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## CREATIVE HISTORY – A CLOSER LOOK

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This section goes into more detail about some of the people, places, businesses and industries profiled in the 1894 flood narrative. Special attention is given to discussing the historical process of each topic. Use these case studies in conjunction with [Keys to Local History](#) to evaluate challenging research questions and learn how particular problems were solved. Think about how some of the solutions might apply to your own research.

### **People**

Get to know some of the people featured in the [Main Events](#). Discover how and when they came to Boulder and their continued rolls within the community

### **Communities**

Uncover more about Boulder's early history and additional information about a few of the mountain mining towns.

### **Local Industry**

Discover the large industrial bases that drove Boulder's nineteenth-century economy, along with some locally owned businesses.

## THE COMMUNITIES

As news of the Colorado gold strikes spread throughout the nation, many people traveled west in search of riches. Beginning in 1859 numerous mining claims were made and small camps sprung up in the mountains above the supply town of Boulder. Town populations ebbed and flowed with the success of the mines, and due to multiple economic hardships, many communities did not survive very far into the twentieth century. Despite the challenges, some of these mining towns are still inhabited today.

### **Boulder**

As with most larger towns and cities, Boulder had humble beginnings. By looking back at how people adapted their community to what they needed and wanted, a different perspective is uncovered as to how and why Boulder evolved the way it did.

### **Crisman and Springdale**

One of the challenges of researching small towns is that there is often little information to work with. Publications done by older local historians or local journalists who did not include endnotes or a bibliography might be the only sources available. While these secondary sources are not useless, they can pose problems if you are searching for specific answers. You might also find yourself questioning the reliability of the work due to the lack of citations. Another challenge is that town histories are often very general and

similar information continues resurfacing from book to book. When this happens, look at the bibliographies, the most likely culprit is that the book is based entirely on secondary sources.

This type of research usually takes extra patience and more creative problem solving to get past the roadblocks. Investigate what types of Primary Sources are available to you and think about what questions you could ask of the source to discover your own new clues.

## **BOULDER**

*Like people, towns have a birth, a youth, maturity, and old age. Like people, towns also have personalities; they are serious, and they laugh. Cared for, they flourish; unloved and neglected they perish. But unlike people, who sort of grow in every direction at once, towns tend to start at one point and grow outward.*

– David Weitzman, *My Backyard History Book*.<sup>1</sup>

Towns grow in a variety of ways depending on their needs and economic pressures. Boulder's character initially developed around one industry: mining. As the town grew, its needs branched out in several different directions, each one becoming vital to the town's growth. This section will highlight some of the varied efforts made by the people of Boulder to create a thriving community. Click on the topic links for more information about a particular industry.

When researching your town's beginnings you will discover why people migrated to the area, understand how people lived, what industries became key to the survival of the town, and gain a better understanding of how and why your community grew economically and physically. Research some of the high-profile people who built your town as well. You might discover even more details about how your community grew, how people's contributions shaped the community, and might clarify the names behind some of those streets, buildings and subdivisions.

### **Mining**

Central to Boulder's beginning, [learn more](#) about the different types of mining that made pivotal contributions to the area's economy, as well as the variety of gold mining techniques.

### **Mining Support**

All types of small businesses that you might only expect to see in an urban area were operating in Boulder in the 1880s and 1890s. These stores conveniently serviced the local population and were only a short day trip away to re-supply the mountain mining

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<sup>1</sup> David Weitzman, *My Backyard History Book* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1975) 87.

communities. Below is a list of businesses and services found advertised in early city directories.<sup>2</sup>

- **Clothing** - Tailors, boot/shoe makers, dress makers, milliners, laundries
- **Entertainment and Other Items** - Billiard rooms, jewelry stores, books and stationery, newspapers, cigar and tobacco shops, music stores, and watch makers
- **Equipment and Other Merchandise** - Mining supplies, plumbing supplies, stoves and tinware, lumber, furniture, building materials, and paint supplies.
- **Food and Drink** - There were bakeries, butchers/meat markets/ dry goods stores, breweries, candy makers, grocery stores, saloons, liquor stores, dairies, flour mills, and restaurants.
- **Hotels and Boarding Houses**
- **Medical** - Doctors, surgeons, dentists, undertakers, drug stores, barbers
- **Professionals** - Blacksmiths, architects, assayers, attorneys, bankers, real estate agents, carpenters/contractors, civil and mining engineers, insurance agents, mining agents, painters, printers, photographers, brick makers, and surveyors.
- **Transportation** - Wagon makers, harnesses and saddlery, livery and feed, freight/hauling, stage lines

### **Agriculture**

The ability to produce food items locally provided fresher food to those in the mountains, and kept more money in the local economy. [Read more](#) about how wheat cultivation, horticulture, and grazing flourished in Boulder, and how the challenges of water and irrigation were addressed.

### **Railroad**

A necessary industry for mining, the Boulder mountain railroad system was a difficult venture often plagued with financial and environmental problems. [Learn more](#) about the ups and downs of one of Boulder's key transportation industries.

### **Education**

The people of Boulder made early investments in education. The town built Colorado's first schoolhouse at the corner of Walnut and 15th Streets in 1860. Then in 1861, only two years after the town's founding, the territorial legislature decided Boulder

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<sup>2</sup> *Boulder County Directory, Colorado Business Directory and Annual Register* (Denver: J.A. Blake, 1875, 1877, 1878) The list was compiled from multiple pages using directory headers or indexes listing business and services.

would have the region's first university. It took sixteen years, a great deal of lobbying, donated land, and \$15,000 from the community before the location was finalized and the first university structure built.<sup>3</sup> See the biography for [Marinus Smith](#) for some additional information about the founding of the University of Colorado.

### **Health**

The area's dry climate and clear air became known as a good treatment for sufferers of lung ailments, especially tuberculosis. To address the needs of the ill, the Seventh Day Adventist Church established the Boulder Sanitarium in 1895. Modeled after the Kellogg facility in Battle Creek, Michigan, the Sanitarium became a destination for those with tuberculosis, and later became Boulder Memorial Hospital.<sup>4</sup>

A health and fitness interest that still remains prominent in Boulder today is the love of bicycling. Bikes have been in Boulder's landscape since the early 1870s, and by the 1890s they became a part of the town's culture with the founding of the Boulder Wheel Club. More local and regional riding clubs quickly formed and soon racing became particularly popular events.<sup>5</sup>

Closely tied to tourism, hiking became a favorite pastime for both visitors and locals alike, and its popularity helped form the Chautauqua Climbers Club in 1898. Lower elevation excursions in the Foothills, such as hikes to Royal Arch, were common for beginners. As the season progressed hikes to Arapaho Glacier and South Arapaho Peak were made, with the 14,000-foot Long's Peak often scaled for the summer finale.<sup>6</sup>

### **Early Tourism**

Boulder's Chautauqua began in 1898 as an educational mountain retreat for Texans escaping the southern summer heat. It quickly grew into a popular summer destination for individuals and families who spent the months absorbing educational, cultural, philosophical and physical lessons through lectures, musical performances, discussions, and mountain outings.<sup>7</sup>

In 1898 the Colorado and Northwestern Railroad became the new source of rail travel into the mountains above Boulder, and the "[Switzerland Trail](#)" became popular for daily outings. The train followed the same approximate path as the Greeley, Salt Lake and

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<sup>3</sup> *History of Clear Creek*, 404-408.

<sup>4</sup> Smith, *A Look at Boulder*, 102.

<sup>5</sup> Smith, *A Look at Boulder*, 85.

<sup>6</sup> Smith, *A Look at Boulder*, 125.

<sup>7</sup> Smith, *A Look at Boulder*, 124-125.

Pacific did prior to the 1894 flood, with new extensions to Ward and Eldora. Visitors enjoyed summer day trips which typically included picnics at the Mount Alto pavilion, high-altitude snowball fights, picking wildflowers, and rides on railroad hand cars. Despite the popularity of the train for tourism, the Switzerland Trail's days were numbered. Not able to maintain revenue due to the collapse of the area's mining industry, the railroad received its final blow in July 1919, succumbing to another destructive flood.

### **CRISMAN**

Constructing a history for a town from small bits of secondary information can prove difficult. The story often told of Crisman is quite basic and scattered with random factoids. My guess is that the story remains basic and repetitive because few people are motivated to actually read years of old newspapers, comb through available diaries, analyze photographs, and delve into mining records. In order to uncover a more detailed history of this, or any small mining town, extensive research into primary sources needs to take place.

From 1873 to 1877 the country faced an economic depression, but with news of new gold, silver and telluride discoveries in Boulder County a new wave of gold-seekers headed to the canyons above Boulder. The area near Four Mile Canyon witnessed an overnight boom as new camps sprung up with the names of Sunshine, Magnolia, Salina, Wall Street, Gold Hill, Glendale, and Summerville. Among these was the small community of Tellurium, later known as Crisman.

The Hansbrough family was one of the earliest to live in the area of Camp Tellurium (Crisman) in Sunbeam Gulch. George Sr., with his two sons, Jack and Oliver, staked a claim to four mines in the area (Clipper, Golden Gem, Clipper No. 2, and Lincoln) between 1875 and 1878. During this time they partnered with Obed Crisman to build an ore-processing mill. The Crisman Mill later gave the town its name.<sup>8</sup>

The two main mines, Yellow Pine and Logan (discovered in 1874), were already working by the time the town was officially put on the map in 1875. Located in Four Mile Canyon, about seven miles from Boulder, Crisman began as a general store and post office owned by G.S. Kelley. The Yellow Pine mine produced a silver-lead-copper ore, and miners of the Logan dug out high-grade gold and telluride ores giving the Logan the title as the richest mine in the country. Legend claims the gold from the mine was so pure it was transported directly to the Denver Mint.<sup>9</sup>

Crisman again made news in 1881 with a great silver strike at the Yellow Pine mine, which quickly made Crisman one of the busiest towns in Four Mile Canyon. The

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<sup>8</sup> M. M. Anderson, *The Mining Camps: Salina and Summerville* (Boulder, CO: Junction House, 2005) 275.

<sup>9</sup> Smith, *A Look at Boulder*, 56.

Greeley, Salt Lake and Pacific made it a key stop on its mountain railroad, prompting the building of a rail station in Farnsworth's General Store and the construction of a 10,000-gallon water tank in 1883. In just over ten years, the Yellow Pine Mine produced about \$500,000 before the silver crash in 1893.<sup>10</sup>

Colorado's economy was suffering in the early 1890s, and the price of silver had been decreasing for several years. But it was the collapse of the silver market and the Panic of 1893 that sent Colorado, and the entire country, into a depression. Those who made millions on silver became paupers virtually overnight as the price of silver plummeted and banks failed. Boulder County was not a total loss as gold mines continued operating, and some of the silver mines hung on as long as possible. The town of Crisman struggled, but survived. The following year, however, would truly test the endurance of the town's residents.

The May 31, 1894 flood hit Crisman hard with early reports claiming the town was nearly destroyed. Many of the houses in town were either washed away completely or severely damaged. William Hult, one of the mountain county commissioners, lost his store with all its groceries and stock, an estimated \$2000. He was only able to save about \$200 worth of goods and his horse. Along with the destruction of buildings, the stretch of railroad track near Crisman was totally obliterated by the floodwaters.<sup>11</sup> Besides the early newspaper reports of damage, there was no later mention of how, or even if, the people of Crisman rebuilt what was lost.

The town managed to stay afloat for about another twenty years. In 1901 the Logan Mine struck another amazingly rich vein of gold that kept business in the community, but little else kept Crisman together. On May 31, 1918 the town's post office officially shut down signaling the eventual demise of Crisman. Another flood on July 31, 1919 down Four Mile Canyon and Boulder Creeks washed out about seven hundred feet of rebuilt railroad track between Boulder and Crisman, heavily damaging two bridges, and indicating the inevitable extinction of the town.<sup>12</sup> Some gold mining continued into the 1930s but little remains of Crisman today.

### **SPRINGDALE**

The current historical writings about Springdale are surprisingly minimal considering the town claimed to have been one of the first health resorts in Colorado Territory. There are very few published sources, and what information has been found is mainly from news-

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<sup>10</sup> Anderson, *Salina and Summerville*, 20; Sandra Dallas, *Colorado Ghost Towns and Mining Camps* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1985) 64; Crossen, *Switzerland Trail*, 27.

<sup>11</sup> *Daily Camera*, 1 June, 4 June 1894.

<sup>12</sup> Anderson, *Salina and Summerville*, 69; Dallas, *Colorado Ghost Towns*, 64; Crossen, *Switzerland Trail*, 260.

papers and a handful of unpublished sources. Springdale's history will be presented in a similar fashion as the biography of Mary Kingsley, an analysis of the town on a source-by-source basis. These are preliminary findings and a great deal of additional research must be done in order to uncover the town's past.

### **Published Sources**

Located approximately fifteen miles northwest of Boulder in Left Hand Canyon, little is known of Springdale's beginnings. The town developed around the 1870s with tellurium mines such as the Ellen, Grand Central, Gladiator, King William, and the Rip Van Dam. These mines made economic contribution to the town, but they were minor producers compared to others in the district. Over three hundred people lived in the area during the early boom, but by 1882 only fifty residents were officially accounted for.<sup>13</sup>

Unlike other mountain mining towns, Springdale's economy revolved around its natural hot springs rather than mining. The Seltzer House and the mineral waters of the Seltzer Springs became the town's main attraction. Located at the top of a gulch the natural springs, originally called Peabody's Hot Springs, was later named after the Seltzer Springs in Germany because of similarities of the water's mineral composition. After several ownership changes, C. Edgar Smith took over the property around 1880 and improved the twenty acres of the Seltzer House grounds with a boarding house and ten small cottages. Smith began an extensive advertising campaign to bring more tourists to experience the mountains scenery, enjoy the spring's hot or cold mineral baths, and drink the curative naturally carbonated water.<sup>14</sup>

### **Newspapers**

So far newspaper have been the only source to provide hints to Springdale's possible formation. Early prospecting and exploring were done up Left Hand Canyon and along James Creek, but it was not until the 1870s that people began settling in the area that would become Springdale. Small camps or settlements usually become an official community when they acquire a post office, and in July 1876 a new town was on the map with the new "post office [that] is called Springdale."<sup>15</sup> That same month Mr. and Mrs. Charles F. Pease opened a new hotel catering to tourists and invalids searching for relief in the mineral hot springs.<sup>16</sup> Though unnamed, it is believed the Pease's hotel would later become the Seltzer House.

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<sup>13</sup> Perry Eberhart, *Guide to the Colorado Ghost Towns and Mining Camps* (Athens, OH: Swallow Press /Ohio Universtiy Press, 1981) 99; "Shippers' Guide," *Colorado State Business Directory*, 1882, Carnegie Branch Library for Local History, Boulder, Colorado, 58.

<sup>14</sup> Eberhart, *Colorado Ghost Towns*, 98; *History of Clear Creek*, 430-431.

<sup>15</sup> *Colorado Banner*, 20 July 1876.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*

The following year newspapers reported on the popularity of the Seltzer Springs and the hotel despite the changes in ownership. Mr. and Mrs. J. G. Evans became the new managers of the Seltzer Hotel (as it was referred to at this point) but it is not known if they purchased the property.<sup>17</sup> Whether they owned the structure or not mattered little since the couple only lasted one year. H. A. Jackson followed becoming the new proprietor of the Seltzer House in May 1878 before one more ownership change took place in the summer of 1880. Multiple advertisements made no mention of a name behind the new management but C. Edgar Smith, who is mentioned in some published sources, could be a likely possibility.<sup>18</sup>

Perhaps it was during the new ownership that the marketing of Springdale Seltzer water began. Advertisements for this “miracle” water in the late 1880s claimed it cured “indigestion, headache, rheumatism or derangements of kidney or liver.”<sup>19</sup> It is not clear if the Seltzer House bottled and sold the seltzer water under the name of The Seltzer Mineral Springs Company, or if this was a completely separate company.

Through the 1880s and early 1890s newspaper coverage of the Seltzer House typically consisted of advertisements and reports in the social columns providing a who’s who of visitors to the mountain resort.

Washed away in the May 1894 flood, nothing has been found to indicate when the Seltzer House was rebuilt or when it began operating again. A further investigation into late 1890’s newspapers needs to take place. The resort finally succumbed to fire July 15, 1903, destroying the entire structure, the furnishing, as well as the personal property of some of the guests.<sup>20</sup>

To gain a better understanding of Springdale and the Seltzer House a much more thorough investigation of the local and Front Range newspapers needs to be conducted. The current research has focused only of the sources made available through the Colorado’s Collaborative Digitization Program. [<http://www.cdpheritage.org/index.cfm>] Tracking articles and advertisements through newspapers might show additional town activities and events, clarify the Seltzer House’s ownership changes, more details about the destructive fire, pinpoint with the resort was rebuilt, and how the town slowly deteriorated over time.

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<sup>17</sup> *Boulder County News*, 8 June 1877.

<sup>18</sup> *Boulder County News*, 31 May 1878; *Boulder News and Courier*, 20 August 1880; Smith, *A Look at Boulder*, 66.

<sup>19</sup> *Fort Collins Courier*, 29 September 1887; Smith, *A Look at Boulder*, 66.

<sup>20</sup> *Weekly Courier*, 15 July 1903.

### **Personal Papers and Marketing Materials**

The next set of sources: personal papers, newspaper clippings, and some marketing brochures, all dated around 1965 and were created by Al E. Freel, a retired research engineer living in Boulder. Since no corroborating evidence has yet been found to verify the information presented in these documents, they will **only be used as guidelines** for further research.

What make these sources so difficult to use are the multiple contradictions and key omissions by Freel himself. For example, he states that a Frederick Ayer owned and operated the Seltzer House from 1875 to 1903, makes no mention that the structure was destroyed in a flood in 1894, and provides a contradictory title of ownership list that puts Ayer's ownership dates into question.<sup>21</sup>

In addition to Freel's dubious history of the Seltzer House, brochures for his radium-enriched Curie Spring's health water are also quite outlandish. Through his brochures, Freel reveals himself to be an aged quack medicine promoter becoming one more interesting participant in the history of the Springdale.

In his papers Freel claims that Frederick Ayer, of sarsaparilla fame, came to Boulder from Lowell, Massachusetts in 1875. Supposedly Ayer realized the potential of the naturally carbonated water bubbling up from what was known as the Rocky Mountain Springs, and conceived the Springdale Health Resort, later known as the Seltzer House.<sup>22</sup> Nothing else is presented about Ayer's participation. In order to legitimize the health benefits stated by Ayer and himself, Freel includes quotes from numerous local physicians who claimed cures for an extensive list of diseases and ailments, and prescribed the water to their patients.<sup>23</sup>

In 1916 the Springdale property was purchased by Lt. Colonel W. P. Harlow, M. D. of the United States Army Medical Corps at Fitzsimons Hospital in Denver. It was during this time the popularity of using radium water to cure health problems was at a height. Due to the radium found in the water, it is believed Harlow renamed the location Curie Springs in honor of Marie Curie, the discoverer of the radioactive element radium.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> A.E. Freel, "Springdale-Colorado Territory's First Health Resort," "Title History of Spring Dale Springs," Writings *circa* 1950s to 1960s, Boulder Historical Society Collection, Carnegie Branch Library for Local History, Boulder, Colorado.

<sup>22</sup> Freel, "Springdale-Colorado Territory's First Health Resort."

<sup>23</sup> A.E. Freel, "In Olde Days 1875-1903, Physicians Using These Waters," Writings *circa* 1950s to 1960s, "Curie Springs Brochure," *circa* 1950s, Curie Springs Printed Materials, Boulder Historical Society Collection, Carnegie Branch Library for Local History, Boulder, Colorado.

<sup>24</sup> Freel, "Springdale-Colorado Territory's First Health Resort."

Freel's first encounter with Curie Springs is said to have been in 1924 when his wife, struggling with a persistent illness, drank the water and ultimately cured her. Making some preliminary tests on the water in 1926 Freel became so interested in the radium-enriched liquid he purchased the property in 1946 from Dr. Harlow's estate. With more detailed testing Freel realized that not only did the water contained high levels of radium, but it also had what he believed to be an important plasma-like gas with "life-force gas with recharging powers" calling it "plasmatron."<sup>25</sup>

Although the craze for radium water had been subsiding for many years, it is clear from the content of his papers and brochures that Freel boasted that the water's radium level and the facility's radon levels were the highest in the country. Surprisingly, most of his marketing took place in the 1950s and 1960s, decades after the dangers of radium were well documented.

### **Future Primary Source Research**

Because there is no definitive history written about Springdale, opportunities for creative research techniques and careful primary source analysis are available to reveal a new chapter of Boulder County history. Below is a preliminary research outline that could uncover new information and research directions.

**Mining Claims Records:** These could uncover individual property owners, miners living in the area, and mine investors.

**Deeds:** Preliminary searches show a few properties bought and sold in Springdale, but finding more specific township coordinates might indicate some of the earliest properties and owners.

**City/County Directories:** Some county directories dedicate a few pages to the smaller mining towns. Any information about Springdale's businesses and residents from these directories could create an excellent research topic outline.

**Newspapers:** Only a handful of newspapers were examined for this preliminary town history. Many more editions need to be combed through in order to track down more details about events occurring in Springdale.

**Personal Histories:** Discovering more about some of the key people mentioned above could inspire new research directions or expose new facts. Frederick Ayer, the supposed developer of Springdale's first mineral springs resort, is of obvious interest. Land records show Ayer and his son in Boulder during the appropriate time frame. Could Al Freel's Seltzer Spring's history have some truth to it?

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<sup>25</sup> "Boulder County Claims World's Most Radioactive Spring," *Denver Post*, 31 Aug 1953; Freel, "Springdale-Colorado Territory's First Health Resort"; "Life Force Plasmagen," Curie Springs Printed Materials, Boulder Historical Society Collection, Carnegie Branch Library for Local History, Boulder, Colorado.