

An Inventory of the Records of  
**Aspen, Colorado**

**Collection Number 19**

A holding of the  
Library of the Colorado Historical Society  
1300 Broadway  
Denver, Co 80203

**Processed by Aleks Humeyumtewa  
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### HISTORICAL INFORMATION

In 1873, Fred V. Hayden conducted the first geological survey in the upper Roaring Fork River area with his official photographer, William H. Jackson. After Hayden's records and maps were published in 1879, four Leadville prospectors, C.E. Bennet, S.E. Hopkins, A.C. Fellows, and W.S. Clark, were motivated to prospect the continuation of Leadville's mineral belt. They went by the way of Twin Lakes and Independence Pass, explored the Roaring Fork River, and camped in the area.

H.B. Gillespie, later owner of the Mollie Gibson Mine, crossed the Mosquito Range of the Elk Mountains from Leadville and made his way into Roaring Fork Valley. He was impressed with the new district and at once began to work on its development. He called a meeting of local miners to discuss the establishment of a town, to be named Ute. They prepared a petition asking the postmaster general to establish a mail route in the district and Gillespie himself went to Washington, D.C. to present the petition in person. While he was away, B. Clark Wheeler came to the camp and proceeded to lay out a town which he called Aspen, named for the many aspen groves in the vicinity. When Gillespie returned, a conflict was fortunately avoided, and the two

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interests combined and Gillespie continued to be instrumental in Aspen's development.

Although prospectors had some luck in locating mines in the area, the winter of 1879 proved almost fatal for the growing settlement. Due to harsh weather and fear of Indian uprisings the town was almost completely abandoned. But in the spring of 1880, the settlers of the previous year returned. People poured into the silver rich region. The population rose to 1,000 and a church and school were soon built. By that time, the area had at least 100 mines producing valuable ores and supporting the district.

The town was platted in March 1880 and lots were sold. Bonds were given out on the proviso that a deed would be given when the town company received its patent. In June 1880, a post office was established and tri-weekly mail service began via Hillerton.

In 1881, Pitkin County was established from part of Gunnison County and named in honor of F.W. Pitkin, the current governor of Colorado.

On April 11, 1881, the town of Aspen was officially incorporated and became the county seat of Pitkin County. In May 1881, Governor Pitkin appointed temporary officers for the county and, on November 8, 1881, regular county officers were elected.

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By 1885, the population of Aspen had increased to 5,000 and a second mining boom was in progress. During 1885, the first hydro-electric power plant in Colorado was erected in the area, and Aspen became one of the first towns in the country to have its streets and buildings electrically lighted. In 1888, the second high head water power plant in the state was constructed near the town. This power was chiefly used for elevating mine hoists in the Veteran Tunnel, being the first electric hoist in the country.

The Aspen Theatre, built by Jerome B. Wheeler, was opened on March 12, 1885. It was the most celebrated opera house in Colorado during its time. In 1887, the Denver and Rio Grand Western Railroad pulled into the booming camp of Aspen which then boasted a population of 15,000. The Colorado Midland Railroad arrived in 1888.

One of the more prominent and colorful residents of Aspen was Davis H. Waite. Waite was born in Jamestown, New York, on April 9, 1825. He received his training to become a lawyer in his father's law office and for several decades he lived in several states working as a lawyer, shopkeeper and teacher. His political aspirations were quickly revealed when, in 1856, he was elected to the state legislature of Wisconsin and, in 1878 to the same post in Kansas.

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In 1879, the silver boom in Leadville drew him to Colorado. He lived in Leadville and worked as a lawyer and also tried his hand at mining. In 1881, he moved to Aspen and worked in the same occupations. While there, he became actively involved in liberal politics. He served as secretary of the Knights of Labor, worked in support of other labor parties and organizations, and became a prominent figure in the Colorado Populist Party. In Aspen, Waite served as justice of the peace and was the first superintendent of schools for Pitkin County. In 1891, with George Rohde, he founded and ran the Aspen Union Era, a populist newspaper. The same year he became the temporary chairman of the Populist State Convention. In 1892, Waite was elected the first and last Populist governor of Colorado, and he served until 1895. After his term in office he traveled, giving lecture tours and published Waite's Magazine in 1898. He died in Aspen on November 27, 1901.

From 1887 to 1893 the camp rapid development. But after the 1893 national silver slump, the camp once again declined. Although the silver mines continued to produce, the federal demonetization of silver brought a marked decrease in the town's population.

The town sat almost abandoned until the late 1940s when Chicago industrialist Walter Paepcke set out to revitalize it. Paepcke's vision was to create a mecca for both intellectuals and

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sportsmen. He established the Aspen Skiing Corporation and began revitalizing the area's skiing industry with the construction of new ski lifts and runs. He also founded the Aspen Institute for Humanistic Studies, which has attracted some of the world's greatest artists and intellectuals.

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CHRONOLOGY

- 1873 Fred V. Hayden and William H. Jackson conduct a survey of the Roaring Fork Valley area.
- 1876 Colorado gains its statehood.
- 1879 Hayden's records and maps are published, motivating migration to the Roaring Fork Valley area.
- 1879 June: W.L. Hopkins, Smith Steele, and Phil Pratt discover the famous Smuggler Mine in the Aspen area.
- 1880 Mr. and Mrs. McLaughlin build the Aspen House, which serves as the town's first hotel.
- 1880 March: The plat of the town of Aspen is filed.
- 1880 July: A post office is established and a tri-weekly mail service started.
- 1881 Pitkin County is established from part of Gunnison County, and named in honor of F.W. Pitkin, governor of Colorado.
- 1881 Waite moves to Aspen and works as a lawyer and miner.
- 1881 April 11: The town of Aspen is incorporated.
- 1881 May 21: Governor Pitkin appoints temporary officers for Pitkin County.
- 1881 November 8: The regular county officers are elected for Pitkin County.
- 1885 The first hydro-electric plant in Colorado is erected in the Aspen area.
- 1885 The population of Aspen is 5,000.
- 1885 The Claredon Hotel is constructed.
- 1885 March 12: The Wheeler Opera House is opened.
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- 1887 The Denver and Rio Grand Western Railroad reaches Aspen.
- 1888 The second high-head water power plant in the state was constructed near Aspen.
- 1888 The Colorado Midland Railroad arrives in Aspen.
- 1889 The Hotel Jerome is opened.
- 1891 With George Rohde, Waite establishes the Aspen Union Era.
- 1891 The Populist Party is organized in Denver, Waite serves as the chairman of the Pitkin County Central Committee.
- 1892 Davis Waite is elected governor of Colorado.
- 1892 February 22: Waite serves as a delegate from Colorado at the St. Louis Reform Convention.
- 1892 July 4: Waite serves as a delegate at the Populist Party Nominating Convention in Omaha, Nebraska.
- 1893 A national silver slump causes a depression in Aspen.
- 1895 The Colorado Telephone Company completes a line to Aspen connecting it with the rest of the long distance circuit.
- 1898 Waite publishes Waite's Magazine.
- 1901 November 27: Davis H. Waite dies in Aspen.
- 1910 The Smuggler Mine is reopened after several years of idleness.
- 1949 Walter Paepcke and other Chicago industrialists host the Goethe Bicentennial Convocation in Aspen, which attracts humanitarians, artists and intellectuals from around the world, including Albert Schweitzer.
- 1950 The Aspen Institute for Humanistic Studies is established.
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### SCOPE AND CONTENTS

This collection consists of a scrapbook containing newspaper clippings of ordinances of the town of Aspen, Colorado. The ordinances span 1881 to 1882, the first year or so of the town's incorporation. The scrapbook was owned by Davis H. Waite while he was living in Aspen and working as an attorney.

Additional material on Aspen can be found in the Colorado State Archives, and the archives of Pitkin County. The public papers of Davis H. Waite and all the other state governors are housed in the Colorado State Archives and his personal papers are housed at the Denver Public Library, Western History Department.

The provenance of the collection is unknown.

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**COLLECTION CONTENTS**

**City Ordinance Scrapbook (1881-1882)**

Scrapbook containing city ordinances that were published in Aspen newspapers, 1881-1882.

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