

# 20<sup>th</sup> CENTURY COLORADO – FAMILIES, CHILDREN & SCHOOLS

## Families

What do these photos tell you about Colorado families in the 20th century?

### A Keota Farm Family

This family lived on a farm near Keota. The photo was taken in 1930.



*Keota farm family*

*Photo: Denver Public Library, Western History Collection*

### More About This Topic

During the late 1800s, most families in Colorado lived on farms and ranches or in small towns. By the 1930s, most families lived in large towns and cities. However, many families, like the one in this photo,

still lived on farms. However, these families often did not have the same conveniences, such as electricity, as those families living in towns and cities.

### **Their Own Words**

“Originally, of course, in my memory, there was just kerosene lamps and then years ago Dad purchased a thirty-two volt electric lamp. They we had our own electricity. It was satisfactory. We could run small motors, things of that nature. We really didn’t have electricity here until 1941 when the REA [Rural Electric Association] came in as part of the Colorado Big Thompson Project.”

*Source: Andrew Steele quoted in Maria M. Rogers, ed., In Other Words: Oral Histories of the Colorado Frontier (Golden, CO: Fulcrum Publishing, 1996): 81-2.*

### **A Mexican American Family**

This photo of a Mexican-American family was taken in Denver sometime during the 1960s.



*Mexican-American family in Denver, Colorado*

*Photo: Denver Public Library, Western History Collection*

### More About This Topic

By the 1960s, most Colorado families lived in Denver and other cities along the Front Range. They worked in factories, shops, and offices. Many of them were newcomers, like this Mexican-American family.

### Their Own Words

“Characteristics of Denver [in 1949] have been well-defined areas of . . . racial segregation. Some fifteen thousand Negroes live in a section [of Denver] known as ‘Five Points.’ Most of the thirty thousand Spanish-speaking people inhabit an area shaped in a crescent along the bottoms of the Platte [River]. Within these same areas are compressed much of the substandard housing and health conditions [of Denver]. 88 per cent of Spanish-American homes are rated substandard and 45 per cent of Negro homes. Infant mortality among Spanish-Americans is twice as high as the city average.”

*Source: Charles A. Graham and Robert Perkin, “Denver: Reluctant Capital,” in Ray B. West, ed., Rocky Mountain Cities, (New York: Norton, 1949): 315.*

### A 50<sup>th</sup> Wedding Anniversary

The elderly couple in this photo are Mr. and Mrs. James Lamping. Their three grown-up children are standing behind them.



*50<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary of Mr. and Mrs. Lamping*

*Photo: Denver Public Library, Western History Collection*

### **More About This Topic**

The couple in this photo were celebrating their 50th wedding anniversary. The photo was taken on December 12, 1938.

### **Heading For Amache Camp**

This photo was taken in May 1942. It shows a Japanese-American family traveling to the Amache Center near Granada.



*Japanese-American family heading to Amache Camp*

*Photo: Denver Public Library, Western History Collection*

### **More About This Topic**

During World War II, the United States government forced Japanese-American families to leave their homes in California. This family was being relocated to Colorado, where they would spend the next three years at a camp on the eastern plains.

## Their Own Words

“It was ugly. They put us on a train and pulled the [window] shades down. They took us from Santa Anita [in California], down through the center of LA [Los Angeles], right by the Sears and Roebuck building, through the rail yards, and then up toward Utah, Wyoming, and then brought us back into Colorado. . . . They didn’t want us to look out. I don’t know why—maybe they didn’t want Americans to see us or us to see the Americans. I don’t know.”

*Source: Tom Shigekuni quoted in Robert Harvey, Amache: The Story of Japanese Internment in Colorado During World War II (Dallas, Taylor Trade, 2004): 71.*

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## Children

What do these photos tell you about Colorado children in the 20th century?

### A Girl At Play (1925)

The young girl in this photo lived in Denver during the 1920s. She is playing on a sidewalk with some of her toys. The photo was taken about 1925.



*Girl at play in Denver*

*Photo: Denver Public Library, Western History Collection*

### **More About This Topic**

Children of the 1900s had more and better toys than children of earlier years; at least those from well-to-do families did. The girl in this photo has a modern tricycle and a teddy bear, as well as an old-fashioned wooden wagon.

### **Their Own Words**

"When I was a small boy [in the 1920s], not many kids rode bicycles, which were considered more of a means of transportation than a toy or a recreational vehicle. We had tricycles, coaster wagons, and homemade scooters. I don't even recall any bicycle racks at the elementary schools I attended."

*Source: Robert Esterday, A Kid's-Eye View of Early Greeley (Greeley, CO: The Author, 1993): 68.*

### **Three Girls In Antonito**

These children were photographed in the town of Antonito, an Hispanic community in the San Luis Valley.



*Three girls in Antonito*

*Photo: Denver Public Library, Western History Collection*

### **More About This Topic**

This photo of children in a small town in rural Colorado does not include tricycles and other modern toys. However, the girl in the middle is holding a jump rope.

### **Their Own Words**

“We never had any ‘store’ toys. We had to make our own playthings. Chips of wood became boats, sticks became spears, butts of old rope became lariats. We were able to make fairly respectable bow and arrows. We had a lot of fun with these things.”

*Source: Jack Dempsey, Round by Round: An Autobiography, in collaboration with Myron M. Stearns (New York, 1940): 11-12.*

### **A YMCA Camp**

This photo was taken at Camp Nizhoni, a YMCA camp in Colorado. The building in the background is the camp lodge.



*YMCA camp*

*Photo: Colorado Historical Society*

### **More About This Topic**

Children from poor as well as well-to-do families could attend this YMCA camp. The campers in this photo are young African-American girls.

### **Their Own Words**

"Young people today don't play with rubber guns. You took a Model A inner tube, cut it around like a big flat rubber band, notched the end of a wooden lath board, and stretched that inner tube from the notch back to a close pin trigger. When the trigger released, the rubber band flew toward the target. The longer the barrel, the better the stretch. A knot in the tube produced a distinct sting upon the human target."

*Source: Keith A. Cook, "A Whiskey Train and a Doughnut Day: Coming of Age on the Eastern Colorado Plains," Colorado Heritage (Spring 1998): 5.*

## **Chinese American Children**

The young Chinese-American children in this photo lived in Denver.





## *Chinese American children in Denver, Colorado*

*Photo: Denver Public Library, Western History Collection*

### **More About This Topic**

Chinese people lived in Denver and in Colorado from the earliest days of the gold rush in 1859. By the 20<sup>th</sup> century, children from many different ethnic groups lived in Colorado.

### **Their Own Words**

“ . . . [The] large Chinatown of the city [Denver], extending from Sixteenth along Wazee and Wynkoop streets . . . was a busy mart, a growth of the steady immigration of the ‘Celestials’ to Colorado, where thousands had been, and still were, employed in placer mining around Central City, at Fairplay, Tarryall, California Gulch, and other gold camps. Chinatown was their supply source. Here were silk and clothing shops, stores of exotic atmosphere with shelves crowded with imports, fine teas, spices, drugs, and foods from China, tapestries, fans, laces, and there were many laundries. . . . The steam laundries hadn’t come [yet], and the Chinse had a monopoly on laundering.”

*Source: Joseph E. Smith, “Personal Recollections of Early Denver,” Colorado Magazine, 20 (January 1943): 5.*

### **Keota Children At Play**

The town of Keota built this swing set for its young people. This photo was taken in June 1930.



*Keota children playing on swing set*

*Photo: Denver Public Library, Western History Collection*

### **More About This Topic**

The playground equipment for children in rural areas of Colorado was simple and homemade. This swing set was made of wooden beams.

### **Their Own Words**

"The second year my sister and I decided we needed some swings and teeter-totters for each school. So we planned a program, a box supper and a small carnival.... We had a fortune teller, a fish pond, stunts, jokes and many other typical carnival games for entertainment...

"From the sale of the boxes and the carnival we took in about \$70.00, which was considered a lot of money...

"Our father, with our help, put up the equipment for both schools. These were the first schools on the prairie to have playground equipment."

*Source: Lavina Gamet Lewis, "Northwest of Last Chance," in Margaret J. Lehrer, ed., Up The Hemline (Colorado Springs, 1975): 104.*

### **Sterling Children At Pioneer Park**

The children in this photo are swinging at a playground in Pioneer Park in Sterling.



*Children swinging at Pioneer Park in Sterling, Colorado*

*Photo: Denver Public Library, Western History Collection*

### **More About This Topic**

City children had playground like this one in Sterling. How is this swing set different from the one Keota in the previous photo?

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## **Schools**

What do these photos tell you about how their schools looked like?

### **Byers Junior High School (1921)**

This is Byers Junior High School in Denver. The school was built in 1921.



*Byers Junior High School in Denver*

*Photo: Colorado Historical Society*

### **More About This Topic**

This junior high school has three floors. In Denver and other big cities, land was scarce and cost a great deal of money. That was one reason why city schools were built upward rather than outward.

### **Their Own Words**

"The Cameron School of 1926 was quite different from the school of the '90s. We had no resident school nurse, no school library, no gym, and neither a kitchen nor a hot lunch program. No students were bused, and since we had an hour off at noon we walked home for lunch. We ate fast and got back to school in time for some playground time before afternoon classes started."

*Source: Robert Esterday, A Kid's-Eye View of Early Greeley (Greeley, CO: The Author, 1993): 78.*

## **Garfield Elementary School (1959)**

This is Garfield Elementary School in Loveland. This photo was taken in 1959, shortly after the school was built.



### *Garfield Elementary School in Loveland*

*Photo: Denver Public Library, Western History Collection*

#### **More About This Topic**

Loveland in 1959 was a small city with many new suburbs. Land was cheaper in these outlying neighborhoods than in the inner part of cities. That is one reason why suburban schools of the 1950s covered a large area and were only one-story high.

### **St. Louis Catholic School**

This photo of St. Louis Catholic School's first school bus was taken about 1950.



*St. Louis Catholic School's first school*

*Photo: Denver Public Library, Western History Collection*

#### **More About This Topic**

School buses like this one made it possible for children to live several miles from the nearest school.

## The Bookmobile Visits A School

This truck is the “Bookmobile” for the Pueblo school district.



*Bookmobile for the Pueblo school district*

*Photo: Denver Public Library, Western History Collection*

### More About This Topic

Bookmobiles are libraries on wheels. The truck in this photo brought books from the Pueblo Public Library to schools in nearby small towns. Here it is delivering books to students in the town of Rye, Colorado. The Denver Public Library still provides bookmobiles.

### Their Own Words

“Here comes the Bookmobile!’ was first heard throughout Pueblo County in 1948.... Pueblo’s McClelland Public Library furnished the books for the [bookmobile] which visited the rural schools throughout the country.... The first truck had a metal floor and when the weather was really cold, ice would form on the floor and service was much speedier.... The youngsters didn’t linger while choosing their books, as they loved to do on more pleasant days.”

*Source: Clair K. Knox and Jane C. Cotner, “Here Comes the Bookmobile,” in Margaret J. Lehrer, ed., Up The Hemline (Colorado Springs, 1975): 166-167.*

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## Classrooms

What do these photos tell you about how their classrooms were like?

### A Classroom In Alamosa (1941)

This is a fourth-grade classroom in Alamosa. The photo was taken about 1942.



*Fourth-grade classroom in Alamosa*

*Photo: Denver Public Library, Western History Collection*

### **More About This Topic**

School classrooms of the 1940s looked much as they did sixty years before. Children still sat at wood desks with iron sides all lined up in rows.

### **Steele Public Library (1930)**

This is the school library at Steele Public School in Denver. The photo was taken about 1930.



*School library at Steele Public School*

*Photo: Denver Public Library, Western History Collection*

### **More About This Topic**

This well-lighted, elementary school library had many places for students to sit. But it had very few bookshelves or books. The lack of books may have resulted the economic depression of the 1930s.

### **Their Own Words**



“My first year of teaching was in 1933-34. . . . The school had very few library books. This was deplorable situation. To me—reading was as necessary as food. More than anything, I wanted to begin building a good library for the children so that they might have the joy and enrichment of good books in their childhood years. However, these were the depression years. Money was scarce, and one did not request school boards to purchase library books. School boards used money for the bare necessities.”

*Source: Beryl Foster quoted in Margaret J. Lehrer, ed., Up the Hemline (Colorado Springs: Williams and Field, 1975): 137.*

## **Gym Class In Alamosa (1941)**

This is an eighth-grade girl's gym class at Central School in Alamosa about 1941. How are their gym clothes different from those worn in gym classes today?



*Eighth grade gym class at Central School*

*Photo: Denver Public Library, Western History Collection*

### **More About This Topic**

The girls in this gym class are building a human pyramid. Their gym clothes included white, short-sleeved blouses, belted dark shorts, dark socks and white tennis shoes.

## Science Class In Alamosa (1941)

This is a science class at Central School in Alamosa. The photo was taken in 1941. How are science labs different today?



*Science class at Central School*

*Photo: Denver Public Library, Western History Collection*

### More About This Topic

The four students in front of the room are doing a science experiment. The lab had very little equipment. It included glass beakers for holding liquid, a stand with a funnel cup, and paper towels. Most of the students were seated at desks watching the experiment.

### Their Own Words

“During the first of school, the superintendent said he was very busy, and would I please take his physics class for a week. He managed to visit the class a short time each day. I had only one year of high school physics and it was the subject I least wanted to teach. However, I studied and did my best. At the end of the week Mr. Johnson told me he was still very busy and wanted me to continue to teach physics. . . . It didn’t take me long to figure out the superintendent didn’t want to teach physics.”

*Source: Emma D. Schaetzel, “At Windsor High School in 1912,” in Margaret J. Lehrer, ed., Up the Hemline (Colorado Springs: Williams and Field, 1975): 65.*

## Music Class In Alamosa (1941)

This is the music classroom at Central School in Alamosa, Colorado in 1941. The teacher is playing the piano while the children sing.



*Music classroom at Central School*

*Photo: Denver Public Library, Western History Collection*

### More About This Topic

It is possible that the children were preparing for a special Christmas program. The left side of the photo shows part of a Christmas tree decorated with tinsel.

### Their Own Words

“In 1945, at the end of World War II, I was offered the position of Orchestra and Vocal Music Instructor of elementary, junior high and senior high school in Rifle, Colorado. . . . The music department consisted of an out-of-tune piano and five tattered song books. . . . At the end of the [first] semester, a young man came to teach science [to which she had been assigned], and I was sent to introduce music to fifth and sixth graders and organize girls’ and boys’ glee clubs. . . . In spite of these handicaps [scheduling problems and lack of music], our glee clubs were entered in the spring vocal contests. How those youngsters sang! We came home with top ratings.”

*Source: Sylvia Miles, “Music, Music, Music!” in Margaret J. Lehrer, ed., Up the Hemline (Colorado Springs: Williams and Field, 1975): 164-65.*

