

An Inventory of the Records of the

**J.S. Brown & Brother Mercantile Company,
Denver, Colorado**

Collection Number 88

A Holding of
The Library of the Colorado Historical Society
Denver, Colorado

Processed by Keith Schrum

Colorado Historical Society
Copyright
1991

An Inventory of the Records of the
J.S. Brown & Brother Mercantile Company,
Denver, Colorado

Collection Number 88
A Holding of
The Library of the Colorado Historical Society
Denver, Colorado

Processed by Keith Schrum

Colorado Historical Society
Copyright
1991

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Historical Information.....	4
Chronology.....	6
Scope and Contents.....	7
Collection Contents.....	8

HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A brief history of the J.S. Brown & Brother Mercantile Company was written by J. Sidney Brown for the Company's fiftieth anniversary catalog in 1911. The first-hand account describes the company's early days as J.S. and his brother, J.F. Brown travelled with ox trains from Atchinson, Kansas to Denver in 1861, selling goods directly from their wagons. In the fall of that year, the brothers rented a store in Denver and entered into a partnership with A.B. Daniels, which lasted until 1867.

The company experienced success and hardship during the next several years as it bought property and relocated its operations along what would become Blake Street in Denver, Colorado. On April 19, 1863, the company was destroyed by fire. J.S. Brown rebuilt, only to face the Cherry Creek Flood in 1864. The company survived the flood, prospered and moved to Wazee Street, where it remained until 1867, when it located permanently on the corner of 18th and Wynkoop Streets.

In describing the days of wagon transportation between 1858 and 1864, Brown noted in the company's history that freighters, immigrants and teamsters could travel to Denver uninterrupted by Indians. However, this changed, starting with an Indian uprising in 1864, when attacks began to occur. Freighters grouped together for safety, but the cost of transporting goods rose sharply as a result of Indian attacks, the Civil War and a shortage of gold currency.

After A.B. Daniels retired and the company began operating under the name of J.S. Brown & Brother, J.F. Brown moved his family to Denver. J.S. Brown formally incorporated the company in 1893 as J.S. Brown & Brother Mercantile and operated under this name until 1899, when he bought his brother's interest in the company.

A new partnership formed in 1913, and the company received new articles of incorporation. Between 1893 and 1936, the company amended its articles five times to reflect changes in its structure, and, in April 1942, filed notice for a stockholders' meeting for the purpose of dissolving the company. The corporation filed its last annual report with the State of Colorado on March 15 1943, with a reported net surplus of over \$218,000.

CHRONOLOGY

- 1861 J.S. Brown comes to Denver, Colorado by wagon train from Atchinson, Kansas and rents a store at what is now 1504 Blake Street. He enters into a partnership with A.B. Daniels, of Council Bluffs, Iowa.
- 1863 April: J.S. Brown buys the store of Carter & Company, located at 1513 Blake Street.
- April 19: Fire destroys the J.S. Brown building.
- 1864 Brown buys the firm of Wilder, Jenkins & Company, located at 1452 Blake Street.
- 1867 Brown buys the store of J.W. Smith at 1527 Blake Street.
- 1870 Brown buys lots on Wazee Street. J.F. Brown joins the firm and the company becomes J.S. Brown & Brother.
- 1893 The company formally incorporates on June 23 1893 as J.S. Brown & Brother Mercantile Company.
- 1899 The company moves to the corner of 18th and Wynkoop Streets.
- J.S. Brown buys the company interests of J.F. Brown.
- 1911 The company celebrates its 50th anniversary.
- 1913 The company changes its name to J.S. Brown Mercantile Company and files new articles of incorporation.
- 1942 The company files notice of stockholders' meeting for the purpose of dissolving the company.
- 1943 The company files its last annual report with the State of Colorado on March 15 1943.

SCOPE AND CONTENTS

The J.S. Brown and Brother Mercantile Company Collection at the Colorado Historical Society spans the years 1863 to 1943 and contains a mule-train account book dated 1863, an account ledger dated 1867 and a fiftieth-anniversary catalog for 1911. There are also handwritten manuscripts that describe the company's early days (which later appear in the catalog), a 14-page history of Colorado's railroads and a depreciation claim filed for the loss of mules and horses taken in raids by the Cheyenne, Arapaho and Kiowa in 1864.

The collection draws its importance from the history of the era in which J.S. Brown operated. All the goods that came to the Peak Region before the first railroads in the early 1870s had to come by wagon train across the plains from Kansas and Nebraska. As noted by the owner in his own history of the company, these convoys crossed relatively unmolested until an Indian uprising that followed the Sand Creek Massacre in 1864, which lends support to the idea that commerce was severely disrupted by the conflict between Native Americans and whites after this incident.

The only other known repository of J.S. Brown Mercantile material—the Colorado State Archives—houses articles of incorporation, amendments to the articles and the company's last annual report filed with the Colorado Secretary of State in 1943.

Five account books were donated in 1927 by J.F. Brown's daughter, June Brown Benedict. *Colorado Magazine* V. 14, Nov. 1937, p. 238.

COLLECTION CONTENTS

<u>FF No.</u>	<u>Description</u>
1	Fiftieth Anniversary Catalog, 1861-1911
2	Early company history (handwritten by J.S. Brown)
3	Mule Train Account Book, 1863
4	Depreciation Claim, 1864
5	Day Book, 1867
6	Legal document: Bond of Indemnity, 1876
7	Stock Certificate: The Defiance Mine Company, 1883
8	Annual Report, 1943
9	Manuscript (14 pp.): "History of Colorado Railroads," by J.S. Brown, undated