its wall constructed of grey sandstone rubble set in random coursing. Two main floor windows are located there, both of them filled with wood paneling. However they retain their sandstone lintels and sills, together with the original wood window surrounds. The only other feature of note on this elevation is the presence of an old metal yard light that is attached to the upper rear wall of the building.

#### **South (Side) Elevation Details:**

Facing the narrow side driveway, the south elevation of the Flowers Store is not ornamented,

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with its wall constructed of grey sandstone rubble set in random coursing. The basement level was previously more exposed than it is today, and the sandstone lintel for one window can still be seen projecting above grade. From the interior of the basement, it is possible to see that this elevation originally contained two exposed windows. On the main floor, the building contains no windows at all. Otherwise, this elevation is characterized by the presence of a secondary entrance near the southwest corner that provides direct access into the kitchen. This entry is reached by way of two old concrete steps and contains a non-historic solid core door set into an old wood frame with a sandstone lintel and sandstone threshold below. S-shaped iron tie bar plates are located at equidistant points along the upper portion of the wall, approximately 14" below the parapet cap.

### **Interior Details:**

The interior of the Flowers Store is simply made up of the unfinished basement and main floor hall. Access to the basement is found through a floor hatch in the kitchen, below which a wooden stairway drops below grade inside the southwest corner of the building. The full basement is characterized by a dirt floor, exposed stone walls, and a ceiling that was partially finished with lath and plaster. The window and door spaces on the north are filled with concrete blocks, and the now-below grade windows on the south are exposed. Groundwater has been seeping into the damp basement for years and part of the dirt floor is constantly muddy.

The main floor consists mostly of what is now the Grange hall, together with a kitchen and two restrooms toward the west end of the building. The interior features the original oak flooring, tongue-in-groove ceiling, and plastered walls. An entry vestibule and cabinets have been constructed at the main entrance and non-historic fluorescent lights are suspended from the ceiling. Two areas of the wood floor, along the north and south walls, are darkened from the historic presence of pot-bellied stoves at these locations, and the flue openings (covered by pie tins) can be seen on the walls above. Hanging from the picture rails along the north and south walls are presidential portraits, a framed copy of the Cache la Poudre Grange's 1944 charter from the Patrons of Husbandry, and a framed 1967 needlepoint celebrating the National Grange's centennial. Mounted on the kitchen wall and facing the Grange hall is a cabinet containing trophies and awards related to the activities of the local Grange organization.

### **Alterations to the Flowers Store**

Alterations to the exterior of the Flowers Store are largely limited to the closure of windows and doors on both levels due to the combined impact of grade changes to County Road 52E and vandalism. These alterations took place decades ago as the Cache la Poudre Grange struggled with how to deal with impacts to the building and its surroundings. Specifically, the basement windows and doors on the north are no longer fully exposed and have been filled with concrete block. On the main floor, the original windows have been covered with siding and the two doors replaced with modern ones. These alterations were completed due to frequent vandalism during the 1960s and 1970s, together with re-grading of County Road 52E that raised both its elevation and the level of the grounds around the building. Even with these changes, the window spaces and doorways are in their historic locations and retain their original lintels, sills, thresholds and surrounds. According to members of the Grange, the storefront windows are present but encased within modern siding both inside and out.



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The front stoop has also undergone some alteration, although much of this appears to have taken place more than fifty years ago. In general, the stoop is largely intact with its original size and sandstone steps. However the addition of concrete to the upper landing encased the original stonework there. This most likely was completed to stabilize the stoop after the grade in front of the building along County Road 23 was lowered to improve the intersection. In addition, older members of the Grange recall that during the late 1940s and early 1950s, when Horsetooth Reservoir was under construction to the south, numerous trucks heavily laden with dirt passed the building daily. These vehicles caused intense vibration of the ground at the intersection where the building is located, and the movement in turn started to damage the building's stonework. This in itself may have resulted in a need to stabilize the front stoop with concrete.

On the interior, the building has been altered somewhat with the installation of a small main entry vestibule, along with a kitchen and restrooms at the rear. These changes took place after the building was acquired by the Grange in 1948, do not reach the full height of the ceiling, and have resulted in minimal impact to the building's historic interior. All of the noted alterations appear to have taken place between 1948 and the 1970s.

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## SIGNIFICANCE STATEMENT

The 1882 Flowers Store is the oldest and most important commercial and community building in Bellvue and the surrounding Pleasant Valley. In recognition of this prominent building's masonry construction and its role as the commercial and social center of Bellvue and the Pleasant Valley between 1882 and 1948, this document seeks to nominate the Flowers Store for designation on the State Register of Historic Properties. The Flowers Store is therefore nominated under Criteria A, B, and C for the following reasons:

**Criterion A** – The Flowers Store is nominated under Criterion A for its association with the Social History of Bellvue and Pleasant Valley from 1882 through 1948. With his successful new mercantile business acting as the commercial center of the valley starting in 1882, and eager to see the community flourish in the coming years, pioneer Jacob Flowers dedicated additional time and energy to impacting its early social life. Known as “Uncle Jake” to residents of the agricultural district and its surrounding sandstone quarries, he made his store a welcome gathering place for locals to share friendship and a sense of community. Inside the store, Flowers installed card tables, a pool table, a small saloon, and chairs. He encouraged customers to linger there by serving free coffee and snacks, and made sure that the Bellvue post office resided in his building to attract daily visits. Not only was this good business practice, but Flowers understood that his efforts encouraged social interaction in the community by providing residents and visitors with a convenient, comfortable place to gather. Nearby, Flowers created a race track, picnic ground, and bandstand to facilitate community leisure activities during the warmer months (today these features are gone). Finally, moved by the occasional personal and financial troubles encountered by his fellow pioneers, Flowers planted gardens and set aside extra provisions, acting in effect as a one-man relief center for those in need.

Following Flowers' death in 1900, his son Benjamin and then another owner continued to operate the building in Bellvue as a combined store and center of community life for another fifteen years. In 1915 the building ceased operating as a commercial enterprise yet continued to serve the community for decades to come in other capacities. Between that year and 1948, the old Flowers Store opened its doors regularly to host numerous community meetings, funerals, receptions, elections, parties and Saturday night dances. Its open space and wood floor also allowed it to serve during the 1920s and 1930s in part as a roller skating rink. Throughout the seasons, year after year, the citizens of Bellvue and Pleasant Valley utilized this important building as the only community gathering place available to them. The period of significance for Criterion A starts with the completion of the building in 1882 and ends in 1948.

**Criterion B** – The Flowers Store is nominated under Criterion B for its association with Commerce/Trade in the Bellvue area during the pioneer era. Built in 1882 by Jacob Flowers to house his new mercantile enterprise, the building served through 1915 as Bellvue's only source of groceries, general merchandise, and lumber. Flowers came to the area in 1874 after a thirty-year career as a Midwest riverboat captain and farmer. In Pleasant Valley he engaged in farming and lumbering for a number of years before founding the town of Bellvue in 1882. That same year, Flowers strategically constructed his store where it would dominate the primary intersection of the emerging town. Over the following thirty-three years, the building housed a general store that offered the area's pioneer farmers, ranchers and quarry workers a place to

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obtain food and merchandise that not only met their daily needs but also provided modern conveniences and a sense of connection to American commerce and material abundance. Beginning with Flowers' appointment as postmaster in 1884, the building also served for years as the valley's post office. General stores and post offices were important to the success of any pioneer community, and the Flowers Store stood alone in Bellvue throughout its pioneer era in serving the new community in these respects. The period of significance for Criterion B is 1882 – 1900, the years that Jacob Flowers owned and operated the store.

**Criterion C** – The Flowers Store is nominated under Criterion C in the area of Architecture for its type, period and method of construction. The building was erected in 1882 by local stonemasons using red and grey sandstone collected from area quarries. By the 1870s, the hills surrounding Pleasant Valley were a beehive of activity as numerous quarries were opened to provide stone for the construction of buildings, sidewalks, walls and other features throughout the northern Front Range and northeastern plains of Colorado. Rail spurs were extended into the area, one of them running through Pleasant Valley, so the stone could be shipped to more distant cities such as Denver, Omaha and Kansas City. The sandstone quarries near the valley were particularly noted for their various hues of red, known as Bellvue Redstone, which made an attractive and highly sought-after building material. Because of the abundance of local stone, numerous buildings in Bellvue, Fort Collins, Laporte and other nearby communities were constructed of the material throughout the last several decades of the 1800s and into the early 1900s. Included among these were the Flowers Store (1882), Flowers House (1880), Bellvue School (circa 1885), and several other houses in Bellvue. In Fort Collins the list includes the Avery Block (1897), Miller Block (1888), Fort Collins Library (1904), Avery House (1879), and numerous other residences, churches, university buildings, and commercial blocks. The Flowers Store is the only commercial building in Bellvue to have been constructed of stone, and as such is significant for its architectural merit. The period of significance for Criterion C is 1882.

Today the Flowers Store retains a preponderance of its exterior materials and appearance. Its finely crafted stonework is intact and unchanged from the date of construction, and the storefront can still be seen and clearly identified as such. The building's interior exhibits its original wood flooring, plastered walls, and tongue-in-groove ceiling. None of the exterior or interior alterations described have seriously diminished the overall character of the building. In general, the Flowers Store exhibits a good degree of historic integrity related to its period of significance.

## HISTORY OF THE FLOWERS STORE

The small northern Colorado town of Bellvue is located in the heart of Pleasant Valley at the base of the foothills northwest of Fort Collins. Occupied by rich agricultural fields, irrigation canals and two state fish hatcheries, the valley is bordered by foothills and hogbacks in all directions, together with the Cache la Poudre River, which emerges from the mountains to the northwest and flows to the southeast along the northern and eastern borders of Pleasant Valley. Somewhere in the vicinity of Bellvue is the storied but lost location of the cache of gunpowder that gave the river its name. Rising to the northeast is the dominating Bellvue Fold, a massive dome of uplifted bedrock that has stood watch over Peaceful Valley for millennia. To the southeast, the valley is bordered by Bingham Hill with its well-tended pioneer cemetery. Two miles due south of town the valley terminates at the base of Horsetooth Dam, the earthen wall that has retained the deep waters of Horsetooth Reservoir since the late 1930s. With all of the changes that Larimer County

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experienced over the past century, Bellvue and Peaceful Valley remain little changed from their appearance in the late 1800s.

From the early to mid-1800s, Pleasant Valley was occupied by undeveloped open land used as the periodic home of a band of several hundred Northern Arapahoe led by their chief, Friday. By the 1850s, aging fur trappers and frontiersmen of French-Canadian and Scotch-Irish origin had settled in the area, where they built log cabins along the Poudre River and in the nearby settlement of Laporte. Anglo-American pioneers arrived shortly afterward, and by 1860 were filing claims on large tracts of land, erecting log cabins and barns, excavating irrigation ditches, and laying out crop fields, pasture and orchards. It was there in the valley that the first irrigation ditch drawing water from the Poudre River was completed. With a priority date of June 1860, the ditch was the second to be placed into use on the northeastern plains of what was about to become the Colorado Territory. Throughout the 1860s and into the early 1870s, additional pioneers arrived in Pleasant Valley to establish farms and ranches. Among these early arrivals were Jacob and Elizabeth Flowers, who due to their ambition, entrepreneurship and hospitality were to change the area forever.

Jacob Flowers was born in Greene County, in the southwest corner of Pennsylvania, on 4 July 1827 to immigrant parents from France and Germany. From 1844 to 1866, Flowers lived in the Ohio River Valley, where he worked as a riverboat captain. He eventually owned three steam vessels that transported passengers and goods between Marietta, Ohio and St. Louis, Missouri. In January 1852, Flowers married Elizabeth Meeks in Wood County, Virginia across the Ohio River from Marietta and the couple started a family that would eventually include six children. During the Civil War, Flowers' boats were utilized to haul soldiers and supplies for the Union Army. After a storm destroyed two of his riverboats in 1866, Flowers decided to head west to the frontier. Jacob and Elizabeth sold their real estate holdings in Ohio, loaded the remaining boat with their six children and household belongings, and steamed down the Ohio River and then up the Missouri to Kansas City. There they sold the boat and settled for several years in the farming community of Wyandotte, Kansas, which today is a suburb of Kansas City.

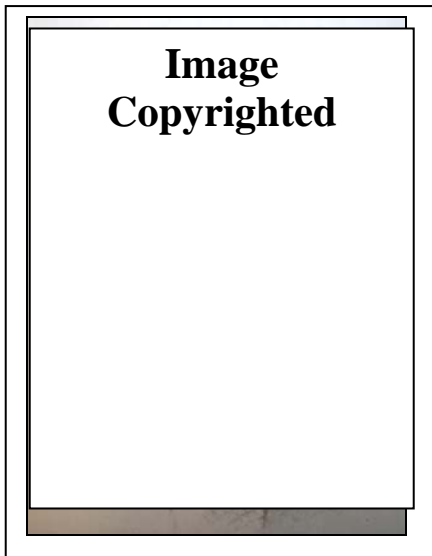
After seven years in Kansas, Jacob was certain that his future lay farther west so he helped form the Wyandotte Colony, a group of families that developed plans to move into the frontier and form their own agricultural settlement. Flowers and another member of the colony by the name of Laidlaw visited the Colorado Territory in the fall of 1872 to scout a location for the new settlement. In the spring of 1873 twenty-five families headed west, however their plans to stay together somehow fell apart. While some relocated near the recently-established communal settlement of Greeley, others continued up the Cache la Poudre River to the area around Fort Collins. Because of his many years as a riverboat captain accustomed to working and socializing with a diverse cross-section of humanity, Flowers was uncomfortable with the homogenous population in Greeley's Union Colony and their strict religious mores. Searching for the right place to stake their future, the family moved on to Fort Collins, arriving there on 1 May 1873.

During their first year in Colorado Territory the Flowers family farmed north of Fort Collins and the following year traded land in Kansas to prominent local Joseph Mason for acreage in Pleasant Valley six miles to the northwest. There, on their land along the north side of the Rist Canyon Road (today's County Road 52E), Jacob and Elizabeth settled down for the remainder of their lives. After their initial 1874 crop was destroyed by grasshoppers, Jacob purchased a sawmill in the Buckhorn region above Pleasant Valley and began to supply the area with lumber. Critical to this work was the development of logging roads in the mountains, and later that year Jacob accepted an appointment as a county road overseer, the first of several political and community offices he was to occupy throughout his years in Colorado. In 1879 he surveyed and developed what became known as the "Old Flowers Road," which pushed through the rough terrain of the

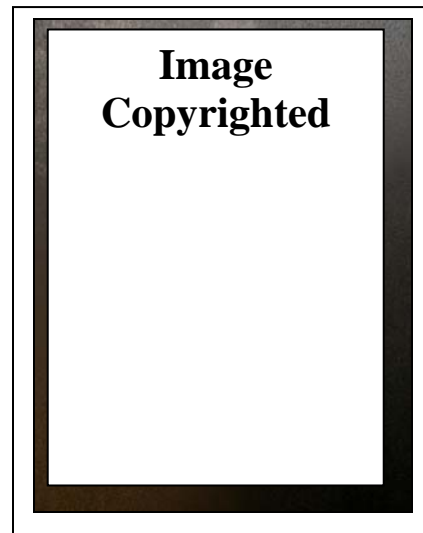
Property Name FLOWERS STORE

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upper Poudre River watershed to reach expanses of alpine timber that were harvested over the following years. Eventually the road was completed to the North Park town of Walden. On his farm in Pleasant Valley, Flowers established an orchard where he grew apples and cherries, proving that fruit could be grown in the region. With the farm and timber business growing and providing stability, in 1880 Jacob and Elizabeth constructed a two-story family home using locally quarried red sandstone. As a result of his agricultural and timbering success, in 1879 Jacob was elected president of the Pleasant Valley and Lake Canal Ditch Company and in 1881 he became a Larimer County Commissioner.



**Jacob Flowers**



**Elizabeth Flowers**

By the early 1880s, the Pleasant Valley area sported a reputation as both a thriving agricultural district and as the source of attractive building stone valued for its various shades of red. A decade later, the *Fort Collins Express* referred to Bellvue as the "Home of the Redstone," praising "the wonderful qualities and beauties of the Bellvue Production" (Industrial Edition, 1894). Quarry workers were employed by the hundreds to meet the demand for building stone. While some of these crewmembers stayed in hotels established by the railroads and dormitories built by quarry owners, many pitched tents or erected simple cabins along the Poudre River. Others built or purchased homes in Bellvue after the town was established. Quarries stretched northward along the hogbacks toward Owl Canyon and numerous others were located along the hills south of Pleasant Valley in the direction of the communities of Stout, Masonville, and Arkins. Railroads invested in some of the quarries and developed spur lines to haul stone to growing communities throughout northern Colorado, among them Fort Collins, Greeley, Loveland, and Denver. Before long one of these spurs passed through Pleasant Valley a short distance east of the Flowers home, with several trains making their way through the valley each day. Numerous shipments of locally-quarried building stone were sent by rail to distant locales such as Omaha and Kansas City, and the area was thriving.

The entrepreneurial spirit of Jacob Flowers led him to see a variety of opportunities in Pleasant Valley that went beyond farming the land and cutting and milling timber. He moved into the 1880s launching a series of business enterprises strategically positioned to take advantage of the development of the valley as a thriving quarrying and agricultural district. In January 1882, Flowers spent \$1,800 to purchase 80 acres of land from George W. Fisher on the south side of Rist Canyon Road and west of Bingham Hill Road (now

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County Road 23). He had big plans for this land that were not immediately apparent but soon became known throughout the area. Early that year, Flowers laid out an approximately 28-acre townsite in the eastern part of the parcel, although the plat was not recorded until 30 July 1887. He named the town Bellevue, French for "beautiful view," because of the scenic character of the area. (The name was originally spelled Bellevue, however in 1886 Fort Collins newspapers began to leave the middle "e" out and it has been spelled without this letter ever since, although an 1896 plat of the town retained the original spelling.) He began to sell town lots and to erect modest homes upon speculation that he sold to buyers interested in joining the community.

Recognizing the need for commerce in the valley, and the opportunity to grow his business empire, Flowers erected a general store in 1882 in the northeast corner of the land he had just purchased from Fisher, which corresponded to the northeast corner of the Bellevue townsite. The site chosen for the store was anything but random, for Flowers knew that Lots 1 & 3 of Block 1 would dominate what was to become the primary intersection at the main entrance to the town. Facing east onto Bingham Hill Rd., which he renamed Front St. (County Road 23), with Mountain Ave. (Rist Canyon Road or County Road 52E) to the north, the one-story building with a raised full basement was constructed of locally-quarried red sandstone and erected by local craftsmen.

Flowers initially owned the store with a partner by the name of Theodore Kutcher. This partnership continued through January 1885, when Jacob parted ways with Kutcher and invited his son Benjamin to join him in the business. (Kutcher ended up opening his own grocery store and bakery in downtown Fort Collins.) The elder Flowers' many interests and pursuits placed great demands upon his time and capital, and he evidently sought to keep the business a family venture. Offering a diversity of goods, the establishment provided items needed by area farmers, ranchers, and quarry workers, even serving them for a time with a barber shop. The full basement was also utilized and in the early years housed a blacksmith shop. However it most likely was used as storage space for excess stock. In addition, milled lumber was sold at the site, presumably from the vacant space behind the building. From the time it opened, the Flowers Store experienced booming business and its owner's various enterprises continued to profit.

On 24 June 1884, Flowers officially became the valley's first postmaster, requiring that he travel to and from Fort Collins daily to handle the mail, a trip that could take much of the day. (Jacob and his son Benjamin alternately retained the title of postmaster throughout most of the period from 1884 to 1899.) Business and town development prospects looked excellent as that summer the residents of the valley anticipated the construction there of the main line of the Greeley, Salt Lake & Pacific Railway with a stop in the town of Bellvue. In July 1884, a reporter from the *Fort Collins Courier* visited Bellvue and shared the following impressions with his readers:

[Bellvue] is destined at no distant day to become a general distributing point for an extensive mountain region on the west, which is fast filling up with small stockmen, dairymen and ranchmen, and a town in point of size of no mean pretensions. A saw-mill and planing-mill is already in course of erection, and an extensive flouring mill will be built this fall. A post office has recently been established at Bellvue, which is presided over by Mr. Jacob Flowers, the founder of the town, and who is one of the most liberal and enterprising citizens of Larimer county. Messrs. Flowers & Kutcher have a well-filled general store, and are doing a profitable and constantly increasing business, the sales frequently running from \$75 to \$100 per day. After partaking of Uncle Jake's well-known hospitality, we continued our drive, well pleased with our visit, and confident of a promising future for Bellvue (10 July 1884).

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In addition to being a good businessman, Flowers made his store the center of the community's social life by installing card tables, a pool table, and benches for visitors to sit and socialize. Locals gathered there on cold days, where they sat around a pot-bellied stove and told stories. Encouraging customers to stay a while, and to return frequently, he provided them with hot coffee as well as crackers, apples, and cheese, and it was said that Jacob Flowers was a man who reveled in seeing his neighbors happy.



**Flowers Store, 1894**

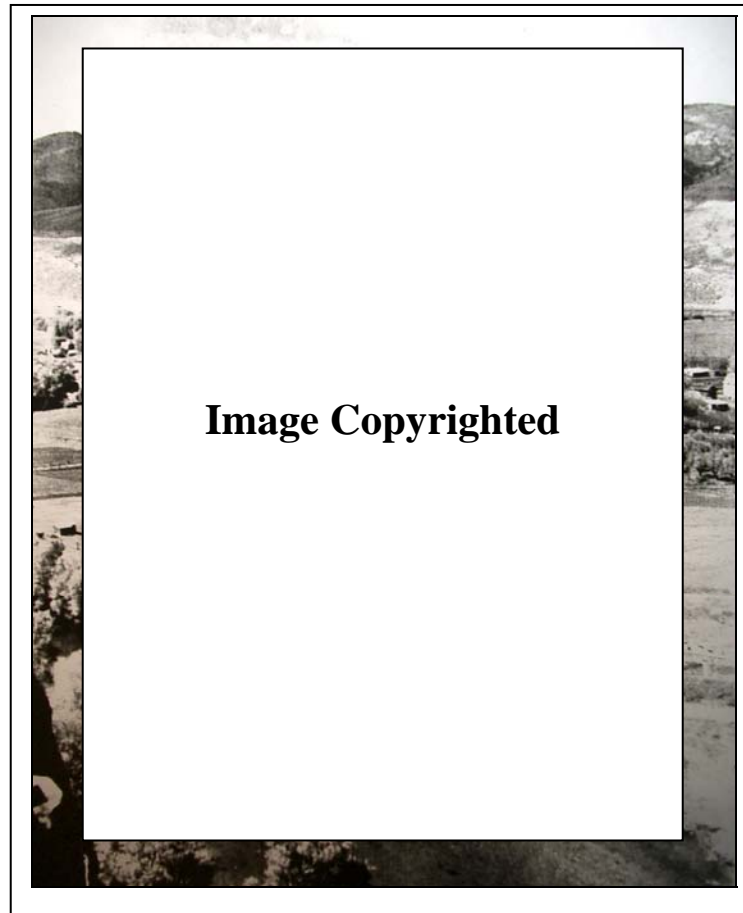
Eager to provide additional social opportunities to the local community, Flowers added a saloon to the store and in the surrounding open fields he reportedly installed a baseball diamond, horse race track, bandstand, and picnic grounds. The social events that Flowers facilitated allowed young people to meet one another in informal settings, leading to a number of marriages that in turn drew the populace closer together. Bothered by the cases of poverty he saw in the community, Flowers planted gardens, raised hogs, and set aside provisions that were used to assist local families in need. Active in Republican Party politics for many years, Jacob served as one of seven Larimer County delegates sent to the state convention in Denver in September 1882. Because of his prominent position in the community and the kindness he offered to its citizens, Flowers was referred to in newspaper articles throughout the 1880s and 1890s as "Uncle Jake," the moniker given him by his appreciative and admiring neighbors in Pleasant Valley.

Ever ambitious, Jacob Flowers identified additional community needs and business opportunities, responding to each with action. Recognizing the need for construction materials, he began selling milled lumber from his mercantile store. In response to area farmers' pleas for a grain processing facility, in the fall of 1884 Flowers built a two-story masonry feed and flour mill east of town along the west bank of the Poudre River at the base of the Bellvue Fold. The mill operated for a number of years processing grain and was later used as a sawmill. Eventually the operation closed and the building was converted to a residence. (The mill was demolished in 1963 to make way for the state fish hatchery at Watson Lake.) In May 1886, the *Fort Collins Courier* ran another article about the town expressing the same enthusiastic optimism about its future that it had two years earlier: "Bellvue is booming. Jacob Flowers is building

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cottages for rent. One has just been completed and three others will be put up at once. Two large boarding houses are filled to overflowing, and another is contemplated" (6 May 1886).



**Bellvue, in the heart of Pleasant Valley, circa 1890**

(The Flowers Store is at the center of the photograph, with Flowers' mill appearing in the foreground.)

Acknowledging the growing importance of the town to the surrounding region, it was first included in the state business directories in 1888 and continued to be listed for many years thereafter. With an in-town population of 100 that year, Bellevue (still the original spelling) was described as located on the Cheyenne division of the Union Pacific Railroad. The primary industries involved the production of stone, lime, and lumber. That year the Flowers Store appeared under the name B. F. (Benjamin) Flowers, who was serving as the town's postmaster and a purveyor of general merchandise. Several years later, in 1892, listings for the town appeared under its slightly abbreviated spelling and it was described as having a population of 300 with the chief industry being agriculture. Jacob Flowers was shown as the town's postmaster and the proprietor of a store engaged in selling general merchandise. Also listed was Flowers & Tilton, a firm engaged in the wholesale distribution of lumber. In 1895, Benjamin was postmaster again and the family firm appeared as the Bellvue Mercantile & Lumber Company.

Elizabeth Flowers died in 1890, at the peak of her family's commercial and social success, and was buried in Fort Collins' Grandview Cemetery on September 18<sup>th</sup> of that year. By the mid-1890s, Jacob Flowers & Son continued to operate although as he aged and pursued other interests, Jacob turned additional portions of the business over to his son. An 1894 photograph of the store showed that the sign on the front



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read "B. F. Flowers, General Merchandise." Benjamin Franklin Flowers was born in Wood County, Virginia on 22 June 1861 and arrived in Colorado with his parents when he was twelve years old. He became a partner in his father's Pleasant Valley enterprises in the mid-1880s and in March 1892 married Amanda Catlett of Bellvue. In 1894, the general store carried an estimated \$8,000 in goods and the Flowers family retained their reputation for supplying high quality products and conducting an honest business. In addition to the store, Flowers & Son operated a saw and planing mill that provided lumber to area builders.

In August 1896, thirty petitioners filed papers with the county requesting that Bellvue be incorporated. As expected, the group included Jacob and Benjamin Flowers. The petition was granted and the town joined the ranks of incorporated communities throughout Larimer County. That same year, a photograph was taken of the Flowers Store, showing a sign on the front for the Bellvue Lumber Company (in addition to the general merchandise sign mentioned above). According to county records, this firm was incorporated in August 1896 by Benjamin Flowers and two partners.

By the end of the century, the demand for redstone from the area's quarries began to decline as concrete began to be used for foundations and paving, and bricks and milled lumber became more readily available for construction. The 1900 state business directory showed that the Bellvue population had decreased by that time to around 100 and agriculture had become the primary industry. Benjamin Flowers was listed that year as manager of the Bellvue Lumber Company. Jacob Flowers died on 15 November 1900 at the age of 73, shortly after the federal census completed that summer categorized his occupation as "capitalist." The loss of its most prominent pioneer, town founder, economic booster, and social core marked the end of an era for Bellvue and Pleasant Valley.

Following Jacob Flowers' death, his stone commercial building continued to operate as a general store under the management of Benjamin Flowers and then David Cox until 1915. That year, Cox erected the wood-frame Bellvue Store across the road to the north and opened his own store at that location. During the first two decades of the twentieth century, Bellvue was occupied by numerous residences along with two general stores (the Flowers Store and the Bellvue Store), a meat market, a wagon shop, and a blacksmith shop. The Town of Bellvue was dissolved on 7 April 1914 when 22 of its 34 remaining registered voters cast their ballots in favor of a resolution to discontinue its incorporated status. With the quarries closing, residents moved on to other opportunities. Those who stayed behind continued to enjoy the quiet scenic valley and pursued the agricultural activities that remain there today. Surprisingly, the town's population rose again after a few years and by 1920 it counted 150 residents, a number that stayed stable into the 1950s. Since then, the town and surrounding valley have remained a quiet, peaceful part of unincorporated Larimer County.

The Flowers Store, however, continued to play a central part in the social life of the community following its closure in 1915. Between that year and 1948 the building was used for a variety of purposes, all of which cemented social relationships in the valley. Throughout these years the building hosted numerous receptions, parties, and Saturday night dances. With entertainment provided by local musicians, area residents could enjoy an entire evening of fun for an entry fee of twenty-five cents. The building's open space and wood floor allowed it to serve as a public roller skating rink, particularly enjoyed by area children. During the winter months, the community held social gatherings there, with each family bringing a hot dish to share. Summertime, they gathered at the old store before parading to the nearby Flowers Mill, where many days were spent swimming in the Poudre River and enjoying food, games and conversation along the shore. Meetings were held in the building whenever events called for discussion and decision-making. In one case, numerous members of the community gathered there to discuss a tragic fire in the valley that shortly before Christmas had resulted in the loss of a family home. After determining their response, the residents of Pleasant Valley pooled resources and within weeks had rebuilt the home. Finally, whenever a

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death occurred in the valley, the community gathered at the Flowers Store for the funeral and to show their support for the family. Throughout the turbulent 20<sup>th</sup> century decades that contained two world wars, an economic boom, and the worst depression the country had ever seen, the Flowers Store frequently opened its doors to the Pleasant Valley community as a place of social interaction and bonding.

The final chapter in the history of the Flowers Store began in 1948, when the building came under new ownership. Cache la Poudre Grange #456 was chartered by its original fifteen members in July 1944. After meeting in members' homes for four years, the Flowers Store was acquired in 1948 for use as a permanent meeting hall. The building was repaired after many years of deferred maintenance and has been used regularly for Grange activities through the present day. In 1977 the building also came into use as Bellvue's senior citizens center. In addition to Grange meetings and events, the former Flowers Store has served over the past six decades as a polling place and for wedding parties, meetings of area organizations, fundraisers, and by local groups such as the Boy Scouts. The Grange has also provided meals for local families who have suffered a death, along with other mourners visiting town to attend funerals. In 2005, the Pleasant Valley community gathered once again in the old Flowers Store to socialize and plan for historic preservation activities in the area. Today the building that Jacob Flowers erected over 120 years ago continues to serve as a community center and as the venue for discussions about the future of Pleasant Valley. With Flowers' passion for bringing the community together, his building's continued use throughout the twentieth and into the twenty-first centuries would certainly have pleased the founder of Bellvue and the valley's most ardent pioneer booster.

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Photograph of Jacob Flowers, Circa 1870 (#5881F). Located in the Local History Collection of the Fort Collins Library.

Photograph of the Flowers Store, 1894 (#8801). View of the Building from the Northeast. Located in the Local History Collection of the Fort Collins Library.

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**GEOGRAPHICAL DATA**

**VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION**

The boundaries of the nominated property are limited to Lots 1 & 3, Block 1, Original Bellvue Townsite in Larimer County, Colorado.

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### PHOTOGRAPH LOG

The following information pertains to photograph numbers 1-14 except as noted:

Name of Property: Flowers Store  
Location: Larimer County/ Colorado  
Photographer: Ron Sladek  
Date of Photographs: 7 November 2005  
Negatives: With photographer

<u>Photo No.</u>	<u>Photographic Information</u>
1	General view of the 1882 Flowers Store (on the left), the 1915 Bellvue Store (on the right), and the intersection of County Road 52E and County Road 23. View to the northwest.
2	General view of the Flowers Store from the intersection of County Roads 52E and 23. View to the southwest.
3	View of the facade on the Flowers Store. View to the northwest. The storefront windows were boarded over several decades ago by the Grange members because they were repeatedly broken by passers-by.
4	Detail view of the facade and front stoop of the Flowers Store. View to the southwest.
5	View of the plaque installed on the facade of the Flowers Store by the Cache la Poudre Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution in 1990.
6	General view of the north and west elevations of the Flowers Store. View to the southeast.
7	Detail view of the stonework near the northwest corner of the Flowers Store. View to the east.
8	View of the west elevation of the Flowers Store. View to the southeast.
9	View of the rear parking lot and west elevation of the Flowers Store. View to the northeast.
10	View of the south elevation of the Flowers Store. View to the northwest.
11	View of the south elevation of the Flowers Store. View to the northeast.

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- 12 View of the interior of the Flowers Store. View to the west.
- 13 View of the interior of the Flowers Store. View to the east.
- 14 View of the kitchen in the west end of the Flowers Store. View to the north.

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**USGS TOPOGRAPHIC MAP**  
Laporte Quadrangle, Colorado  
7.5 Minute Series

