

## ROADS OF THE MOUNTAINS AND PLAINS

Within the Boulder Historic Context Area, 1859-1996

### INTRODUCTION

The settlement of any new community is dependent on its roads. So it was with early Boulder. The first roads on the plains were merely wagon tracks from which the largest rocks had been removed. Travellers themselves often made the improvements in order to be able to continue on their way. The first people to arrive made it easier for others to follow, and encouraged the growth of their new town.

The legendary account of the settlement of Boulder began, in 1858, with a band of gold prospectors who separated from the main group at Fort St. Vrain, a fur-trading post on the Platte River Trail. The small group headed west instead of continuing on to the Denver area. They followed the St. Vrain Creek to its juncture with Boulder Creek,<sup>1</sup> then followed Boulder Creek to the edge of the mountains, and pitched their tents at Red Rocks near the mouth of Boulder Canyon.<sup>2</sup>

This discussion of roads, from 1858 to the present, will concentrate on the area within the Boulder Historic Context boundaries, as defined as Areas I-III of the City of Boulder's Comprehensive Plan, 1989.

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<sup>1</sup>Just east of present-day Longmont.

<sup>2</sup>Bixby, Amos, "History of Boulder County," in *History of Clear Creek and Boulder Valleys, Colorado*. Chicago: O.L. Baskin & Co., 1880, p. 379. Now Settlers Park between Pearl Street and Sunshine Canyon.

## INTO THE MOUNTAINS FOR GOLD AND SILVER

Early Toll Roads, Beginning in 1859

### Gold Discovered at Gold Hill --

Boulder's first settlers came to find gold. The mountain roads, out of topographical necessity, followed the winding earlier routes of animal and Indian trails. The prospectors walked and/or rode pack animals as they followed one of these trails up Sunshine Canyon. They soon discovered gold in a creek they named Gold Run, at a camp they named Gold Hill, twelve miles west of Boulder. Finding gold was the first step. Next they needed to move in their equipment and supplies. They needed a road.

### Boulder to Gold Hill, via Left Hand Canyon --

In Gold Hill and other early mining districts, the first roads were built by the miners themselves who agreed to take time out from prospecting. Gold Hill minutes stated ..."the President shall draw up a subscription that every one is willing to do work on the road to Left Hand..."<sup>3</sup>

As mining increased, the men were too busy mining to work on their roads. Once a route became established, toll companies, who hoped to make a profit, took over the building, improving, and maintenance of the heaviest travelled roads. Their charters normally ran for twenty-four years, after which the road became free.

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<sup>3</sup>Gold Hill minutes, October 15, 1859, as quoted in Fritz, Percy, *The Mining Districts of Boulder County, Colorado*. Unpublished thesis, University of Colorado, 1933. The road to Left Hand Canyon from Gold Hill was Aikens (Lick Skillet) Gulch.

On December 7, 1859, the Boulder City, Gold Hill, and Left Hand Creek Wagon Road was incorporated. Three hundred shares of capital stock were issued at \$25 per share. The toll road probably followed the route of the miners' earlier road and went up Left Hand Canyon to Aikens (Lick Skillet) Gulch to Gold Hill.<sup>4</sup>

Boulder to Black Hawk, via Gregory Canyon --

The Gold Hill discoveries, however, were soon outshadowed by those made by John H. Gregory at Black Hawk. In 1859, Gregory had managed to haul the first of his machinery up "a sort of road" in what soon became known as Gregory Canyon, between Flagstaff and Green Mountain, then by today's Kossler Reservoir, and across a Ute Indian trail to South Boulder Creek and on to the site of more gold finds at Black Hawk.<sup>5</sup>

Meanwhile, in the summer of 1859, one hundred men per day were reported to have followed the Platte River Trail to areas of mining activity in what is now Colorado. In order to turn the tide through Boulder, and thus give some profit to the town's early merchants, Henry Clay Norton built a toll bridge across the Platte River near Fort St. Vrain. He also improved the road to Boulder and planned to continue the road John H. Gregory had started up Gregory Canyon. Norton raised funds by subscription, but did not get enough for the road to go into the mountains.<sup>6</sup>

In the 1870s, the Gregory Canyon road was rebuilt by residents of Magnolia as an alternative to the toll road built up Magnolia Hill from

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<sup>4</sup>Provisional Laws and Joint Resolutions Passed at the First...General Assembly of Jefferson Territory, 1859, pp. 285-286, as quoted in Fritz.

<sup>5</sup>Parsons, Martin, "Toll Road History of Boulder County," *Daily Camera*, July 31, 1945.

<sup>6</sup>Bixby, p. 392.



"Double S turns" Gregory Canyon 1896.

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1942.  
Birby, p. 392.

Boulder Canyon. On April 5, 1881, Gregory Canyon was declared by the Boulder County Commissioners to be a free county road. It was in use until the Flagstaff road was built in 1906-1907.<sup>7</sup>

Today one can still drive a short distance up Gregory Canyon from the base of Flagstaff Mountain. The rest is a hiking trail. Since the road was improved several times over the years, it is not known if the current trail exactly follows the original road.

Boulder to "over the range," via Sunshine Canyon --

One of the earliest roads built from Boulder into the mountains was the Gordon and McHenry road of 1861.<sup>8</sup> In his "History of Boulder County," Amos Bixby called it "another early attempt to make a direct wagon-road connection between Boulder and Black Hawk," but teamster Martin Parsons and author Donald Kemp referred to the Gordon and McHenry road as a "military" road.<sup>9</sup> Although it was used by miners, it was said to have been built by the U.S. Army in order to be able to respond to Indian uprisings in Middle Park.

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<sup>7</sup>*Boulder County Commissioners Journal* 3, p. 519. (April 5, 1881). Gregory Canyon became (old) County Road #217 (*Boulder County Road Book C*, p. 17.)

<sup>8</sup>Bixby, p. 392. Date of 1861 from Parsons' handwritten notes.

<sup>9</sup>The Gordon-McHenry road went up Sunshine Canon, down Ritchie (Poorman) Gulch, on the east side of Poorman Hill, to Four Mile Creek to Orodell (now the junction of Four Mile and Boulder Canyons.) It then headed west through what now is the Betasso Preserve, and roughly paralleled the current Sugarloaf Road to the Sugarloaf townsite. Continuing to the southwest, the road went through Gordon Gulch, through Switzerland Park, then along North Boulder Creek, and west through the Tucker (Caribou) ranch where it was abandoned north of the townsite of Caribou. (Kemp, Donald, *Silver, Gold and Black Iron*. Denver: Sage Books, 1960, p. 28. To see this route mapped on a current topographical map, see Weiss, Manuel, *Boulder County Historical Inventory*, 1980, Carnegie Library, Boulder.) It was originally planned to cross Arapahoe Pass into Middle Park, but, by then, easier routes over Berthoud and Rollins Pass had come into use.

By 1874, the route was already called the "Old Gordon-McHenry Road."<sup>10</sup> In 1894, Sugarloaf residents used this route as an outlet to Boulder when they were marooned by a the "hundred-year" flood. In 1915, the route was still traversable by horse-drawn wagons.<sup>11</sup>

Boulder to Black Hawk, via Bear Canyon --

In addition to local roads built by residents, and the Gordon and McHenry road built by the Army, investor-financed toll roads were necessary to open up routes to the gold mining areas. Several Boulder entrepreneurs formed their own toll road companies. Between 1861 and 1870, seven of the forty-three toll-roads authorized by the Colorado Territorial legislature were in Boulder County.<sup>12</sup>

Bridge-builder Henry C. Norton built a road up Bear Canyon with money furnished mainly by gold mine owner George R. Williamson.<sup>13</sup> The road, incorporated on November 7, 1861, was the first of several toll roads to be constructed from the present Table Mesa area south of the National Center for Atmospheric Research. The Bear Canyon road intersected the Gregory Canyon road near today's Kossler Reservoir. Norton and Williamson were optimistic about reaching Black Hawk, but a cloud-burst soon washed out the first Bear Canyon road.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>10</sup>*Boulder County News*, September 18, 1874, p. 2, c. 4, as quoted in Weiss.

<sup>11</sup>Weiss, Manuel, *Boulder County Historical Inventory*, 1980, Carnegie Library, Boulder.

<sup>12</sup>*Daily Camera*, February 7, 1952.

<sup>13</sup>Williamson owned the Yellow Pine mine and later was President of the Boulder National Bank.

<sup>14</sup>Ridgway, Arthur, "The Mission of the Colorado Toll Roads," *Colorado Magazine*, vol. IX #5, September, 1932, p. 165. Also, Bixby, p. 392.

Boulder to Gold Hill, via Left Hand Canyon, again --

The owners of the St. Vrain, Altonia (Altona), Boulder Mines (Gold Hill) & Gregory Wagon Road Company also had high hopes of reaching Black Hawk.<sup>15</sup> This road, which followed the earlier routes up Left Hand Canyon, also was incorporated on November 7, 1861.<sup>16</sup> Either because of a lack of money or because there was enough activity to keep the prospectors occupied at Gold Hill, the road abruptly ended at Gold Hill rather than continuing on to its original destination.<sup>17</sup>

Boulder to Black Hawk, via Magnolia --

Despite the Boulder road builders' intentions, the most heavily-travelled route from the plains to Black Hawk and the mines near Central City was the Enterprise Road from Golden thru Golden Gate Canyon.<sup>18</sup> Since Boulder investors wanted to direct the traffic their way, and their own toll roads had not been financially successful, they recognized the importance of connecting with the Enterprise road.<sup>19</sup>

This connecting road is what Bixby called "the first successful toll road from Boulder to Black Hawk." The Boulder Valley and Central City Wagon Road Company was incorporated February 8, 1865<sup>20</sup> with a capital

<sup>15</sup>Bixby, p. 392.

<sup>16</sup>Ridgway, Arthur, "The Mission of the Colorado Toll Roads," *Colorado Magazine*, vol. IX #5, September, 1932, p. 165.

<sup>17</sup>Finally, in 1873, the Snyder-Corson road was built from Salina up Gold Run and extended westward along the ridge to west of Ward. There it branched, with one branch north to Ward and the other to Nederland. The latter route, completed in 1874, was considered "the best possible route from Black Hawk to Gold Hill." *Boulder County News*, July 3, 1874.

<sup>18</sup>Ridgway, p. 164. The Enterprise Road was incorporated on October 3, 1861.

<sup>19</sup>Parsons.

<sup>20</sup>Ridgway, p. 167. Also Bixby, p. 393.

stock of \$50,000. Sawmill partners, James A. Maxwell<sup>21</sup> and Clinton M. Tyler each subscribed \$10,000. Other prominent Boulderites, including brothers Henry L., Luther C., and Sylvanus Wellman; Charles Dabney; Anthony Arnett, Jonathan A. Tourtellote, Frederick A. Squires, and Daniel Pound also contributed. Construction began in March, 1865.

This well-financed toll road went up the previously impenetrable Boulder Canyon to the foot of Magnolia Hill. It then went up and over Magnolia Hill, where it crossed the road started by John H. Gregory, and then continued across South Boulder Creek, near the mouth of Beaver Creek, joined the Enterprise Road, and continued on to Black Hawk. The toll for a vehicle with one span of horses, mules, or cattle was one dollar. A horse or mule with a rider was 25¢. Travel to funerals was free.<sup>22</sup>

Lee and Walter Smith began operating a daily stage line to the town of Magnolia. Their coaches were specially designed for steep mountain roads and were drawn by mules instead of horses.<sup>23</sup>

Boulder to Black Hawk, via Left Hand Canyon, again --

In 1866, the Niwot and Black Hawk Wagon Road Company built a road which also went up Left Hand Canyon.<sup>24</sup> One branch went north to Ward, but the main route followed California Gulch to Sunnyside, Brown's Ranch (Nederland), Rollinsville, and on to Black Hawk roughly parallel to today's Peak to Peak Highway.<sup>25</sup>

<sup>21</sup>son of James P. Maxwell.

<sup>22</sup>Ridgway, p. 168. Also, *Daily Camera*, January 25, 1976.

<sup>23</sup>Gladden, Sanford, *The Early Days of Boulder, Colorado*. Boulder: Sanford Gladden, 1982, p. 402.

<sup>24</sup>Ridgway, p.168. The road was incorporated on February 6, 1866.

<sup>25</sup>Kemp, Donald, *Silver, Gold and Black Iron*. Denver: Sage Books, 1960, p. 28.



Boulder to Caribou, via Boulder Canyon and Nederland --

Boulder Canyon, past the Magnolia turn-off, was the last canyon out of Boulder into the mountains to be conquered. In 1869, Wells Fargo and Company came up with the idea of running its stages from Boulder to Black Hawk if a road would be built up Boulder Canyon to Brown's Ranch (Nederland). During the following winter, when the water in Boulder Creek was low, C. M. Tyler, William Pound, and others surveyed the route from the existing road at the bottom of Magnolia Hill to Nederland,<sup>26</sup> where the Niwot and Black Hawk road already crossed Boulder Creek. They found that the new route was six miles shorter between Boulder and Black Hawk than the one which went over Magnolia hill.<sup>27</sup>

By May 20, 1871, the completed Boulder and Caribou Wagon road connected Boulder with what is now Nederland, and continued on to Caribou. While the road was under construction, Caribou conveniently boomed with a major silver discovery. Laborers hurried to get the road done in order to capitalize on the freight traffic that would soon come. A toll gate was located at the mouth of Boulder Canyon. Another at Eagle Rock replaced the station formerly located at the foot of Magnolia hill. The road up Boulder Canyon soon became a financial success as well as a tourist attraction.<sup>28</sup>

The *Boulder News* stated,

"The road now building up the canon we have feebly described, is the most ambitious piece of work that has ever been, to our knowledge, attempted upon a wagon road in Colorado. The work is

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<sup>26</sup>Besides being called Brownsville, Nederland also was called Middle Boulder in its early days.

<sup>27</sup>Kemp, pp. 28-29.

<sup>28</sup>Kemp, p. 29.

stupendous and nothing less. The line necessarily crosses the creek often, how many times we did not count, but guess the number of bridges at 30. These are all substantially built, with a height and water way sufficient to make them permanent....An immense amount of blasting has been necessary to break up the great irregular masses of loose rock, and to cut down the solid points to a grade. In one place a spur of the mountain has been blasted down 20 feet, still leaving the road 15 feet above water."<sup>29</sup>

Wells Fargo and Company never ran its stages between Boulder and Caribou as promised, but Lee and Walter Smith transferred Wells Fargo express and made tri-weekly trips.<sup>30</sup> In 1871, these four-horse Concord coaches charged \$3.50, about the equivalent of a good day's wage.<sup>31</sup> A branch line ran from Caribou to Black Hawk and Central City.

The sturdy Concord coaches, costing one thousand dollars each, also carried passengers and mail.<sup>32</sup> Instead of having shock absorbers, they were suspended on broad leather straps. Author Mark Twain called the Concords "a great swinging and swaying stage of the most sumptuous description -- an imposing cradle on wheels."<sup>33</sup>

In Boulder Canyon, stage drivers changed horses and had a meal at the American House, just above the "narrows." Jim Sewell, who drove the Caribou route, later told Forest Crossen in an interview that he left -

<sup>29</sup>*Boulder News*, May 20, 1871.

<sup>30</sup>Kemp, p. 29. Also, Fritz, Percy, *Mining Districts of Boulder County, Colorado*. Unpublished thesis, University of Colorado, 1933, p. 197, and *Boulder News* August 16, 1878.

<sup>31</sup>Gladden, p. 402, from *Boulder County News*, May 27, 1871.

<sup>32</sup>Gladden, p. 402.

<sup>33</sup>Noel, Mahoney, and Stevens, *Historical Atlas of Colorado*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1993, p. 27. Mark Twain's quote is from *Roughing It*.

Boulder at 7 am with six passengers inside and another on the seat on top with him. The coach would arrive in Caribou around dusk. His passengers were mostly miners going back to work.<sup>34</sup>

The Boulder Canyon road was narrow and had few turnouts. If two vehicles met where there was no turnout, the lighter of the two had to unhitch its horses and be lifted off the roadway so that the heavier vehicle could pass. Bells fastened on the harnesses alerted the driver of oncoming traffic. At night, a lantern was suspended from the front of the wagon box.<sup>35</sup>

In 1874, tolls included \$1 for each two-horse wagon, \$1.25 for each four-horse wagon, 75¢ for each one-horse wagon, and 20¢ for a rider on a saddle horse. The section between Boulder and Boulder Falls had been reduced so tourists and others from Boulder could "visit the famous Falls and wonderful scenery of the canyon without feeling that the rates are exorbitant."<sup>36</sup>

The *Boulder County News*, on August 11, 1876, stated, "The road up the [Boulder] Canon is in excellent condition, and no more pleasurable ride can be had in the state for the same money."<sup>37</sup>

Conditions had deteriorated by 1878 when freighter Richard Crow angrily wrote to the *Boulder News*. He claimed his tolls averaged over one hundred dollars per month, yet "other travellers have [had] to assist me at

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<sup>34</sup>*Daily Camera*, April 29, 1948.

<sup>35</sup>Kemp, p. 29. Also, Crossen, Forest, *Switzerland Trail of America*. Boulder: Pruett Publishing, 1962, p. 12.

<sup>36</sup>*Boulder County News*, July 10, 1874.

<sup>37</sup>Gladden, p. 402. By 1878, daily stages left livery barns in Boulder for Caribou and Magnolia, as well as to Sunshine, Delphi (Wallstreet), Springdale, Jamestown, and Balarat. (*Boulder News*, August 16, 1878.)

times in making the roads passable, for my teamsters have been compelled to carry axes and shovels to get through."<sup>38</sup>

While those trying to make a living may have grumbled, author Helen Hunt Jackson, who rode down Boulder Canyon on horseback in 1878, praised its beauty. Of the canyon she wrote,

"Its gray stone walls rise up, fortresslike from the meadow -- the left hand wall bare and gray, the right hand one thick set with fir from the base to the top. It is a picture of vivid contrasts -- the green meadow with ranks upon ranks of yellow and red willow bushes making belts of bright color upon it, [and] between the yellows and reds, gleams of white foam flashing, and beyond the high buttress fronts of the canyon mouth, adorned with evergreens."<sup>39</sup>

Tolls were discontinued in Boulder Canyon in 1887, nine years after teamster Crow complained, and six years after Magnolia residents had found another way to get home.<sup>40</sup> The section from the foot of Magnolia Hill to Nederland, however, remained under the ownership of banker Charles G. Buckingham until 1893 when he sold all rights and title to Boulder County.<sup>41</sup>

When Mart Parsons came to Boulder in 1897, he drove four-horse stages made by the Studebaker Company. Eldora's gold mining boom had just begun, and there was a lot of traffic in Boulder Canyon. These newer stage coaches had steel springs and hauled nine people inside, and three,

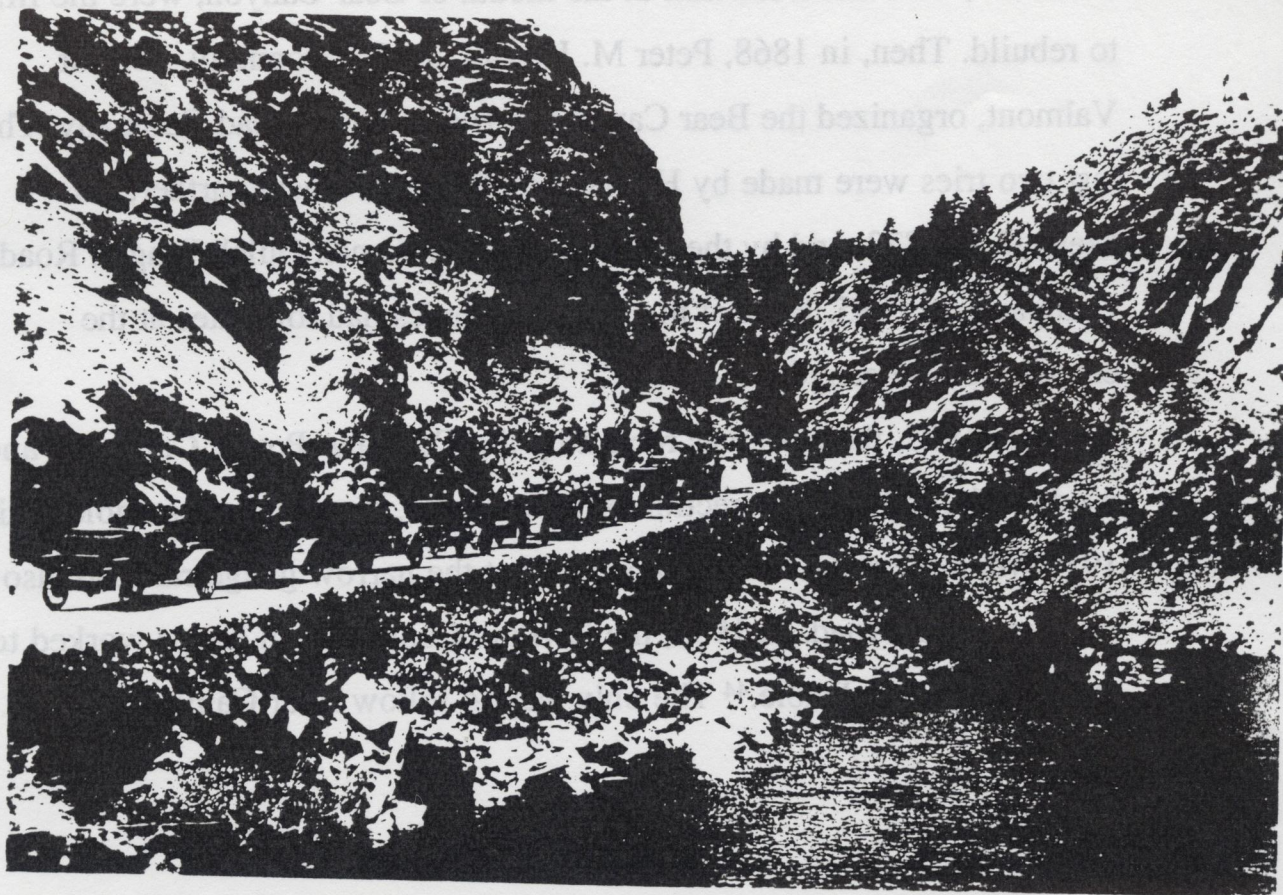
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<sup>38</sup>*Boulder News*, August 30, 1878.

<sup>39</sup>Jackson, Helen Hunt, *Bits of Travel at Home*, 1878.

<sup>40</sup>*Boulder County Commissioners Journal* 8, p. 36.

<sup>41</sup>*Boulder County Commissioners Journal* 6, p.207 (June 6, 1893).



Traffic jam in Boulder Canyon  
ca. 1915

including the driver, on top. A storage "boot" in the front held mail and another in the back held trunks and baggage.<sup>42</sup>

When John W. Valentine rented a team and buggy in 1906 to drive to Nederland to drum up some business for his Boulder hardware store, Boulder Canyon was still a one-track road with turnouts.<sup>43</sup>

Bear Canyon, Again and Again --

Meanwhile, determined road builders kept trying to establish a road in Bear Canyon, but each one was washed out. G. D. Harmon and Onsville C. Coffin, who had a sawmill at the mouth of Bear Canyon, were the first to rebuild. Then, in 1868, Peter M. Housel and Ed Donnelly, both of Valmont, organized the Bear Canon and Black Hawk Road Company. The last two tries were made by Harmon, Coffin, and a new partner, Eli Metcalf, in 1873, and by the Bear Canon and French Gulch Wagon Road Company, in 1885. Each of the road companies had toll gates at the entrance of the canyon.

In 1907, the road was rebuilt by the Colorado Power Company and used until 1910 for the erection of power lines. It remained passable until 1919 when the same flood that wiped out the narrow gauge railroad also washed out the road. In 1935, the Civilian Conservation Corps worked to make the trail walkable.<sup>44</sup> The only way to follow Bear Canyon today is on foot.

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<sup>42</sup>*Daily Camera*, February 7, 1955.

<sup>43</sup>*Daily Camera*, February 22, 1955.

<sup>44</sup>Ament, Pat, and Cleveland McCarty, *High Over Boulder*, 1970. Boulder: Pruett Publishing Co., p. 130.

## ON THE PLAINS

## County Roads and the End of the Stage Coach Era, 1858-1871

When the first settlers arrived, all land south of the 40th parallel, now Baseline Road, was in Kansas Territory, and land to the north was in Nebraska Territory. In the Boulder area, Colorado Territory was formed, in 1861, from parts of both. Boulder County also was created at this time.

As in the early settlement of Gold Hill, the first residents, in both the mountains and the plains, worked on their own local roads. Informal preferences of teamsters decided where streams would be crossed. Neighbors cooperated in grading down steep banks in order to make fording possible.<sup>45</sup>

After Boulder County was organized, any group of citizens who wanted a road presented a petition to the County Commissioners. They, in turn, appointed "viewers" to examine the request. If the viewers' report was favorable, the Commissioners established the route as a free county road. On the plains, roads were straight lines until something interfered. The earliest ones within the historic context area are as follows:<sup>46</sup>

County Road #1 (Pearl Street) had been the first road in Boulder established by the early settlers. As they waited out the winter of 1858-1859, they formed the Boulder City Town Company and built log cabins around the intersection of what is now Pearl and Broadway. A stick was driven into the ground in the middle of the intersection. Pearl Street became a straight route from a sighting across the stick to Valmont Butte.

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<sup>45</sup>Large, Dorothy, *Old Burlington, First Town on the St. Vrain, 1860-1871*, 1984. Longmont: St. Vrain Historical Society, p.28.

<sup>46</sup>*Boulder County Commissioners Journal 1*, p.57.

The other downtown streets either ran parallel to or at right angles to Pearl Street.<sup>47</sup> Valmont was the area's major agricultural center, and Boulder was a supply center for the mining activities in the mountain mining towns. A straight road was the logical way to connect these two earliest communities.

On April 10, 1862, Pearl Street was named County Road #1. The Commissioners stated that it "started at Boulder City and [ran] in a direct course in the direction of the Butte (Valmont)," then along various farmers' boundary lines "on the most practicable route to the east line of the County."<sup>48</sup>

County Road #2, or 12th Street (Broadway), was established the same day. It extended from "Boulder to the Foundry," and was commonly called the "Boulder-Furnace road."<sup>49</sup> It followed the current route of Broadway and South Broadway to just past Chambers Drive (south of the light at Greenbriar Boulevard) where it then followed what is now called Marshall Road into the town of Marshall. Marshall was the site of the earliest coal discoveries which fueled a blast furnace for the production of pig iron.

This foundry, at Marshall, was described by journalist Bayard Taylor, who visited it in 1866:

"On dropping into a little winding hollow, we soon saw the massive smelting furnace surrounded by clustered cabins. Mr.

<sup>47</sup>*The Saturday Truth*, March 28, 1903, p. 3. In later years, the streets outside of the downtown Pearl Street area were laid out in north-south and east-west directions.

<sup>48</sup>*Boulder County Commissioners Journal 1*, p. 57-58. The rest of the early numbered roads differed from those planned in this entry. In 1902, the section from the Housel and DeBacker mill in Valmont through Canfield to the east county line was vacated (*Journal 8*, p.29.)

<sup>49</sup>*Boulder County Commissioners Road Book B*.



Marshall, the proprietor, received us at the door of his residence, and after dinner, piloted us to the furnace and the mines. There are eleven veins of coal, varying from four to twelve feet in thickness, in the space of a mile; iron ore of a richness of fifty per cent just beyond it, and the best limestone, in almost inexhaustible quantities. Mr. Marshall, however, has only experimented with the native ores sufficiently to establish their value. He finds it more profitable to buy up abandoned machinery at a trifling cost, and recast it. The furnace is not only substantially but handsomely built, and has thus far done a thriving and successful business for its owner."<sup>50</sup>

County Roads #1 (Pearl) and #2 (Broadway) were laid out in the direction which seemed practical at the time -- Boulder to Valmont, and Boulder to Marshall. Outside of the downtown Boulder area, the remaining early roads followed north-south and east-west grid lines.

A petition was circulated in January, 1865 to make the road to the north, from Boulder to Left Hand Canyon, County Road #3. It was located "as near as the base of the mountains as practical," and joined the toll road at Altona, at the mouth of Left Hand Canyon. It appears to be in the same location as North Broadway and the Foothills Highway, but it is not known if this was the same as the the early Left Hand Canyon toll roads.

County Road #4 was part of today's Colorado 287, considered "almost identical"<sup>51</sup> to the "Salt Lake and California [stage] Road."<sup>52</sup> Previously it was known as the Cherokee Trail.

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<sup>50</sup>Taylor, Bayard, *Colorado: A Summer Trip*, originally published in 1867, reprinted, Niwot: University Press of Colorado, 1989, p; 157.

<sup>51</sup>Large, p. 19.

<sup>52</sup>*Boulder News*, June 26, 1874.

This stage coach route was declared a public highway on February 5, 1866.<sup>53</sup> Although its main route was out of the historic context area, its impact on Boulder makes it too important to leave out of this report.

The stages rushed travellers from Denver to Wyoming and points west. They stopped for meals and/or to change horses at various points including George Church's ranch (south of Broomfield) and John Boone's farm (called Boulder Station<sup>54</sup>) on Boulder Creek. Continuing north, they reached Alonzo Allen's home, and later hotel, in Burlington (on Longmont's Main Street),<sup>55</sup> and on to Berthoud, Loveland, LaPorte, Virginia Dale, and Laramie.<sup>56</sup>

At Boone's farm there was no bridge across Boulder Creek, so in order to find the best place to ford the creek, stage coaches sometimes detoured to the west to cross on today's 95th Street. During high water, they had to be ferried across at Valmont.<sup>57</sup> The coaches then travelled on the Gunbarrel road (see County Road #8) to reach their next scheduled stage coach stop at Burlington. There, mail for Boulder was picked up by Edward Viele who rode out from Boulder on horseback.<sup>58</sup>

<sup>53</sup>Boulder County Commissioners Journal 4, p.506.

<sup>54</sup>Jackson, W. Turrentine, *Wells Fargo in Colorado Territory*. Denver: Colorado Historical Society, 1982, p. 64 (from *Brown's Gazeteer*, 1869, pp. 26-27.)

<sup>55</sup>Allen, Alonzo H., "Pioneer Life in Old Burlington, Forerunner of Longmont," *Colorado Magazine*, Vol. XIV #4, July 1937, p. 146.

<sup>56</sup>Dyni, Anne, *Pioneer Voices of the Boulder Valley*. Boulder County Parks and Open Space, 1989, p.45-47.

<sup>57</sup>Valmont became a regular stop, in 1867, for the Denver and Boulder County Stage, a feeder line operated twice a week by C. B. Akins between Denver, Valmont, and James Creek [Jamestown]. (*Denver Daily*, March 30, 1867.) The trip, however, was not without its dangers. The April 4, 1868, issue of the *Denver Tribune* stated simply, "The hack from Denver to Boulder was lost during the big storm."

<sup>58</sup>Fetter, Richard, *Frontier Boulder*. Boulder: Johnson Books, 1983, p. 27.

Beginning in 1862, the stages were operated by Ben Holladay as part of his Overland Stage Line. In 1866, the same year that the road was declared a county road, Holladay sold his business to the Wells Fargo and Company which continued to operate it until the line was replaced by railroads.<sup>59</sup>

When the Union Pacific reached Cheyenne from the East in November, 1867, Wells Fargo coordinated its Denver-Cheyenne schedule. Stage coaches that left Denver at 7 am arrived in Cheyenne at 3 am the next morning. Passengers from Denver could get to Chicago in three days. The \$25 fare in 1867 was reduced to \$5 in 1869.<sup>60</sup>

When journalist Taylor travelled on horseback in the Boulder area in 1866, he had left Denver "on the Salt Lake stage road, which runs northward, parallel with the mountains, for near a hundred miles."<sup>61</sup> Others on the road were "large freight trains on their way to Salt Lake," and "many emigrants bound for Montana and Idaho [who] have been obliged to make a detour of two hundred miles, through Denver, in order to get over the swollen Platte [River]."<sup>62</sup>

The rest of the early county roads were:

County Road #5, the section of Jay Road between 28th and 75th Streets. County Road #6, 75th Street north and south of Niwot. County Road #7 is now Airport Road west of Longmont, and out of the historic context area.

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<sup>59</sup>Dyni, *Pioneer Voices of the Boulder Valley*, p.45-47.

<sup>60</sup>Jackson, W. Turrentine, *Wells Fargo in Colorado Territory*. Colorado Historical Society, 1982, p. 44, 64.

<sup>61</sup>Taylor, Bayard, *Colorado: A Summer Trip*, originally published in 1867, reprinted, Niwot: University Press of Colorado, 1989, p.154.

<sup>62</sup>Taylor, p. 155.

County Road #8 extended from just north of the town of Valmont to Mineral Road (today's Colorado 52), east of 95th Street, and on to Burlington. Alonzo Allen stated that it was called the "gunbarrel" route "on account of its straightness."<sup>63</sup> Today's Gunbarrel Hill was named for this road. When the area was settled by homesteaders, the road, which cut across square and rectangular land parcels, was discontinued.

County Road #9 extended from Peter Housel's flour mill at Valmont east to Louisville. County Road #10 was 63rd Street north of Valmont.

The Commissioners, who later renumbered all of these roads, stated, "All of the above-mentioned roads are to be four rods<sup>64</sup> wide and to be located with a view to economy, and also so as to damage farms and every other class of property as little as possible, the most fordable crossings of the creeks are to be taken in to consideration."<sup>65</sup>

In 1865, the Boulder County Commissioners required an annual road tax of two dollars per person. A road overseer was appointed for each road district to see that money was collected and the work accomplished.<sup>66</sup> Those who could work or pay more, did so. In 1880, Amos Bixby, in his *History of Boulder County*, wrote,

"Few, in after years, realize how much of a drain upon the earnings of pioneers is the indispensable expenditure for roads, in a rough, roadless mountain region, where, at first, it was difficult to cut a foot-path or a pack-trail. In this direction, some of the pioneers were liberal and enterprising beyond their means."<sup>67</sup>

<sup>63</sup>Allen, p. 157.

<sup>64</sup>A rod is 16.5 feet, so 4 rods = 66 feet

<sup>65</sup>*Boulder County Commissioners Journal 1*, p.61.

<sup>66</sup>*Boulder County Commissioners Journal 1*, p. 138 (April 8, 1865).

<sup>67</sup>Bixby, p. 393.

As homesteaders took up their claims, farmers built a grid of straight intersecting county roads which ran along their property boundaries. In 1866, *New York Tribune* correspondent Bayard Taylor visited Belmont (Marshall), then rode on to Valmont. Frustrated by the layout of the roads on the plains he wrote,

"We were full two hours in reaching Valmont, on account of the very independent habits of the Colorado farmers. The second bottoms [defined by Taylor as "rolling table land"] being devoted to grazing purposes, they have found it necessary to fence the outer edge of the farm land; and, in so doing, they cut off the road with the most utter disregard of the public."

"If there are laws in relation to roads, they seem to be a dead letter. That which should be the first business of a territorial government is left to a time when it can only be regulated by a great deal of trouble and expense. Our National Government acts in the most niggardly manner toward its incipient States. There should be at least a million of dollars annually spent in each Territory between Mississippi and the Pacific, on roads and bridges. In spite of the tedious zigzags we were forced to make, the views of the broad, prosperous, and thickly-settled Boulder region, made our ride very enjoyable."<sup>68</sup>

In 1874, the *Longmont Press* wrote an editorial, which was reprinted in the *Boulder County News* on the above subject. The people in Longmont were upset about not having a direct route to Boulder. It was stated,

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<sup>68</sup>Taylor, p.158.

"The farmers are not wholly to blame for fencing up the roads and making people zig-zag around two miles, to go a distance of one mile; the most blamable parties are the County Commissioners. They have formed a policy that has not only been detrimental to the advancement of the welfare of the country, but has, by the inordinate stinginess of the County Commissioners in regard to road matters, increased the expense ten times by delaying till the land has become so much more valuable, over which the roads run."

"To illustrate a case in point. A few years ago, a petition was circulated and numerous signed, praying the board of County Commissioners to appoint viewers to lay out a road from this town [Longmont] to Boulder. The viewers were appointed, the road laid out, but some farmer on Left Hand [Creek], whose farm the proposed road crossed, was damaged to a more or less extent, and rather than pay the damages that might accrue to him, the Commissioners revoked the whole thing, and today there is no legally laid out road to Boulder."<sup>69</sup>

The road to Longmont, now known as the Longmont Diagonal, would not become a reality for over eighty more years!

Railroads brought an end to the early road era. Historian Frank Hall reminisced, "None who lived in the period from 1859 to 1870 will forget the gaudily painted and rather imposing Concord coaches, drawn by six splendid horses, guided by the most expert reinsmen in all the land..."<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>69</sup>*Boulder County News*, June 26, 1874.

<sup>70</sup>Hall, Frank, *History of the State of Colorado in Four Volumes, Vol. II*. Chicago: Blakely Printing Co., p. 105.

In 1871, a reporter noted that "The Denver and Boulder stage is defunct." Using the term "rapid transit" perhaps for the first time in the Boulder area, he continued,

"Since the increase of service on this route to a daily, Walt Smith meets the mail at [the railroad at] Erie. Thus old institutions are giving way to the rapid progress now apparent all around us. We have enjoyed the old stage line so long that a shade of sadness comes over us as we part with it forever, but console ourselves with the reflection that the age of steam and railroads brings improvements which compensate us amply for the loss. Mr. Smith makes close connections at Erie, so that passengers to and from Denver can rely upon rapid transit. To those who have not seen the iron horse for years we would recommend a pleasant ride to Erie with Walter."<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>71</sup>Gladden, p. 401. From *Boulder County News*, May 20, 1871.

## THE AUTOMOBILE ERA

## And the Need for Better Roads, 1900-1996

The turn of the twentieth century ushered in a new era of transportation -- automobiles. According to historian Sanford Gladden, the first in Boulder was a ca. 1900 Locomobile owned by Charles B. Culbertson, manager of the Colorado & Northwestern Railroad.<sup>72</sup> Either this "first" automobile, or another early one was tested in October, 1900, by a drive up the steep road to the town of Magnolia.<sup>73</sup> It soon became obvious that automobiles required an improvement in the area's roads.

Paving was on everyone's minds in 1905 when a "Good Roads Convention" was held in Boulder. On exhibit were paving bricks from the Alumina Clay Company's deposits in Bear Canyon. Mayor Lou Johnston favored using the bricks to pave parts of Pearl, 13th, and 14th Streets. Boulder Canyon granite, in a gravel form, was the preferred material for residential streets.<sup>74</sup>

Apparently a majority of property owners did not approve, as no brick laying was ever done. Instead, a steam roller packed Pearl Street with gravel.<sup>75</sup> On April 4, 1908, six-horse teams were "plowing up the hard surface of Pearl Street" in preparation for the rails of the Denver & Interurban railroad.<sup>76</sup> By 1911, the Boulder County Commissioners ordered the gravelling of the Marshall Road (South Broadway and

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<sup>72</sup>Gladden, p. 408.

<sup>73</sup>*Boulder County Herald*, October 2, 1900.

<sup>74</sup>*Daily Camera*, May 17, 1905 and July 26, 1905.

<sup>75</sup>*Daily Camera*, June 16, 1906.

<sup>76</sup>*Daily Camera*, April 4, 1908.



Marshall Road) from Baseline Road. Additional gravelling of County roads was done with horse-drawn dump wagons and convict labor.

Of the convicts, who came from the state penitentiary, Commissioner Clark Gilbert was not enthusiastic. He stated, The convicts "have been fed in Brown Palace style and work about as hard at road building as would the average guest of that hostelry." He also complained that for a gang of thirty men, there were three foremen who "do nothing," and "others who eat but don't shovel dirt."<sup>77</sup>

Another "Good Roads Conference" was held on January 13 and 14, 1911. The general consensus was that better roads would bring in tourists. It was stated,

"Every summer hordes of wealthy people from all parts of the United States would ship their cars to this state to indulge their penchant for motoring, and to enjoy in this way the salubrious climate which now brings to us a less opulent class of visitors...There is little use in kicking about our wealthy class going to Europe each year when they should spend their money at home. When they are ready to take care of them as well, or nearly as well, as they are looked after abroad in these matters of material comfort and convenience of travel, they will come -- and gladly."<sup>78</sup>

The mood toward convict road builders had improved in 1915. By then they were camped in, and improving the road up, Boulder Canyon. For Thanksgiving that year, the "good people of Boulder City and vicinity" treated the men to games and music and then a mid-day Thanksgiving dinner complete with an after-dinner cigar. In the afternoon they had

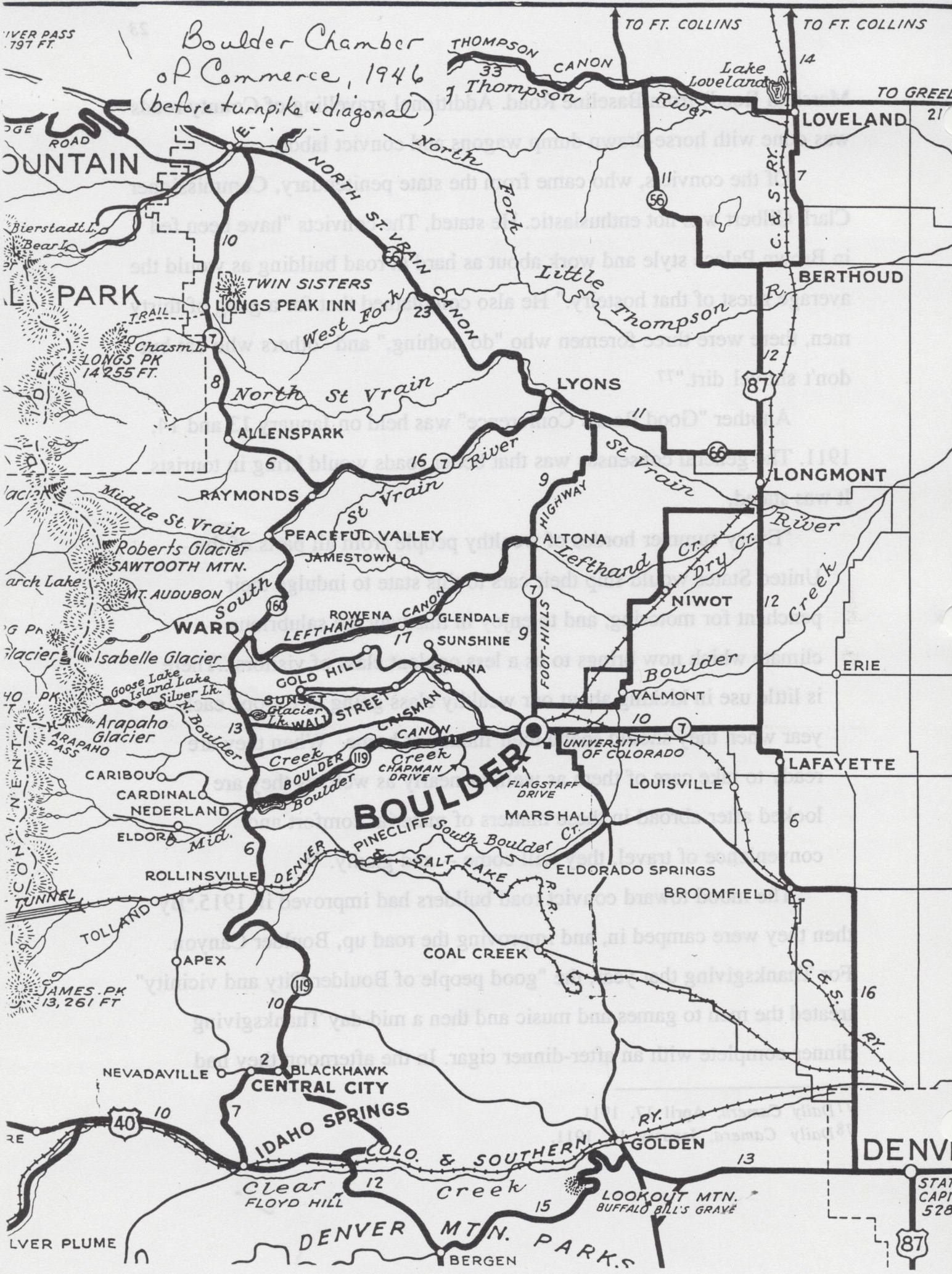
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<sup>77</sup>*Daily Camera*, April 17, 1911.

<sup>78</sup>*Daily Camera*, January 15, 1911.

RIVER PASS  
797 FT.

# Boulder Chamber of Commerce, 1946 (before turnpike & diagonal)



87

boxing matches, then more turkey and the trimmings, another cigar, and a "moving picture show."<sup>79</sup>

In 1917, the convicts were still working on the Boulder Canyon road. The Boulder Commercial Association, forerunner of the Boulder Chamber of Commerce, treated the road gang to a noonday dinner in the main dining room of the Hotel Boulderado.<sup>80</sup>

By this time, Hickox and Son started a Stanley Steamer automobile line between Boulder and Eldora. Their busiest years were during the tungsten mining boom of 1915-1917.<sup>81</sup>

Speed limits were set for the first time in 1920. Drivers could go 35 mph on "prairie" roads and 20 mph in the mountains. All turns were limited to 18 mph.<sup>82</sup>

In 1926, Boulder opened the first of its free auto camps at what is now Eben G. Fine park. The *Daily Camera* reported, "It is expected that several thousand motoring tourists will stay one or more nights at the auto camp this summer, and ample accommodations are provided for them to cook, wash, sleep, and enjoy their stay."<sup>83</sup>

After the railroad tracks through Marshall and the University were removed in 1932, South Broadway was extended to Marshall on the existing railroad grade. (See Railroads, "black" tracks.) The road (Colorado 93) was completed in 1936. In 1954, after the opening of the Rocky Flats Atomic Energy Commission plant, a section of this road was rerouted to bypass the town of Marshall.

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<sup>79</sup>*Daily Camera*, November 27, 1915.

<sup>80</sup>Pettem, Silvia, *Legend of a Landmark*. Boulder: Book Lode, 1986, p. 46.

<sup>81</sup>*Daily Camera*, January 31, 1971.

<sup>82</sup>*Daily Camera*, August 10, 1920.

<sup>83</sup>*Daily Camera*, May 27, 1926.

By 1940, the only paved roads out of Boulder were the Foothills Highway to Lyons and Arapahoe Road east to Colorado 287.<sup>84</sup> The right angle turns through Lafayette and Broomfield into Denver remained from the early homesteading days. The old stage route was still the main road north from Denver. Drivers turned west on Arapahoe to get to Boulder.

After many years of free county, state, and federal roads, one final toll road was built -- the Denver-Boulder turnpike. The government appropriated land so that the road could go basically in a straight line, just like the earliest roads before the land was homesteaded. Beginning January 19, 1952, tolls of 25¢ were charged at the toll-gate under the Broomfield interchange. The road paid for itself thirteen years ahead of schedule. The last toll was collected on September 14, 1967.<sup>85</sup>

The Colorado Department of Highways submitted plans in 1959 for the Diagonal Highway between Boulder and Longmont. Like the Denver-Boulder turnpike, properties had to be condemned in order to obtain the right of way. One lane of the divided highway was completed in 1965 when the IBM plant first opened. The other lane, which was not begun until 1972, sliced through Niwot's commercial district, destroying a segment of the town.<sup>86</sup> The Diagonal became a reality nearly a century after county residents requested it!

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<sup>84</sup>Noel, Mahoney, and Stevens, *Historical Atlas of Colorado*. Norman: University of Oklahoma, 1994, p. 31.

<sup>85</sup>*Daily Camera*, January 25, 1976.

<sup>86</sup>Dyni, Anne, *Niwot, Colorado, Echoes From a Railroad Town*, 1994. Boulder: Book Lode, p. 45.

## SUMMARY

Boulder's early main thoroughfares, Pearl Street between Boulder and Valmont and the Broadway/Marshall Road between Boulder and Marshall were surveyed before the land was fenced into square and rectangular homesteads. The roads were laid out as straight as possible.

The area's latest highways, the Boulder-Denver turnpike (US 36) and the Longmont Diagonal (Colorado 119), also follow straight lines, but only after land was appropriated from the property owners. "The editor of the *Longmont Press* was correct, in 1874, when he stated that the longer the Commissioners wait to acquire the land, the more expensive it will be. Most of the rest of the Boulder area's roads still follow right-angle property boundary lines.

In a 1952 interview, Martin Parsons, the elderly former teamster recounted his poem, "Trails vs. Turnpikes," as follows:

"You boast of your graded highways done in gravel and cement;  
Where you can ride in a limousine, with pleasure and content.

But somehow it don't seem natural for an old cowhand, like me,  
To sit on a padded cushion, Glassed in, so I cannot see.

I long for a good old cow trail, and a trusty saddle horse,  
The hills and plains of a cattle range, where a man is his own road boss.

Out there in God's open spaces you can dream when the sun gets low,  
As you ride along you can hum a song just as slow as you want to go.

You've naught to fear as the shadows fall, your cow horse will not  
stray.

And you need no glaring headlights to push the dark away.

They say there's a path of glory that leads to a great white throne,  
A gleaming, polished highway with angels to bear you home.

But I seem to feel, when I get my pass, for a trip to the judgment seat,  
A winding dust blown cattle trail will guide my erring feet."<sup>87</sup>

Within the historic context area, interpretive signs should be located at the base of the hiking trails into Gregory Canyon and Bear Canyon, as well as at the first turn-out in Boulder Canyon.

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<sup>87</sup>Daily Camera, undated clipping, 1952.

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*Denver Daily*

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Map #1

↑ = need for marker

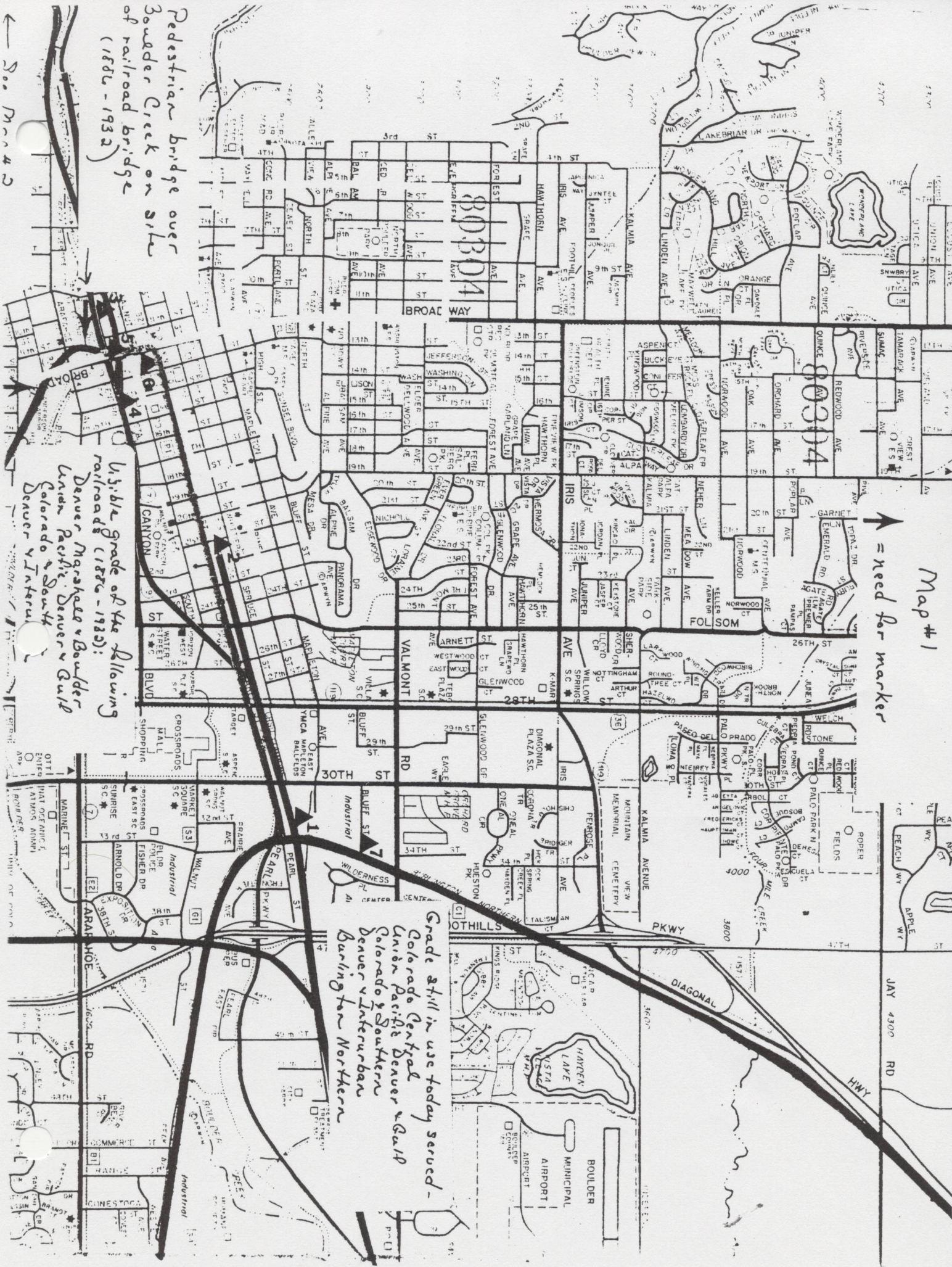
Pedestrian bridge over  
Boulder Creek on site  
of railroad bridge  
(1880-1932)

← Soo No. 42

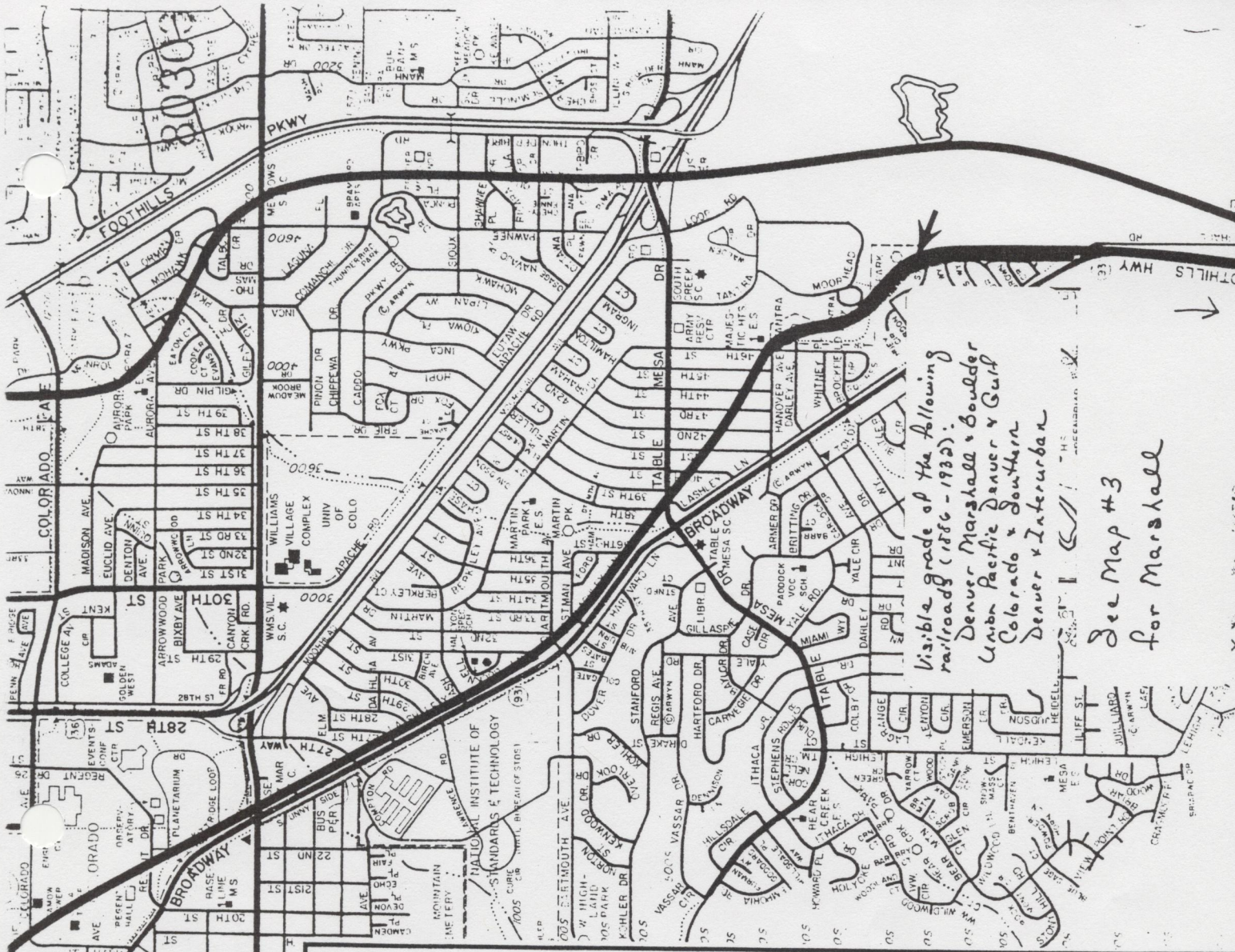
Visible grade of the following  
railroads (1870-1920):

Denver, Marshfield & Boulder  
Under Pacific, Denver & Gulf  
Colorado & Southern  
Denver & Intermountain

Grade still in use today served -  
Colorado Central  
Under Pacific, Denver & Gulf  
Colorado & Southern  
Denver & Intermountain  
Barrington Northern



Four Mile Canyon



**BOULDER, COLORADO'S RAILROAD AND STREETCAR TRACKS**  
(IN CHRONOLOGICAL ORDER)

- GREEN BUILT 1873, GOLDEN TO LONGMONT
  - DARK BLUE BUILT 1873, BRIGHTON TO BOULDER
  - RED BUILT 1877, EAST OF BOULDER TO MARSHALL
  - PINK BUILT 1883, DOWNTOWN BOULDER TO MTS,  
ALSO CONNECTION TO DARK BLUE TRACK.
  - BLACK BUILT 1881, FIRST USED 1886, DENVER TO  
DOWNTOWN BOULDER
  - YELLOW BUILT BEGINNING 1899, STREETCARS
  - LIGHT BLUE BUILT 1908, PEARL STREET CONNECTION
- DEPOTS** ▲
- 1 BUILT BY COLORADO CENTRAL, 1873
  - 2 BUILT BY DENVER & BOULDER VALLEY, 1873
  - 3 BUILT BY GREELEY, SALT LAKE & PACIFIC, 1883
  - 4 BUILT BY UNION PACIFIC, 1890
  - 5 BUILT BY COLORADO & SOUTHERN, 1910
  - 6 FIRST NATIONAL BANK, USED BY DENVER & INTERURBAN, 1908
  - 7 BUILT BY COLORADO & SOUTHERN, 1957

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This excerpt is from Margaret Long's  
"The Smoky Hill Trail," 1953, Kistler Co.

#### IV. THE OVERLAND TRAIL THE WESTERN DIVISION IN COLORADO.

U. S. 87 Denver to Fort Collins, and U. S. 287 to Virginia Dale.

AFTER the main line of the Overland Stage Line was changed to include Denver, it ran over the Fort Morgan Cut-off to the crossing of the South Platte in Denver. It then turned back, north, along the west bank of the Platte to Longmont and Loveland. Beyond it passed west of Fort Collins to Laporte on the Cache la Poudre River. The earlier Trail had crossed the South Platte between Latham and Greeley and ascended the Poudre to Laporte.

There were two stage roads between Laporte and Stonewall Stage Stations. The westbound stage ran north from Laporte on the east side of U. S. 287 and descended a steep grade to Stonewall Valley. Going south, the eastbound stage passed west of the highway, between it and the Cache la Poudre River, and came down from the hills to Laporte. These routes avoided the steepest up-grades whether east or westbound, according to the Old Timer's legends.

The Overland stages were pulled by six horses, matched in size and color. The big coaches accommodated twenty-two passengers. There was a deep boot below the driver's feet, which was used for mail bags, express packages and treasure box. At the back of the coach was a four foot platform where trunks were piled and covered with a large leather apron and buckled down with wide straps. One of the seats next the driver was reserved for the guard or messenger. Many long strings of ox-

teams with big freight wagons, and long strings of mule freighters consisting of six to ten mules driven with one long jerk line, went over the stage road. Soldiers traveled over it between Fort Russell, Wyoming, and Denver, and large herds of longhorn cattle from Texas trailed over it to Wyoming and Montana.<sup>1</sup>

Alonzo H. Allen describes the route of the Overland Trail.<sup>2</sup> "In the good old staging days, the main line ran from Atchison, Kansas to Sacramento, California. Our side line came from the northwest, through Little Laramie, Wyoming, Virginia Dale, Colorado, through Laramie, Spring Canyon, Mariano Modena on the Big Thompson,<sup>3</sup> crossed the Little Thompson at Dick Bowler's<sup>4</sup> and the St. Vrain at old Pella,<sup>5</sup> or on south into Burlington,<sup>6</sup> then through Valmont to Golden City, and then to Denver. When Boulder Creek, Clear Creek, or South Platte were not too high, coaches traveled by Buford's,<sup>7</sup> Rock Creek, Rawhide or Churches,<sup>8</sup> and thence 11 miles into Denver, and pulled up at the old Planter's Hotel at the foot of Fifteenth street." [id.] Sixteenth.

The Allen account in the COLORADO MAGAZINE describes the town of Burlington, across the St. Vrain from Longmont. The first post office was in the Allen cabin, just west of the D. A. R. monument on U. S. 87. The rest of the town, including two general stores, was south of the Allen cabin, all on the west side of the present highway. Burlington was moved across the river in 1870,

<sup>1</sup> Condensed from the account in *The Colorado Magazine*. XIV. 145. *Pioneer Life in Old Burlington*. Alonzo H. Allen.

<sup>2</sup> Allen. Op. cit.

<sup>3</sup> Loveland.

<sup>4</sup> Dick Bower's station was near Berthoud.

<sup>5</sup> Pella on the St. Vrain, a few miles above Longmont. Now called Hygiene.

<sup>6</sup> Burlington was across the Big Thompson from Loveland. Longmont.

<sup>7</sup> Buford's stage station was on Boulder Creek, in the same location as Boone's stage station, described at reading 25.2, page 213. An account of Buford's is given in *The Colorado Magazine*, September, 1946, page 212.

<sup>8</sup> Church is between Arvada and Broomfield on Colorado Highway 121.

#### IV. THE OVERLAND TRAIL

and established on higher ground at Longmont to avoid the floods in the St. Vrain.

Bob Spottswood, who became superintendent of the Overland Stage Company in 1864, contracted with Mrs. Allen to operate a stage house or hotel. This was a board and grout building, erected on the east side of the present highway opposite the Allen cabin. In 1865 a two-story frame addition was built upon the north end of the old house. The office, dining room, living room, and two large double bed rooms were on the ground floor. Upstairs there were four more bedrooms, large enough for two beds each. Sometimes that was not enough and extra guests were accommodated by spreading blankets and buffalo robes on the dining room floor. The guests could not go to bed before the departure of the midnight coaches, and they had to get up before the tables were set for breakfast.

Mr. Allen says: "For regular meals to stage coach passengers mother was paid \$1.50. Maybe that sounds a little steep, but when you consider that flour cost \$25.00 per hundred pound sack, that eggs were \$2.00 a dozen, and butter often \$2.00 a pound, you can see that there was some expense in serving meals. The average meal would consist of a big bowl of good soup as a starter; the main course, served family style, having plenty of meat—usually beef, buffalo, antelope, or deer; vegetables, such as potatoes, squash and beans cooked with plenty of salt pork; light bread; fruit, usually apples dried on strings; home-made pastries; coffee or tea.

"It is probably impossible for the present-day housewife to have much idea of the work required of my mother operating such an establishment without any modern conveniences. At the time she was feeding passengers, drivers, and stock tenders and regular town boarders, she was using pitch pine wood for fuel in a large sheet iron

range; dipping water from barrels that had been hauled from the river on sleds; doing her laundry out of doors, using wooden tubs and washboards; ironing with heavy cast flatirons; with no modern bathrooms, and with all outbuildings quite a distance from the house."

The main part of Mrs. Allen's Hotel was moved to the southeast corner of Third Avenue and Kimbark street in Longmont and renamed the City Hotel.<sup>9</sup>

The other stage stations on the Overland Trail are described in the following automobile Log.

#### OVERLAND AND CHEROKEE TRAILS

LOG OF THE OVERLAND MAIL STAGE from Denver to Virginia Dale. This short log of Root and Connelley<sup>10</sup> is given before the automobile Log on the present highways.

Miles

- 0.0 Denver.
- 11.0 Childs (Or Church).
- 23.0 Boone's. (On Boulder Creek).
- 41.0 Little Thompson.
- 49.0 Big Thompson. (Loveland).
- 63.0 Laporte (On the Cache la Poudre).
- 75.0 Boner (Near Owl Canyon).
- 87.0 Cherokee. (On Stonewall Creek).
- 99.0 Virginia Dale. (On Dale Creek. The last station in Colorado).

AUTOMOBILE LOG. The Overland and Cherokee Trails. Denver to Virginia Dale. U. S. 87 and U. S. 287.

Miles

- 0.0 Denver at Larimer and Fourteenth streets. Go west across the Fourteenth Street Viaduct, and northwest on Speer Boulevard to Federal Boulevard. Turn north on Federal or U. S. 87.
- 3.2 Junction of Federal Boulevard with W. 46th Avenue. Go west on W. 46th or Colorado 72.
- 6.6 Arvada. Intersection of Colorado Nos. 72 and 121. Go north on No. 121.
- 6.8 Bridge over Ralston Creek.

<sup>9</sup> *The Colorado Magazine*. XIV. 193. Allen. "Early Days in Longmont."

<sup>10</sup> *The Overland Stage to California*. Root and Connelley. p. 102. The parentheses in the above log of Root and Connelley have been added.

11.6 CHURCH'S STATION or Twelve Mile House.<sup>1</sup> This was a large twenty-room house, on the west side of the highway and the south bank of Dry Creek. The high embankment of the Colorado and Southern Railway runs between the site of the house to the east and the sites of the two barns to the west. The house was burned down a few years ago. Where it stood a bare spot with piles of brick and plaster is still separated from the highway by a row of fine cottonwood trees.

12.6 Underpass, Colorado & Southern R.R.

13.3 Take the right fork which goes to the overpass.

13.5 Overpass, above the Boulder Turnpike.

14.6 Broomfield. Turn west on Colorado 121, on the Jefferson-Boulder County Line.

14.9 Turn north on Colorado 121. The entrance and exit roads to and from the Boulder Turnpike go west from Colorado 121 in the next quarter of a mile.

15.1 Cross the railroad tracks.

15.2 Junction of Colorado 121 & U. S. 87. Go north on U. S. 87, which turns from northwest to north at this reading. The Overland Trail ran north with U. S. 87 across Boulder County.

17.6 Bridge over Rock Creek.

19.4 Bridge over Coal Creek.<sup>2</sup>

21.0 Lafayette. East junction of U. S. 87 and Colorado 7. Turn west on the combined highways, which run on the Base Line or 40th Parallel.

21.5 Turn north.

22.6 West junction of U. S. 87 and Colorado 7. No. 7 goes west to Boulder. Go north on U. S. 87.

25.2 BOONE'S STATION site<sup>3</sup> on the east side of the highway and the south side of Boulder Creek. This station site has been located by N. Rothrock of Longmont.

25.7 Bridge over Boulder Creek.

27.8 Junction of U. S. 87 and Colorado 52. Continue north on U. S. 87.

<sup>1</sup> S. W.  $\frac{1}{4}$ , Sec. 14, T. 2 S., R. 69 W.

<sup>2</sup> This stream, named Coal Creek, comes down from the mountains. Another Coal Creek, sometimes called Sand Creek, heads to the southeast near Hilltop. Both are tributary to the South Platte.

<sup>3</sup> N. E.  $\frac{1}{4}$ , Sec. 15, T. 1 N., R. 69 W.

- 31.8 Bridge over Left Hand Creek.
- 32.0 Site of one of the stores in the vanished town of Burlington on the west side of the highway. It is now occupied by a large red barn.
- 32.2 Road west. Continue north on U. S. 87.
- 32.4 THE ST. VRAIN STAGE STATION site.<sup>4</sup> Mrs. Allen's Hotel was opposite, on the east side of the highway. A monument on the west side has the following inscription:  
1860-1928. The site of the first log cabin in St. Vrain valley lies 200 feet west of the marker. The cabin was built by Alonzo N. Allen and used as a stage station on the Overland Trail. Placed by the Long's Peak Chapter, Daughters of the American Revolution.
- 32.5 Bridge over St. Vrain Creek.
- 32.8 Cross the tracks of the C. B. & Q. and the C. & S. railroads in Longmont.
- 34.0 North city limits of Longmont.
- 34.7 Junction of U. S. 87 and Colorado 66 to Lyons and Estes Park. Go north on U. S. 87.
- 39.7 Larimer-Boulder county line.
- 40.8 Bridge over the Little Thompson.
- 41.0 LITTLE THOMPSON STAGE STATION<sup>5</sup> or Dick Bower's Station according to Alonzo H. Allen. The station was a quarter of a mile west of the highway on the north bank of the Little Thompson. Harold Dunning of Loveland obtained the location of this station from an Old Timer, Louis Brandt, also of Loveland.
- 42.7 Junction of U. S. 87 and Colorado 56. Go east on U. S. 87. The Overland Trail continued north and ran west of the highway to Laporte.
- 43.9 Berthoud. Cross the Colorado & Southern railroad tracks.
- 44.0 Cross roads. Turn north on U. S. 87.
- 47.3 Junction of U. S. 87 and Colorado 60. Continue north on U. S. 87.
- 49.8 Bridge over the Big Thompson.

<sup>4</sup> N. W.  $\frac{1}{4}$ , Sec. 10, T. 2 N., R. 69 W.  
<sup>5</sup> S. W.  $\frac{1}{4}$ , Sec. 27, T. 4 S., R. 69 W.

- 50.5 Loveland. Intersection of U. S. 87 and Fourth street, the business center of town. Continue north on U. S. 87.
- 51.5 Loveland. Intersection of U. S. 87 and U. S. 34. Go west on U. S. 34.
- 54.3 Leave U. S. 34 and go south through C. & S. Railway Underpass.
- 54.6 FORT NAMAQUA. THE BIG THOMPSON STAGE STATION<sup>6</sup> was on the west side of the road and the north bank of the Big Thompson. There was a small, square stone fort with loop holes on all sides. The building had a peaked roof which was blown off in a wind storm and replaced by a flat roof. The fort was burned down in the summer of 1936. The original unpainted, wooden barn is standing in the yard near the site of the Fort. It was built by the Wells-Fargo Company.
- 54.7 Bridge over the Big Thompson.
- 54.8 A monument stands on the west side of the road, in front of the Modena cabin. The solid block of granite in which the tablet is placed was brought from Estes Park. The legend reads:  
NAMAQUA. Home, trading post and fort of Mariano Modena, early trapper, scout and pioneer. First settlement in Big Thompson Valley. Station on the Overland stage route to California 1862. Erected by the State Historical Society of Colorado from the Mrs. J. N. Hall Foundation and by the Namaqua Chapter Daughters of the American Revolution. 1931.
- 55.2 End of the road. Turn east.
- 58.5 Intersection of U. S. 87 and Fourth street in Loveland. Same reading as 50.5 above.
- 51.5 Loveland Intersection of U. S. 87 and U. S. 34. Go north on U. S. 87.
- 59.5 Cross roads. Continue north on U. S. 87.
- 60.5 Cross roads at a filling station. Leave U. S. 87 and go west on a section line road.

<sup>6</sup> N. W.  $\frac{1}{4}$ , Sec. 16, T. 5 N., R. 69 W.

62.5 **SPRING CANYON STAGE STATION.**<sup>7</sup> The section line road west ends on the bank of Spring Creek. The station site is in a wheat field at the Trail crossing of the creek, near the mouth of Spring Canyon. It has been located by Clyde H. Brown of Fort Collins who has found an iron bar for locking the stable door and other relics on this station site. Half a mile south of the road intersection at this reading, a road goes west into Spring Canyon and passes Green Gables Filling Station and the site of vanished Stout City.

After the Overland Trail up the Cache la Poudre from Latham to Laporte was abandoned in 1862, the Overland, as described by Root and Connelley, ran north from Denver. Beyond Spring Canyon it passed west of the future site of Fort Collins and crossed the Cache la Poudre at Laporte.

There was a change of route for a short time before the Overland ceased to operate. According to Clyde H. Brown, Namaqua Station, west of Loveland, and Spring Canyon Station, southwest of Fort Collins, were abandoned and the Trail swung eastward. A new station was established on the Washburn Ranch at the trail crossing of the Big Thompson, about three miles below Namaqua.<sup>8</sup> The Washburn station site is a mile south of Loveland, on the south bank of the river and the east side of U. S. 87 as it approaches the highway bridge. From Washburn the Trail ran northeast to the Second Sherburn Ranch on the south bank of the Cache la Poudre at its junction with Box Elder Creek. Thence it ascended the Poudre, for about five miles, to Fort Collins and crossed the river near the present highway bridge (U. S. 87) on North College Avenue. It then continued up the north bank of the Poudre to Laporte.

After the Cache la Poudre flood of 1864 Camp Collins, the military camp at Laporte was moved to Fort Collins. At that time, tents, clothing, buildings and equipment were carried away and de-

stroyed.<sup>9</sup> The barracks at Fort Collins were on the south side of the Poudre, a few blocks east of College Avenue, according to John McKissick of Fort Lupton. The old grout house at the southwest corner of Linden and Jefferson streets, near the original barracks, is thought to have been the stage stop for passengers and mail. The home station was at Laporte.

60.5 Return to the cross roads at the filling station, and go north on U. S. 87.

62.5 Fort Collins. North city limits. Continue north on U. S. 87 or College Avenue.

63.8 Intersection of College Avenue and Olive street at the Armstrong Hotel. Lincoln Park is two blocks east on Olive street. The Park occupies a city block, bounded on the north by Olive street. The entrance to the Carnegie Library is on the west side of the Park, and the entrance to the Pioneer Museum is on the east side. Continue north.

64.0 Intersection of College and Mountain View Avenues.

64.2 East junction of Colorado 14 with U. S. 87. Cross the railroad tracks just north of this junction.

64.5 Bridge over the Cache la Poudre River.

66.0 Junction of U. S. 87, to Cheyenne, with U. S. 287. Go northwest on U. S. 287.

68.4 Cross roads. The Larsen Ranch is half a mile south, on the west side of the section line road. The house is the original stage station building at Laporte, which Bill Taylor moved to its present position in 1871. It is a large two-story house, painted white. There are two large rooms with a hall between, containing an old fashioned stair case, on the ground floor of the main building. There are several more rooms on the ground floor in the addition of a later date. Go west on U. S. 287.

69.7 **LAPORTE.** This was a trading post for French trappers as long ago as 1828. Baxter's store is just south of this reading, on the west side of the road leading south to the Laporte bridge over the Poudre.

<sup>7</sup> S. W.  $\frac{1}{4}$  Sec. 28, T. 7 N., R. 69 W.  
<sup>8</sup> S. W.  $\frac{1}{4}$  Sec. 24, T. 5 N., R. 69 W.

The stage station buildings were on the west side of the road between Baxter's store and the river.<sup>10</sup> The station house was moved to the Larsen Ranch, and later the other buildings at Laporte were burned. The memorial tablet was recovered after the fire and is now on exhibition at the Pioneer Museum in Fort Collins. The legend reads:

In 1862 this log house was used as a station house for the OVERLAND STAGE COMPANY.

Erected by the Cache la Poudre Chapter Daughters of the American Revolution, 1916.

73.2 West junction of U. S. 287 and Colorado 14. No. 14 ascends the Cache la Poudre. Go north on U. S. 287, following the east side of the ridge. The Overland Trail ran on the west side of the ridge.

81.0 Owl Canyon. Filling station. C. E. Roberts of Laporte is in charge of this station. He has located the following stations as far as Virginia Dale. Leave U. S. 287 and go east.

81.1 Turn northeast.

84.0 The road turns southeast. There are high, red sandstone cliffs on the north side of the road. This is reported to be an inscription rock on which the emigrants carved names and dates as they passed on their way to California in the 1860's.<sup>11</sup>

85.5 Roads southeast and south. Turn south on section line road.

87.0 Turn east on a section line road.

87.1 PARK CREEK STATION site<sup>12</sup> on the west bank of Park Creek and the south side of the section line road. A few holes in the ground mark the station site. The stage barn has been moved across the road and is one of the buildings on the Ripples, formerly the Minor Ranch. The barn has been painted and is in good repair. Park Station is called the Pollock Ranch on the Colorado township plat of 1872.

<sup>10</sup> The station site in Laporte is in the S. W.  $\frac{1}{4}$ , Sec. 29, T. 8 N., R. 69 W.

<sup>11</sup> *The Colorado Magazine*, XVII, 72.  
<sup>12</sup> N. W.  $\frac{1}{4}$ , Sec. 16, T. 9 N., R. 69 W.

This is one of the stage stations located by C. E. Roberts of Ingleside and Laporte.

87.3 Bridge over Park Creek.

88.0 Roads east and south. Go south on a section line road.

97.0 Cross roads. Same reading as 68.4 above. U. S. 287 goes west to Laporte and east to Fort Collins.

81.0 Return to the Roberts Filling Station at the mouth of Owl Canyon and go northwest on U. S. 287. The Overland Trail ran close to U. S. 287 from Owl Canyon to Virginia Dale.

81.3 Bridge over Owl Creek.

81.4 Leave U. S. 287 and go south on an unimproved road.

82.4 BONER SPRING STAGE STATION.<sup>13</sup> The original station house is a wooden building which is rapidly falling to pieces. It has been moved from the southeast to the northwest quarter of the section in which it stands.

A grave at the nearby Boner Spring has been marked, L. E. Hale, 1864. It is reported that a little boy is buried here. He ate some ground glass at Laporte, and died as a result by the time the emigrant train had made its slow way to Boner Spring. The Musgrove Corrals, headquarters for horse thieves, were also at Boner Spring. This information about Boner Spring has been given by C. E. Roberts.

81.4 Return to U. S. 287 and go northwest.

84.8 The Forks Hotel. West to Cameron Pass. Continue northwest on U. S. 287.

87.7 Bridge over Stonewall Creek, below its junction with Ten Mile Creek.

90.5 STONEWALL STATION site.<sup>14</sup> Also called Cherokee Station and, sometimes, Ten Mile Station. This stage station site is southeast or below the junction

<sup>13</sup> The Boner Spring station site is in the S. E.  $\frac{1}{4}$ , Sec. 13, T. 9 N., R. 70 W.

<sup>14</sup> Near the middle of Sec. 10, T. 10 N., R. 70 W.



of Stonewall and Ten Mile Creeks, at the upper or western end of Stonewall Canyon. The highway, on the west side of the creek, runs over the hill which once sheltered the vanished stage station at its base. Saloons were evidently not countenanced at the stations, but there was one less than a mile up the creek. Steamboat Mesa is a landmark to the north, which can be seen miles away from any direction.

**WHEELER SPRING.**<sup>15</sup> The westbound stages from Park Station came down the hills on a steep grade to the blacksmith shop at Wheeler Spring en route to Stonewall Station. The junction of the Trails from Boner and Stonewall Stations was about three miles above or northwest of the latter station, near the junction of Stonewall and Ten Mile Creeks. This junction is shown on the Colorado land plats of the late 1860's, and is just east of the present highway.<sup>16</sup>

Charles E. Roberts has given the information about Stonewall Station and Wheeler Spring.

98.3 Highway bridge over Six Mile Creek.

98.4 Virginia Dale Post Office, store and filling station. Leave U. S. 287 and go north. A monument has been placed at this road junction, on the east side of the highway. The legend reads:

Three-quarters of a mile northwest from this point is the original VIRGINIA DALE, famous stage station on the Overland route to California, 1862-1867. Established by Joseph A. (Jack) Slade and named for his wife, Virginia. Located on Cherokee Trail of 1849. Favorite camp ground for emigrants. Vice President Colfax and party were detained here by Indian raids in 1865. Robert J. Spotswood replaced Slade. Erected by the State Historical Society of Colorado from the Mrs. J. N. Hall Foundation and by the Fort Collins Pioneer Society. 1935.

<sup>15</sup> In the S. E.  $\frac{1}{4}$ , Sec. 10, T. 10 N., R. 70 W.

<sup>16</sup> The trail junction was in Sec. 5, T. 10 N., R. 70 W., as shown on the Colorado township plat.

99.5 Bridge over Dale Creek.

100.5 VIRGINIA DALE STAGE STATION.<sup>17</sup> The original station house stands on the west side of Dale Creek, at the southern extremity of the Black Hills or Laramie Mountains. A drawing, made by a soldier stationed at Virginia Dale, is on exhibition at the Pioneer Museum in Fort Collins. It shows a group of buildings surrounding three sides of a square, open to the south towards the Trail. The stage barn south of the house, and other buildings forming the east and west sides of the square have disappeared, but the station house still occupies the north side. The following legend has been painted on a board and placed above the front door which faces the inside of the former square.

Virginia Dale, Colorado, alt. 6977 feet.

This building built by the United States Government 1862. The first shingles were freighted from St. Joseph, Mo., at a cost of \$1.50 per pound. Joseph Slade, the notorious outlaw, was a division master of this old stage division, which was located at this place.

The station house is a one-story building, 20 by 60 feet. The square cut log walls are now covered by clapboards, painted white. There are many bullet holes in the logs at the northeastern corner, and the great rock chimney is in the east wall. The walled-in cellar beneath the house was used as a stable for livestock in times of Indian troubles. The well, and the present windmill, are at the southwest corner of the house. The stages entered one end of the barn, changed horses, and drove out of the other end up the slope to the station house, standing on a slight elevation.

According to local legend, there was a stone watch tower on a hill to the east where a sentinel could give warning signals of Indian attacks, or of the approaching stages. Another hill nearby is known as Robber's Roost. A cemetery with three graves is reported to be south of the road, opposite the station house.

<sup>17</sup> N. W.  $\frac{1}{4}$ , Sec. 33, T. 12 N., R. 71 W.

Virginia Dale was the first division point west of Denver. The stage which left Denver in the morning, stopped for dinner at Boone's station on Boulder Creek, passed through Laporte in the evening, and arrived at Virginia Dale at midnight.<sup>18</sup> It was a stage trip of some eighteen hours with relays of horses. Now it is an automobile trip over oiled highways in two or three hours, depending on the speed limit enforced by the State.

Harold Dunning and Charles E. Roberts have published accounts of Virginia Dale in the local newspapers. The following is based on their stories: Joseph A. Slade or Jack Slade was appointed the first division agent. He erected the house, stables and other buildings. While he was the agent in charge, the mail seldom failed to come through on time. He drank heavily at times, and is said to have made the station a rendezvous for gamblers and bad citizens. For this reason he was dismissed at the end of the first year.

William S. Taylor or Bill Taylor succeeded Slade. Taylor and his wife kept the hotel and Bob Spotswood was the division agent. Taylor, so the story goes, once stood off the Indians with camouflaged cannons made out of stove pipes and wagon wheels. Taylor moved to Laporte in 1866. At some time in his career he was in charge of other Overland Stations, Park Creek in Colorado and Willow Creek over the border in Wyoming. S. E. Leach was Bill Taylor's successor at Virginia Dale.

When the Union Pacific Railroad was completed to Cheyenne in 1867, the Virginia Dale stage station was abandoned. Successive owners have lived there since that time. After the highway was rebuilt in the 1920's and no longer passed by the station, the present owner moved the Virginia Dale Post Office to the new highway. The old station house is in good repair and is sometimes used as a dance hall.

98.7 Return to U. S. 287 and go northwest.

99.3 Highway bridge over Dale Creek.

103.5 The Colorado-Wyoming line. A monument on the east side of the highway, at the state line, has the following legend:

This stone marks the place where the OVERLAND STAGE LINE on its way to the west, June 1862-1868 crossed the Colorado-Wyoming line. Erected by THE STATE OF WYOMING and chapters of THE DAUGHTERS OF THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION. The Cache la Poudre, Fort Collins, Colorado. The Centennial Greeley, Colorado. The Jaques Laramie, Laramie, Wyoming. 1917

The actual Overland Trail crossing of the state line was one mile east of the state line monument, as shown on the Colorado township plat.<sup>19</sup> THE DENVER-CHEYENNE STAGE ROAD

In 1867 the Overland stage between Denver and the east came to an end, but a stage line connected Denver with the railroad at Cheyenne. The new line followed the old one from Denver to Laporte. Beyond to Cheyenne, the stage station sites have been located by Clyde H. Brown, Curator of the Fort Collins Pioneer Museum, and Carl Anderson and Richard S. Baker, also of Fort Collins. Mr. Brown says: "For many years there had been a trail through Larimer County (Colorado) which started at Santa Fe going northward to Fort Laramie." Between Denver and Park Creek, the next station beyond Laporte, the Cheyenne stage road and the Old Cherokee Trail followed the old trail from Santa Fe.

The Denver-Cheyenne stage road can be traced on the Colorado township plats. It ran close to the now abandoned grade of the Denver Pacific Railway or Colorado Central Branch of the Union Pacific. When the railroad entered Denver in 1877 it superseded the stage road. Between Fort Collins and Cheyenne, Highway U. S. 87 runs east of

<sup>18</sup> *The Rocky Mountain News* of Nov. 13, 1863.

<sup>19</sup> The Overland Trail crossed the state line nearer Dale Creek and the Old Highway, in Sec. 19, T. 12 N., R. 71 W.

the Colorado & Southern Railway and both the Highway and the Colorado & Southern are east of the old stage road and the abandoned Colorado Central or Denver Pacific.

Between Denver and Laporte, Namaqua Station was on the Cheyenne stage line, as it had been on the Overland line, but the station at Spring Canyon was not used again. By this time Fort Collins was important enough to be included on the way to Laporte. But the only reference to a stage station at Fort Collins is found in the following account of a stage trip by George A. King. Here is the list of stage stations between Laporte and Cheyenne.

**PARK CREEK STATION.** This was a trail junction. One branch of the old Overland Trail, which came from Laporte, went northwest to Virginia Dale Station in Colorado and on to Wyoming, Utah and California. The other old trail went northeast to Fort Laramie, Wyoming. Between them the later stage line went north (or more accurately N. N. E.) to Cheyenne. The Denver-Cheyenne stage station, used by the Wells Fargo Co., was just south of the earlier Overland stage station on Park Creek.

**THE WHITCOMB RANCH,** a mile or two west of Bristol on the old Colorado Central R. R., was at the trail crossing of Box Elder Creek, a tributary to the Cache la Poudre. Another Box Elder Creek in Colorado is a tributary to the South Platte. **BURNT RANCH** was a swing station. Beyond, the trail passed west of a conspicuous mesa called Round Butte.

**JACK SPRING RANCH** was at or near Taylor on the old Colorado Central R. R. **SPOTTSWOOD STAGE STATION**<sup>20</sup> was practically on the Colorado-Wyoming line and Spring station near Taylor was only a short way south of the state line. Both stations were between Spottswood or Spottle-

<sup>20</sup> Spottswood, Spottswood or Spottlewood was on the northern boundary line of the Half Section 23, T. 12 N., R. 68 W. In other words on the Wyoming side of the state line, just east of the 105th Meridian which passes through Denver. Nell's maps of Colorado for the 1880's show many of the vanished towns and settlements mentioned in this Log. Among them is the railroad station of Lone Tree, which is not identical with the Lone Tree Stage Station.

wood and Lone Tree Creek. Clyde Brown of Fort Collins says: "It (Spottswood) is not over 150 yards north of the state line in Wyoming. This station was built of rock and was not used merely for a station, but as a fort by the early settlers, as well." Mr. Brown has located the station sites on the stage line between Fort Collins and Cheyenne.

**LONE TREE AND HAZARD STAGE STATIONS** are in Wyoming and are forgotten in all but the names. They may be two names for the same station, as the distance between Spottswood and Cheyenne is only twelve miles. The Lone Tree stage station evidently took its name from Lone Tree Creek in Wyoming. Lone Tree Stage Station must not be confused with Lone Tree Railroad Station on the old Colorado Central R. R. The railroad station is on Lone Tree Creek on the Colorado side of the state line and east of the Denver-Fort Collins-Cheyenne stage road and stage stations.

**CHEYENNE.** The end of the stage line.

#### A TRIP IN A CONCORD STAGE

George A. King went from Golden to Cheyenne by stage in 1868.<sup>21</sup> This is the story of his trip. "The first day was spent on the way to Fort Collins, which we reached a little after dark. There we were to have dinner at the stage station near the bank of the Cache la Poudre. After driving all through the night we reached Cheyenne sometime the next day."

But they had an adventurous night on the way to Cheyenne. King relates that just after crossing the Cache la Poudre bridge a front wheel came off. The stage turned on its side and was dragged some distance. No one was badly injured and another stage was sent out from the station on the banks of the Poudre. The passengers, the mail, the bullion carried by Mr. King's father, and three of the four soldiers who were riding on top of the stage as guards against Indians and robbers, arrived in Cheyenne without further mishap. There was some suspicion that

<sup>21</sup> *The Colorado Magazine*. XIV. 54.

the wheel had been tampered with while the stage was in the corral. But if the accident was inspired by the bullion on board the stage, the robbery did not occur.

Sidney, Nebraska, was then the western terminus of the regular passenger service. After a stage trip of thirty-six hours to Cheyenne, the passengers rode to Sidney in a construction train, and they arrived in Omaha the next day. There were no bridges across the Missouri between Omaha and Council Bluffs in those days. Mr. King's trip was in the winter. The river was frozen, but the ice was too thin to be safe and too heavy for the little ferry boats. So the passengers walked in single file over a line of heavy planks from bank to bank. The bullion arrived safely at the Philadelphia Mint and Mr. King was paid cash for it.

Pioneer Trails are becoming a dream of the past, so much of the story has been forgotten. The trails to Denver, which meant to the gold fields, came from the south up the Arkansas and the Smoky Hill Rivers and from the north up the Platte River.

The emigrants traveled slowly, day after day, in the ox-drawn covered wagons, suffering hardship, privation and often danger. There were no bridges at first, rivers were crossed by ford or by ferry, and too often drownings occurred. Storms disorganized wagon trains and Indians threatened them. The graves beside the trail tell the story. The evening camp fires in the circle of the wagons on the vast prairie brought relaxation from the day's work and offered what little social life there was in the company.

Travel by stage was less slow than by covered wagon but was cramped and uncomfortable at the best. Eventually the stage and the gallant Pony Express were replaced by the "railroad cars" and the telegraph.

Today we travel swiftly over the same country in luxurious Pullmans or motor over fine roads, while air ships soar above us. Let us hope that, in spite of the ease and comfort of travel in this mechanical age, we can still measure up to the hardy pioneer of yesterday.

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