



**THOMAS CUNNINGHAM BERGEN**

*Thomas Cunningham Bergen was born in Brooklyn, New York in 1820. Later he moved with his family to Dewitt County, Illinois. He married Judith Fletcher Roe and had several children.*

*In the spring of 1859 he joined a wagon train bound for the gold diggings in Colorado. He passed Golden and west up Apex Gulch to the highlands where he stopped and is often quoted as saying, "This is the most beautiful spot my eyes ever rested upon." By the fourth of July he completed a log cabin with clapboard siding, becoming the first permanent settler in the area then known as Elk Park. Realizing this location was one day's journey to and from the mines, Bergen saw a wonderful opportunity. He built an ox barn, a warehouse and a lodge large enough to feed and house forty miners.*

*In 1862 Bergen was elected one of the first three commissioners of Jefferson Territory, along with T. Boyd and D. K. Wall. He attended Jefferson Territory meetings in Golden which was the territorial capital. He also filled an unexpired term as Senator of the Colorado Territory.*

*Bergen was instrumental in laying out the "Idaho Cutoff" which allowed loggers to haul timber to Kittredge, then to Parmalee's Road to the saw mills and the toll road down Turkey Creek to Denver. Along that road he and his neighbors erected the first schoolhouse in the area. Fittingly, one of the first acts of the Territorial Commissioners was to set up a mil levy for schools.*

*In 1870, Bergen sold the land and road house in Elk Park and moved his family to Morrison. As a good farmer, he knew the flat lands only needed water to produce fine crops. He arranged for a sluice, now known as the Bergen Ditch, and created two reservoirs for irrigation. He had a choice herd of cattle, bred trout and harvested ice in the reservoir near Bear Creek.*

*Thomas Bergen was a man of vision who left his mark as a true pioneer on the land and the county he assisted in developing. Bergen Park, Bergen Elementary School and a Denver Mountain Park are all named after him. He and his wife, Judith, are buried in Morrison Cemetery.*