



*ROBERT WILLIAMSON STEELE*  
*Jefferson Territory Governor*

*Robert Williamson Steele was born January 14, 1820, on a farm near Chillicothe, Ohio. He attended district schools, later taught in a rural school and saved money to begin his studies for a law degree. He married Susan Nevin, on September 6, 1848. After graduation from the Cincinnati Law School they settled in Warren County, Iowa. In 1855 they moved to Omaha, Nebraska where he entered into the real estate business. He was elected to the Nebraska legislature and served from 1858-59. Attracted by the news of the discovery of gold in this region, Steele brought his family to settle at Mount Vernon, and was elected Governor of a provisional government in October 1859. Steele was the first and only governor of Jefferson Territory, which formed several counties, including Jefferson County and stretching from Henderson to Central City. He was re-elected and served as governor until the Jefferson Territory was replaced when the Colorado Territory was formed in June of 1861.*

*Although he "ruled" for less than two years, those who followed Steele were influenced by his dignity, scholarly dedication and integrity. Steele moved his family to Georgetown in 1865 where he lived a relatively uneventful and frugal life prospecting for gold and practicing law until he died in 1901. According to Volume I of the "History of Nebraska" by Morton, Steele is the "Father of Colorado."*

*In 1926, the Daughters of Colorado, placed a granite marker surrounded by an iron fence at Mount Vernon. The marker states: "Homesite of R.W. Steele - Governor of the Provisional Territory of Jefferson 1859-1860 - From which the Territory of Colorado was created February 26, 1861."*

*Robert Williamson Steele was elected to the Jefferson County Historical Commission Hall of Fame in 2002.*