# PRIMARY SOURCES PACKET

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FOOD, CLOTHING, AND SHELTER

FOOD

WEEKEND MEALS

“On Saturdays we always had baked beans for the noonday meal as my father had the afternoon off and the hot meal was served when he came home. There was a small, brown, pottery jar kept for baking beans alone. For Sunday dinner we would have chicken from our own flock, for as soon as my parents moved to the new Goss Street house they began keeping chickens. And it was no unusual matter to have pie for breakfast on special occasions.”


CHRISTMAS MENU, DENVER, 1859

“Fried rabbit, stewed rabbit, broiled rabbit.
Fried venison, stewed venison, broiled venison.
Grouse, pome bread.
Rabbit Pie, Venison Pie, and Dried Apples.”


PREPARING FOOD IN DENVER, 1859

“A few of the houses had stoves - those were the homes that had women in them. But where the men had to do their own cooking, and most everywhere they did, a little Dutch oven was used.”


WILD GAME

“During the winter we had deer, antelope, elk, bear and mountain sheep. We kept our game on the roof of the cabin.”

FOOD IN EARLY DENVER
“A scant supply of shriveled vegetables crossed the dusty plains in the lumbering Conestoga wagons, each drawn by twelve yoke of oxen. One month to six weeks were required for the trip. Potatoes sold for 25 cents a pound. Hardier fruits, much rarer than gold nuggets, were hauled by stagecoach express. Apples sold as high as $1.25.”


A CHRISTMAS DINNER MENU
“Soup: Beaver Tail, St. Julien, Oyster
Fish: Baked Specked Trout, Fried Yampa River Grayling
Boiled: Sugar Cured Ham, Chicken, Elk Tongue with Horseradish
Roast: Loin of Elk, Chili Sauce, Leg of Venison, Mallard Duck, Oyster Dressing
Entrees: Rocky Mountain Elk Steaks, Hunters Style; Elk Brains on Toast; Strawberry Flummery, Cream Sauce; Mayonnaise, Salmon Salad, Pickled Beets
Relishes: Hartford Sauce, Home Made Catsup, French Mustard
Vegetables: Baked Sweet Potatoes, Scalloped Tomatoes, Sugar Corn, Mexican Beans
Pastry: English Plum Pudding, Mince Pie, White Cake, Gold Cake, California Peaches, Crackers, Nuts, Tea, Coffee, Milk Chocolate”


CHEAP FOOD
“It was reported that Denver in 1890 served the cheapest meals, for the food put out, in the Untied States. Steak, French fried potatoes, bread and butter, coffee and a dessert, raisin pie or bread pudding, was 15 cents.”

Source: “Colorado Eats,” WPA Files, Box 5 Denver Public Library.
CLOTHING

A WELL-DRESSED MAN

“To see our family, led by my father and my mother--the former dressed in top hat and frock coat, with the seven offspring bringing up the rear, on its way to Church of a Sunday, must have been some sight.

“My father always wore a full beard. His boots were square-toed high boots, over which he drew his trouser legs. They cost $22.00 a pair at John Jenkins, the Cobblers.”


HATS

“A hat was a nuisance. It was always falling off unless there was a rubber under your chin.... Speaking of hats, they constituted another “don’t” at school. Never wear or try on another child’s hat. Why? You might bring home something you didn’t like.”


WOMEN’S HATS

“Ladies those days wore big hats held on with a long hairpin. It was pointed on the end to penetrate any kind of cloth and some of the softer heads. I recall my mother used to feel that thing very carefully through her hair, until it came out the other side.”


CLOTHING STYLES

“Ladies - Three to twelve petticoats were usual and at least three had to be taffeta to create a swish.

“Men - The man who escorted the Gibson Girl through City Park on a Sunday afternoon wore a Prince Albert coat with a silk hat and a cane...when he went to work he togged out in a derby and cutaway coat...in summer he changed for a straw hat with a black cord anchoring it to the lapel of his short Seymore coat.”

Source: Recollections of Frances Melrose, Rocky Mountain News, September 15, 1946.
WOMEN’S CLOTHING

“When I was a child ladies were still wearing bustles. These were oval pads attached to the rear of the person just below the waistline by strings tied around the body. These were the days, too, of the ‘hour glass’ figures and tight lacing was required to secure the desired shape.”


WOMEN’S HAIR STYLES AND HATS

“In those days ladies curled their hair with curling irons. One held them over the flame of a kerosene lamp to heat but some had handles that could be bent so the metal part could be inserted in the lamp chimney and left the required length of time. Hair was usually worn in elaborate puffs and pompadours built up over pads commonly called "rats." On top of these erections were work large hats attached to the hair by long hat pins, sometimes very long indeed, and the subject of much complaint. . . . Girls wore their hair mostly in braids, which were adorned with ribbon bows, the larger the better, and a great source of pride.”


WOMEN’S SHOES AND GLOVES

“I liked to look at ladies’ high button shoes and at their long, buttoned gloves. They used to have full-sized buttoners for the shoes called a button hook, and tiny ones for the gloves. And gloves were supposed to go on easier if powder was shaken into them from a small, dainty wooden container somewhat in the shape of a bottle.”

HOUSES

EARLY DENVER HOUSES

“The only variety in the houses those days was that some of them had a window or two where most had none and a few had two doors instead of one. Most of the homes were what was known as “Yankee Frame” made out of unplained cottonwood boards, nailed upright instead or being nailed laterally on upright supports.”

MANSIONS

A DENVER MANSION

“Not long ago I had the pleasure of seeing the interior of the residence of one of the wealthiest men in Colorado.

“The finest part of the house was its ball room. It was illuminated by electric lights shining through stained glass. Large mirrors reflected all which passed in the room. There were quantities of carved wood, a polished inlaid floor, beautiful and handsome draperies, a balcony for the orchestra. An alcove with a cushioned seat where the dancers would rest or those who did not dance would watch those who did.

“Polished wood floors, magnificent paintings, rugs, wood carvings, mirrors abounded throughout the house.”

Source: Henrietta Hitchcock Manuscripts, MSS#1344 Colorado Historical Society.
FAMILIES, CHILDREN, AND SCHOOLS

FAMILIES

ITALIAN IMMIGRANT FAMILIES

“About the time we built our Bell Street house (1893) there was a great influx of Italians into Denver. They settled in North Denver and began truck gardening in the Platte River bottoms…. These women were always soberly dressed in black calico, shapeless dresses, black aprons with little black shawls around the shoulders or over the head.”


A BLACK FAMILY MOVES TO COLORADO

“After the third child was born to the Robinson family, in New Mexico, my grandfather decided to move to Colorado. He had never forgotten how beautiful the mountains had been when he first came west. . . . Since he was an excellent cook, he was never out of work.”


A CHINESE FAMILY FUNERAL

“We stopped to watch a Chinese funeral. First we heard the queer tin-panny music. Then we saw the men trotting along in their thick soled slippers, all dressed up in their best embroidered coats, their long queues hanging under round pillbox hats. They were tossing bits of bright red paper around…. Pretty soon they laid the food they had brought with them on the dead man’s grave. There were roast ducks and bowls of rice and baskets of fruit.”

CHILDREN

THE GAME OF BULL PEN

“The game was played with a ball, which was made of yarn unraveled from the leg of an old sock. The ball was wound hard and was made large and heavy. Its use was not to be struck with a bat; its mission in the world was to be thrown at somebody with no gentle force. If the ball struck a boy fairly and unexpectedly in the stomach, it knocked him down; this was great fun.”


CHILDREN’S GAMES

“We were seldom without a ball, but somehow balls seemed unable to avoid getting under the kitchen stove where they acquired a strange shape, which made them unsuitable for play. Then there were jack straws and tidily winks. How we loved the latter. . . . Clay pipes were provided for bubble blowing, another pastime greatly enjoyed.”


SOME CHILDREN’S GAMES

“There were card games, “Authors” and others... When in my teens a kind neighbor used to favor me with a frequent game of checkers and in those days we young ones got into the habit of gathering around the piano for an evening of song, usually the old fashioned kind.”

SCHOOLS

SCHOOL DESKS

“According to my ideas of school Miss Peabody’s First Grade was all that it should be. There were the little desks, five straight rows, seven in each row. The desks were made for the average size six-year-old to slip in, perch on the edge of the seat hinged to the desk behind and ease it gently down into position, or accidentally on purpose slip and slam it down. Those who were small for their age had plenty of room to wiggle about and sit on their feet. Those who were large for their age found the desks a tight fit, but they wiggled just the same. The desks had fancy cast iron sides that were screwed to the floor. Each desk had a sloping wood top and a shelf underneath.”


A FIRST-GRADE CLASSROOM

“There were the narrow tall windows on one side of the room, and the big slate blackboards on the other. At the lower edge of the blackboard was a trough to hold the chalk and erasers. Below the trough was a narrow platform for the little children to stand on so they could reach the blackboards. The teacher’s table and chair stood on a wide platform and behind it were her cupboards for books, pencils, chalk, and erasers, the teacher’s lunch and maybe her hat and coat.”


RELIGION IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS

“The early public school was an aid to righteousness such as it does not now seem to be. The bell rang, followed by roll call, then reading of a short Bible lesson, next repeating or singing the Lord’s Prayer or the singing of a well chosen song.”


SEGREGATED SCHOOLS

This man remembered when schools were segregated by race in Denver:

“A building on 16th and Holladay Streets was also rented sometime in 1868; where only colored children were taught.”

SCHOOL ATHLETICS

“School athletics were practically nil and were individual only as far as the boys were concerned and were confined largely to ‘Marbles,’ ‘Tops,’ ‘Foot and a half,’ and ‘Jacks.’ Later, the girls stole the latter….. [Girls] were limited to such athletics as ‘Charm String,’ ‘Autograph Albums,’ and ‘Bean Bags.’”


HIGH SCHOOL CLASSES

“The whole third floor of the Arapahoe Building was used by the High School. The large assembly room occupied the front of the building. There were two large classrooms and a small one partitioned from the hall—originally the boys’ coatroom. Classes in Greek and French were heard here. The chemical laboratory was in the basement. The teacher performed the experiments while the class looked on. Grade pupils were often interested and peered through the windows, but sufficiently nauseous results [odors] sent them flying.”


RULES FOR DENVER TEACHERS

“1. Are all the pupils busy at their work?
2. Are two studying from the same book?
3. Is the teacher interrupted by questions during recitation?
4. Are the pupils addicted to snickering?
5. Is the floor clean?
6. Are the desks spotted with ink?
7. Are the lips moving during study?
8. Are the pupils polite toward the teacher and toward each other?
9. Is the owner’s name written legibly with ink in each textbook?
10. Is the board clean, or any marks thereon that do not legitimately belong to the school-work, and are all marks neatly and properly made?”

Source: Teacher's Handbook: Denver, 1890.
WORK AND WORK PLACES

MANUFACTURING

A DENVER SMELTER

“Out in the smeltering works I saw long rows of vats, pans, covered by bubbling - boiling water, and filled with pure silver, four or five inches thick, many thousand dollars worth in a pan. The foreman who was showing me shoveled it carelessly up with a little wooden shovel, as one might toss beans.”


SMELTER WORK

“In the smelters, the men worked 12 hours a day, seven days a week for 2 dollars and 50 cents a day. When shifts were changed, they worked 24 hours at a stretch.”

Source: “Racial Groups in Denver,” WPA Files, Box 5, Denver Public Library.
THE ARGO SMELTER

“The Argo smelting furnaces are a group of buildings on the eastern outskirts of the city. Arriving at the works you take a short walk around a high broad fence, cross a track on which are freight cars laden with gold and silver ore and last arrive at the office door.

“Here you are likely to be challenged by a burly watch man who wants to know your business.

“If you are fortunate enough to know someone in the office you can gain admittance and a polite young man offers to take you over the works.

“First of all is the room where the ore is being ground into powder. This is necessary before the smelting and waiting processes begin.

“Here and there are heaps of powdered ore each pile marked with the name of the mine from which it has been taken.

“This ore is gray or brown or red in color and looks like any common powdered stone.

“Of course these mounds contain a great deal of precious metal.

“Seeing one which looked unusually rich, I asked our guide how much money he supposed was in ‘that.’

“He looked queer for a minute and answered, “That’s mostly brick dust.”

“Little half buckets carried off ores attached to a leather band which is constantly revolving over wheels carries the powdered ore to the furnace where the smelting process begins.

“All of the slag sinks to the bottom of the furnace and at the end of a certain time is drawn off leaving only the metal, not yet, however, in the pure state....

“Still another smelting and wasting process follows this when the metal is ready for the tank. Here the almost purified metal is placed in huge tanks through which boiling water passes.

“The metal here is in its most beautiful form in quantities....

“Not being yet in a convenient form the metal is removed from the tanks and melted.

“It is last of all poured into brick molds which contain about $1,000 worth of silver and which weigh when turned out about 85 lbs.”

Source: Henrietta Hitchcock Manuscripts, MSS#1344 Colorado Historical Society.
SMELTING SILVER ORE


“The ore as it comes from the mines. . . is ground in powerful mills, which reduce it almost to powder. The only unusual noise in the place comes from these thundering crushers. . . .

“The [crushed] ore is kept in bins, from which it is taken to the roasting department. It is placed in furnaces here, sixty feet long and twenty wide, and is subjected to a low heat to rid it of sulphur. . . .that may be in it. . . . Ore trucks, lifted in place by hydraulic elevators, next convey the roasted ore to the bedding floors, where it is fluxed for the smelters proper.

“Bedding is, briefly, the mixing of ores and fluxes [limestone and other minerals]. . . . The mixing or bedding is accomplished by dumping the ores from the cars overhead, upon the bedding floors, where they are spread in thin layers, one above another until, maybe, the mass will be seven or eight feet deep. . . .

“The mixed ore, coke and limestone is thrown into the furnaces. . . . from platforms above them. The openings for this purpose afford no view of the raging fires within, but they are there nevertheless, and the natural heat is intensified by a blast blown into them by one of two great engines. . . . On one side of them are the lead wells from which the workmen draw the molten metal in ladles, and pour it into moulds that hold about a hundred pounds each. The slag, or refuse, is run off on the other side, . . . and pitched over the "dump."

“. . . When the moulds have cooled, bars having something of the sheen of silver, are taken from the; but it is not silver, at least not all of it. It is the "base bullion," in this instance more lead than anything else. It has yet to be refined, and for that purpose, in the case of this company, is sent to Philadelphia.

SELLING

DANIELS AND FISHER DEPARTMENT STORE
“We went in the big front door. There were long counters piled high with bolts of goods and boxes of things like handkerchiefs and gloves. There were stools in front of the counters where mamas sat when they bought things. The stools went round when you hit them.”


GENERAL STORE ADVERTISEMENT
DENVER, 1859
“Sugar, coffee, molasses, mackerel, herring, rope, blasting powder, nails, crackers, boots and shoes, socks, domestics, locks, hatchets, and screws.”

Source: *Rocky Mountain News*, 1859.

DRY GOODS STORES
“In the stores of that day there were also bolts of cloth, papers of pins and needles, cards of buttons and tape, large glass cases where the thread was arranged, anything one might need.”


THE GENERAL STORE
“Cookies those days were in bulk in little steel bins with a glass cover. But most people made their own. Pickles came in barrels, and I used to laugh at the grocerman rolling up his sleeve and reaching down in sixteen inches of brine to chase an elusive pickle around and around in that barrel. Usually he’d come up with a pickle sooner or later, but sometimes a little tobacco juice would drip off his chin while he was pursuing the pickle.”

Source: Forrest Coulter, “65 Years of memories,” p. 4. Denver Public Library Manuscript Collection
A DRUG STORE

“Just beyond the convent was a two-story building where Mr. Howard had his ‘Drug Store.’ This was truly a drug store with the great jars of colored liquid in the windows and smelling of real drugs…. His store boasted a telephone, which could be used by anyone needing to make an emergency call…. One of our purchases was “Rubifoam,” a colored liquid dentifrice which was a beautiful red and tasted good. Castile soap was found here also. It was not a ‘fancy’ soap in appearance but came in long, narrow, irregular bars, which had to be cut into smaller pieces at home. But it was considered the best and the only kind suitable for babies.”


A GENERAL STORE

“Next was Gildersleeve’s General Store (3200 Clear Creek). One could buy almost anything there, a length of cloth, a washboard, a clothesbasket, a carpet beater. These latter were of two kinds, very attractive ones of woven rattan in a beautiful pattern and plain ones having a wooden handle and a wire extension similar in shape to the rattan. My mother thought the wire ones had more effect.”


A MEAT MARKET

“Across the space noted above was Stoddard’s Meat Market…. There was a great, round “chopping block,” at least 18 inches thick and three or four feet across, which must have been a section of an enormous tree. Much of the meat was in the form of ‘quarters.’ Some hung from hooks in the ceiling and often several would be hung outside to advertise the business…. For 5 cents one could get a really good soup bone that would make the base of a soup that would serve the four of us. For 15 cents one could get enough meat for the main meal.”

MONEY AND BANKING

GOLD DUST FOR MONEY

“Our medium of exchange in those days was mostly gold dust, carried in a buckskin sack and weighed out on gold scales. The smallest amount that was ever weighed out was 25 cents worth.”

Source: Recollections of S. M. Buzzard, Colorado Springs Telegraph, July 31, 1921.

EARLY BANKING

“Our first banker in town [Colorado Springs] was Alva Adams, who had a safe. We took our money to him, and he gave us due bills—no pass books and no bookkeeping.”


DENVER MINING EXCHANGE

“The mining industry here has its own stock exchange where everything is speculated on mining shares. With his hard-earned mite [savings] the day laborer buys shares in a certain mine and then impatiently awaits a progress report. Suddenly—a catastrophe, because a telegram arrived indicating that the vein of silver disappeared without a trace and the stock has fallen to half its value.”

SERVICES

CHINESE LAUNDIES

“There were quite a number of Chinese laundries in Pueblo at that time, and I fell to reading their signs and spelling out their queer names. There was a Hop Kee, a Sing Lee, and a Wah Sing.”

Source: Lyman Sproul, Turning Back the Clock (St. Louis: Mound City Press, 1953): 87.

PUEBLO FIRE DEPARTMENT

“The early equipment of the department consisted of a large hook and ladder truck that had originally belonged to Denver, but had been bought by the pueblo department. The equipment was most unwieldy, being too heavy for the men to haul, and not being equipped for horses.

“Hose Company No. 1 was considered the best of all companies, for it was to this company that the boys from the better families belonged. There was a great deal of rivalry between companies, and many elaborate balls were given by the companies. Those balls were usually held in the Chilcott Hall, and were gala events. The uniform that the firemen wore to these social gatherings was composed of black doe skin pants, white flannel jackets, which were elaborately trimmed with blue.”

Source: G. L. L. Gann, Fireman, CWA Interviews, Doc. 344/26, Colorado Historical Society.

PUEBLO HOSE CO. #1

“The first truck that held the ladder was 60 feet long, and the most cumbersome piece of equipment the department has ever had. In ‘76 the water works was put in and at that time nozzle men were appointed for the jobs, however before this, leather buckets were used to put out the fires. These buckets were lined along side of the ladder.”

Source: Recollections of Gomer Williams, CWA Interviews, Doc. 344/29, Colorado Historical Society.
A FIRE HOUSE

“Another place we liked to visit was the firehouse…. In the early days there were two main pieces of equipment, the first being the engine in which the fire was kept burning in order to run the pump that pumped the water through the hose. The hose was attached to the water hydrants located at the corners of the blocks all over the city…. Then there was the “hook and ladder” wagon, which carried the ladders and hoses…. Children admired greatly the sturdy beautiful horses that drew the engines.”


A PUEBLO POLICEMAN

“Mr. Dillon was with the police force and knew all that went on in the jail. He had several narrow escapes while working at the jail. On more than one occasion he risked his life to capture a prisoner trying to make his get-away. The jail was an adobe building….

“During the time Mr. Dillon was on the force he held many positions, for a long time he was Night Captain, and at the time of his death, held the position of turnkey at the county jail.”

Source: Recollections of Mrs. Anna Dillon, CWA Interviews, Doc. 344/45, Colorado Historical Society.
HEALTH CARE

TREATING TUBERCULOSIS PATIENTS
“Here the sufferer from lung trouble finds isolation, the greatest precautions being taken that he does not re-infect himself nor endanger others. Tent life, weather permitting, is advocated for all, patients entering the house only to eat or be treated, even this being done in open air when possible.”

Source: Denver Republican, May 3, 1903.

A DENVER SANITORIUM
“All the patients are required to sleep in tents, and will have to sleep out of doors all winter, no matter how cold the weather. This regulation seemed a little severe when the plan was outlined, so a small stove was placed in each tent. The object of the institution is to get the people of moderate means, who come here for their health, and who are compelled to live in unsanitary quarters downtown, in bad air, and work indoors, out into the open, where they will have a chance of recovery. There are plans at the sanitorium now for a barber, a shoemaker, a tailor, and other tradesmen.”

Source: Description of Denver’s Rocky Mountain Industrial Sanitorium in Denver Republican, Nov. 17, 1901.

A HEALTH SEEKER’S FRUSTRATIONS
“Outside of sanatoria, which are expensive and have other drawbacks, it is hard to find lodgings....
“Colorado is overrun with invalids. The few well-managed places where they can stay are crowded and have long waiting lists. It is seldom that the patient is fortunate enough to be in the ideal position of having his family or any member of his family with him to make a home in the climate ordered.”

SMALL POX HOSPITAL

This woman describes her grandfather’s job as a nurse in a small pox hospital:

“Grandfather had other ways of earning money in Colorado Springs, besides cooking. Grandfather told me at one time he was hired as a Pest House Nurse, and worked there, I believe, during 1901 and 1902.

“The large wooden structure, known as the “Pest House,” was a place for the isolation of small pox patients.... He said he cared for over a hundred patients and never lost one. He was not afraid of contagion. He might have had a light case at some time or had a natural immunity.”


TUBERCULOSIS PATIENTS

“No wonder Colorado was a land of promise toward which tens of thousands turned their faces. . . . In this hegira [flight from danger] journeyed hundreds of penniless Jewish sufferers whose emaciated faces and hollow cheeks and hacking cough were sadly eloquent of close confinement in crowded tenements [in the east].”

Source: Rabbi William Friedman (founder of National Jewish Hospital), 1923, Pisko File, NJH Archives, Denver
LARGE CITIES

DENVER

THE YOUNG DENVER

“Denver is the Queen of the Great Plains, the Empress of the Rockies!… It is exceptionally beautiful. Expensive homes, wide streets, many shade trees and gardens, excellent water, marvelous air—one can easily envy the Denverites.”


DENVER’S FIRST ELECTRIC LIGHT

“The newspapers announced as "approaching the miraculous" the discovery by Thomas A. Edison of the incandescent electric light, so we were prepared for the miracle when April 21, 1883, the just organized Colorado-Edison Electric Light Company placed on display in a vacant store room on Curtis Street a 16-candle power incandescent light, Denver’s first. . . . “Electricity had come to supplant gas. Soon the residence sections were no longer dark at night. We had lighthouses on the prairies!”

COLORADO SPRINGS

WILLIAM JACKSON PALMER

“After his first visit to this barren and arid plain, General Palmer wrote, “I am sure there will be a famous resort here soon after the railroad reaches Denver.” He bought the worthless tract of land and upon it he laid out a town with broad avenues and ample streets.”


COLORADO SPRINGS

“We reached Colorado Springs (the station) at noon, and found it situated on a perfectly flat, barren desert, but the fresh, new houses, wide streets and clear flowing streams in its gutters, causing the young trees to grow rapidly, the brilliant wild flowers blossoming profusely on the sidewalk and street, and the businesslike manner of the people, all combined to make one forget that it has grown up from a barren plain.”


MINERAL WATER

“At Manitou we would stop to drink some of the mineral water for which I did not care in its virgin state. Provident folk took with them large glass bottles or jugs and filled them with water from the soda springs. They had to be handled with care lest trouble ensue. If too full and subjected to a lot of motion, the jug was apt to blow its cork and the precious fluid be lost. But my mother was careful and on our return we would have "soda lemonade," a great treat.”

PUEBLO

“In the afternoon we arrived in Pueblo, a very pleasant and interesting town…. One already sees here numerous smelters and factories, among which the most important is the one producing Bessemer steel; several train lines create locally an important communications nexus.”


PUEBLO VIEWED FROM A TRAIN

“The well ordered suburbs of Minnequa with their hundreds of model houses for workmen pass in review on the left, while on the right long lines of freight cars, the scores of tall, slender stacks, giant blast furnaces on the immense steel and brick buildings of the Minnequa Works and of the Eller Smelter separate themselves from the smoke and from one another, and slip by. A glimpse on the left of the lawns, trees and neat executive buildings of the Minnequa Works, and then, on the right, one gets for a moment before the train pulls into the station, a view of the entire central and northern part of the city, with all the larger and finer buildings appearing in their most favorable aspect.”


THE SMELTER HOTEL IN PUEBLO

“There were few houses near the smelter of any size, the cottages rented by the hotel, another rooming house, and a saloon was about all that one could find other than the smelter itself. The smelter was running all of the time, the men knew nothing of short hour regulations and worked whenever they could get a chance.

“In the hotel there were three other girls, and about six cooks hired to care for the men who boarded at the place. I thought I was making a grand salary - I made $20 a month, and had my room and board furnished. My work consisted, for the most part, in waiting on tables, and going for beer for the thirsty boarders.”

Source: Recollections of Mrs. Anna Dillon, CWA Interviews, Doc. 344/45, Colorado Historical Society.
LEADVILLE

LEADVILLE CAMP

“As a glorious camp, rapidly increasing and developing, Leadville is the greatest sensation on record. Its mineral resources are immense, easily developed; communication with the world is laborious and expensive; the climate abominable;...the spirit of the population good and happy. Everybody who wants work gets it, and good pay.”

Source: Engineering and Mining Journal (October 5, 1878); Duane A. Smith, Colorado Mining: A Photographic History (Albuquerque, 1977): 27.

EARLY LEADVILLE

“The scene unfolded was unlike anything I ever before had seen or conjured in my imagination. The main thoroughfare was pretty closely and compactly lined with homes on either side, for a distance of two miles, following the contour of the gulch, all of log or rough hewn slab construction, only a few of them two stories in height. Every other door seemed to open upon a saloon, dance hall or gambling den. There were no streetlights, but the thousands of coal oil lamps indoors cast fitful flashes of light across the way.”

GRAND JUNCTION

“We spent a cheerful and bright autumn night in Grand Junction, Colorado, not far from the Utah border. We chanced upon a great celebration, an exhibition of fruit of the entire county…. For the price of a dollar one can enter the huge hall around whose walls lay piles of peaches, melons, grapes, etc.; live music played in the center and one could dance with the pretty farm girls to his heart’s content.”


GRAND JUNCTION IN 1882

“We were 150 miles distant from the nearest railroad and post office, which was Gunnison City, and Gunnison, you remember, was a pioneer town 100 miles distant from other settlements……

“There were at this time about 50 or 60 people located in what is now Mesa County, most of these were in Grand Junction. There were no houses in town except log cabins, the windows and doors were made out of gunny sacks, the roofs out of dirt, lumber was worth $150 a thousand. Beef, the finest porter house steaks, were worth 5 cents a pound. This cheap price of meat was owing to the fact that this was an Indian reservation, and the cattle rustlers were stealing the cattle for beef.

“The town company were giving away the best business lots on Main Street to anyone who would build a log cabin on them. The pioneers were all poor men. The saloon business was the principal business of the town. Colorado Avenue, which was at that time the principal street, was not known by its proper name, but was known to everybody as Hoodoo Street.”

Source: Recollection of James Bucklin, CWA Interviews, Doc. 344/24, Colorado Historical Society.
COMMUNITY LIFE

CHURCHES

AN EARLY DENVER CHURCH
“When the [Lawrence Street Methodist] church was completed it was as much of a landmark in the city as the capital is today. It could be seen plainly from any point of the city, and people came from over the state to see it.”

Source: Description by an early pioneer, Denver Post, Oct. 20, 1912.

FIRST CHURCH SERVICE IN DENVER
“It was a morning service. The congregation was small, although Mr. Fisher and my father went around and invited everybody to attend. There were no church bells to ring, no finely shape ladies, no choir, no pews to sit in. But seated on buffalo robes spread on the ground, with both the Jones and Smith squaws present, Fisher, father, myself, and perhaps six or eight others, held the very first religious service in the country. In the opposite end of the cabin I could hear money jingle where some gambling with cards was going on.”


A CHURCH SERVICE IN DENVER, 1867
“I remember sitting in church one Sunday and above the voice of the preacher I could hear the voice of three different men announcing the results of the games in as many different gambling houses.”


A LEADVILLE PREACHER
“Made it a rule never to start out to either marry or bury people after dark without a gun in one pocket and a prayer book in the other.”

AFRICAN METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH

“It [Colorado Springs] was also called a city of churches and schools. At first, the little town had no church building for Blacks to worship in, but later, a group called the African Methodist Episcopal Congregation was given ground on Pueblo Avenue and South Weber streets. The building, which followed, eventually became Payne Chapel A.M.E. Church. four black brothers of the Carter family were credited as founders of the church. The donor of the land for the church site was known as the Colorado Springs Company of which General Palmer and William Abraham Bell were among the influential officers.”


DENVER’S METHODIST CHURCH

“The Methodist Church was always striving to bring advantages to their members in the way of musical events, lectures, and study groups of which my father was ever a member. Once I was taken to hear a young man talk about Russia…. Another time a young man in a turban told us about India. He also included some of his experiences in this country.”


CHURCH SERVICES

“Now and then my father would take me to a “Love Feast,” a Sunday morning prayer meeting where those present partook of bread and water in a manner similar to the communion service. Every Wednesday evening there was the regular Prayer Meeting and on New Year’s Eve there was a Watch Night service where the Old Year was ushered out and the New welcomed in with prayer. All this would appear to be too large a dose of religion but, after all, there was little else for a God-fearing family to do in those days.”

HOLIDAYS AND FESTIVALS

DEAR SANTA

“Dear Santa Claus:

I would like to have you send me a nice doll, a pewter set of dishes, kitchen stoves and utensils. Zade is just four years old and would like a fire hose cart and an Noah’s Ark. Josifa would like a nice doll and a doll carriage and a bonnet or hood for herself…. I will be ten years old in March 1895 and go to the Seventh street school.

With Love,
Louise M. Taylor”

Louisville Herald-Democrat, Dec. 23, 1894.

CHRISTMAS IN DENVER, 1859

“We didn’t have a Christmas tree but we hung stockings for the children, and a sack of candy in each, bought from the one big store in camp. Was the rarest Christmas gift imaginable.”


AN EARLY CHRISTMAS IN DENVER

“Denver looks wintry enough, under six inches to a foot of snow: but it is full of life and bustle. The toy shops are gay with preparations of Christmas trees; the candy stores filled with the most attractive sweet-meats; the furriers display beaver coats, and mink, ermine, and sable, to tempt the cold passer-by; and in the butchers' shops hang, besides the ordinary beef and mutton, buffalo, black-tailed deer, antelope, Rocky Mountain sheep, quails, partridge, and prairie chicken.”

CHRISTMAS FRUIT CAKES

“Christmas was a most exciting time. In the autumn my mother made her fruit cakes in preparation for the winter festivals. I had to sit beside the kitchen table stoning raisins and shelling nuts which had first been cracked with the aid of a hammer and a flat iron. . . . Cutting up the citron and various other candied peels fell to me also. I used to grate the nutmeg too and as a treat was permitted to chew on a small stick of cinnamon.”


CHRISTMAS TREE DECORATIONS

“Everyone who was anyone had a Christmas tree, and we made most of our own decorations. Strings of popcorn and cranberries, paper chains, popcorn balls, strings of tinsel, a few ‘boughten’ balls of brightest color, and so one. We had saved during the year every scrap of tinfoil which we used to cover various shapes cut from cardboard, making a small hole at the top through which we drew scraps of ribbon for hangers.”


EASTER EGGS

“At Easter time we prepared our own decorated eggs, and what a messy job it was. Some were boiled in colored solutions. Didn't we use beet juice for the pink ones? for the fancy ones we bought envelopes of little fancy papers. These were wrapped around hard-boiled eggs, then a "rag" wet in vinegar was wrapped about the whole and left for the required length of time. The result as a gaily decorated object. For weeks beforehand we carefully "blew" the contents of the egg shells saving the empty shell. Naturally the egg meat was used in cooking. Then these empty shells were decorated or turned into egg dolls, no end of ingenuity being expended in their fabrication.”


GREELEY’S FIRST THANKSGIVING

“On that first Thanksgiving Day there was not a turkey to be purchased in Greeley, but the week previous the pioneers had gone on a buffalo hunt four miles east of town and plenty of this meat was in storage and was used for the dinner.”

NEW YEAR’S EVE IN EARLY DENVER

“On New Year’s Eve we thought we would have a watch meeting and celebrate in the old way. We loaded up our guns and pistols with a heavy charge, so as to make all the noise we could, and as the old year passed and the new year came we let loose.”

Recollections of W. H. H. Larimer, Dawson Scrapbooks, Vol. 4, p. 71, Colorado Historical Society

AN EARLY CELEBRATION

“The men all wore overalls and buckskin and we had ham and eggs, champagne, and whisky for supper.”


THE FESTIVAL OF MOUNTAIN AND PLAIN

“Every year they built a huge grandstand and there would be nearly a week of festivities with parades, floats, bucking bronco contests, and all manner of entertainment, usually ending with a grand street carnival and ball. The big event to me was always the rock drilling contest, where drill teams showed their prowess with drill and double-jack [hammer] on a block of granite especially moved in for the occasion.”


THE FESTIVAL OF MOUNTAIN AND PLAIN

“For years the annual Festival of Mountain and Plain was eagerly looked forward to. It must have taken place in the autumn for some of the downtown streets were closed to traffic and booths set up where all sorts of the products of the state were displayed, always the choicest varieties of the yield of farm and garden and anything of unusual size or quality was given special attention.

There were several parades, but the finest of all was the parade of "The Slaves of the Silver Serpent." There were many glittering floats lighted by torches carried by men in fire-proof costumes and walking alongside the floats. This was the last word in mystery and glamour to a child.”

“One of the most pleasing features of the long line will be the parade of decorated carriages, buggies and traps of various kinds.... The decorations will not be limited to flowers, natural and artificial, but grains and grass, ribbons and bunting and other decorative materials will be used.”

ENTERTAINMENT

PUEBLO STEEL WORKS BAND

“The band was organized in 1888. It is interesting to note that these bands were the outcome of politicians who saw the necessity to boom parties for presidential campaigns.

The uniforms for these bands were usually purchased with funds raised by the subscription method. When there was a deficit they usually gave a dance to raise the amount. The men of the band were mostly CC&I (old CF&I) and depended largely on the support of the mill. If the mill was running steadily the band flourished. If the mill shut down for any length of time the band was busted and finally disbanded.”

Recollections of Christina Schultz, CWA Interviews, Doc. 344/28, Colorado Historical Society

AN EARLY DENVER THEATER

“Thower Theatre opened on Monday evening last with the “Cross of Gold” followed by a popular song by Min Wakely, a favorite dance by M’lle Haydee, concluding with a farce ‘The Two Gregories’. There was an overflowing house and frequent applause.”

Rocky Mountain News, Oct. 6, 1959

SEGREGATION IN DENVER

“A very interesting suit will probably be brought within a day or two at the Superior Court, in which the plaintiff, a colored man named Hawkins, will sue the management of the Tabor Grand opera house for $10,000 damages. The ground upon which the suit will be brought is the allegation that Mr. Hawkins and two lady friends were refused admission to the parquette of the theater on account of color, after their tickets had been purchased.

Mr. McCourt, the manager of the Opera House, it is claimed, made a rule sometime ago prohibiting any colored person sitting in any portion of the auditorium, only excepting the balcony or gallery, and he claims that the tickets in this case must have been purchased by a white person.”

Denver Tribune-Republican, Feb. 6, 1885.
TABOR GRAND OPERA HOUSE

“It was a great day for me when I went in the front door of the Tabor Grand and walked up hill through the wide hall to the door where the man stood to take the tickets….We went through the door into the opera house. There were rows and rows of seats. A boy with brass buttons on his coat came up and took Aunt Carrie’s tickets….The boy ran down the aisle and stopped at a row of seats. He looked at the numbers on the tickets to see if they matched the numbers on the seats. They did. He flip-flipped the seats down, handed the tickets back to Aunt Carrie, gave us each a program and scurried back up the aisle.”


PERFORMING AT DENVER’S APOLLO THEATER

“We didn’t have to wait for the dramatic critics to tell us what people thought of the show. The critics sat in the gallery, and when they didn’t like us they called down to us and said so. If the show was dull someone in the gallery would put life in it...The price of seats was high, but gold dust and vegetables were acceptable as money. A dozen eggs would buy a seat in the gallery, provided the eggs were left at the gate.”

Denver Republican, Oct. 21, 1902.

FIRST MOVIE IN DENVER

“The second picture represented the breaking of waves on the seashore; the effect was simply marvelous, wave after wave came tumbling on the sand and as they struck and broke into tiny floods just like the real thing, some of the people in the front row seemed to think they were going to get wet and looked about to see where they could run to in case the waves came too close.”

Denver Republican, August 16, 1896.

A MOVIE AT ELITCH’S GARDENS

“The Gardens were crowded all day yesterday, and the thousands of people enjoyed themselves. One of the greatest novelties of the present century is the Edison Vitascope, which reproduced everything as it is in real life, with every facial expression that may be worn by one sitting before it.”

Daily News, August 17, 1896,
THE ELITCH’S GARDEN THEATER

“From 1888 until the spring of 1890 we were very busy laying out the grounds for the amusement park. We were also building the theater and animal houses….

At 1:30 o’clock the doors of the theater were opened for the first performance in Elitch’s gardens. Admission was free, and those who could not get seats stood around under the trees and watched the show, for the sides of the playhouse were not enclosed in those days….

We had a vaudeville show. Here is the program of that first performance:

Refined comedy Sketch, Duo and Banjoists
Miss Minnie Zola in Clever Feats of Contortion
Baily and Reynolds
The Great Knockabout Comedians, Singers and Dancers
Charles W. Goodyear, Comedian
Vanb Auken and La Van, Champion Triple Horizontal Bar Performers of the World
Bijou Mignon, America’s Youngest Singer and Soubrette
The Quaint, Comical Musical Genius, Charles F. Schilling
The Gifted and Refined Balladist, Miss Rosa Lee
The San Francisco Twins, Ed Neal and John Sully”

RECREATION

MOUNTAIN PICNICS

“The last part of July we could go into the mountains for picnics because then the danger of cloud bursts and floods was over....We rode in excursion cars that didn't have any glass in the windows and the cinders from the engine showered down on us...When we came to Crystal Lake the train stopped and we all got out and carried our lunch boxes and baskets with us.”


DANCES AT MANITOU SPRINGS

“Colorado Springs youths who courted girls of this city in the winter months wandered to Manitou [Springs] during the summer. It was there the eastern girls came to spend their vacation. It was a comparatively easy task to become acquainted, and just previous to the start of the dance the management made it a point to introduce the young women.”

SPORTS

HIGH SCHOOL FOOTBALL

“Our opponents in football were Aspen and Salida. We played two games each season with each team, giving us a total of four contests and this was plenty inasmuch as the football season in the high altitudes was short. High school dances followed the home games in Leadville.”

CITIES
IN THEIR OWN WORDS

TRANSPORTATION

STREETCARS

HORSE CARS

“The horse looked small for such a big top-heavy car. The wheels were small, too, and away under the car. The cars were heavy. I know for I watched the boys after school lay two pins crisscross on the track and wait for the car to go over them. The car wheel washed them flat on the iron track and made a little pair of scissors that wouldn’t work.”


HORSE CARS

“There was not too much municipal transportation in those days and not always convenient. I recall persons speaking of a “horse car” which ran between the Brown Palace Hotel and Platte Street, which was at the north end of the 16th street viaduct.”


A GRAVITY CAR

“As a child I went with my mother to call on a lady who lived on East 34th Avenue where one of the early gravity cars, drawn by a horse, went up and down. It started at East 34th and Williams [and ran to] near where Clayton College is today. Then the horse was unhitched and placed in his stall on the rear of the car to ride down the hill.”

MORE ABOUT THE GRAVITY CAR

“What is a gravity car and where does it go?” Asked Uncle Nelson.  
‘That’s the car the horse pulls up the hill and when he gets to the top of the hill he climbs up on the platform and rides down.  It goes on 34th Avenue to Colorado Boulevard….’

We watched the gravity car come down the hill toward us.  From where we stood we could see the horse’s nose sticking out beyond the side of the car so we knew he was riding down on the back platform.”


PAYING THE FARE

“We went up to the corner of Broadway and Capitol Avenue to take the horse car.  When we got on Mama put a quarter in the little round cup in the partition between us and the driver.  He put his hand in from the other side, took out the quarter and put a small envelope in its place.  Mama took the envelope and tore it open.  Five nickels fell out.  Mama put one nickel in the long narrow fare box….She gave Belle and me each a nickel and we put our carfare in a watched it tumble down.”


CABLE CARS

“When the cable car stopped I jumped up on the running board and into the little single seat that was next to the big box where the gripman stood.  He had to stand out there in all kinds of weather…. 

I liked to see the gripman work the big levers that opened and shut the grip that gripped hold of the cable underneath.  When it was time to start the car the gripman would yank the levers, one forward, one back.  The grip gripped the cable with a grinding shriek, the grip car jumped forward, shook itself and jerked the trailer after it.

We went jiggling and jerking down Sixteenth Street.”

DENVER CABLE CARS

“The cars are very beautiful while and gold affairs and move with the speed of a toboggan…. When one mounts a cable car, and is swept with a wild rush around a curve or dropped down a grade as abruptly as one is dropped down an elevator shaft… it leave one gasping.”

Richard Harding Davis in *Life in Denver* (Denver: Denver Public Schools, Department of Instruction, 1940): 38.

TROLLEY CARS

“When we began growing up there was the thrill of the "trolley ride." In those days some of the street cars were open with seats running across from side to side. There was a running board on which the conductor went to and fro to collect the fares. . . . Every summer the Church would engage one of these cars for the evening at a stipulated price. The car would be draped with strings of colored electric lights, refreshments installed, the sale of which would help to defray the expenses, and away we would go riding all about town all evening amid gaiety of the most refined and proper kind.”


TROLLEY RIDES

“When relatives of my mother came to visit, we had very simple ways of entertaining them. . . . We used to board this [trolley] car at about 32nd and Tejon, as this corner is known today, ride out to the end of the line, get off and walk across the prairie through the dust and the weeds, then get the Larimer Street car back, transfer and return to the starting point. And this cost 5 cents a ride.”

WAGONS AND CARRIAGES

EXPRESS WAGONS

“My work for [Mr. Thomas] was to drive a little dun horse they called Major, hitched to an express wagon, delivering goods to and from the store, and picking up express jobs on the street. So Major and I “majored along” and made money for Mr. Thomas. I had a stand on upper Union Avenue [Pueblo], near the Commercial Hotel and under a cottonwood tree….

In a laundry around the hotel corner lived another fat-faced, good-natured Chinaman, who often gave me a job. Dressed in his native costume, with wooden shoes, a black pigtail hanging down his back, carrying a basket full of clothes on his shoulder, he would come down to my stand, place the basket carefully in my express wagon, then jump onto the seat beside me and wave his hand in the direction he wished me to go.”

Lyman Sproul, *Turning Back the Clock* (St. Louis: Mound City Press, 1953): 84, 85.

A VEGETABLE WAGON

“Tony’s vegetable wagon had a flat top. Around that top Tony would fasten green things for fringe. Sometimes it was wild cucumber vines or asparagus gone to seeds, and late in the summer it would be the feathery gray of clematis that grew along the banks of Clear Creek where Tony had his truck garden.”


DELIVERY WAGONS

“People usually carried home their purchases, but those buying for large families could not manage the great loads, so for them there was a delivery service by means of horse and wagon. The purchases were packed in a large wooden box which had to be unpacked in the kitchen, during which process the housewife might have a pleasant chat with the delivery boy.”

STAGE COACH TRAVEL

“Prior to November 1871, the only way to get to Colorado Springs was by stage from Denver and the fare was 20 cents a mile and the walking not very good.”

RAILROADS

EARLY RAILROAD TO COLORADO SPRINGS

“Gen. Palmer had invented a locomotive with two complete engines on it, boilers and all, so that one would pull and one would push. There were two engineers. When the train, after arriving here, was ready to start back, the other engineer simply took the throttle and the engine would push the cars all the way back to Denver.

The cars themselves were very small, as well as the engine, and the smokestack looked like the hopper of an old fashioned coffee mill. The whole train looked like a toy compared with the great steel cars and large locomotives of today.”

S. M. Buzzard, Dawson Scrapbooks, Vol. 34, p. 81; Colorado Historical Society

EXCURSION TRAINS

“Passengers were protected from the weather by a light weight roof, supported by strong uprights. Seats were of common lumber, smoothed and painted....the cars often returned to Denver the same way they went out, and excursionists enjoyed the scenic beauties of the trip riding backward.”

EARLY AUTOS

DENVER'S FIRST SPEEDING TICKET
“For the first time in the history of Denver, an automobilist was fined in the police court yesterday for driving along the streets of the city at a speed which endangered the lives of pedestrians. E. S. Matheson was the prisoner. He had been arrested on Sixteenth Street by Officer Asken, who said that the auto was making forty miles an hour.”

Rocky Mountain News, January. 15, 1902.

SPEED LIMIT 45
“The speed limit then (1915) was 45 miles per hour…. I never heard of a stop sign until about 1930. I never saw a traffic signal until about 1935, except in downtown San Francisco.”