Flooding in Jefferson County

Historically Jeffco
The flood of 1965 in Golden damaged the 10th Street bridge over Tucker Gulch. Golden Masonic Temple in the background.
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Ed Maker for The Denver Post, courtesy Gardner Family Collection
Whizzing through Jefferson County on I-70 west of Denver, motorists look for the buffalo herd in Genesee Mountain Park. Look also for Buffalo Bill’s Grave & Museum and the Chief Hosa Lodge. Those two sites commemorate Colorado’s best known Indian fighter and one of the state’s most important Native American leaders. This unlikely pair of heroes now shares major attractions of Jefferson County’s Denver Mountain Parks.

Last year Coloradans celebrated the 100th birthday of the Denver Mountain Parks, many of which lie in Jefferson County. Most memorably, that centennial produced a gorgeous full color, glossy, coffee table tome, Denver Mountain Parks: 100 Years of the Magnificent Dream (Silverthorne, CO: John Fielder and the Denver Mountain Parks Foundation, 2013. $39.95) by Wendy Rex-Atzet, Sally L. White, and Erika D. Walker with breathtaking photography by John Fielder. In May 2014, this book was designated the award winner in the History category by the Colorado Center for the Book (Colorado Humanities). The book details how Buffalo Bill came to rest atop Lookout Mountain and discusses the role of Chief Hosa Lodge as a pioneer, pacesetting rustic mountain style lodge. Perusing this book should tickle your fancy to revisit Buffalo Bill and Chief Hosa (aka Little Raven).

William Frederick “Buffalo Bill” Cody, widely considered the most handsome and best known American of his age, toured throughout the U.S. and abroad with his Wild West Show. The ultimate American idol, he stood a ramrod straight 6’ 1”, with a handsome face and long flowing locks of which a woman would be proud. He spoke in a booming but melodious voice that did not require a microphone. His fringed buckskin clothing floated famously as he rode onto stages world-wide. He taught Americans—and many Europeans—to play cowboys and Indians. Even Queen Victoria fell in love. She requested Cody’s command performance for her Golden Jubilee in 1887. On that occasion she stood and bowed as Cody’s troupe paraded the American flag. Supposedly no English monarch had theretofore so honored the flag of the traitorous colonies.

Pope Leo XIII welcomed Cody (who converted to Catholicism on his Denver death bed) to the Vatican and offered use of the Coliseum. Cody found it too old and too small for his Wild West Show with its 90 Lakota Indians, 200 horses, 18 buffalo, many paleface performers, longhorn cattle, burros, elk, and mule deer.

From the highest pedestal in the USA, Buffalo Bill took a tumble. Several decades after his 1917 burial atop Lookout Mountain, he was debunked as a drunkard, womanizer, wanton slaughterer of an endangered animal species and near extinct indigenous peoples. Robert Altman’s 1972 film, Buffalo Bill and the Indians, portrayed Cody (Paul Newman) as a charlatan, coward, and liar, perhaps the nadir of Cody’s reputation.

Steve Friesen, Director of the Buffalo Bill Museum and Grave atop Lookout Mountain, is one of the revisionists trying to put Cody back on his pedestal, back in the saddle again. Friesen points out that at a time when Hollywood and others hired fake Indians, Cody hired real Indians and paid them the same wages as whites. Cody’s Indians found touring the world with the Wild West Show much more congenial than trying to grow crops on dry, dusty sun-baked reservations. Cody, Friesen notes, defended the rights of Indians and of women. He also points out that
Cody’s drunkenness has been much exaggerated and that he became a teetotaler later in life.

Buffalo Bill earned his name by killing, according to his autobiography, “4,280 buffaloes” to feed railroad construction crews. When buffalo were facing extinction, he helped to reinstate them by raising one of the country’s largest breeding herds. Certainly no one did more to popularize and endear buffalo to the public. To the dismay of grammarians, he also taught Americans to call bison buffalo.

Chief Hosa Lodge is named for Chief Little Raven, head chief of the Southern Arapaho. Whites apparently gave him the name Hosa (peacekeeper) although Little Raven is much more used. A peace chief despite white atrocities and pressure from his tribe’s young men to fight back, he welcomed the palefaced to Colorado. After the massacre at Sand Creek, he came to regret his hospitality. Little Raven was one of the lucky survivors. Told to camp at Sand Creek, he “accidentally” got lost and camped elsewhere to survive the massacre and retire to a reservation in Oklahoma. Not only the exquisite 1918 rustic style lodge but also a nearby campground is named for the peacemaker.

Chief Hosa Lodge has been restored as Colorado’s finest tribute to the oft forgotten Southern Arapaho Chief whose winter camps with his tribe preceded what is now the sprawling Denver megalopolis. The Buffalo Bill Grave and Museum atop Lookout Mountain remains the most popular shrine to an American hero. Buffalo now roam nearby again as another reminder of the cowboy and the Indian whose ghosts now co-exist peacefully in neighboring mountain parks.

Tom Noel teaches Colorado History at the University of Colorado at Denver. The author or co-author of 42 books on Colorado, he writes a monthly history column for the Sunday Denver Post and appears on Channel 9’s Colorado and Company as Dr. Colorado. Please check his website, dr-colorado.com, for talks, classes, books and tours.

Sources:
Ken-Caryl Ranch Celebrates 100 Years
by Rosemary Lewis

On October 17, 1914, newspaper baron John C. Shaffer purchased 2,660 acres of the defunct Mountain View Stock Farm ranch in southeastern Jefferson County. This was the beginning of the Ken-Caryl Ranch, a combination of the names of Shaffer’s sons Kent and Carroll. Over the following years he bought more of the surrounding land including the Mann Ranch along Deer Creek to the south and the Perley Ranch along Dutch Creek to the north, until the ranch consisted of some 10,000 acres straddling the Dakota Hogback.

The palatial centerpiece of the ranch was the Shaffer Summer Home, now known as the Manor House, a pillared white mansion that would not have been out of place on the banks of the Potomac River. The Shaffers entertained family and friends from Chicago and the Midwest, where John owned a string of newspapers. He came to Denver on the advice of his son who had moved here for his health. Always open to a new business opportunity, John Shaffer expanded his newspaper empire with the purchase of the Rocky Mountain News and the Denver Times in 1913, solidifying his continuing presence in the area.

The Shaffers entertained national political figures, most notably Theodore Roosevelt and Shaffer’s long-time friend Indiana Senator Albert Beveridge. Roosevelt only stayed for lunch and a short tour in 1916, but Beveridge visited often and would join the ranch hands in working the cattle, chopping wood, and trout fishing.

With the stock market crash and the Great Depression, the Shaffers lost much of their wealth, including Ken-Caryl Ranch. The ranch was bank-owned for a number of years until metallurgist William L. Allen bought it in 1938 and restored it to its former glory. He sold it to real estate investor Joseph Minissale in 1944, who in turn sold the ranch to A.T. “Cap” McDannald in 1949.

The McDannald family held the ranch longer than any of its previous owners, for 22 years. For all these years the ranch was kept intact, and not sold off in pieces as could have been the case at any time. After the death of patriarch Cap in 1969, the McDannald family decided it was time to sell the Ranch as a whole. Johns-Manville Corporation bought Ken-Caryl Ranch in July 1971, envisioning a planned development for its World Headquarters and an exclusive residential community.
Planning for Ken-Caryl Ranch began in 1972, and in January 1977 the first 50 families had moved into their new homes. Commercial and light industrial construction was also beginning to emerge from the plains. Development was originally planned for the east side of the Hogback, with executive homes on large parcels in what is referred to as the West Ranch, that portion of the old ranch in the foothills. In 1980 plans changed and the Ken-Caryl Ranch Corporation announced the opening of the Valley for development, beginning with the North Ranch. Asbestos litigation in 1982 resulted in Chapter 11 bankruptcy for Johns-Manville and divestment of Ken-Caryl Ranch.

Today Ken-Caryl Ranch consists of 4,146 homes and 4,800 acres of open space, as well as commercial and light industrial developments.

On August 9, 2014, the Ken-Caryl Ranch Historical Society hosted the community and special guests at a centennial celebration. One thousand flags lined the road up to the Manor House, now a private event center, where more than 500 people enjoyed 1914 vintage games and music. Children and adults enjoyed playing croquet and potato sack races. A barbershop quartet and a banjo and piano trio provided music from the early 20th century. A mule-drawn wagon ferried people along a small portion of what may have once been a part of the Bradford Road, while an authentic 1914 Model T Ford and other classic vehicles dotted the circle in front of the Manor House. Costumed members of the Historical Society joined descendants of the ranchers in telling stories about the old days. A Proclamation recognizing 100 years of Ken-Caryl Ranch was presented by the three County Commissioners at a special reception on August 8 and to the general public on August 9.
In the spring and early summer of 2014, we’ve faced a wide assortment of Colorado weather—late snows, hail, heavy rains, even tornados—and Jefferson County has had its fair share. This issue reviews the record weather of September 2013, and its historic antecedents. We share stories that have shaped patterns of our history, and that continue to shape our county today.

Historically, we humans have preferred to settle along rivers, for vital reasons. In Colorado, the presence of water was especially crucial to historic communities as it was not the common commodity it was in more eastern sections of the U.S. The “Great American Desert,” as John Wesley Powell called it, was viewed as inhospitable, a wasteland that today holds millions of people. Our thirst for water has grown so vast and our use so profligate that water now travels through mountains to get to us. Once-fertile wetlands are turning into new wastelands to serve our urban demands. On March 28, 2014, when the Colorado River reached the sea for the first time in more than 50 years, it was news.

Sometimes, however, water can become overabundant, even here in the parched American West. Our historical record is splashed with references to moderate high waters and extreme floods. In light of the unusual events of September 2013 across the Front Range, we explore the stories that Coloradans and Jeffco residents have faced since the earliest days of European settlement.

Floods of Jefferson County

At Bear Creek Lake Park near Morrison, roads and park structures disappeared under more than 40 feet of water.

Bear Creek Lake Park staff photo
2013 Storms Make History—Again

by Richard Gardner and Sally L. White

Storms began on September 9, when power was knocked out at the Jefferson County Administration and Courts Facility and in southern Golden, and west Colfax Avenue in Lakewood had to be closed due to torrential rain and hail. Two days later, Highway 72 in Coal Creek Canyon was closed, as was Highway 93 a few days later.

By mid-September, everyone knew we were witnessing a major flood event. Many major roadways were closed by Friday, September 13; voluntary and involuntary evacuations were in effect in Upper Bear Creek, below Leyden Dam, and from Morrison to Evergreen. Jeffco’s Fairgrounds accepted more than 100 horses, five goats, and two llamas. Rockslides were a major concern in canyons, and efforts to prevent them occupied emergency crews throughout the foothills.
Bear Creek stood at 8.8 feet above normal flows by Friday night. All the water pouring down from its 164 sq. mile upper watershed was captured in Bear Creek Lake until Monday September 16, when the Army Corps of Engineers finally began releasing some of the water into the lower drainage. By then, floodwaters had raised water elevations in the lake 53 feet, to a new record high of more than 5,600 feet. The previous record, set in 1995, was six feet lower.
On September 17, the Jefferson County Sheriff’s Office (JCSO) estimated damage to infrastructure countywide at a “preliminary” $6,000,000, with 14 residences destroyed, 215 damaged, and 5,805 more threatened. Two dozen commercial properties were damaged and another 24 threatened; 200 more “minor” structures were also affected or threatened.
Jeffco, however, escaped the worst effects, which struck with full force in the northern Front Range. Across the 17 counties affected, eight people died, an estimated 1,500 homes were destroyed, thousands more damaged, and more than $2 billion in costs incurred, largely by homeowners. Within Jeffco, Coal Creek Canyon, Clear Creek, and Bear Creek were hardest hit, as the effects of the storms dwindled southward. Clear Creek and Bear Creek remained “torrential” well into October, but service gradually began to be restored across the county. Most roads and parks hit by flooding reopened within weeks, although repair efforts continued in some places for months after.

Sources:
http://inewsnetwork.org/2013/09/18/bear-creek-dam-puts-the-brakes-on-flood-that-punished-evergreen/
Jeffco Sheriff’s emergency blog, entries for September 2013, http://jeffcosheriff.blogspot.com/

Volunteers gather October 2, 2013, at the Skunk Hollow Picnic Area to help clean up Bear Creek Lake Park after September flooding. The “Flood the Park with Love” event focused on debris removal and trail maintenance.
Bear Creek Lake Park staff photo

Commissioners Donald Rosier (left) and Faye Griffin (right) with Coal Creek Canyon resident during the reopening of Highway 72 in Coal Creek Canyon.
Jefferson County Public Information Office

Flood damage in Evergreen’s downtown business district on Colorado Highway 74 left large chunks of the adjacent parking lot crumbling. In 2014, the roadway area repairs are still in progress.
Karen Graves, YouHub
Flooding events come in many forms and have often been considered among the “greatest natural disasters known to mankind.” In the U.S., three-fourths of all presidential disaster declarations are associated with flooding. During the past 50 years, flooding caused an average of almost $4 billion in damages and took more than 100 lives per year in the United States—more than any other weather-related event.

Flooding occurs whenever water due to rain or snow melt accumulates faster than soils can absorb it or rivers can carry it away. Flooding can happen in the summer due to torrential rains often associated with severe thunderstorms and tornadoes, in the fall as a result of hurricanes, in winter due to ice jams, and in the spring as a result of melting snows.

**Flash Floods**

Short, intense rainfall events over small or large areas can deliver water faster than streams can carry it away. Water pools in low spots such as underpasses and basements when rain falls faster than the ground can absorb it. Pockets of heavy rain with larger areas of lighter rain make forecasting of exactly where the worst flooding will occur difficult. Year in and year out, flash floods take more lives than any other type of flooding. Widespread, prolonged flash flooding can lead to flooding of major river systems.

**Ice Jam Floods**

Rivers clogged with ice can rise rapidly after rainfall and/or snowmelt. Ice can then break up into large pieces that jam at river bends or bridge abutments. Ice jams can act as dams, backing up water behind and raising river levels. Golden’s winter flooding in December 2013 was related to ice conditions during an unusually cold spell.

**Riverine Flooding**

Widespread excessive rain events produce flooding along waterways throughout the United States. River flooding can range from minor overbank events to massive, widespread inundation such as occurred along the Missouri and Mississippi Rivers in the summer of 1993. Such flooding may be caused by excessive rainfall alone, or a combination of heavy rainfall and snowmelt.

**Snow Melt Floods**

Snow usually melts slowly over a season, and seldom causes floods. However, warm, moist conditions and heavy rain can combine with snow melt to cause dramatic winter and spring flooding.

Flooding is sometimes also caused by dam breaks or levee failures.

*Source:*
Adapted from NOAA (online March 14, 2001);
Overview of 19th Century Floods

The earliest recorded flood affecting present-day Jefferson County took place 170 years ago, a great flood of the South Platte River in 1844. George West wrote in the Colorado Transcript:

“Old Major Jim Bridger, in 1861 told Capt. Berthoud that in 1844 or ’47, he could not precisely remember but was pretty sure it was 1844, that himself with a large party of men, Indians, ponies, etc., and Kit Carson, came down to the South Platte from the North on their way we think he said to the Arkansas and New Mexico. That the South Park (called the Bayou Salado) and the mountains at the head of Platte River were very heavily clad with snow, that a heavy rain struck the Park, and at the head of Cherry Creek the two floods met on their downward course, and that for days the whole valley was flooded from bluff to bluff, and his recollection was that the water reached near the high ground at Larimer street and they were compelled to get a canoe to ferry over the men and baggage with extreme difficulty. And he said that they might recur at any time.”

Bridger’s warning to the future has proven profound, as floods have impacted Jefferson County since the beginning of its settlement. In mid-June 1859 gold discoverer George Andrew Jackson, with partner Thomas L. Golden, paused at the rapids at the entrance to Clear Creek Canyon while Jackson fished for their lunch on a rock on the middle of the river. The effect of upstream cloudbursts being unknown to those newly arrived, Jackson was swept away, struggling mightily to swim to shore. Golden stayed with him although he was sure Jackson would “pass in his cheeks and quit the game for good.” After Jackson recovered, the two made their way by safer route to discover a new town was being laid out at their base camp. At Jackson’s suggestion, it was named for his partner and friend, Tom Golden.

In 1864 Bridger’s prophecy came true when a big flood inundated Denver, destroying among many things the Rocky Mountain News office. This particular flood also hit Clear Creek in Jefferson County, and was the second in an unparalleled series of three floods of Clear Creek that spring. All bridges were destroyed, compelling Golden citizens to build a ferry to take across the many travelers who were carrying themselves and goods to and from the mountain towns. The flood widened Clear Creek through Golden from a single channel to a delta, creating a landscape that would remain prominent in the city until a Civil Works Administration project restored the single channel in the 1930s.

It soon became highly evident that Bear Creek and Clear Creek would be the major floodways of Jefferson County, having six floods apiece by the mid-1880s. On July 21, 1890, the first lethal flood in Jefferson County took place. Heavy rain deluged Clear Creek Canyon and Beaver Brook, sweeping away three who were camping along the river. Then in 1894 one of the sternest tests came when major floods swept down Bear and Clear creeks. Most of the bridges on Clear Creek were destroyed, where Adolph Coors frantically fought to divert the river away from the family mansion. Flood control marked the first major land expansion of the Coors Brewery. In Golden, engineer Edward Berthoud concluded Golden needed a much longer span of the Wash-
Notes from 1800s Flooding on the South Platte  

By Rosemary Lewis

In early May 1867, the new Turkey Creek Wagon Road opened for business, bypassing the dreaded hill of the Bradford Road to the south. Then, on May 25 the black, forbidding clouds that had been building for days brought forth torrential rains and hail that lasted for two days. To the west up to two feet of snow fell, but in the foothills the snow melted as it hit the ground. The new wagon road was washed out, the bridges and roadbed having disappeared downstream. As the road was built along the very steep canyon walls, rock slides took it out completely in many places. The road was eventually rebuilt.

The South Platte has experienced a number of significant floods, many the results of cloudbursts. The earliest known was in 1844, for which circumstantial evidence is available. The river flooded again the night of May 19, 1864, when a cloudburst over the Cherry Creek and Plum Creek basins rampaged downstream to Denver. Again in May 1867 the South Platte flooded, but it did not appear to be as severe as the 1864 flood as the river channel had been widened considerably for the earlier event. A storm from May 29 to June 1, 1894, topped a diversion dam on the Highline Canal at the mouth of the South Platte Canyon (Waterton Canyon) by about five feet. The most severe recorded flood to date was during June 1921 when heavy widespread rain across the region flooded many river basins, most notably the Arkansas River. At the town of South Platte, that flood washed out the tracks of the Colorado & Southern Railroad in the canyon. Farms along the river down to Denver were inundated, and the flood plain was up to 1.5 miles wide.

Sources:
Rocky Mountain News, May 28, 1867
Colorado Transcript, May 29, 1867
For decades after, floods would be compared to the “Great Flood” of 1896, a catastrophic flood that affected waterways across central Jefferson County, caused the loss of 27 lives, and became an enduring measure of devastation that eclipsed less memorable events.

In 1933, another impressive flood year, the Jefferson County Republican reported that the 1896 flood had “all but wiped the town of Morrison off the map.” With flows estimated at 8,600 cubic feet per second (cfs), it is the flood of record for Bear Creek at Morrison. By comparison, the 1933 flood was measured at 8,110 cfs.

In impassioned language and extravagant detail, the Rocky Mountain News recorded the events of the weekend as they occurred in Morrison:

Three Cloudbursts Sweep Through Morrison Within Twenty-Four Hours

“Less than two days ago Morrison was considered the most delightful, quiet and peaceful summer resort in Colorado.

“Today it is a mass of wreckage and ruin, the people panic stricken and a number of those who were inhabitants are either lying at the morgue awaiting burial or are buried under an enormous mass of debris somewhere between Denver and Morrison, perhaps never to be found until Gabriel sounds the last trumpet on the day of judgement. …

“Suddenly a sullen roar, resembling thunder, yet more sustained, so that none mistook it for that noisy sound. Among those in the store, several had been there before. They had heard that sound and knew its meaning. Their faces paled as they shouted, “A flood, a cloudburst!” Around the bend came the monster, appearing as a log-crowned curling wave ten feet high. It did not look like water, having more the appearance of a solid mass, dark as night, with a luminous crest.

“It seems to move with almost lightening-like rapidity. When it reached the bridge above town, the first object that seemed to be in its path, there was no clash: the bridge hesitated but an instant, moved slowly from its piers, then went rolling end over end down past the depot until the railroad bridge was reached. Here there was a moment's resistance, but the water simply paused to wait an instant for reinforcements.”

—Rocky Mountain News, July 26, 1896

A day later, an update appeared under the headline “Morrison Will Live.” Despite the “active circulation of a rumor to the effect that the town would be abandoned,” Morrison “will recover promptly and there is not the slightest danger of a repetition of such a flood, for several years at least,” the News reported optimistically.

The Cliff House, Morrison’s oldest and largest stone building, stood firm as waters from Mount Vernon Creek swept around it, but the floodwaters “literally cleaned out the business portion of Morrison” along main street as they ran parallel to Bear Creek, damaged the railroad depot, and carried off barrels of whiskey from Schrock’s Saloon that were never recovered.

Morrison did survive, and it survives still, despite flood losses that continued to disrupt the town in subsequent decades. Writing in 1969, historian Dennis Potter reported:

“Morrison was devastated. It took months to recover. I don’t just mean from property damage, but from the tragedy of the deaths. Massive and elaborate funerals went on for months… It was a freak flood, it all came down at once. It was one of those once-in-a-century things.”

Source:
Unidentified newspaper clipping, 1969 (in UDFCD report cited on next page)
What is Meant by a 100-year Flood or Storm?

by Rosemary Lewis

The term is deceptive. This does not mean that a given flood or storm will happen once in one hundred years. The term actually refers to the probability that an event will happen in any year.

A so-called 100-year flood is a flood of a defined magnitude that has a one percent chance of happening in any year. By a similar analysis a 500-year storm has a 1/500 (or 0.2 percent) chance of occurring in any given year. For those who remember their statistics, probability does not rule out that a storm of any magnitude could recur year after year, or indeed month after month.

Statistics are a moving target, and the data generated from each event are used to re-evaluate the statistical analysis. Therefore a 100-year flood in 1880 may not be the same as a 100-year flood in 1980. More data provides greater confidence in the analytical results.

Another common term used is flood stage. A 100-year flood on any river is measured by the statistically determined flood height above an arbitrary level (such as base flow level) at a specific place along a river. Thus a 100-year flood stage at 18 feet means that when a river flows more than 18 feet above the base flow level it has reached the 100-year flood level.

Storms and floods are often connected, but they are separate hydrological phenomena. A 100-year storm also does not necessarily result in a 100-year flood. Floods are dependent on the stream bed geometry and capacity. A storm may fall in a geographically small area and not flood a river, as happens with many cloudbursts. However, the 2013 storms that stalled for days over a wide area did flood the streams. It is possible that a small area experienced a 500-year storm, but the draining streams had only a 100-year flood.


Additional Sources for Flood Stories in This Issue

The detailed flood accounts and lists in this issue are based on a variety of newspaper accounts and online sources. In addition to those specifically cited in articles, these include:

Central City Daily Miners Register, 5/18/1864, 5/29/1864.
Denver Post, 8/16/2013, “Bear Creek Canyon flood of 1933”.
Golden Globe, 1890-1909, including 5/21/1898, 7/13/1907.
Golden Outlook, 1956.
Historical files of Richard J. Gardner.
The Great Flood of 1896

To date the largest single-day loss of life and destruction of property in Jefferson County history, the Great Flood began when a huge storm system came from the south-west and laid siege to the area on Friday, July 24, 1896. The experience was described in the Golden Globe:

“Imagine a volume of water perhaps twenty feet high hundreds of feet long, and wide, suddenly emptied on a mountain slope. To those who saw the rush of water, the sight will forever remain. Over the crest of North Table Mountain the water poured as it pours over Niagara Falls. Down the slopes of the mountains came the great wave looking like a giant roll of white mist, rolling boulders that weighed tons, as if they were spools of thread. The mighty roar as these huge monsters hurried down after their victims, was a sound besides which the roar of the Niagara Falls was dwarfed...It was awful, majestic, unreasoning and unpitying power before which human strength and ingenuity was as a straw before the cyclone.”

It was the most extensive flood in Jefferson County history, wreaking havoc across waterways including Bear Creek, Clear Creek, Cressman Gulch, Creswell Gulch, Cub Creek, Mt. Vernon Canyon, Tucker Gulch, and more. Across Jeffco it claimed 29 victims: one at Evergreen, three at Golden, four in Mt. Vernon Canyon, and 21 at Morrison including 16 children from the Casey, Herren, Longnecker, Miller, and Procter families as the flood smashed house after house. At Evergreen a poor charcoal hauler named Nichols was swept away trying to save his horse team, his only source of livelihood. At Golden Laura Edwards and Andrew and Anna Johnson were caught up without warning by the 30-foot wall of water in Tucker Gulch. In Mt. Vernon Canyon, two young couples and their chaperones were on a sightseeing trip. The two young men barely survived; the others perished. Three vacationing families died at the Wolff house at Morrison. The three Procter children who died there were laid to rest beneath a triple tombstone at Fairmount Cemetery.

However, there were survivors, such as ten-year-old Irene Procter who was miraculously blasted through the roof of the Wolff house and clung to a plank until she could be rescued. Jerry Shrove, a terminally ill man, clung to a corner of the Treffeisen Building at 10th and Ford streets in Golden, and lived for another year. Across the street, Al Bawolski broke the bones of his hand saving...
his family by pulling them from the house that still stands at 519 10th Street. Golden firefighters rescued many stranded in homes that were swamped in the lower 11th Street neighborhood. At Morrison the Pillar of Fire Church served as emergency shelter for those seeking refuge from the flood.

The Washington Avenue Bridge, fortified after the 1894 flood, was the only structure known to have taken a direct hit from the Great Flood and survive undamaged. It had even been hit from two sides, from Clear Creek and from the waters of Tucker Gulch that jumped the bank at 8th Street, parted at the Colorado Glass Works, and flowed down Washington Avenue. The towns of Morrison and Golden were physically edited by the flood, with no buildings again built along portions of Bear Creek, Clear Creek, and Tucker Gulch where lives were lost. Beyond Jeffco, the same storm is known to have lashed waves and rivers in the streets of Denver, hit the Arkansas River, and flooded as far south as the Rio Grande.

The Great Flood was of such power that a quartz boulder earlier seen in Golden Gate Canyon, estimated to weigh eight to ten tons, was found lodged along Tucker Gulch within the Golden limits, carried at least one and a half miles. “Vast blocks of mica schist” were reported all over Mt. Vernon Canyon, with the road badly damaged in many places. In Golden the Johnson Cottage on 10th Street next to Tucker Gulch was wiped away without a trace as if it never existed, the same fate which befall the Miller house in Morrison. Completely losing his home and family, tough hard rock miner Moses Miller walked around Morrison in a daze, crying “My God! My God!” In his analysis, Edward Berthoud believed that recent wildfires that had scorched Bear Creek, Clear Creek, and Ralston canyons had deprived them of water and soil-holding vegetation, contributing to the magnitude of the Great Flood.

The waters destroyed miles of railroad track up Clear Creek Canyon, wiping out entire stretches of railroad bed as if it were never there. More than 100 fortunate passengers who happened to be safely on the Beaver Brook siding were stranded when the flood hit. In Golden, flood waters destroyed 3,000 feet of track and bridge of the Tyndale Branch of the Denver, Lakewood & Golden railroad along the north shore of Clear Creek. The flood cut off the line from the Tyndale Coal Mine overlooking Ralston Creek along with other industries along the branch. Totaling $20,000 in destruction (today more than $550,000), it plunged the railway, already teetering from the Silver Crash, into bankruptcy. By the time the railway emerged as the Denver & Intermountain, the Tyndale mine had closed due to its unstable shaft; the resurrected line focused as a Golden-to-Denver line, today revived as the West Corridor light rail.
Overview of 20th Century Floods

In the early part of the 20th century, flood waters repeatedly visited minor or major havoc on parts of Jefferson County. By 1915, Mt. Vernon Creek and Clear Creek recorded high waters four times each, but Bear Creek had undergone seven floods. High water hit one drainage or another almost annually, but Bear Creek was especially vulnerable to damage because the road from Morrison to Idledale lay almost entirely in the canyon bottom and had as many as 15 bridges. In 1908, the Golden Transcript called for a “high-line” road as the only solution. Heavily used by tourists during the flood-prone summer months, floods in this canyon continued to prove lethal until the road was finally raised in the late 1930s.
The Bear creek road is the worst piece the county authorities have to contend with, as this stream is the most treacherous to be found in Jefferson county. The only way to solve the problem is the building of a high line road from Morrison up a distance of six or seven miles, joining the high line already constructed.

—Golden Transcript, August 8, 1908

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<th>Date</th>
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<td>8/15/1903</td>
<td>Bear Creek, Mt. Vernon Canyon</td>
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<tr>
<td>7/8/1906</td>
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<td>7/9/1907</td>
<td>Bear Creek, Clear Creek (Canyon and Golden)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8/27/1907</td>
<td>Bear Creek, Mt. Vernon Canyon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8/13/1908</td>
<td>Bear Creek (Canyon and Morrison), Indian Gulch, Kinney Run (Golden), Mt. Vernon Canyon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8/19/1908</td>
<td>Bear Creek</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7/4/1909</td>
<td>Clear Creek Canyon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7/6/1909</td>
<td>Bear Creek, Mt. Vernon Canyon, Turkey Creek</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7/27/1909</td>
<td>Tucker Gulch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8/7/1909</td>
<td>Dry Creek, Lakewood Gulch (Lakewood)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9/18-19/1910</td>
<td>Clear Creek Canyon, Parmalee Gulch, Turkey Creek</td>
</tr>
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<td>8/1911</td>
<td>Kelly Creek, Leyden Creek, Ralston Creek</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7/21/1912</td>
<td>Clear Creek Canyon, Golden Gate Canyon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8/11/1913</td>
<td>Kinney Run (Golden)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8/1/1919</td>
<td>Bear Creek, Coal Creek Canyon, Crawford Gulch, Golden Gate Canyon, Leyden Creek, Ralston Creek, Tucker Gulch, Van Bibber Creek</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6/2-7/1921</td>
<td>Bear Creek Canyon, Clear Creek, Ralston Creek, South Platte River</td>
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<tr>
<td>7/14-15/1921</td>
<td>Bear Creek (Canyon and Morrison), Beaver Brook, Clear Creek Canyon, Soda Creek Canyon, Turkey Creek</td>
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<td>7/31/1921</td>
<td>Clear Creek Canyon</td>
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<tr>
<td>8/7/1921</td>
<td>Clear Creek</td>
</tr>
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<td>7/26/1923</td>
<td>Bear Creek, Clear Creek Canyon, Indian Gulch, Maggie Gulch, Tucker Gulch (Golden)</td>
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<td>8/30/1925</td>
<td>Bear Creek Canyon, Mill Gulch</td>
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<td>1929</td>
<td>Turkey Creek (Tiny Town)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1932</td>
<td>Turkey Creek (Tiny Town)</td>
</tr>
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<td>7/7-8/1933</td>
<td>Bear Creek (Canyon, Idledale and Morrison) (5 dead), Mt. Vernon Canyon, Sawmill Gulch, Turkey Creek</td>
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<tr>
<td>9/9/1933</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>8/9/1934</td>
<td>Bear Creek (6 dead), Mt. Vernon Canyon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8/3/1936</td>
<td>Clear Creek (United Gilpin Dam break), Cressman Gulch</td>
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<tr>
<td>9/2-3/1938</td>
<td>Bear Creek (Canyon and Morrison) (6 dead), Cold Spring Gulch, Mt. Vernon Canyon</td>
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<td>6/25/1941</td>
<td>Genesee Gulch, Golden Gate Canyon, Mt. Vernon Canyon, Sawmill Gulch, Tucker Gulch (Golden)</td>
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<tr>
<td>8/24/1946</td>
<td>Bear Creek (Idledale) (1 dead)</td>
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<tr>
<td>6/7/1948</td>
<td>Clear Creek Canyon, Crawford Gulch, Golden Gate Canyon, Tucker Gulch (Golden)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6/4/1956</td>
<td>Clear Creek (Georgetown Dam break) (Golden) (Wheat Ridge)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8/21/1957</td>
<td>Bear Creek, Mt. Vernon Canyon (Morrison)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6/16/1965</td>
<td>South Platte River</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7/23-25/1965</td>
<td>Bear Creek, Clear Creek (Golden) (Wheat Ridge), Cressman Gulch, Golden Gate Canyon, Tucker Gulch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5/7/1969</td>
<td>Bear Creek Canyon, Coal Creek Canyon, Deer Creek, South Platte River, Turkey Creek (Tiny Town)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5/7/1973</td>
<td>Bear Creek, Kinney Run, Lena Gulch (Wheat Ridge), Massey Draw, South Platte River, Tucker Gulch (Golden), Turkey Creek</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3/17/1979</td>
<td>Lena Gulch (Maple Grove Dam vandalized) (Wheat Ridge)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5/5/1980</td>
<td>Lena Gulch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7/1983</td>
<td>Bear Creek Canyon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6/8/1987</td>
<td>Lena Gulch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6/1/1991</td>
<td>Lena Gulch</td>
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<tr>
<td>8/10/1994</td>
<td>Lena Gulch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7/12/1996</td>
<td>Buffalo Creek (Buffalo Creek) (2 dead)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7/27/1997</td>
<td>Lena Gulch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7/31/1998</td>
<td>Buffalo Creek, South Platte River, Spring Creek</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8/4/1999</td>
<td>Massey Draw</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
On August 7, 1909, a cloudburst between Green Mountain and Denver inundated Lakewood Gulch, sending a wall of water down the gulch and into today's Sun Valley neighborhood as city and county officers attempted to warn the people there. It again hit the Denver & Intermountain Railroad and covered the basin where 200 people lived, and “...had it not been for the quick and daring action of many a brave man, there would have been mourning indeed in this district.” At West 14th and Canosa streets, the water was so deep people were not safe standing upon tables. The waters damaged today’s Rude Park. There the lake and ticket office were washed out and picnickers narrowly escaped, as did a tramway car traveling west that barely missed the rising waters and had to stop a short distance past Power House Station. The line where it had just traveled was badly damaged, “The tracks at the eastern end of Decatur street were washed away or twisted out of use; their bridge near the Lacombe plant was wrecked and floated down against the Colfax Avenue or Golden street concrete bridge; and other bridges along the line were added to swell the flood.” The Lacombe plant is today the Zuni plant on the east side of the South Platte where the line travels today. In all $100,000 (today more than $255,000) of damage was done, but every life was saved.

The flood of August 1, 1919, the last widespread flooding event before 2013, hit a general area similar to the September 2013 event. At least half of Golden Gate Canyon Road was destroyed, along with every bridge at Crawford Gulch, as well as those along Coal Creek, upper Ralston Creek, Van Bibber Creek, and on Bear Creek below Morrison. Golden was also hit along Arapahoe and Tucker gulches.

Again in June and July 1921, floods hit Jeffco streams. Most extensive was the mid-July flood, which struck Bear Creek, Beaver Brook, Clear Creek, Soda Creek, and Turkey Creek. A cloudburst two miles east of Evergreen sent a 10-foot wall of water down Bear Creek Canyon, carrying away camping equipment as well as several highway bridges. The bridge connecting the Denver Motor Club at Starbuck (now Idle-dale) to Highway 74 was also lost. Several campers and motorists marooned in the canyon were taken in by hotels and summer cottage owners, but no lives were lost that night. Four years later, at the end of August, picnickers faced floods in the canyon again, but only a few bridges were washed out. ☞
Bear Creek in the 1930s

Bear Creek begins at Summit Lake high on Mount Evans and drains a watershed of 261 square miles, half of which is above Morrison, before emptying into the South Platte River. Between Evergreen and Morrison, seven major tributaries join the creek. The latter two of those have proved especially troublesome for Morrison—Sawmill Gulch at Idledale, and Mount Vernon Creek, which discharges into Bear Creek in the middle of town. Cloudbursts high on Mount Morrison, overlooking Red Rocks, drop rainwater down both sides of the mountain. If Bear Creek high flows, swollen by Sawmill Gulch waters, reach Morrison at the same time as Mount Vernon Creek high flows, the eastern half of the town is in deep water.

1933 Flood Causes Extensive Damage

Bear Creek experienced three major rampages during the 1930s, with floods proving lethal in 1933, 1934, and 1938, and a total of 17 people losing their lives. The first of these Depression-era floods struck on July 7 and 8, 1933, at Idledale, Morrison, and the canyon between, playing out this pattern for the area. Five died in the canyon during that event, and properties were heavily damaged, especially from Idledale through Morrison.
Idledale (Starbuck) was reportedly “wrecked by flood” and its small downtown area at the creek-side never recovered. In 2013, reporter Josie Klemaier recapped the loss of the town’s main street, which “boasted a garage, two grocery stores, two dance halls, two cafes, a popcorn stand and a post office…, which were all wiped out by the rushing water.” Plans were already underway to rebuild the Bear Creek highway; the devastation of the road urged them forward.

The Friday afternoon flood peaked at more than 8,000 cubic feet per second at the Morrison gauge on Bear Creek. It was quickly followed by a second flood Saturday evening, which came within three feet of the previous day’s flow but “wrought little damage, although again pouring water and mud into business houses at Mt. Morrison and undoing all the labor in the process of clearing away the debris.”

Floodwaters from Mount Vernon Creek abandoned their channel and punched a hole in the wall of the Mt. Morrison Garage, newly rebuilt in brick after a 1931 fire, before sweeping through the nearby grounds of the Cliff House. Mrs. Gladys Blakeslee and her sister-in-law barely hung on to a board fence in the alley near the Cliff House; both were rescued. The new Durham and Sydow dance pavilion suffered complete demolition, as “the building was scattered for many miles down stream.”
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Rebuilding the Canyon Road
On Colorado Day, August 1, 1934, Mayor George Begole of Denver and Mayor Frank Baker of Morrison stood next to a red, white, and blue braided cord to reopen and dedicate the new Bear Creek roadway, with great fanfare. Governor Johnson led a motorcade as hundreds of cars followed him all the way to Evergreen, ending the town’s “year-long isolation,” and providing the motorist “a complete new picture of the scenic wonders” in the canyon.

Just a few days later, on August 9, another flood threatened, putting the brand new road to the test. Six people died, including three members of the Dieken family visiting from Detroit, Michigan. All had been trapped in the canyon by the rising waters. Morrison escaped major damage in that event because one of the contributing cloudbursts struck farther west, near Kittredge. The peak flow on Bear Creek had already passed through town before the high water from Mount Vernon Creek arrived.

September 1938 “Creeks on Rampage”
Another Friday night disaster in Morrison and Bear Creek Canyon occurred in early September of 1938, a storm whose footprint has been compared to the 2013 event. Regional storms over the Front Range reached a peak near Morrison on September 2, with reports of more than seven inches of rain north of Morrison in a six-hour period. Mount Vernon Creek, with flows estimated at more than 9,000 cfs, reached the town shortly before the floodwaters coming down Bear Creek. Together they produced a record flood, exceeding the 100-year flood level by approximately four feet.

Bear Creek Canyon, where the road and bridges between Morrison and Idledale suffered heavy damage, was again the scene of flood-related deaths. Cousins Thomas Clennan III and Barbara Pedley, ages 8 and 10, expected a weekend outing in Evergreen. They were swept to their deaths, along with their grandparents, Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Clennan. Barbara’s body was found miles downstream, below Morrison. Mrs. Cecil Goodrich, Georgia Goodrich, and Kathleen Boyd of Louisville, also died.

Both Denver newspapers printed pages of photos of the demolition of Morrison’s main street businesses, some of which had been similarly damaged by flooding just five years before. An auto supply store and drug store were wrecked when the “waters of Mount Vernon Creek swept through them from back to front,” but the adjacent grocery store was left relatively unharmed. The Morrison Garage was filled with silt, leaving less than two feet of air space inside, and the dance hall across the street was, once again, completely demolished.

(continued on page 26)
Floodplains and Major Flooding Streams in Jefferson County
This map shows 100-year floodplains in Jefferson County in light blue; streams and other bodies of water are darker blue. Flood lists in this issue include records for 204 events on 43 streams in Jefferson County. Here are the top 10 places to encounter floods and the number of events:

1. Clear Creek Canyon 38
2. Bear Creek 36
3. Tucker Gulch 17
4. Mt. Vernon Canyon 11
5. Turkey Creek Canyon 11
6. South Platte River 9
7. Golden Gate Canyon 8
8. Lena Gulch 8
9. Ralston Creek 8
10. Kinney Run 4
This time, federal forces came to Morrison’s rescue. Hundreds of Works Progress Administration (WPA)* workers, sent to the town, helped search for victims, clean up debris, and shovel mud out of buildings. In 1939, they were called upon again, to build monumental stone walls in the lower section of Bear Creek Canyon, lifting the deadly highway away from the stream at last. Since 1938, only one additional flood death has occurred in the canyon.

After this flood, citizens of Morrison resurrected discussion of abandoning the low-lying town in favor of higher ground. Led by former mayor Otis A. Pike, some suggested the town be dammed and turned into a scenic lake. Decades later, a lake was built, but it was too far downstream to protect the little town from floods. Morrison remains in its streamside location.

Sources:
Durango Herald Democrat, September 3, 1938. “3 Known Dead in Floods In North Part Of State.”
Jefferson County Republican, September 8, 1938. “Morrison Again Devastated by Flood, Third Within Five Years.”
The Denver Post, September 3, 1938. “Creeks on Rampage Wrought Heavy Damage at Mountain Resorts.”

* This agency was known by this name from its inception in 1935 until July 1, 1939, when it was renamed to “Work Projects Administration”. The “WPA” acronym continued.
Driving on History in Bear Creek Canyon

After the 1938 flood washed away more than half of the Highway 74 roadbed, Works Progress Administration (WPA) workers started a project to build stone walls between Morrison and Idledale (then known as Starbuck). The Rocky Mountain News reported that “Enough masonry to build a solid cube the size of a four-story building measuring 125 feet by 125 feet is being placed in the retaining walls along Bear Creek Canyon between Morrison and Starbuck to provide a flood-proof roadway,” at a cost of $436,588. By the end of May 1939, the project was 30 percent complete.

To create the walls, workers blasted tons of rock from the canyon walls, building a 40-foot-wide shelf to support the roadway above the creek. The walls range from seven to 34 feet in height and are as much as 17 feet wide at the base. The massive foundations were excavated five to 15 feet below what was then the creek level.

These walls have stood the test of time. Built in segments along the lower three miles of the canyon, “where full force of the waters strike the roadway,” the walls eliminated the many vulnerable stream-crossings of the low-lying road. Thanks to the WPA workers, these walls remain largely unnoticed as they continue to protect more than 3,000 daily motorists along approximately 4,500 feet of Highway 74 between Morrison and Idledale.

Source:
Throughout Jefferson County history, 55 people are recorded to have died in floods, including every age group, rich and poor, native and visitor. In the Great Flood of 1896 more children died than were lost at Columbine, and its 29 victims remain the largest single day loss of life here since Jeffco was settled.

### June 16, 1886
**Bear Creek Canyon**
Unknown man

### July 21, 1890
**Clear Creek Canyon**
Mrs. R.R. Able
Able daughter
Ethel Drake

### July 24, 1896 (Black Friday)
**Evergreen**
Nichols (Evergreen)

### Golden
Annie Laura Edwards (Golden)
Andrew A. Johnson (Golden)
Anna A. Johnson (Golden)

### Mt. Vernon Canyon
Adele Horner (Denver)
Mary Horner (Denver)
Josephine Holme (Denver)
Mrs. Harry M. Warren (Denver)

### Morrison
Elizabeth Miller (Morrison)
Harry Miller (Morrison)
Miller child (Morrison)
Miller child (Morrison)
Isabella Amelia Procter (Denver)
Marguerite Grace Procter (Denver)
Robert James Procter (Denver)
Edith Stainbank Procter (Denver)
Mrs. Anthony Herren (Denver)
Eugene Herren (Denver)
Josephine Herren (Denver)
Carroll Herren (Denver)
Mable Herren (Denver)
Mrs. Thomas F. Casey (Denver)
James Casey (Denver)

### Anna Casey (Denver)
Eddie Casey (Denver)
Mamie Casey (Denver)
Clara Casey (Denver)
Thomas McGough (Dayton, Ohio)
Jacob Longnecker (Morrison)

### July 7, 1933
**Bear Creek Canyon**
C.E. (Jack) Burton (Idledale)
Leonard Conde (Denver)
Raymond Conde (Denver) (missing)
Marietta McIntyre (Denver) (missing)
Eunice L. Soderman (Denver)
Sylvia A. Soderman (Denver)

### August 9, 1934
**Bear Creek Canyon**
Gordon W. Dieken (Detroit, Michigan)
Maria W. Dieken (Detroit, Michigan)
Wendell W. Dieken (Detroit, Michigan)
Isabella Cowan Husband (Denver)
John Henry Husband (Denver)
Charles Madison Juhnke (Englewood)

### September 2, 1938
**Bear Creek Canyon**
Kathleen T. Boyd (Louisville)
Thomas H. Clennan (Denver)
Mrs. Thomas Clennan (Denver)
Thomas H. Clennan III (Denver)
Mrs. Cecil Goodrich (Evergreen)
Georgia Goodrich (Evergreen)
Barbara Pedley (Denver)

### August 24, 1946
**Idledale**
Ruth Nooning (Morrison)

### July 12, 1996
**Buffalo Creek**
John Tinker (Pine)
Alex Salizar (Lakewood)
HISTORIC FLOODING IN JEFFERSON COUNTY

1965 Jeffco’s “Wettest Year on Record”  
By Richard Gardner

From June 25 to July 25 the equivalent of a year’s worth of rain fell in Jeffco foothills, approximately 12 inches, setting a new record to that date. After June’s flood of the South Platte devastated Denver, a mass of warm moisture swept up from the Gulf of Mexico near the end of July. On July 20th the rain began to fall, dumping nearly seven inches through the next Sunday. On Saturday, July 24th, exactly 69 years to the day after the greatest flood in Jeffco history, raging waters returned to Tucker Gulch. They tore out bridges, crumbled basements and spilled torrents of water down Ford Street and Washington Avenue in the first televised flooding event in Jeffco history. The massive timbers from the railroad bridge were piled up against the 10th Street bridge. Ingrid Norquest, a young music teacher recently arrived in Golden, wrote:

“It looks as though a huge stream of water just suddenly swept down it. Everything under a couple feet of mud. Starting about 4 blocks east of where Coors Porcelain plant is, it took out the railroad bridge and bent the tracks in a huge curve. They were going east and west. Now they come in from the east, but bend around toward the south and end up in the creek. The ties from the rr bridge ended up 2 blocks to the south against the bridge where 10th street here crosses the little creek. That bridge has a huge hole in it. And it was brand new, too. The street running along the small creek where all this happened has huge chunks out of it. The street bridge a block from the rr bridge is still there, but all hand railings were ripped out. A house near there was completely flooded and its garage apartment collapsed. Very interesting.”

A Few Words on Cloudbursts  
By Rosemary Lewis

Long-time residents are familiar with how localized a cloudburst can be along the Front Range. Although it can be dry in one area, just a few miles away it is raining literally buckets. In 1896 a rancher’s daughter was riding on Green Mountain when a cloudburst opened. She was all but drowned by the time she and the horse reached the barn. The rain was so intense that it made it almost impossible for her to breathe. This storm resulted in the Bear Creek flood of July 24-25, 1896.

On August 11, 1936, the official weather station in Denver measured 1.35 inches of rainfall, but three miles away a bucket was filled to a depth of 6.5 inches. The nature of cloudbursts often makes accurate measurements difficult, because they do not conveniently happen over gaging stations. A 1948 study by the U.S. Department of the Interior provided a table of measurement devices for the September 2-3, 1938, storm that flooded Cold Spring Gulch and flowed into Bear Creek. The novel system included a coffee can, a wheelbarrow, various buckets, barrels, and washtubs, and one 4-inch gage that ran over for an estimated rainfall total of 6.25 inches.

The destructive flood of 1965 was also the result of a cloudburst, this time in Douglas County. The rainfall was described a year later in Empire magazine as “a Niagara of water” coming out of a black sky after an eerie calm. The storm dropped up to 14 inches of rain in one afternoon.

On June 27, 2004, a cloudburst over Massey Draw in Ken-Caryl Ranch produced nearly 3 inches of rain in two hours. Ken Caryl Avenue at the Hogback cut was flooded to the top of the guardrails and made impassible. Downstream floodwaters inundated the Deer Creek Golf Course and many new homes in Meadow Ranch.

Sources:
Denver Post Empire magazine, June 5, 1966.

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The Flood of 1965: Chatfield, Strontia, and Two Forks
By Rosemary Lewis

In mid-June of 1965, heavy spring storms stalled over the Front Range, overwhelming the basins of the Arkansas and South Platte rivers. The magnitude of the rain, floodwaters, and subsequent damage defied belief to those who did not witness the storms firsthand. The morning of June 16 started pleasantly enough, but shortly after noon the tempest began. Tornadoes touched down southeast of Denver and at Palmer Lake, a prelude to the horror yet to come. A dense, dark cloud descended on Dawson Butte in Douglas County around 2 p.m., and the air became an ocean, with rain so heavy it was as if a bucket had tipped over the butte.

In the next three hours, more than 14 inches of rain fell at Castle Rock. The water was too much for the creeks and arroyos. It picked up boulders and trees and scraped gouges in the western flank of Dawson Butte that are still visible today. The normally placid Plum Creek became unrecognizable. At the juncture of Plum Creek and the South Platte, it was estimated that the river was 200 feet wide and 20 feet deep, moving at ten miles per hour and carrying 40 times its normal flow. At 8 p.m., the flood hit Littleton carrying not only water, but mud and accumulated debris. As the flood continued downstream to Denver and points northeast to Nebraska, it ripped out bridges, roads, and buildings.

In the Report to the Colorado General Assembly, total damages from the 1965 floods were estimated at $397 million with 11 lives lost. Jefferson County emerged relatively unscathed with no officially reported monetary damage or lives lost. This was due to the limited length of the flooded river along the southern county border. Only about one mile of the South Platte River between Plum Creek and about Wolhurst was flooded. At the time this area was rural and sparsely populated.

As Colorado cleaned up after the storms, public attention reignited long-dormant plans for two proposed dam-and-reservoir projects—Chatfield and Two Forks—on the South Platte River along the Jefferson-Douglas County border.

Chatfield Dam and Reservoir
Chatfield is a name long associated with the land south of Littleton. Since the 1870s, families of Civil War veterans and cousins, Isaac W. and Edward L. Chatfield, had owned much of the land along the South Platte River stretching from Plum Creek to Bear Creek. The Colorado and Southern Railroad established a station on Chatfield’s property just inside Jefferson County southeast of present-day Platte Canyon Road and West Mineral Avenue.

Chatfield Dam was originally approved by the Colorado Water Conservation Board (CWC) in 1945 and was authorized by U.S. Congress under the Flood Control Act of 1950, but it was not funded at the time. The dam was planned to be built below the confluence of the South Platte River and Plum Creek, near present-day highway C-470. The reservoir was projected to impound 200,000 acre-feet
of water, backing up six miles along the South Platte and four miles up Plum Creek. Local residents strongly disapproved of the plan, which was quietly shelved for years.

The project design resurrected after the ’65 flood called for a flood control dam without the provision for water storage, under the control of the US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE). Dam construction began in 1967 and was completed in 1975. The rolled earth structure is 13,136 feet long at the crest and rises 147 feet high from the original South Platte stream bed to an elevation of 5,527 feet above mean sea level (msl). The reservoir behind the dam is about two miles long. At maximum capacity it can hold 351,400 acre-feet of water. (As a rule-of-thumb in water resources engineering an acre-foot is the amount of water a family of four needs for one year.) In 1967, as construction was about to begin, the state of Colorado was granted permission to store water, and in 1979 Denver Water was also granted permission to store water in Chatfield Reservoir under the Foothills Agreement. These storage rights resulted in a total of a six-foot increase in the pool level over the planned elevation of 5,426 feet msl.

The USACE is currently investigating the feasibility of reallocating storage space from exclusive flood control to joint flood control and conservation purposes. The purpose is to decrease dependency on aquifers for water supply. Several alternatives are being considered, including raising the reservoir pool level as much as 12 feet during non-flood conditions. This alternative is advocated by the CWCB on behalf of the 15 regional water users who have surface rights on the South Platte and Plum Creek and would share the new storage space.

The Foothills Agreement, Strontia Springs, and Two Forks

Whereas Chatfield was designed with the primary intent of being a flood control detention dam, Strontia Springs and Two Forks were first-and-foremost water supply projects directed by Denver Water. The 1979 Foothills Agreement granting Denver Water storage rights in Chatfield was tied to the permitting of the Strontia Springs Dam in Waterton Canyon. This Agreement impacted not only Chatfield and Strontia Springs, but the proposed Two Forks Dam project as well. The requirement of a systemwide Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the Two Forks project evolved from the Foothills Agreement.

Development up the South Platte Canyon started relatively small with the Strontia Springs Dam. It was envisioned eventually to be a forebay to the much larger Two Forks Dam project. In the meantime, the Strontia Springs Dam fulfilled the immediate need for water storage. Completed in 1983, the dam is 243 feet high and impounds 7,863 acre-feet of water in a 1.7 mile long lake. Through the years sediment accumulated in the bottom of the reservoir, as it does in all reservoirs. However, the Strontia Springs Reservoir also received erosion debris from the 1996 Buffalo Creek Fire and the 2002 Hayman Fire. On August 2, 2010, Denver Water closed the Waterton Canyon, the dam, and the reservoir to public access in order to dredge...
some 625,000 cubic yards of accumulated sediment from the reservoir. The Canyon reopened April 23, 2012.

The story of Two Forks goes back more than a century. In 1905, as Cheesman Dam was being completed, surveyors for the Denver Union Water Company (DUWC) declared that the deep narrow canyon of the South Platte River, about a mile downstream of the town of South Platte, would be an ideal location for a dam. The stable geology was a dam builder’s dream. DUWC laid claim to the land and for the next 60 years bided its time, waiting for the opportunity to move forward with the plans.

In the aftermath of the 1965 flood, the Two Forks project became intimately tied to flood control along the South Platte River. In 1966, the US Bureau of Reclamation made a case for Two Forks to be a multi-use project, enfolding hydroelectric, water storage, and flood control under one massive structure. Reclamation decided not to pursue the Two Forks project after the US Fish and Wildlife Service commented in 1974 that the project was the least desirable choice for development due to impacts on fish and wildlife. The proposed dam was a thin-arch concrete structure that rose 615 feet above the riverbed with a crest length of 1,700 feet. By comparison Hoover Dam is 726 feet high. At its maximum pool level, an elevation of 6,547 feet, the reservoir would have extended 8.8 miles up the North Fork (as far as Ferndale). The south, or main, fork inundation would have extended 21.3 miles (almost to the foot of Cheesman Dam), created a 1.1-million acre-foot, 7,300-acre reservoir, and flooded six towns. However, the Two Forks reservoir would have had significant fluctuations in the elevation of the pool because of junior water rights and operation as part of the larger water supply system. The estimated cost was $1 billion—projected to be the most expensive dam in US history to be entirely financed by state and local authorities. Proponents said the project was absolutely vital to answer the water needs of the growing needs of the Denver metroplex, projected to top three million people by 2000.

Two Forks pitted local communities, utilities, public interest groups, and politicians against each other. In 1987, polls indicated that 50 percent of local people supported Two Forks and 31 percent opposed. As discussed in historian Patricia Limerick’s book, A Ditch in Time, the value of a good public relations firm can drastically change perceptions and polls. By 1990, 32 percent favored and 42 percent opposed.

Locals were not the only groups at odds. The US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the USACE also went head-to-head in battle. As required by the Foothills Agreement, a systemwide EIS was developed by the USACE at the request of Denver Water, the successor to DUWC and a leading stakeholder in the project. The USACE issued the Draft EIS in 1987, which demonstrated that the Two Forks project was the most environmentally damaging of the alternatives examined. The EPA quickly responded to the draft, saying it was inadequate in addressing water quality standards. The USACE revised the Draft EIS and issued a Final EIS in March 1988 that did address some of EPA’s concerns, but it still did not address a number of major issues.

After submitting more comments and holding several meetings, the EPA’s continuing concerns regarding water quality, conservation, and the nature of the USACE’s Dredge and Fill Permit (called a Section 404 Permit) continued to be unresolved. The USACE filed a notice of intent on March 15, 1989, to issue the 404 Permit for the dam. Meetings were held during the next three months with Colorado Governor Roy Romer, Congressmen, local elected officials, Colorado and Nebraska state officials, and representatives of the environmental community.
After the comment period on the USACE’s EIS, the EPA announced its intention to issue the Proposed Determination to Prohibit, Restrict, or Deny the Specification—in other words to quash the USACE’s permit for construction and thus kill the project. The official EPA report stated that the reservoir “would destroy an extremely valuable and unique fishery, wildlife, and recreational resource.... The Colorado Wildlife Commission has designated much of the stream as a ‘Gold Medal’ trout fishery.”

The newly-appointed administrator for the EPA, William Reilly, announced on March 24, 1989, that the EPA was invoking Section 404(c) that granted the EPA veto rights under the Clean Water Act. Reilly delivered his official veto on November 23, 1990, a landmark decision in environmental history. In his veto, Reilly said that the project would cause “unacceptable environmental damage.”

If Two Forks had proceeded in 1990 it would have been the seventh highest dam and one of the last of the high dams built in the United States, an outdated dinosaur even before coming online at the end of the Big Dams Era. In the two decades since, the large-scale damming of the nation’s rivers has become less desirable. Public outcry, the limited number of remaining sites, ongoing environmental impacts, and maintenance issues such as sediment removal and structural integrity have made the high dams almost obsolete in favor of more creative options to answer the country’s water and electric demands.

In retrospect the quashing of the Two Forks project proved to be fortuitous. According to the US Census, the Denver metropolitan statistical area population was 2.18 million in 2000, significantly less than the projected 3 million. In the decades since the fight over Two Forks, Denver Water has reevaluated its historical propensity in accumulating land and water rights. Instead, it has committed itself to the proactive conservation of water resources. Denver Water has promoted water recycling to produce grey water for irrigation, pursued partnerships with other local water suppliers, optimized the existing system, educated the public in water conservation, and extended the system to include non-traditional avenues such as using old gravel pits as reservoirs and advocating xeriscaping.

Sources:
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Buffalo Creek’s Tragedy of Fire, then Flood

By Richard Gardner

For 50 years Jefferson County went without a flooding fatality, until July 12, 1996. Only two months after a devastating 12,000-acre fire rampaged through Buffalo Creek, a storm system came in and dumped water on the treeless slopes, sending a flash flood down upon the inhabitants attempting to rebuild. The flood, charcoal-black from the fire-damaged debris and peaking as a 20-foot wall of water, came under cover of night. John Tinker, a 43-year-old of Pine, was killed when water swept his pickup truck off Highway 126, flipping the truck over and trapping him inside. Seventy-three-year-old Alex Salizar, of Lakewood, was working on his fifth-wheel trailer when the floodwaters came upon him and swept him away. Their bodies were retrieved the following Saturday morning.

Roads and bridges and cars were washed away, with cars found upside down in flood waters and slammed into trees. Buildings were knocked off their foundations or otherwise heavily damaged, with mud and debris everywhere. Buffalo Creek’s utility infrastructure was almost entirely wiped out, including power, water, and sewer service, with its entire century-old water line completely destroyed. Golden’s fire department rescued 16 people stranded at the South Platte River, including an infant and a man in his 80s, and took vacationers at Foxton cabins out two at a time by rescue boat. Even trout stranded in puddles were rescued. Numerous other fire departments assisted with rescue operations. However, North Fork Fire Station 1, which had been the command center during the recent fire, was destroyed with its vehicles inside. The force of the water was great enough to turn the building 180 degrees and blow out two of its walls.
A bout halfway through the can-
yon of the North Fork of the
South Platte River stands the
Westall Monument, honoring a rail-
road engineer who put the lives of his
passengers before his own life. Near the
location of the Dome Rock railroad sta-
tion, the monument poignantly states,
“Tell my wife I died thinking of her.”

On August 28, 1898, William “Billy” G. Westall,
enGINEER FOR THE DENVER, SOUTH PARK AND PACIFIC RAILROAD, was guiding his train with about 450 travelers back to Denver. Before getting to the Dome Rock Station, where more people were waiting for their ride home, Westall discovered piles of sand and gravel covering the tracks. He slowed the train to decrease the impact. His fire-
man jumped to safety, but Westall was pinned in the wreck when the train hit the pile of debris and keeled over. He died later that night.

A year later, on September 4, 1899, Westall’s comrades of the Ancient Order of United Work-
men (AOUW) erected the impressive monu-
ment to honor him.

When JCHC member emerita Milly Roeder wrote an article in Historically Jeffco, marking the 100th anniversary of Westall’s heroic action, she noted that even though the monument “shows little sign of deterioration or destruction… the real threat comes from repeated floods that are washing out the ground, especially after the 1996 forest fire near Buffalo Creek.” It is in the flood plain of the North Fork of the South Platte River.

That concern remained largely unheeded un-
til spring 2012, when Frank Reetz, a teacher at West Jefferson Middle School, started a search for an historic site that needed “championing” by young people in South Jefferson County. “It has always been my intention to couch student learning in authentic and relevant contexts,” he said.

(continued on page 36)
In 1898, my grandfather, Elias Amos Haight, worked as a fellow engineer with Billy Westall on the Denver, Leadville and Gunnison Railroad. They were best friends, and figuratively speaking it was no accident that my grandfather resigned from the railroad following Billy’s death. Literally speaking, it was all about accidents. The best source on this subject, Mark Aldrich’s *Death Rode the Rails: American Railroad Accidents and Safety, 1828-1965*, reports a combined 2,262 collisions and derailments on American railroads during 1898, with 243 fatalities among engineers and their crews. Counting passengers and pedestrians, along with fatal accidents among workers in railway shops and yards, the annual death toll exceeded 10,000!

According to the stories Grandpa Haight told me before his death from natural causes in 1949, the romance of the rails could not override the reality of the risks: exploding boilers, faulty brakes, flimsy trestles, fractured ties and tracks, not to mention snowslides and washouts. So, in the wake of the Westall tragedy and while still serving as the guardian for two sons of another fallen engineer, my grandfather retreated to 60 acres of irrigated land five miles east of Morrison in Jefferson County. Here, close to the present-day intersection of Highway 285 and Kipling, he built a pretty little farmhouse flanked by the fanciest privy in the territory—all in preparation for the arrival of a bride (my grandmother) from his native Missouri. In 1914, my mother was born, and as they say, “the rest is history.” If history is about telling a story and explaining something—whimsical contingencies and transcendent forces—the Billy Westall story is as large and public as the history of the American West and as small and personal as the existence of Elias Haight’s grandson.
Reetz then worked with Neil Sperandeo of Denver Water to develop a “research to action” project. Assistance was also provided by Colorado Preservation, Inc., and the History Colorado Center. Reetz started the three-year project when the students in his social studies class were in the sixth grade. Students were given the opportunity to join the Core Team.

Denver Water guided the students in making preliminary measurements and conducting research. They measured the volume of the monument’s blocks (courses), approximate weight of each course, distance from the road, and distance from the current river level. The students were assigned to write lengthy reflections of their visit and the process to that point.

During the 2012-2013 school year, the Core Team cleaned up trash and sketched ideas for landscaping proposals. Plans included bridges, parking areas, barbecue stands, bathrooms, picnic tables, signs, and paths. Coordinates were drawn to move the monument 40 feet closer to the road and out of the 60-year flood plain.

Top left: Students reflected on the meaning of the monument by writing poems, later compiled into a book.

Amy Johnson Photography

Top right: Bob Schoppe, president of the Denver, South Park and Pacific Historical Society, helped with the cleanup around the monument.

Amy Johnson Photography
The students then worked on fundraising plans. Bob Schoppe, president of the Denver, South Park and Pacific Historical Society, joined the Core Team. The organization awarded a significant grant to the project. Denver Water and the Anschutz Foundation also awarded grants.

The Core Team was joined by Adam Cornett, undergraduate from the University of Colorado at Denver’s History Department. His work began the process of developing interpretative signage for the two sites: the monument site and the actual train wreck site, three quarters of a mile upriver from the monument.

During early 2013, many of the students, now in Reetz’s eighth grade English class, wrote poems about the Westall Monument. Two books of poems have been edited to replicate the monument’s restoration process by placing students’ first drafts alongside their final poems.

The monument was rededicated in a ceremony, Friday April 18, 2014, located at Dome Rock along the North Fork of the South Platte River, in a location so desolate that the invitation stated in bold letters: “There are no facilities and no cell phone coverage at this remote site.”

On October 16, 2014, at the annual Hall of Fame Awards Ceremony, the Norman and Ethel Meyer Award for Historic Preservation recognized West Jefferson Middle School’s Gifted and Talented students and teacher Frank Reetz for their dedication and work to preserve and restore the Westall Monument.

Source:

Everyone likes tee shirts, including Hudson McCarthy and Rachel Shirlaw, members of the Core Team. Hudson designed the shirts that were given to all students and to the main project coordinators.

Frank Reetz.

Top left: Workers from Denver Water fitted the stone blocks of the monument in place in new location.

Denver Water

Top right: Members of the Core Team with teacher Frank Reetz and Milly Roeder.

S.L. White

Left: In June 2014, Reetz was working at the site, when he noticed a family checking out the wreck site. He discovered the father’s name is Robert Westall, great-great-nephew of hero Billy Westall. With Robert are his wife Jennifer, and their children, Jackson and Lauren. Frank Reetz.

Frank Reetz.
J. W. Green

Pioneer, Businessman, Community Leader

J. W. Green, Sr. arrived in Buffalo in September 1879. He was 16 years of age and had traveled from his birthplace in Independence, Virginia. He was employed by the Morrison Timber Company as a logger and made his first home, a lean-to built between two large granite boulders, along Buffalo Creek. He worked as a logger and by 1883 he owned the store, “J. W. Green, Dealer in Everything”.

Between 1885 and 1888, he acquired a hotel, sawmill and a house with lots along the North Fork of the South Platte River. His sawmill supplied railroad ties for the Denver Tramway. In the heyday of business, five spur tracks were built for unloading merchandise and loading lumber. Every day 25 to 30 cars of lumber were shipped to Denver. In 1937 when the railroad pulled up the tracks, trucks were used to deliver the lumber.

In 1886, President Grover Cleveland appointed J. W. Green, Postmaster of Buffalo Creek. He maintained that position until 1915, when his son took over the position. By 1899, Mr. Green was a deputy sheriff for Buffalo Creek and the surrounding area. He oversaw voting from the time he bought the store until his death in 1948.

Mr. Green worked his way up from a newcomer to the new Denver, South Park and Pacific Railroad stop called “Buffalo” to a successful businessman, postmaster, deputy sheriff and community activist to provide for the residents of Buffalo Creek.

J. W. Green was elected to the Jefferson County Historical Commission Hall of Fame in 2014.

Marian Metsopoulos

Historian

Marian Moeller Metsopoulos, a native of Chanute, Kansas, attended Kansas State University, receiving a BS Degree in Home Economics. From the University of Texas Medical School, in Dallas, TX, she earned a Masters in Medical Art. She married Major William Metsopoulos, a career Air Force navigator, and had a daughter, Lisa Norris. On his retirement in 1964, the family moved to the Lakewood area.

A horticulturist at heart, Marian planned the landscaping of their garden, which was opened to the public for tours. In 1969 she volunteered as “gardener” at the Foothills Art Center, and then served as director for 18 years. She worked with artists to promote watermedia and oil paintings, sculpture, pottery, quilting, weaving, jewelry, needlework, poetry, and music. At that time the Rocky Mountain National Watermedia Exhibition was born and is still bringing watermedia paintings from throughout the United States to Golden. She initiated the Holiday Arts Market, attracting large crowds to the Center. Marian is an award-winning member of the Embroiderers’ Guild of America.

As past president of the Applewood Reliques, a chapter of the Questers International, she has written grants for preservation and restoration of the Creighton Pumphouse and the Wide Acres Interurban Trolley Stop, now on the grounds of Lakewood’s Twentieth Century Museum. She published a booklet on the history of the Consolidated Mutual Water Company.

In 1995, with Marian’s leadership, the Lakewood Historical Society had two structures placed on the National Register of Historic Places: Davies’ Chuck Wagon Diner and the 1888 Schnell Farm. The Register of Historic Landmarks in Lakewood now lists 22 structures, thanks to much diligent work. She was instrumental in leading a group to refurbish the WWII Memorial, which bears the names of Lakewood High School’s students lost in World War II. Marian has edited The Lakewood Historian, a quarterly newsletter for the Society, for 22 years. She also created the Dennis Vanderhoof Lakewood History Essay Contest with prizes totaling $2,000, received each year from the estate of Mr. Vanderhoof. The winners are published in The Lakewood Historian.

Marian was elected to the Jefferson County Historical Commission Hall of Fame in 2014.
When a small group assembled over breakfast in 1988 with a shared vision of protecting Jeffco’s prehistoric heritage, many of those in attendance didn’t realize the magnitude of the project they were undertaking. Twenty-five years later, the Friends of Dinosaur Ridge (FoDR) have become one of the great success stories of volunteer commitment in the Front Range and are the 2014 recipients of the Norman and Ethel Meyer Historic Preservation Award.

Dr. Martin Lockley of the University of Colorado Denver, who first researched dinosaur track fossils here in the late 1980s, promoted the protection and public ownership of the area. In fact, the hogback was already owned by Jefferson Co. Open Space, with a right-of-way along Alameda Parkway that was part of Denver Mountain Parks. In 1988, theft of dinosaur tracks was reported in the newspapers, creating interest in preservation of this unusual resource, and the group that gathered to do so included representatives of the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS), the Denver Museum of Nature and Science, the Colorado Department of Transportation, Colorado School of Mines, Rocky Mountain Association of Geologists, Chevron, and Amoco Production Co., as well as Jefferson County and Morrison. Retired USGS paleobotanist Dr. Richard Scott is credited with suggesting the name “Dinosaur Ridge,” a parallel to the West Slope’s Dinosaur Valley.

Since those early days, the Friends have partnered with numerous organizations to protect their original concern, the hogback at Alameda Parkway, officially renamed Dinosaur Ridge in 1994. That same year, the Ridge received recognition on the State Register of Historic Places. In 1973, the quarries on the Ridge had been designated a National Natural Landmark (NNL), but this honor was not officially celebrated until 2004, when a plaque was placed at the bone quarry site on the west side of the Ridge. In 2011, with the submission of a second evaluation, the NNL was expanded from 60 to 84 acres, and now includes three track sites near Golden in addition to the two original quarry sites. The Morrison-Golden Fossil Area is the only NNL in Jefferson County and one of 14 statewide.

Under the leadership of Executive Director Joe Tempel, who has been involved since the early days, and dedicated volunteers on the Board of Directors, the Friends of Dinosaur Ridge have published dozens of books, guidebooks, and reports, as well as regular annual reports and newsletters. Many of these report research by Dr. Lockley that provides new scientific insights. This collection constitutes a substantial contribution to the historic record of the fossil sites and of the organization’s development.

“It is still a magical organization… the level of commitment and energy among the people who are part of the group is just phenomenal…”
—Ginny Mast, former Director of Colorado School of Mines Geology Museum and early FoDR board member, in 1999

Spectators with Joe Tempel, Dinosaur Ridge Executive Director, and Rick Frost, National Park Service Regional Office, at the dedication of the Morrison Fossil Area National Natural Landmark, May 2004.

S.L. White
In 1994, Jefferson County had acquired the Wagner Ranch, near Rooney Ranch, which became the Friends’ headquarters for offices, gift shop, events, and interpretive exhibits. Alameda Parkway over the hogback was closed to motor vehicles in 2008, improving the safety of visitors to the track sites on the east side, as well as to the historic bone quarries on the west. In 2011, the Friends expanded their umbrella to encompass the historic Parfet clay pits (now known as Triceratops Trail at Parfet Prehistoric Preserve).

Each year, more than 40,000 visitors take guided tours of Dinosaur Ridge from the Visitor Center; 60,000 more walkers informally access the Ridge, reading informational signs about the fossils and geology. In 2014, the Friends opened a second “Discovery Center” to provide access and interpretive services to the west side of Dinosaur Ridge. The new Center includes exhibits, a base for programs, a prehistoric garden, offices, and a gift shop. Its pre-launch celebration attracted 170 guests for beer and barbecue on July 4, 2014, as well as a lofty view of fireworks from the top of the Ridge.

Throughout the organization’s 25-year history, the Friends of Dinosaur Ridge have mastered the art of engagement. Many of their volunteers and board members are practicing or retired geologists and other professionals, giving them a sound basis for scientific interpretation. They have attracted major funding from the Adolph Coors, Boettcher, Harvey Family, and Gates Family foundations, as well as organizations like the American Association of Petroleum Geologists, and are regularly supported by the Scientific and Cultural Facilities District, the Greater Denver Area Gem and Mineral Council, and Rocky Mountain Association of Geologists. More than 50 corporations and foundations and 100 individuals stepped forward to support the purchase and development of the new Discovery Center. For their impressive accomplishments in protecting Jeffco’s earliest history and their stewardship of these nationally recognized sites, we are pleased to present the 2014 Meyer Award to the Friends of Dinosaur Ridge.

Sources:
RidgeReport_Summer2014_26-2_web.pdf
In 1877, when the Rev. Arthur Lakes began finding dinosaur bones along the Hogback now known as Dinosaur Ridge, he opened 13 quarries between Morrison and present-day I-70. His diggings, under the auspices of Yale’s Peabody Museum, gave us some of the West’s first significant dinosaur discoveries. Thereafter, several quarries faded into history and their locations grew obscure.

Recently researchers from Dinosaur Ridge relocated Lakes (or Yale) Quarry #1, the northernmost of the set. Because its exact location was “lost,” the site was not included in National Register (1975) or National Natural Landmark (1973) designations in the area. In May 2014, Dr. Beth Simmons submitted a landmark application to JCHC for the site.

According to the nomination:

The site is significant because it is the first place that dinosaur bones were found in the American West... The discoveries made during 1877 at Quarry #1 changed the course of paleontological history. They also intensified what have been called “the bone wars” between Edwin C. Cope and Othniel C. Marsh. Marsh intended to keep the Morrison site secret, thinking it was secluded in the mountains of the west. However, numerous visitors came not only to see the easily accessible quarries and sit on the bones, but also to help with the digging...

...The Rooney family would have known about the site because Otis, son of the original homesteader, helped Arthur Lakes and George Cannon during the dinosaur digs when he was a teenager. However, the site was “lost” in the 1960s through a paleontological blunder...

Quarry #1 is the site of discovery of the first large dinosaur, *Atlantosaurus*, and first Jurassic crocodile, *Diplosaurus* (both described in 1877). The landmarked site lies on the west side of the Hogback about one-quarter mile north of the inter-
Even when choosing only the “nuggets” of 40 years of activities by the Jefferson County Historical Commission (JCHC), there is just too much to “mine.”

The stimulus for formation of a new group was the approaching national Bicentennial and Colorado’s Centennial. The Arvada Historical Society, the Jefferson County Historical Society, the Golden Landmarks Association, and the Wheat Ridge Historical Society collaborated in asking that the County Commissioners create a new organization to coordinate activities, but also be “an on-going group to inventory county historical sites, set up a reference library, and work with the schools.”

“In 1974 a need was felt for an umbrella group to coordinate the historical activities of the County and to act as a liaison with National, State, and local historical organizations,” wrote Dorothy Lombard in her President’s Message for the 1988 summer edition of Historically Jeffco.

The Historical Commission (now known as JCHC) has varied in size through the years, but today consists of 11 members appointed by the Jefferson County Board of County Commissioners, two from each Commissioner District and five at-large. Over the years, dozens of dedicated volunteers have worked to uncover and promote the fascinating stories of our county’s past. As we celebrate this anniversary and the 2014 Dana Crawford Award that recognizes JCHC’s 40 years of efforts, we remember the commitment of founders such as Jane Gardner, Hazel Humphrey, Gene Childs, Connie Fahnestock, Francis Rizzari, Sandy Crain, Elmer Wyland, Marjorie Clement, Mary Binder, and Naomi Olson—all of whom served among the very first JCHC appointees and made many other contributions.

A premier JCHC event in the early days was organizing and sponsoring the Festival of the West, a giant carnival celebrating Jefferson County. The first event was held in 1975 as a “dress rehearsal for the big July 4, 1976, Centennial-Bicentennial birthday party.” JCHC continued its management of the Festival through 1980, when a nonprofit organization was formed to take over the project. JCHC members continued support, with Vi Hader often seen staffing the booth each Fourth of July at the Fairgrounds.

The Jefferson County Hall of Fame was originated in 1979. Each year since then, honors are bestowed upon two Jeffco residents who have made outstanding contributions to its history. One honoree is living and the other is deceased. Today the images and tributes to these movers and shakers of the county’s past can be viewed in the hallway near Commissioners’ Hearing Room 1, a Who’s Who of accomplishment in county politics, business, and history.

Through JCHC efforts, many places have been recognized for their historic value. In 1976, 25 sites were designated as “Centennial Sites.” JCHC members have helped pursue recognition for historic properties on the National Register of Historic Sites, and 40 sites, most privately owned, have been designated County Landmarks since that program began in 2003.

In 1985, JCHC published “From Scratch,” a history of Jefferson County produced after years
of work by members. Three years later, the first edition of the Historically Jeffco magazine was produced, a small printed report that grew out of an earlier newsletter. In 1998 the magazine took on a new image, as a glossy, well designed publication of more than 40 pages. Beginning in the 1980s, JCHC also undertook to create and manage a Placenames database that now has more than 3,000 entries.

In July 1999, JCHC celebrated its 25th Anniversary. “UCD History professor Tom Noel recounted Jefferson County’s history with slides from the greatest natural landmarks to recent structures including the County courthouse and the Taj, that someday will be treasured like the Eiffel Tower or the dome of Monticello.” In this 1999 edition, Noel was quoted that Historically Jeffco was the only magazine published by a county historical commission in Colorado.

May 14, 2005, marked the first annual JCHC Symposium, held in Morrison, as an opportunity for members of historical groups to share information. Attendees learned about the function of JCHC, historic themes in Jefferson County, the Most Endangered Places Program of Colorado Preservation, Inc., the Cultural Resources Survey, the North Fork Historic District, and the Civilian Conservation Corps. JCHC congratulated the community of the former Pine for its success in getting its historic name – Pine Grove – restored. Ten symposiums have taken place, hosted by JCHC in cooperation with historical organizations around the county.

The Cultural Resources Survey was a multi-year grant-funded project intended to identify significant historic resources in unincorporated areas. Initiated in 1999, the project created an inventory of historic (pre-1951) properties, evaluating each in the field to determine its architectural integrity. Out of 4,000 properties surveyed, about 500 were deemed significant resources.

Comparable to the nation’s and Jeffco’s Bicentennial celebrations was the celebration of Jefferson County’s Sesquicentennial – a party so big that it lasted three years –2009-2011. JCHC started the celebration in 2009 with members and friends marching in parades throughout the county, including the parade for 150th Anniversary of Golden. Costumes ranged from gamblers and merchants to Annie Oakley and ladies in hoop skirts. During 2010, the Commission continued participating in events and parades with some new characters – a miner, a farm wife and a Victorian lady. Starting in 2009, the annual Hall of Fame Ceremony was changed to an evening reception. This tradition is now on-going.

The capstone event of 2011, the Sesquicentennial Gala held Nov. 18 at the Jefferson County Fairgrounds, was a great success by any measure. It was a mild, beautiful late autumn evening that reminds us of just why we live along Colorado’s Front Range. Approximately 500 attendees, many in costume, feasted on barbeque, enjoyed entertainment by the volunteer Civil War band, and perused displays of county history and artifacts collected for the time capsule.

On April 13, 2012, the Time Capsule—marking the Sesquicentennial—was buried on the back patio of the Jefferson County Administration and Courts Facility. This “message to the future” is to be “rediscovered” in 2061, just in time for the county’s Bicentennial.


JCHC members present a sign designating Lutheran Medical Center a “Centennial Site” in 1975.

From a JCHC scrapbook
Growing up in Jeffco – A Personal History

By Margaret T. Chapman

Hundreds, if not thousands, of stories could be told about what makes Jefferson County what it is today. Cherry Moore submitted her family’s story of growing up in the Forties and Fifties to JCHC’s annual Writers’ Award competition.

JCHC knows that many Jeffco citizens have stories to share. The Commission is working with the Jefferson County Public Library to record these histories for posterity.

The Jefferson County Public Library has the best collection of oral histories covering the scope of Jefferson County; some are online. Classifications include North Fork Valley, Lakewood, Trolley Stories, Golden, Federal Center, Evergreen, World War II and What’s New, featuring histories “close to” but not actually in Jeffco.

Currently, JCHC is compiling a list of oral history locations in the county. There are several repositories for oral histories in Jefferson County.

• Jefferson County Historical Commission
• Jefferson County Historical Society: http://jchscolorado.org/— currently there are 44 entries.
• Jefferson County Public Library “Jeffco Stories Oral History Project – http://jefferson.lib.co.us or contact padma.polepeddi@jeffcolibrary.org or 303-275-6180
• Jefferson County’s Boettcher Mansion is in the process of recording oral histories about the Boettcher family and those who worked there. http://jeffco.us/boettcher-mansion
• The World War II Museum in New Orleans has an extensive collection of oral histories from battlefields to the Home Front. Many Colorado veterans have recorded their histories there. http://www.nationalww2museum.org/

If you know of another source of oral histories in Jefferson County or are interested in recording your oral history, please contact Dennis Dempsey, 303-271-8734 Fax: 303-271-8744 Email: ddempsey@jeffco.us

Moore’s article about family connections starts with Jonas and Vira Ann Barber, who helped found Golden. Sprinkled with stories of no running water, jumping off the cow shed to see who could “splat” the cow pies the highest to tales of attending school at Fremont Elementary, she shows how life has changed dramatically in Jefferson County.

Some things such as the Arvada Harvest Festival are still scheduled, but have been updated. Sadly gone are the days when a favorite school trip was to the Jolly Rancher candy factory on Ward Road.

To sum up the theme of the Moore’s reminiscences, she writes, “The Jefferson County of our youth was long gone, and the only thing left was just our wonderful memories of growing up in a great place in the best of times.”

Although Moore’s entry did not meet the guidelines for a Writer’s Award, she was honored at the Hall of Fame with a Certificate of Merit for efforts in bringing forth the importance of oral histories. An oral history is the systematic collection and recording of individual memories as historical documentation. An oral historian collects memories in the same way a museum collects artifacts.

Top left: 1952 Christmas photo shows Virginia Moore holding Merry, Charles, Stanley (youngest), Gregory, Cherry, and Betsy.

Moore Family Photo
On February 10, 2014, the Conifer Junction Schoolhouse at 26951 Barkley Road was listed on the National Register of Historic Places (5JE.5107). Conifer Junction Schoolhouse, referred to by locals as the Little White Schoolhouse, sits on a one-acre lot in the unincorporated community of Conifer. A nearby barn, built sometime in the 1930s, housed the animals that the teacher and students rode to school. The school functioned as a one-room schoolhouse until the growth necessitated a larger school in 1965. The Little White Schoolhouse was continuously used from 1923 to 1965 for grades 1-8.

The Conifer Junction Schoolhouse replaced a previous schoolhouse, which was in an abandoned reform Mormon church. In 1965 the Jefferson County School District converted the Little White Schoolhouse to a preschool, which operated until 2012 when it was sold to the Conifer Historical Society and Museum. The school provided a central gathering place for dances, box socials, and other community events over the years, including church services.

Conifer area families probably came together to help a local builder construct the school. Its two floors include a classroom and two cloakrooms, with a basement kitchen, office, and bathrooms. The school and the 1930s horse barn are good examples of the Late 19th and Early 20th Century American Movements architectural style. The low-pitched hipped roof, the overhanging eaves with exposed rafter tails, the porch with sturdy columns, and the single-story design help emphasize its horizontal look. The entry porch, with three doors that lead into the main room, and the protruding cloakrooms make this schoolhouse distinctive.

Bradford Junction, 27051 Barkley Road, Conifer

Bradford Junction began as a stage stop with a small hotel and restaurant at the crossing of Highway 73 and Bradford Road, where Robert Bradford purchased 320 acres. The Bradford Road, the Mount Vernon Road, and the Denver and South Park Wagon Road were all stage lines to different mining areas from the larger cities, such as Denver. As more people stopped and stayed in the crossroads settlement, Bradford Junction added a post office in 1865.

The Bradford Junction property listed on the Colorado State Register of Historic Properties consists of a large barn (The Yellow Barn) at the northwest boundary, a small cottage at the southwest corner, and a larger house to the east. The barn, caretaker’s house, and ranch house were all constructed in 1918 and are considered contributing structures to the State Register designation. The Civil War Well located at the center of the area formed by the three buildings was considered non-contributing as it has lost integrity due to the removal and replacement of the original superstructure.

All three contributing structures are mail-order, Gordon Van Tine kit buildings that have remained intact on their original locations and are recognizable from the original catalog pages. The Yellow Barn was designated as a Jefferson County Historic Landmark in 2003.


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As the new Chair of the JCHC, I want to share our accomplishments for the past twelve months, especially in light of the fact that we're celebrating our 40th anniversary in 2014. An excellent overview of major activities these last 40 years written by Margaret Chapman appears on page 42, and I hope you will enjoy reading the history that she has compiled. I'd also like to thank Rose Lewis for her three years of service as chair. Although she left JCHC this year, Rose is continuing to help produce this magazine and work on our Placenames Directory. I certainly appreciate her dedication and continued involvement.

On October 17, 2013, we hosted our annual Hall of Fame capstone event at the Mount Vernon Country Club. More than 110 people were in attendance as we recognized the 40th anniversary of Jefferson County Open Space by awarding the annual Norm and Ethel Meyer Historic Preservation Award to the program. In 40 years, through this nationally recognized program, Jefferson County has reserved more than 55,000 acres of Open Space for future generations.

The Ute Council Tree and Rooney Ranch Picnic Site became our newest county landmark. Dr. Burdette Weare, who served on JCHC for ten years and is now an Emeritus member, opened our eyes to the importance of this tree with his personal stories of the Rooney family and growing up in the area. This tree still stands at the Rooney Ranch Picnic site near Alameda Parkway, where early Anglo settlers met with Chief Colorow and other Native Americans in the early days of our county.

We had two inductees to the 2013 Hall of Fame and their families were both in attendance to receive the awards. Their complete stories in last year’s magazine are online at HistoricJeffco.org. Greg Stevinson, businessman and community leader, indicated his appreciation in accepting the award and credited his wife, Sue, as his partner in success. Stevinson spoke about the challenges and rewards of being a developer within the framework of Open Space. His participation and leadership on the Open Space Advisory Committee between 1988 and 2009 coincided with a period of both growth and challenges to the County’s Open Space program.
Historically Jeffco 2014

George Washington Olinger, deceased in 1954, was represented by family members, and they too were honored to have their ancestor inducted into the Hall of Fame in recognition of his contributions to businesses and community development in Wheat Ridge.

For three years, a group of middle school students from West Jefferson Middle School, inspired by their teacher, Frank Reetz, studied the stories and planned the rescue of the Westall Monument along the South Platte River near Dome Rock. In April, with the relocation and restoration completed, several JCHC members and Emeritus members were pleased to witness the rededication of this historic memorial. This was a marvelous achievement by students in cooperation with the Denver Water Board, Colorado Preservation Inc., and the Denver, South Park & Pacific Historical Society. See the full story of the students’ project on page 34 of this issue.

Our 11th annual symposium this year brought John Fielder, well known Colorado photographer and preservationist, to Boettcher Mansion for a wonderful 75-minute slideshow presentation. We had more than 150 people in attendance, with a few standing, but it was well worth seeing the different landscapes and wilderness areas that he has captured. To realize that they are all in our picturesque state of Colorado is a blessing.

The efforts of our forty years in Preservation Leadership were recognized on May 14, 2014, at the annual Dana Crawford Awards Dinner hosted by Colorado Preservation, Inc. I was very proud to receive the State Honor Award on behalf of the Jefferson County Historical Commission with some of my colleagues also in attendance.

2014 has been a wonderful year and I look forward to another. Ongoing projects include continuing our annual symposium, placenames database, and awards and landmarking projects. Nominations are always welcome for Hall of Fame and Landmark recognition!

Our monthly meetings are held at the Jefferson County Administration and Courts Building in Golden, Colorado. They are open to the public and guests are always welcome. Please check the county website www.jeffco.us for meeting times, dates, agenda, and minutes. If you are interested in volunteering on historic projects with JCHC, please let our staff liaison in Planning and Zoning know at 303-271-8744.

Follow us on www.historicjeffco.org, where we list upcoming historic events throughout the county.

S. L. White

JCHC representatives (from left) Dennis Dempsey, Deborah Andrews, Mary Lindsey with Dana Crawford and Ernie Witucki at the State Honor Awards Dinner May 14, 2014.

Commissioner Casey Tighe (in red tie) joined a standing-room-only crowd at the Boettcher Mansion for the presentation by John Fielder in May 2014.

At the Westall Monument rededication on April 18, 2014, JCHC was represented by Mary Lindsey (left), Milly Roeder (second from left), and Bud Weare (right), here with Rachel Parrish of Colorado Preservation, Inc.

Historically Jeffco 2014
The Jefferson County Historical Commission was established by the Board of County Commissioners in 1974 to encourage and engender stewardship of the history of Jefferson County. JCHC members are citizen volunteers appointed by the Jefferson County Board of County Commissioners. We invite you to get involved in helping us promote and recognize the county's significant historical features!

**Programs and Projects**
JCHC periodically partners with a host community to hold a Historic Preservation Symposium to discuss topics of current interest in the preservation community.

The Landmark Program promotes the recognition and preservation of significant buildings, sites and structures contributing to local history. Nominations from the community for designation of a Historic Landmark are encouraged.

Nominations for our annual Hall of Fame and Meyer Award are also invited; applications are available online at the JCHC website.

Emeritus Program designates retiring JCHC members to special status upon approval of a nomination submitted to the Nominating Committee. Candidates are considered for dedication to community service through the JCHC, offices held during their tenure on JCHC, and outstanding support of JCHC historical and educational programs. Emeritus membership is a life-time honorary status; honorees are not eligible to hold office, but may serve on committees, participate in JCHC activities, and help advance its mission.

The Speakers’ Bureau at Jefferson County Historic Commission will travel to your business, civic club, church group, school, or other organization to share our knowledge and resources with you free of charge! Topics can include, but are not limited to: Hall of Fame; landmark designation; preservation; and oral histories. Speakers can also address various topics in county history from births to deaths, mines to retail businesses, farms and ranching, transportation and most of all – the people who made Jefferson County.

**Historically Jeffco Magazine**
This magazine is produced annually. Submissions from the public are welcome, and should be sent to jeffersoncountyhistoricalcommission@jeffco.us. Copies of current and back issues can be purchased for $6.46 at Planning and Zoning or Jeffco Archives beginning in late October. The magazine is available free of charge to members of Jefferson County historical societies and online at http://jeffco.us/planning-and-zoning/historical-commission/publications/.

**Placenames**
In the 1980s, JCHC members launched an ambitious project to document the county's historic and current placenames and create an online database. Today that database contains more than 3,000 records, available at http://jeffco.us/placenames/. We encourage the public to visit and let us know if you have any information to share. Contact us through the County Archivist at the address below.

**Friends of the Jefferson County Historical Commission**
This separate entity raises money to assist JCHC goals. The inaugural project funded activities for Jeffco’s Sesquicentennial. Funds have come from an award from the Good News Breakfast, activities associated with the Opening of the West Line, honorariums for speaking on behalf of JCHC, and donations from groups that received back issues of Historically Jeffco. All activities are handled by Mary Lindsey and JCHC volunteers.

**HistoricJeffco.org**
The Historic Jeffco web site provides downloadable copies of all issues of Historically Jeffco magazine (1988-2012), as well as direct links to most historical societies, museums, resource pages, city and county information, and other sources for historical information. The web site provides updates on events and activities of the Commission, as well as indices of the magazine and selected stories from previous issues. Send comments or corrections on the historicjeffco.org web site to jeffcohistory@gmail.com.

**Contacting JCHC**
The County’s Planning and Zoning Division provides support for the Historical Commission, as does the Archives Office (IT Services). The JCHC Web site (http://planning.jeffco.us) under “Boards and Commissions” has additional information on history and historic preservation in Jefferson County, plus applications for Commission membership and all forms and agendas. Contact Dennis Dempsey at 303-271-8734. By mail: JCHC c/o Planning and Zoning, Suite 3550, 100 Jefferson County Parkway, Golden, CO 80419. E-mail, call 303-271-8448 or visit jeffersoncountyhistoricalcommission@jeffco.us. For Archives, call 303-271-8448 or visit http://jeffco.us/archives.
2014 Jeffco Historical Commission Members


Lou Fohn, 2014 – Pilot, forester and South Jeffco historian focusing on development of the Columbine area, narrow gauge railroad and water issues.


Chuck Hause, 2014 – From a Columbine farming family, with interest in preserving the history of old water lines and local one-room schools.


Max Lankston, 2014 – Owner of the Octagon House for 40 years and Indian Hills historian.


Rita Peterson, 1981 – Chairman of the Hall of Fame and Writers’ Award. Member, Board of Directors, Senior Resource Center. Lives in Lakewood.


Commission Staff

Kristi Anderson  Dennis Dempsey  Ronda Frazier

Emeritus Members

Robert Briggs, 2009-2011
Erlene Hulsey-Lutz, 1986-2010
Norman Meyer, 1986-2010
Dave Nelson, 2008-2012
Kathryn Ordway, 2006-2011
Jack Raven, 1997-2011
Milly Roeder, 1995-2013
Burdette “Bud” Weare, 2003-2012

County Commissioners

Faye Griffin, District 1  Casey Tighe, District 2  Donald Rosier, District 3

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Intermountain Car #25: Flood Survivor

On August 11, 1913, Car #25 was trapped by floodwaters from Kinney Run. With the 16th St. bridge collapsing behind it, passenger Michael Sweeney Sr. drew the motorman’s attention to the danger in time to stop the car from crossing the 17th St. Bridge, which collapsed as Car #25 approached. Car, passengers, and crew were marooned on an island for some time, but ultimately rescued. Today Car #25 is displayed at the Colorado Railroad Museum and is on the National Register of Historic Places.