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Gold, Iron, and Stone: The Urban and Architectural History of Denver, Colorado

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The Urban and Architectural History of Denver, Colorado

by
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Dedicated to my parents for their support and encouragement,

and to Ian and Colin, who is the golden child now?

Chapter 1: A Condensed History of Colorado and Denver

1.1 Introduction

The state of Colorado and its capital city of Denver conjure up mental images of swift skiers flying down snowy slopes, hikers making their way through dense forests, and enormous mountain ranges penetrating the skyline with their jagged peaks. The image of Colorado is one of the scenic beauty of the outdoors that awaits any tourist, and its capital city is at the center of it all.

Since its founding in 1858, Denver has gone from a small pioneering village to a large metropolis with a spot on the global map. The history and development of this city is a case study in flexibility and adaptation to changing conditions and circumstances. What factors, influences, and precedents shaped the course of Denver and how it grew? What forced the city to expand the way that it did? And most importantly, what influenced the architectural and urban development of Denver?

I believe that Denver drew architectural precedents from the eastern cities of the United States, but had to adapt and change based on the local conditions and challenges. As a result, Denver became an amalgamation of the popular styles of the eastern states and its own vernacular design.

This thesis is therefore split into two parts: the first section aims to study and track the urban development of Denver, from a small, dusty pioneering town, to a large, complex city that embraced City Beautiful ideals to ease its complicated problems. The second part of this thesis

zooms in and studies the architecture of early Denver. Through the lens of four case studies, we can trace stylistic trends and vernacular deviations specific to this city. We begin first by tracking the history of the state of Colorado, before the founding of Denver.

1.2 The Setting of Denver, Colorado

Denver is located at 39° N latitude and 104° W longitude, right at the heart of the state of Colorado. The city is nestled on the flat plains at the base of the Rocky Mountains, along what is known colloquially as the "Front Range", where the majority of Colorado's current population resides. This population massing occurs just east of the mountains, running north and south throughout the state along Interstate 25 and paralleling the foothills. The population density then decreases as you move east or west away from this linear cluster. The state of Colorado is bordered by Wyoming to the north, Nebraska and Kansas to the east, New Mexico to the south, and Utah to the west.

Figure 1.1 – Map of Colorado Territory, showing the three geological regions

Colorado is divided longitudinally into three geological sections moving east to west: the Great Plains, the Rocky Mountains, and the Plateaus. Starting with the eastern border, beginning in Kansas, are the Great Plains. They start "from an elevation of little less than 4,000 feet along the eastern border to 6,500 feet at the mountain front."[1] In fact, Denver received its nickname "The Mile High City" because of its average elevation of 5,280 feet above sea level.

The Rocky Mountains take up a long thin strip, just west of the Great Plains at the center of the state. This range is divided into smaller groups of peaks, 53 of which rise 14,000 feet above sea level. These mountains are known colloquially as "fourteeners," and are popular

[1] Russell D. George, "Geology" in *History of Colorado,* Vol. I., (Denver: Linderman Co., 1927), 39

tourist destinations, and can be seen along the Front Range from the city center. From downtown Denver, you can see Pike's Peak to the south, which denotes the location of Colorado Springs, and Mt. Evans and Longs Peak along the mountain range to the west and north respectively. Moving west away from the mountains, the next geological region within Colorado is the Plateaus. This area "consists of a great series of mesas or plateaus flanking the mountains and declining gradually or by step-like intervals to the western borders of the state."[2]

The city of Denver is located within the ASHRAE Climate Zone 5B, characterizing it as a dry region with “a great range of temperature, and a low moisture content in the air".[3] The land in this climate can experience deep freezes with heavy snowfalls in the winter, especially in the mountains where the snow banks can reach up to six feet in depth. This area can also experience blistering hot, dry days in the middle of summer, with temperatures sometimes reaching over 100° F.

In terms of the location of Denver within the greater United States, it is geographically isolated from any major city, especially in the historical context of the mid to late-1800s. To the west are the cities of San Francisco, California and Salt Lake City, Utah. San Francisco is just over 1,200 miles directly west of Denver, but a traveler needed to navigate the steep Rocky Mountains in Colorado, the arid deserts of Utah and Nevada, and then the treacherous Sierra Nevada mountain range in California to get there, which was hardly an easy journey, even by today's standards of travel. Salt Lake City is closer, just over 500 miles west of Denver. While closer and with less challenging terrain to cross, Salt Lake City began as an isolated retreat for the Mormon Church and did not become a larger, metropolitan city until much later in Denver's

[2] George, “Geology”, 42
[3] James Grafton Rogers, “Geography and Natural Features” in *History of Colorado*, Vol. I, (Denver: Linderman Co., 1927), 116

history.

Located about 450 miles south is the town of Albuquerque, New Mexico. This town was under the ownership of a variety of political powers such as Spain, Mexico, and the United States, throughout its early history. This constant fluctuation in power resulted in Albuquerque being culturally and politically separated from Denver.

The small town of Santa Fe, New Mexico, however, played a more important role in the genesis of Denver. Santa Fe was founded in 1607 by the Spanish, and remained under Spanish control until the Mexican War of Independence in 1810. At the end of the war in 1821, when the new territory of Mexico was formed, Santa Fe became the capital of its northern state, Nuevo Mexico.

This change in political power meant that new trade opportunities with the United States opened up. Santa Fe became an important trade location for various routes, including the Santa Fe Trail to the east which connected with Franklin, Missouri. Dry goods, such as textiles and non-perishable food stuffs, were sent west and sold at higher prices to the new market in Mexico. The payment for these goods came in the form of silver coinage and was sent back to the east.

Santa Fe was also located near the northern end of the El Camino Real de Tierra Adentro. This supply line extended from the town of San Juan Pueblo, just northwest of Santa Fe, down south to Mexico City. Santa Fe, therefore, acted as an overland post in the larger trade network of the western United States and Mexico long before the emergence of the railroads in the later 1800s.

There is no large city directly north of Denver, only the vast states of Wyoming and Montana until the border of Canada; which leaves its strongest connection to the rest of America to the east. It was the older cities of St. Louis, Chicago, and New York that influenced the urban

development and architecture of Denver. St. Louis is 850 miles to the east, while Chicago is just over 1,000 miles to the northeast of Denver. Both cities provided further access, via railways, to New York City, which is located 1,800 miles to the northeast.

Since the future city of Denver was located in the midst of a dry and arid desert, access to a stable water supply was a necessity. The two main water sources for Denver are the South Platte River and Cherry Creek. The South Platte River originates in the mountains of present-day Park County, southwest of Denver, and flows north along the foot of the Rocky Mountains. It then continues northeast, around Greeley, before exiting the state into Nebraska where it joins the North Platte River (combining to create the Platte River) before eventually draining into the Missouri River.

This watercourse is also fed by various tributaries that flow in from the mountains, the most significant of which is Cherry Creek. Cherry Creek originates in present-day El Paso County south of Denver and flows north before merging with the South Platte River, right at the heart of the city.

The city of Denver today is an expansive one, with different neighborhoods sprawling away from the river confluence along rambling highways and main streets. To limit my research, I will focus on a select few neighborhoods that were founded in the beginning of Denver's history or were established soon thereafter.

Figure 1.2 – Map of Denver Neighborhoods

These neighborhoods include Auraria, located just south of the confluence of the South Platte River and Cherry Creek, which was one of the first areas settled. Across Cherry Creek, at the confluence of the South Platte River, is the neighborhood of Union Station. To the south of this neighborhood, and to the east of Auraria, is the Central Business District (CBD). The

Capitol Hill neighborhood, home of the Civic Center complex, is directly south of the Central Business District and southeast of Auraria. The large Five Points neighborhood is northeast of Union Station, following the South Platte River as it heads east.

1.3 Colorado before the Gold Rush of 1858

Before the rush of eastern settlers poured into the Pike's Peak Region, the area was, and had been, occupied by another set of people. The earliest occupants were the Ancient Puebloans. The Ancient Puebloans, some of whom were the famous "Cliff Dwellers", occupied the southwest corner of present-day Colorado in the mid to late-thirteenth century. These people settled in cities scattered throughout the states of Utah, Colorado, New Mexico, and Utah, the most famous of which is Mesa Verde, in Colorado. The Ancient Puebloans were farmers who lived in earthern cities, sometimes under the shelter of a cliff edge, hence the nickname. These people worked and lived as a unit to survive in the harsh desert, and had little interaction with surrounding communities.

The Ancient Puebloans, and the city of Mesa Verde, flourished in the mid-1200s, until a severe drought settled in 1276. This drought lasted 24 years, forcing a very industrious people who had successfully adapted to the climate, to admit defeat and leave. It was not a mass migration, but a slow and steady one, and after the turn of the 14th century, the Ancient Puebloans had abandoned their settlements in southwest Colorado.[4]

After the departure of the Ancient Puebloans, the Pike's Peak Region was occupied by two major American Indian tribes. The Ute Indians of the Shoshonean linguistic group occupied the mountain and plateau region of Colorado, stretching into Utah. This tribe preferred to stay in

[4] Don Watson, *Indians of the Mesa Verde,* (Ann Arbor: Cushing-Malloy, Inc., 1953), 134

their region, but still bartered and traded with trappers who wound their way through the mountains.

While the Ute Indians occupied the mountains, the Great Plains region was divided up among the Indians of the Algonkian linguistic group. The Cheyenne Indians stretched across the land of Nebraska, Kansas, and eastern Colorado. The Arapaho Indians also occupied eastern Colorado all the way north into Wyoming. Even though they lived in the same territory, these two groups lived in relative peace.[5]

The Kiowa and Comanche Indians lived in northeastern New Mexico, Texas, and Oklahoma. The Apache Indians occupied a majority of New Mexico and some of the southern edge of Colorado. While these southern tribes interacted with future settlers, it was the Cheyenne and Arapaho Indians who played larger roles with Denver's pioneering men.

As it was later the lure for men of the United States to the east, gold was also the lure of the Spanish explorers to Colorado. After the end of the French and Indian War in 1763, the peace treaty "ceded to Spain all of France's territory and claims west of the Mississippi."[6] While no major exploratory expeditions were attempted by any Spaniards, they still made a presence. Small groups of shepherds and tradesmen migrated northward to use the fertile grazing lands and to barter with the Ute tribes. The Spanish occupation is more reflected in the nomenclature of the state. Names like the San Juan Mountain Range, the Sangre de Cristo Mountain Ranges, Huerfano County, and the San Miguel River are just small examples of the Spanish occupation of Colorado. In fact, the word Colorado itself is a Spanish word for something to be "colored red", referring to the iron-rich soil and rocks found in the mountains and prairies.

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[5] Alfred L. Kroeber, *The Arapaho,* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska, 1983), 3
[6] Leroy R. Hafen, *Colorado: The Story of a Western Commonwealth*, (Denver: Peerless, 1933), 64

Part of Colorado remained under Spanish control until the Louisiana Purchase of 1803. The Louisiana Purchase was an important moment in Colorado's history because, for the first time, the eastern portion of present-day Colorado fell under the rule of the United States. Needing to survey the new territory that was purchased, President Thomas Jefferson commissioned various expeditions, the most famous of which was led by Meriwether Lewis and William Clark. While Lewis and Clark began their famous trek to the northwest portion of the United States in 1804, two years later in 1806, another expedition was led "by a gallant young Captain from the United States army whose name is indelibly linked with Colorado – Zebulon Montgomery Pike."[7] His company was tasked with exploring the south and west regions of the Louisiana Purchase.

The state of Colorado and the initial interest in its early development owe a lot to Zebulon Pike. He left with his party from St. Louis and began by following the Missouri River west. He passed through the middle of Kansas and then entered Colorado through its modern eastern border. He eventually reached the area of present day Colorado Springs and was the first to describe the large mountain peak at its western edge. While Pike did not name the mountain for himself, "the trappers who followed him, insisted on calling it "Pike's Peak", and so it is known today."[8] Pike's geographical survey of the state of Colorado became a popular hit when it was published in 1810 and "was read eagerly not only in the United States but was published in England and quickly translated into German, French and Dutch editions." His survey piqued the interest of adventurous men who wondered what riches lay in those mysterious mountains.

Figure 1.3 – A fur trader and his pack animals

After Pike's expedition, smaller groups of explorers, tradesmen, and trappers began

[7] Hafen, *Colorado*, 67
[8] Hafen, *Colorado*, 69

trickling into Colorado during the 1820s through to the 1840s. The beaver trade was flourishing in the eastern part of the United States "with beaver skins selling at $6 and $8 a piece, with markets in St. Louis, New York, and London."[9] The fur of the beaver was then felted and made into fashionable hats. Colorado provided the perfect setting for the beaver population to thrive, since no trappers had ventured into the mountains until then. With a small trickle, these trappers made their way into Colorado carrying a few meager supplies with them. They started to explore other regions of the state, moving away from the known roads set out by the American Indians and Zebulon Pike. They had to go to regions of the state previously unexplored, where the beaver population would flourish. It was the nature of this trapping, and the new routes they found through the mountains, that "made these men the real pathfinders of Colorado. It is to them we are indebted for the first thorough exploration of our territory."[10]

The beaver trade soon began to expand in Colorado. Trappers not only sent pelts back to the eastern part of the United States, they also established a trade relationship with the local American Indian population. Trading posts began to pop up along the base of the mountains allowing for the trappers to stock up on supplies from the east before moving back into the mountains. One of these trading posts was at the confluence of the South Platte River and Cherry Creek, near the future site of Denver. In 1815, the Philibert Expedition set out on a venture to Colorado, this time including two trappers from St. Louis, Pierre Chouteau (the nephew of Rene Auguste Chouteau Jr. who helped found St. Louis), and Julius DeMun. Together, they set up a trapping business on the plains and maintained a satellite organization in the mountains. They were so successful in their business that "not only did they gather furs by

[9] Hafen, *Colorado*, 75
[10] Hafen, *Colorado*, 75

trapping, but through trade with the Cheyennes, Arapahoes and Kiowas obtained peltries".[11]

The trapping trade began to expand in the mid-1800s, from beaver pelts to other items that could be found in Colorado, such as buffalo hides. The amount of goods being sent back to the eastern seaboard meant that the trade routes became firmly established and subsequently served as routes for miners. The mountains however, had a richer secret that would bring men to their base, at first in a trickle, and then a flood.

1.4 Gold Rumors

Rumors of gold began slowly traveling back and forth along the trade routes. Prospectors had already poured into California looking for gold, unknowingly bypassing a territory that also had it hidden away. The rush to Colorado to find gold was slow at first, however, because of the fleeting nature of its rumor.

Various sources identify the first prospector to discover gold in the mountains of Colorado. LeRoy Hafen Ph.D., a historian for the Colorado State Historical and Natural History Society for twenty years until his retirement in 1954, claimed that James Purcell was the first American prospector to discover gold. A trapper from Kentucky, he set off from St. Louis in 1802. He became a trade emissary for the Indians in Santa Fe in 1805, when he met Zebulon Pike after his capture, a few years later. He explained to Pike "that he had found gold on the head of the Platte and had carried some about in his shot pouch for months, but had finally thrown it away since he despaired of ever again seeing the civilized world."[12] Purcell, who did not realize the importance of his discovery and was not in the direct pursuit of gold,

[11] Hafen, *Colorado*, 77
[12] Hafen, "Coming of the White Men - Exploration and Acquisition" in *History of Colorado,* Vol. I, (Denver: Linderman Co., 1927), 299

unintentionally helped fuel the infant gold rumors.

Carl Abbott, a professor of urban studies and planning emeritus at Portland State University, supported the more commonly accepted story of the Russell expedition. In the spring of 1858, fifty years after Purcell, William Green Russell and his brothers made their gold discovery around the banks of Cherry Creek. This expedition mined all through the spring and into the summer when

> from June 24 to July 4, over a hundred men swirled pans in the cold waters of the Cherry Creek, Ralston's Creek, and other small streams without finding "color", the prospector's word for the glint of gold. Not until July 7 or 8, several days after most of the discouraged men started the long trek back to Kansas, did the thirteen stubborn holdouts pan small pockets of the precious metal from the banks where Cherry Creek flows into the South Platte, at the present site of Denver.[13]

Whether or not the Russell brothers were the first to discover gold in Colorado is insignificant considering the larger role they played in the founding of Denver.

Historian Robert G. Athearn, told the story of another discovery by George A. Jackson, after the Russell expedition in 1858. Jackson had been mining in California before returning east and hearing the rumor of gold along Cherry Creek. Jackson set up a camp further up in the mountains and, “when the weather warmed, Jackson and some others began a serious probing of the find; as word spread that the results looked promising, a minor rush took place. Almost overnight some two hundred men were busy at the new Jackson Diggings.”[14]

Jackson, unlike the Russell brothers who moved their prospecting around, stayed with his first big discovery, establishing the first major gold claim in Colorado.

Another accepted story of the first gold discovery, and the find that arguably sparked the gold rush, was that of another Georgia miner, John H. Gregory, who also arrived in Colorado

[13] Carl Abbot, *Colorado: A History of the Centennial State*, (Boulder: Colorado Associate University Press, 1976), 52

[14] Robert G. Athearn, *The Coloradans*, (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1976), 13

during the summer of 1858. He began his mining operations along Clear Creek, west of Denver, through the mountains. On May 6, his company made their gold discovery, turning Gregory into a rich man and promoting the image of Colorado as a haven for anyone down on their luck and willing to try their hand in mining. Whoever was the "first" to find gold is up for debate, but in 1858, for the first time, substantial and creditable accounts of gold findings were made.

Back east, the newspapers and press seemed little interested in the new territory of the Rocky Mountains and its small mining camps, but their attention was soon drawn westward by these whispers. While the country was in the midst of the financial panic of 1857, these stories of riches in the mountains gave hope to young, desperate, and unemployed men.

Newspapers slowly began picking up the story of gold in the Rockies, but some were dubious of the reports, if they were printed at all. The *New York Times* devoted a small paragraph in an article in 1859, detailing that "accounts from the Kansas gold mines are very favorable and the rush of emigrants for the auriferous region is stated to be something beyond precedent. The average yield with rockers is from four to ten dollars per day to each man. Companies are forming to convey water from the Platte River to Cherry Creek, a distance of twenty miles."[15]

This story of finding gold in the West and the rush of people to Colorado was still just a small mention of something larger taking place. And even though that story seemed to confirm the presence of gold, the rumors still persisted, even though disappointed men tried to quell them. Indeed, "each time the journalists decided that there was nothing in it, as shown by the eastward retreat of the new argonauts, reports of new finds in the mountains would rise to plague

[15] "News of the Day.", *New York Times,* 3 March 1859, Print

them. Overnight the mad hunt was renewed and fresh heroes would emerge."[16]

By the late 1850s, enough chatter convinced many men that there was something hiding in the Pike's Peak region, and that it might be worth the risk to explore the area. But it was not an easy feat to set out for the western country in the feeble hope that one could make their fortune there. A prospective miner first had to survive the dangerous trek over the Great Plains.

1.5 Westward Travel

While prospective miners had many routes to choose from for their journey westward, none were considered easy. The landscape of Kansas and eastern Colorado consists of flat, empty, and deserted terrain for miles. No one talked about the lack of resources such as water, fuel and protection from raiding Indian parties. No one mentioned that once you reached the Rocky Mountains, there was no guarantee that a prospector would find gold. The travel westward was a giant gamble with no guarantee of a payout at the end. But that did not deter many from giving it a shot.

Figure 1.4 – Map of the Oregon Trail. Here we see it cross into the northern section of Colorado along the South Platte River.

When a prospective fortune-seeker finally made their decision to travel westward, they had four trails from which to choose. They could travel the popular Oregon Trail, which followed the Missouri River through Nebraska, clipping the northeast corner of Colorado, before continuing northeast through Wyoming and Oregon. A miner simply turned off the trail at Ft. Kearney in Nebraska and followed the South Platte River down into the Denver area.[17]

An older, but still popular trail was the Santa Fe Trail which followed the Arkansas River into Colorado before turning south and ending at the town of Santa Fe, New Mexico. A miner

[16] Athearn, *The Coloradans*, 12
[17] Athearn, *The Coloradans*, 9

turned off the trail at Bent's Fort in southwest Colorado and followed Cherry Creek northward, until it reached the confluence with the South Platte River. The two remaining trails were less popular but still well-traveled. The Republican route followed the river of the same name through the Kansas Territory, just south of the Oregon Trail. The Smoky Hill River route, also named after the river it followed, was located in between the Republican and Santa Fe routes. This route eventually became the first stagecoach line that fed into Denver.[18]

Hopeful gold seekers also had to deal with disgruntled and disheartened miners who were returning east. These men were termed "go-backers" and fed the mystery as to whether or not there really was any gold in the Rocky Mountains. Once a hopeful prospector reached the mining camps, they settled into a life with very few creature comforts. They had to make do with what supplies they had brought, because the opportunity of restocking sometimes did not come for months. They also had to face the harsh weather and wilderness in their makeshift camps. It must have taken extremely optimistic and mentally tough men to overcome all these obstacles. The situation the miners faced in some ways foreshadowed the challenges that Denver faced as a young city, all alone in the vast landscape.

[18] Athearn, *The Coloradans*, 9

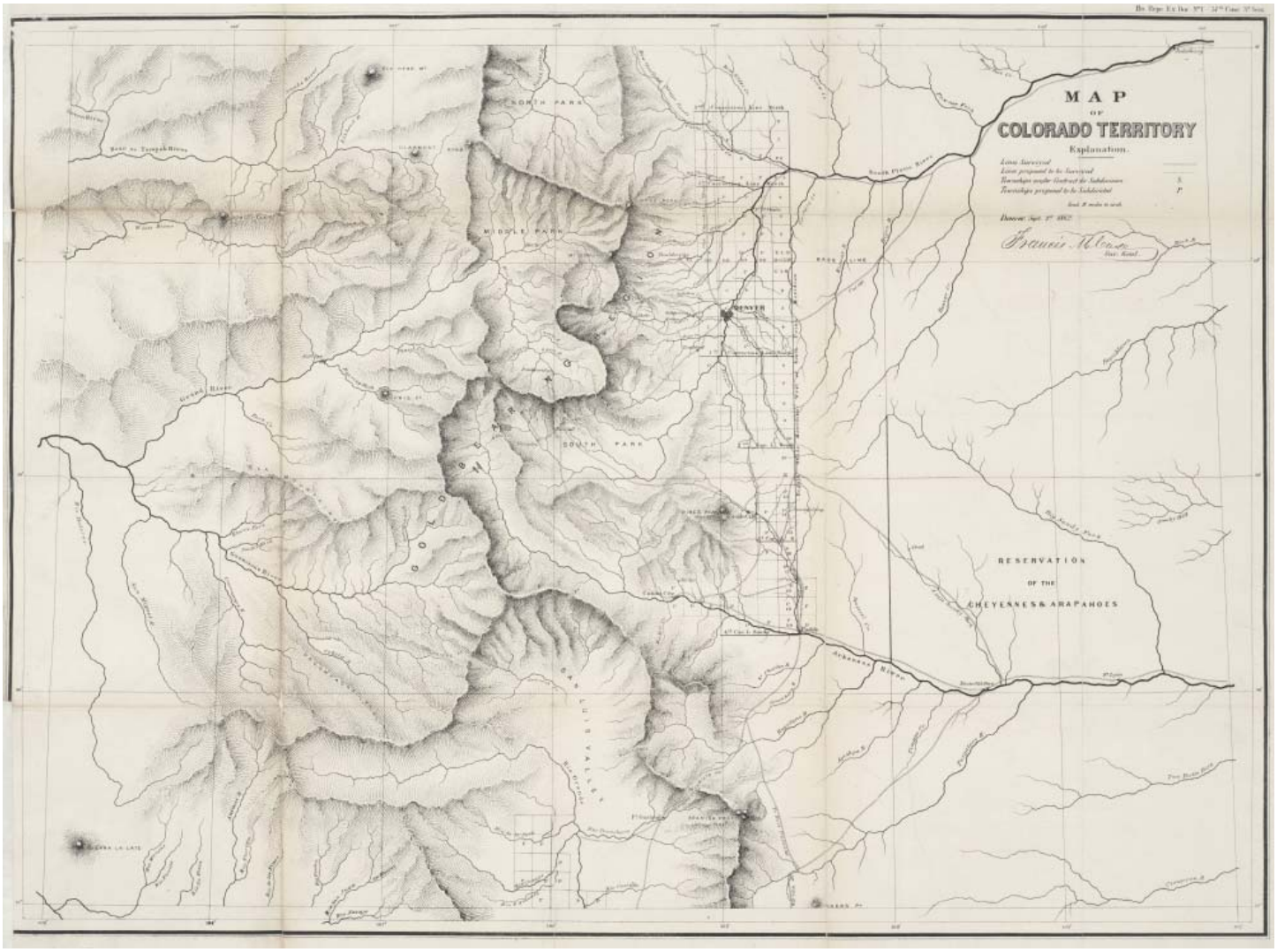

Figure 1.1 - Map of Colorado Territory, showing the three geological regions

Figure 1.2 - Map of Denver Neighborhoods with selected neighborhoods outlined

Figure 1.3 - A fur trapper and his pack animals

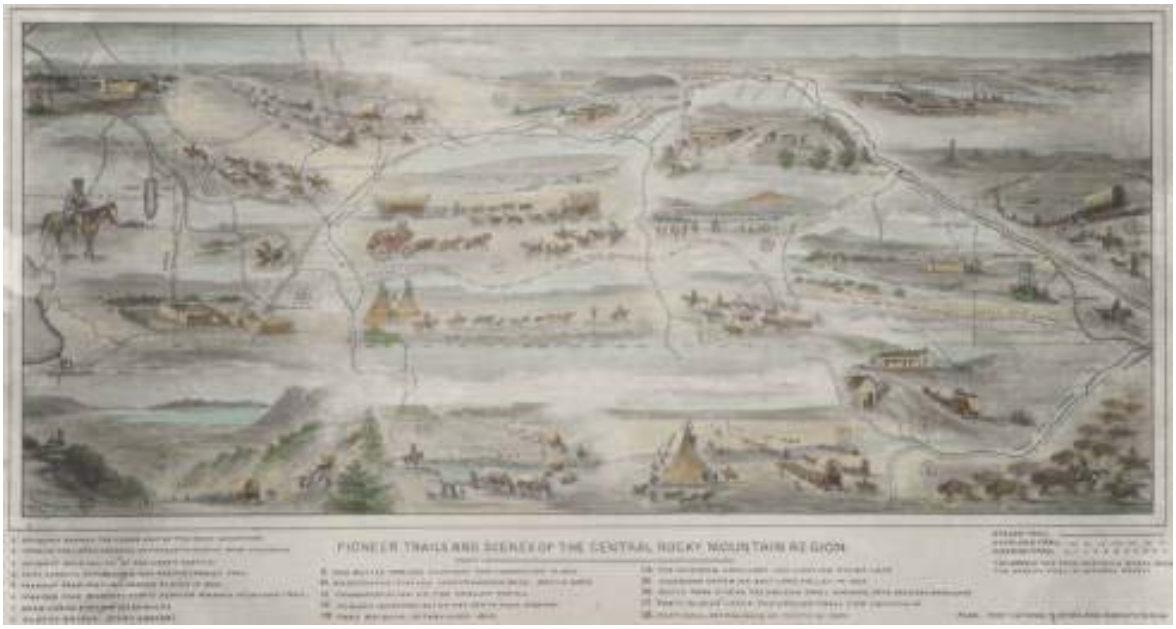

Figure 1.4 - Map of the Oregon Trail. Here we see the northern section of Colorado along the South Platte River

Figure 1.5 - A trio of gold panners in the Cherry Creek

Chapter 2: Gold Discovery of 1858 and the founding of Denver

2.1 1858 and the Cherry Creek claims

The gold rumors were intriguing enough to draw a number of large parties west into the Rocky Mountains. Three mining companies in particular were responsible for the haphazard founding of Denver.

The Russell party, as mentioned earlier, was led by three brothers; William Green, Oliver, and Levi. They left their home state of Georgia in the early spring of 1858, and followed the Arkansas river route northwest into Colorado. They did not make their "big break" that year, but were not discouraged enough to turn back. Instead of the whole party returning to Georgia, a few decided to make camp for the summer at the confluence of the South Platte River and Cherry Creek.

Shortly after the Russell party left Georgia, another company set out from Lawrence, Kansas. While the Russell party proceeded straightaway into the mountains in search of gold, the Lawrence party started prospecting in the streams around the area of present day Colorado Springs. They began looking along the eastern banks of the South Platte River, and hoping that this new location would provide future benefit, decided to settle a town. Montana City was founded in the summer of 1858, on the eastern banks of the South Platte River and consisted of between "fifteen to twenty cabins organized along town lines, making this 'city' the first collection of white man's dwellings in Colorado."[1]

Unfortunately, Montana City's reign as the only Euro-American settlement was a short

[1] Jerome C. Smiley, *History of Denver: With Outlines of the Earlier History of the Rocky Mountain Country*, (Denver: Times-Sun Publishing Co., 1901), 190

one. In fact, within one year, the group of small cabins was gone. During this time, the Russell party had returned from their expeditions in the mountains. They decided that instead of joining the Lawrence party at Montana City they would move to higher ground at the river confluence. There, sandwiched between the two streams just south of the confluence, Auraria City was founded. The leaders of the Russell party named their new settlement after the hometown of the Russell brothers back in Auraria, Georgia, and quite possibly, as a hopeful wish for the future of their new village. With winter coming, the Russell party split into three groups, one to gather supplies, one to gather more men from Georgia, and another to remain behind in Auraria City.

That fall the remaining members of the Lawrence party abandoned Montana City and followed their mining counterparts northward to the confluence and started their second claim, St. Charles, on the opposite banks of Cherry Creek. The Lawrence party made a fatal mistake, however. Unlike the Russell group, the Lawrence party did not build any cabins or structures on the claim of land they wanted, but instead blindly trusted the notion that interest in the Rocky Mountain area was not high enough to warrant a need to defend their claim. When the summer ended, the entire Lawrence party decided to return to Kansas for the winter. On the trail back, they encountered a few groups of men bound for the Pike's Peak region, and nervous that their claim was in jeopardy, decided to send a man back to build a cabin and to watch over the St. Charles claim, Charles Nichols.[2]

While all of this was happening in the Pike's Peak region, a third company was organized in Leavenworth, Kansas. This party was commissioned by the governor of the Kansas Territory, James W. Denver, to investigate the rumors coming from the mountains. This group of men, led by William Larimer, left Leavenworth on October 3rd, 1858.[3]

[2] Smiley, *History of Denver*, 202
[3] Smiley, *History of Denver*, 194

The Larimer party arrived at the new settlements on November 16th, after the previous companies had left, and found the St. Charles claim to be, at least in their view, deserted.[4] Charles Nichols of the Lawrence party had attempted to make a log cabin, but did not succeed in getting far, making the "claim" appear vulnerable. The next day the Larimer party "jumped" the St. Charles claim and took ownership. As a consolation prize, and possibly under the threat of violence, Charles Nichols was invited to join the new town party.[5] The Larimer group decided to change the name from St. Charles to Denver City, in honor, and in hopeful favor from the territorial governor. They did not know that James Denver had retired from office earlier that same month.

2.2 1859 and the competition between Auraria and Denver City

Conscious that Denver City could be "jumped" by another party, the Larimer group formed the Denver Town Company to establish a more legitimate ownership to their claim, and began platting out their land. The Russell party in Auraria City were wary of the Larimer group after witnessing their land seizure, and for the remainder of the year 1859, a fierce rivalry rose up between Auraria and Denver City, as they fought for resources and population.

While Auraria City became host to the first newspaper of Colorado, Denver City acquired the first stage coach line, post office, banks and more supply stores. Both towns, however, dealt with a large and unruly population and a lack of law enforcement.

Figure 2.1 – A trio of gold panners in the Cherry Creek

The miners who uprooted their lives and risked financial ruin by traveling west, fit into a certain demographic. As a group they had a lot of traits in common, such as a lack of family, but they came from extremely varied backgrounds. In common, "they were young, male Americans

[4] Smiley, *History of Denver*, 213
[5] Smiley, *History of Denver*, 213

of northern European stock, along with some foreigners of much the same bloodlines. Being young, they had not as yet amassed much money, instead, their main assets were their youth and optimism."[6] In terms of their previous lifestyles, the different types of pioneers created a colorful social tapestry. In terms of background, "they were doctors, lawyers, preachers and farmers turned miners; there were unschooled lads and university graduates jostling each other in the narrow gulches and voting in mass meetings to make the laws of their districts."[7]

The life on the pioneer front had a way of "leveling the playing field". A Harvard graduate could have received the finest education the world could offer, but it meant nothing if he could not start a fire, make camp, or hunt for his dinner. It did not matter what a miner's background was when it came to the pure luck of mining for gold deposits and surviving the harsh wilderness.

Their combined inexperience and youthful optimism in the face of extreme hardships also meant that their previous backgrounds mattered very little in the new frontier; instead, all that mattered was what the future held. The harshness of the frontier bonded this group of men together, and they had to work as a unit to survive.

2.3 1860s and the Unification of Denver

The Pike's Peak Gold Rush meant that competition for the miner's business pitted many small mining towns against each other along the Front Range. While the competition between the two cities never amounted to open warfare, tensions between Auraria and Denver City were high. However, Denver and Auraria City began to look west 15 miles at a new town named Golden City that was quickly gaining on their heels. This new town was threatening to provide miners

[6] Athearn, *The Coloradans*, 17
[7] Hafen, *Colorado*, 152

with all the amenities that the Cherry Creek settlements did, but with closer access to the mountains. Understanding the need to work as a team to remain competitive, on April 15, 1860, the towns of Denver and Auraria City merged together to become one, under a new name, Denver. Auraria City was renamed West Denver, and old Denver City became East Denver.[8]

Even though the population of miners surged following the 1859 rush, the future of Denver was still murky. There was enough gold coming down from the neighboring mountains to justify the existence of the gold rumors, but it was not enough to sustain the hopes of a burgeoning town. If enough miners became discouraged and left, Denver would fail.

There was also a slump in mining which stagnated both the population and economic growth. The original deposits that yielded gold at the beginning of the rush were emptied, and miners had to dig deeper to find the ore, without the necessary equipment to do so. It would take years of trial and error before satisfactory ways of extracting the ore proved financially viable, which put the futures of the mining towns in jeopardy.

Denver was slowly growing and with that came the usual vices of a burgeoning city. Prostitution and gambling ran rampant in the old portion of Denver City and it left officials scratching their heads as to how to handle the situation. While both activities were frowned upon in the moral sense, there was no denying that they could not be stopped, so how was a new city to regulate these businesses? Denver officials made piecemeal legislation to maintain a pragmatic balance in allowing vices, but within a realm of control. Gambling, made legal in 1861, was stripped of its "legal cover in 1864 when the town council surrendered its regulation over vice resorts to a new Colorado Territory law suppressing gambling and gambling houses and fixing the penalty for keeping a gambling house or allowing gambling on the premises at up

[8] Hafen, *Colorado*, 128

to a year in jail and a fine of $50 to $300."[9]

This kept these activities in control, but they were minor problems that Denver faced. The real struggles for Denver's survival were only beginning. The 1860s proved to be the years that determined whether or not this infant city would survive.

2.4 The Town Planning of Auraria and Denver Cities

Figure 2.2 – Map of Auraria and Denver City

This piecemeal growth of Denver was evidenced in the proposed town maps of the late 1850s. The town grid of Auraria City was snuggled between the South Platte River and Cherry Creek, and was aligned with the latter. Twenty-three numbered streets ran parallel to Cherry Creek, beginning with 1st street that ran right next to the river bed, and moved west in ascending order. An additional 18 named streets ran perpendicular to Cherry Creek. They were named after the first 15 Presidents of the United States, with the exception of the 10th and 13th Presidents, John Tyler and Millard Fillmore.[10] The other streets were named for vernacular reasons, such as Cheyenne, Arapahoe (after the neighboring American Indian tribes and also misspelled), St. Louis, and Ferry. Each city block was 396' by 280' and split into 12 lots. Each lot was 132' by 66' and had a 16' alleyway that cut through the long axis.[11] On the map in Figure 2.2, there were 347 blocks accounted for, but with no description as to what occupied them.

The town grid of Denver City used the same urban language but skewed it slightly. Instead of aligning their grid with Cherry Creek and subsequently Auraria City, Denver City aligned its grid with the South Platte River. Seventeen lettered streets ran perpendicularly to South Platte, with "A" Street closest to Cherry Creek, and extended east in ascending order.

[9] Clark Secrest, *Hell's Belles: Prostitution, Vice, and Crime in Early Denver,* (Boulder: University Press of Colorado, 2002), 60
[10] Smiley, *History of Denver*, 446
[11] H.M. Fosdick, *Plan of the cities of Denver, Auraria, and Highland, Jefferson Territory,* Map, 1859, 16 Jun. 2015

Twenty-five named streets ran parallel to the South Platte River and were named for the founding members of the Denver Town Company, who helped settle the new territory. These streets started at the confluence and expanded southwards. They were named for the following members; Bassett, Williams, Delganey, Wewatta (not a member of the Denver Town Company), Wynkoop, Wazee (also not a member of the Denver Town Company), Blake, McGaa, Larimer, Lawrence, Arapahoe (in honor of the American Indian tribe and also misspelled), Curtis, Champa, Stout, California (in honor of the earlier gold rush), Welton, Glenarm (named after McGaa's ancestral home in Scotland), Clancey, Wapoola (not a member of the Denver Town Company), Parkinson, Cheyenne (in honor of the American Indian tribe), Smith, Platte, Dudley, and St. Charles. Wewatta, Wazee, and Wapoola (sometimes seen as Wasoola) were American Indian wives of William McGaa, who was a member of the Denver Town Company, but the reasons for Champa and Delganey were not recorded. Naming the streets of this new town displayed the vested interest of these initial men in the success they hoped to find.

Similar to Auraria City, Denver City was parceled out into 345 blocks starting at the confluence and extended southwards away from the South Platte River. Each city block was 266' by 259' with 32 lots per block. The size of the lots varied however. Some lots were 25' by 128', and some were narrower, 11' by 128'.[12] All lots also had a 16' alleyway cutting through the longer portion of the block. This set up a denser city grid compared with the city grid of Auraria. This map shows evidence of a bridge that connected Denver City to Auraria City, spanning across the Cherry Creek, connecting Larimer Street in Denver City to 5th Street in Auraria City. There is another bridge that connected Denver City to the undeveloped land north of these two cities along the South Platte River. The street layout, seen here at the very start of Denver, delineates the future neighborhoods of Auraria, Union Station, and the Central Business District.

[12] Fosdick, *Plan of the cities of Denver, Auraria, and Highland, Jefferson Territory,* Map, 1859, 16 Jun. 2015

Figure 2.3 – Auraria and Denver City

Another reproduced map further described the layout of the city. According to the map drawn by E.D. Boyd, Civil Engineer in 1859, "the streets are 80 feet wide, alleys 16 feet."[13] This map went further to explain the nuance in the map markings and the colloquial terms used for the streets. It is noted that even though "A" street is the street marked closest to Cherry Creek: "the street marked "D" on this map has been known as "A" Street, "E" Street has been known as "B" Street, "F" Street as "C" Street and so on to "R" Street."[14] The northern settlement of Highland was drawn on this later map, but this was purely speculative and a proposed plan. The Highland settlement was disconnected from the southern towns by the South Platte River and had to traverse the river confluence, making it a less desirable area to develop.

This early development of Denver was dramatically different form the older cities of the east and west coasts. Unlike San Francisco, St. Louis, Chicago, New York, and other cities, Denver was not founded next to a large body of water or major river system. Railroads were still a decade away, which made water systems, like the Mississippi River or coastal ports, the first highways of United States. While Cherry Creek and the South Platte River provided enough water to supply the needs of the small towns, these streams were not powerful enough to allow transportation along them.

Because the city did not need to use the rivers for transport, Denver developed a little further inland away from the water. The city grids were platted for efficient travel across their neighboring rivers, but were not aligned with each other. This contrasted heavily with the eastern cities such as Kansas City, St. Louis, and Chicago that were built around water ports and had established grid systems that ran north and south, and east and west.

The resource that Denver had that no other city did was the Rocky Mountains. These

[13] E.D. Boyd, *Map of Denver City,* Map, 20 Aug. 1859, 16 Jun. 2015
[14] Boyd, *Map of Denver City,* Map, 20 Aug. 1859, 16 Jun. 2015

peaks, at first, were more of a hindrance than an asset, because passage directly west through them was a treacherous undertaking. At the time of Denver's unification, no reliable route had been found through the mountains to allow for heavy transportation, and passengers instead diverted around them to the north through Wyoming or south through New Mexico. These mountains, while aesthetically beautiful, acted more like a giant wall than anything else.

Denver also had to join together opposing settlements instead of growing from one homogenous one. This patchwork assembly did not necessarily make for a cohesive city. Instead of demolishing and clearing away an existing settlement though, the town sought to stitch the existing villages together, an indication of the agreement between the towns to work together.

2.5 The architecture of early Denver

While these maps gave a great overview of how the town was destined to grow, they did not give a great account of how Denver and Auraria City actually looked on the ground during the gold rushes. A lithograph by John Dillingham in 1862 shows a romanticized small town settled on a wide expanse of land. The Rocky Mountains are seen in the far distance, but the town existed almost separately from them. There were not a lot of trees visible, except for some cottonwoods that grew naturally along the banks of the rivers. There appeared to be a mix of commercial and residential uses but they are hard to distinguish as the building typology appeared the same. Most of the buildings were gabled and pushed up against the banks of the rivers. According to archaeologist Sarah M. Nelson, by April 1859, "Auraria consisted of 150 homes, three stores, two hotels, one bakery, one print shop, two saloons, two meat markets, a blacksmith, a carpenter, a tinsmith, and a tailor."[15]

[15] Sarah M. Nelson, *Denver: An Archaeological History*, (Boulder: University Press of Colorado, 2008), 145

In terms of zoning, both towns really had only two classifications: residential and commercial. The commercial sector of Denver dealt mainly with providing for the miners who passed through to the mountains. Most of the shops in pioneering Denver sold groceries, provisions, clothing, hardware, storage for miners who left for the mountains, and a wide variety of entertainment. In terms of the residential sector, most buildings were single and multi-family residences that housed business owners or the families of the miners who left for the mountains.

The origin point of Denver, which is not clearly discernible in the maps, is located at the intersection of "F" (later 15th) street with Blake, McGaa, and Larimer streets. "F" street intersected the South Platte River just east of the confluence, and a bridge was built to connect with the future Highlands community. Blake, McGaa, and Larimer Streets were further south of the confluence, but crossed Cherry Creek and connected with the commercial district of Auraria City along Larimer Street.

The commercial district in Auraria was less densely occupied around 5th Street. Here, a prominent businessman of Denver, William N. Byers, established the *Rocky Mountain News* in a small wooden shed in the heart of Auraria City. The first issue was printed on April 23, 1859.[16]

Figure 2.4 – The headquarters of the *Rocky Mountain News*

The residential districts of these two areas were relegated to the outskirts of the business districts. In Denver City, Arapahoe Street provided the southwestern boundary for the residential district. In Auraria City, the residential area surrounded the business district on three sides.

During the early 1860s, a photographer named of William Gunnison Chamberlain came to Denver City. Chamberlain had spent his earlier years photographing the gold rushes in California and in Chicago, before moving to Colorado. There he photographed the new pioneer town in its infancy. Most of his photographs were taken from rooftops and tried to show the

[16] Hafen, *Colorado*, 116

street life mixing with the buildings and showed us how the first Denverites lived. His photographs focused on the business sector along “F” Street, and gave us a glimpse of what pioneering Denver was like.

Figure 2.5 – Corner of “F” (15th) and Blake Streets

This image was taken from Block 18 looking towards Block 42, and shows the beginnings of the commercial district that began along the "F" Street corridor that ran perpendicular into the South Platte River. The streets are unpaved and raised wooden boards served as sidewalks that led into the stores. While there were covered wagons lined up in front of the shops, they were not parked in an orderly fashion. Horses and wagons were jumbled together haphazardly, creating the 1860 equivalent of a parking jam. The buildings were a mix of wood and brick construction, although wood frame construction was the standard at this time in Denver's history. The types of stores also provide a little history as to the use of Denver as a supply city for the remote mining towns. Here we see shops for wholesale groceries, storage and commission, and a small meat market that provided the necessary supplies for miners who were stopping through.

Figure 2.6 - “F” Street

This photograph provides another view of the "F" Street corridor, this time looking south towards Lawrence Street, with Cherry Creek behind the buildings. We see more of the mix of building typology and use. In this photograph we see the Broadway Dry Goods Store, Tappan & Co. (one of the major shipping companies in Denver), and stores that sold chemicals, oils, paints, and drugs.

Figure 2.7 – The original Mint Building

A major early industry in Colorado was the growth of its own banking sector. Suffering from the high cost of refining the gold ore and shipping it back to the eastern seaboard to be

minted was driving the mining business under, so a group of men started their own minting business. In 1860, Austin M. Clark, Milton E. Clark, and Emmanuel Henry Gruber established their minting company[17], and the building where they minted their coins is shown in this photograph. Located at "G" (later 16th) and McGaa Streets, the original mint building was standalone structure made from brick. It would go on to serve both as the bank and the mint until the United States Treasury took over in 1863 and moved the minting premises away.

Figure 2.8 – Block 18 along Cherry Creek

This later sketch shows Block 18 at the southeast corner of Blake Street and "F" Street. Here we see the piecemeal infill development of Denver. The buildings lining "F" Street were primarily commercial with boardwalks, but we also see a mix of other uses. Horse stables occupied the northwest corner of the block, with the alleyway cutting through the center. One block to the north, Block 15 on the other side of Wazee Street, tents were pitched on tall grass next to the Cherry Creek. We also see evidence of one of the first bridges that connected Auraria and Denver City on Blake Street.

These photographs provide evidence of the nature of Denver in its first decade. At this point in time, Denver was not a city or a place that people would call “home.” If anything, Denver in the 1860s was a large, glorified rest stop for men on their way to the mining camps in the mountains. The crude buildings and lack of any city infrastructure denote the lack of any creature comforts or signs of settlement. This transitory state, however, was soon put to the test.

2.6 The Fire of 1863

While still in its infancy, Denver experienced a series of natural disasters that almost extinguished its survival before it started. The first was a fire that started in April of 1863.

[17] Hafen, *Colorado*, 132

Before then, Denver was a tinderbox waiting to be lit aflame. Most of the buildings were made of dried out timber, forested from the trees on the banks of the South Platte River, with only a meager stream nearby to put out any flames that might pop up. In the business district, these buildings were also packed in tightly on very narrow lots, with no trained firefighters nearby who knew how to battle a great blaze.

The fire originated at the Cherokee House, a saloon that was located at the intersection of "F" and Blake streets. The fire started small and could have been contained if the few brave people who tried to fight it early on knew what they were doing.[18] The wind, however, picked up and turned it into a blaze. A strong breeze blew west along the South Platte River, and spread the flames along the "F" Street corridor before sending them east along Blake. The flames were halted at "G" Street, destroying about four blocks of buildings. While this may seem underwhelming compared to the damage done by the fires in Chicago, London, and San Francisco, the effect was devastating to Denver.

The fire occurred right at the heart of the business district, destroying supply stores and their goods. The damage was so complete that "many of Denver's precious stores of food staples, especially flour and pork, literally went up in smoke during the blaze, and every hardware store was destroyed."[19] This came at a time when Denver was still located in a government territory, unconnected safely to the eastern United States. Supply lines consisted of covered wagons or stagecoaches that had to travel hundreds of miles over unsecured terrain, taking weeks or months. Not only did supplies take long to reach Denver, they ran the risk of being ransacked by aggressive American Indian raiding parties, or halted by the confusion and disruption of the Civil War.

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[18] Dick Kreck, *Denver in Flames: Forging a new Mile High City*, (Golden: Fulcrum Publishing, 2000), 26
[19] Kreck, *Denver in Flames*, 10

Instead of succumbing to the disaster however, the townspeople learned their lesson and helped secure the city from future fires. Instead of rebuilding their business district using the dried-out wood frame construction, the builders turned to brick. The townspeople realized that the bed of the South Platte River had rich stores of reddish clay waiting to be harvested and dried into fireproof bricks. Where "F" Street stretched north across the South Platte, clay was dug up and manufactured into bricks that were used for decades to come in the architecture of Denver.

This not only became an aesthetic consideration for the city of Denver, it also became a city ordinance. This new guideline required that all buildings be built of brick, slowly erasing Denver's pioneering past of false storefronts and wooden sidewalks.

2.7 The Cherry Creek Flood of 1864

Just when the town recovered from the devastating fire, it was dealt another serious blow when the capricious Cherry Creek flooded the town in 1864. West Denver was spared the fire of 1863 but felt the full vengeance of the water. West Denver was settled on lower ground than East Denver, so when the flood waters came through, the entire western neighborhood was submerged.

On May 19, 1864, a flash flood swept down from the mountains and quickly submerged the town. West Denver was hit the hardest when "buildings in and along Cherry Creek were swept away, including (William) Byer's Rocky Mountain News headquarters, the city hall, the building that housed the Trinity Methodist Church, and scores of office buildings, warehouses, stables, and outbuildings. Ranches along the Platte River and Plum Creek were wiped out, and as the sun rose the next morning, both sections of Denver on either side of Cherry Creek were inundated with water, reaching levels of several feet on the lower west side."[20]

[20] Lyle W. Dorsett and Michael McCarthy, *The Queen City: A History of Denver*, (Boulder: Pruett, 1977), 37

Figure 2.9 – West Denver flooded in distance

This photo was taken from East Denver, a couple of streets inland from Cherry Creek and showed the massive devastation this flood had on West Denver. The entire town was swamped with water and the only section of Denver that was really spared were the far eastern portions on higher ground.

Figure 2.10 – Flash flood waters

This photo showed the speed with which the water came down the river and the severity of the flash flood, especially since this all occurred in one night. Unlike the fire of 1863, this natural disaster provoked an uneven change in Denver's urban structure. After seeing the devastating effects of the raging creek, those who could afford to moved farther east away from Cherry Creek to higher ground, leaving the less fortunate behind. The structures that were lost either had their tenants relocate or were completely rebuilt on the same site. The occupants were probably hoping that this type of flash flood was such a rare occurrence in the arid climate of Colorado and that the flood was something of a freak accident. Having survived its rough infant years, Denver was transitioning from a clapboard pioneer town to a more permanent city.

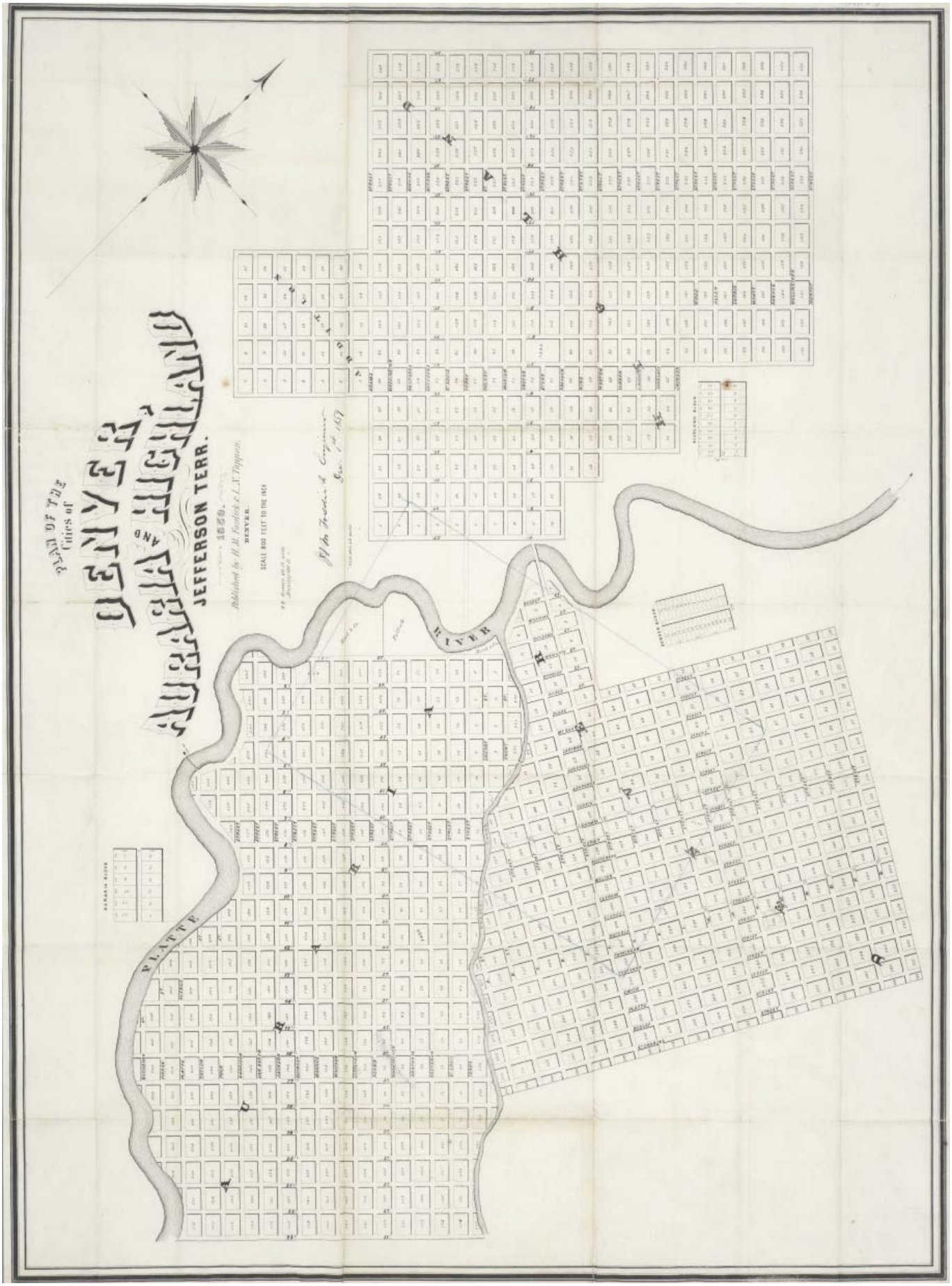

Figure 2.2 - Map of Auraria and Denver City demonstrating the opposing city grids

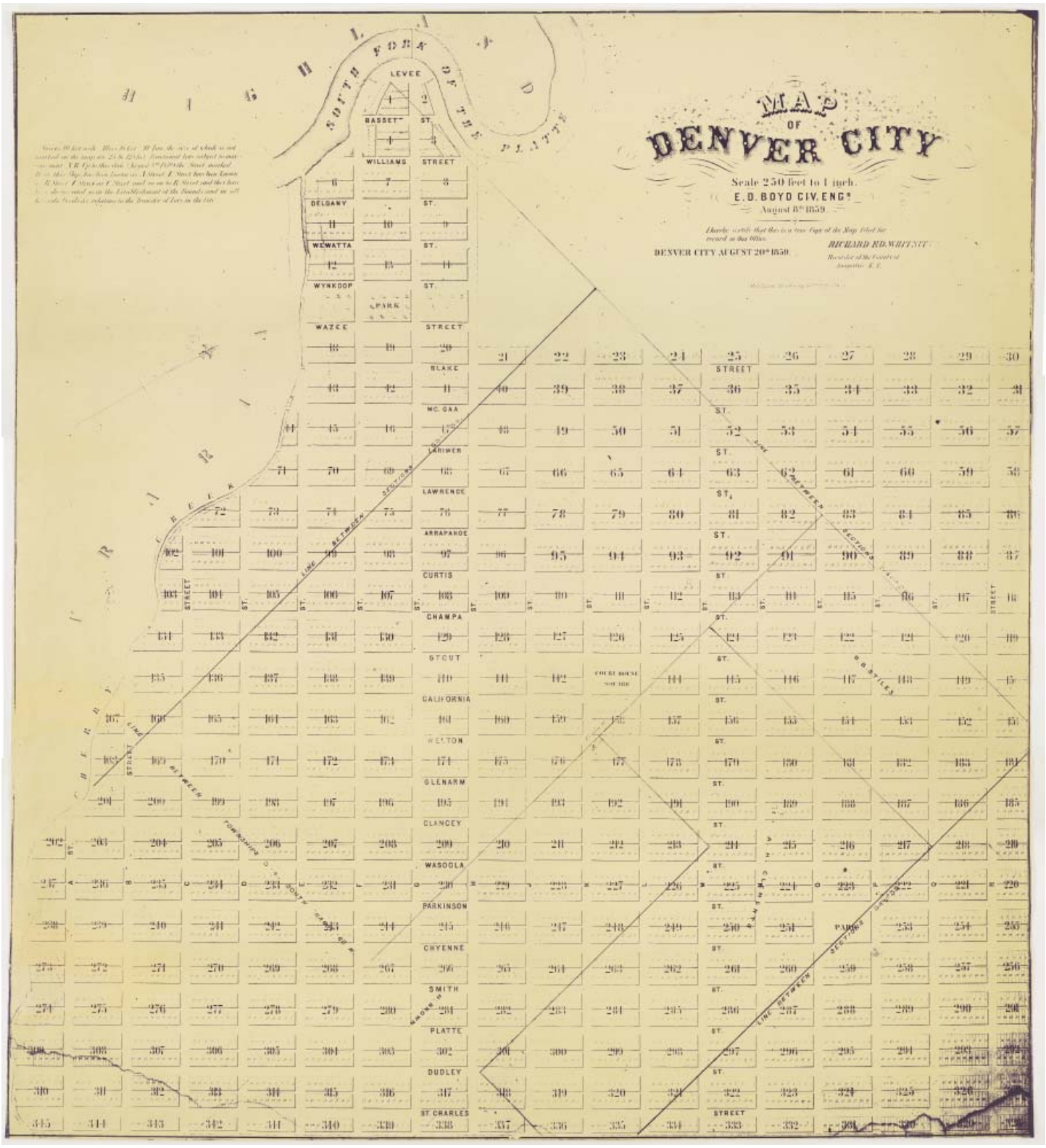

Figure 2.3 - Auraria and Denver City

Figure 2.4 - The headquarters of the *Rocky Mountain News*

Figure 2.5 - Corner of “F” (15th) and Blake Streets

Figure 2.6 - “F” Street

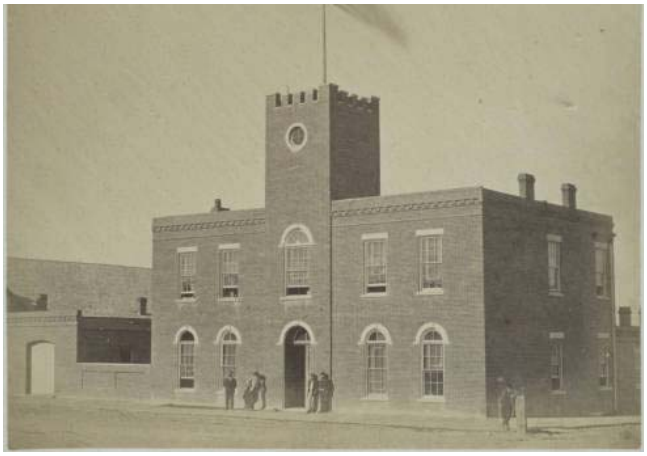

Figure 2.7 - The original Mint Building

Figure 2.8- Block 18 along Cherry Creek

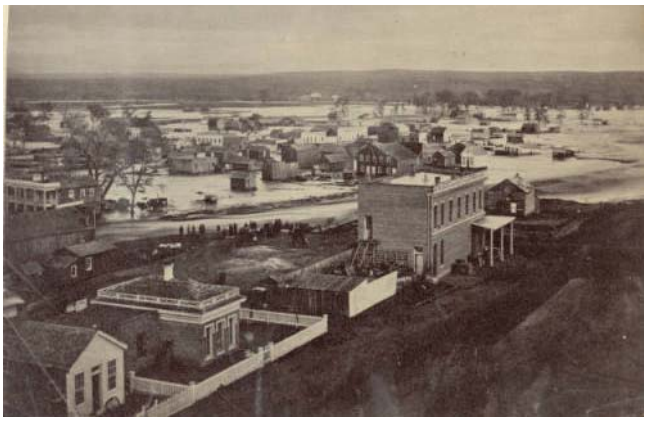

Figure 2.9 - West Denver flooded in the distance

Figure 2.10 - Flash flood waters

Chapter 3: The 1870s: Railroad and Statehood

3.1 Kansas Territory

The story of the Larimer party "jumping" the St. Charles claim was conducive to a bigger problem surrounding the founding of a settlement in a federal territory. When prospectors began building log cabins on the banks of Cherry Creek and the South Platte River, they were squatting on land that belonged to the American Indians, and at the same time, the United States.

Four years before the arrival of the Russell party in the Rocky Mountains, the Kansas-Nebraska Act of 1854 established the Kansas Territory. Stretching between the Missouri border on the east, the Continental Divide of the Rocky Mountains on the west, and between the 37th and 40th parallels to the north and south, this territory contained the entire current state of Kansas and a large chunk of eastern Colorado. The town of Denver was located in the northwestern corner of this territory.

While this technically meant that Denver fell under the federal jurisdiction of the United States, the American Indians, in this specific case the Arapaho tribe, still held a title to the land.[1] Soon after the founding of Auraria and Denver City in 1859, the Denver Town Company sent two representatives back east to Lecompton, Kansas and Washington D.C to plead their case for statehood. However, the government was too distracted by the impending Civil War to give much attention to a few miners over a thousand miles away, and the representatives returned west empty-handed.

Two years later, the Kansas Territory was further carved up in the early spring of 1861, when the state of Kansas was formed. Beginning at the western border of the state, the

[1] Albert B. Sanford, "Organization and Development of Colorado Territory" in *History of Colorado,* Vol. I,.(Denver: Linderman Co., 1927), 489

remaining western portion of the old Kansas Territory became the Territory of Colorado on February 28, 1861. The small town of Colorado City, south of Denver, became the territorial capital for the first year. After that, Denver and Golden City began competing to replace it as the capitol of Colorado Territory.

Less than two months later, the Confederate Army opened fire on Fort Sumter in Charleston, South Carolina, 1,700 miles away. While the Territory of Colorado was inching towards recognized statehood, the rest of the United States descended into the American Civil War.

3.2 The Need for a Railroad

The Colorado Territory and the small town of Denver soldiered on during the Civil War without suffering too much of its devastating effects. However, without help from the east in law enforcement, Denver struggled to keep itself from descending into chaos. Gambling, prostitution, drinking, and drug use ran rampant, leaving local officials scrambling for control. Denver finally established a police force in 1874, but that did little to clean up the streets. The city could not even afford uniforms for its officers, much less curb the lawlessness.[2]

After the Civil War ended, the allure of the West became widespread. Denver had survived her infant years, but looking towards the future realized that it could not remain isolated and survive. While the city continued to grow, "the aggressive businessmen of Denver thoroughly understood that if Colorado's budding settlements expected to have more than a speaking acquaintance with the rest of the nation, they would need much better communication with it."[3]

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[2] Secrest, *Hell's Belles: Prostitution, Vice, and Crime in Early Denver*, 23
[3] Hafen, *Colorado*, 77

Denver needed to connect to the transcontinental railroad system. A railroad connection to the east and west would help Denver and the rest of Colorado survive for a variety of reasons. Miners at the beginning of the gold rush could justify the high cost of transporting their goods because the ore was such a rare commodity. However, miners were extracting a lot more ore from the mountains, and the cost of transporting the ore was rising. They needed a cheaper way to transport their gold ore if the mining business was to continue. And it was not just ore that needed to be transported. Now that Denver was growing, the need for goods that were not obtainable within state borders was increasing. A railroad connection was needed in order to ship these goods to Denver.

Denver needed to attract and encourage a railroad line to pass through, and not any other Colorado town. Being on a railroad's line was so paramount to the survival of a town that "one bend in a railway's course, away from a particular town, could close down that community in no time. Conversely, becoming a stop on a major rail route could make the difference for dozens of commercial enterprises."[4]

Hopes initially rested on the extension of the first transcontinental railroad, the Union Pacific, to come through Denver in 1867. This line was diverted however, and sent north through Cheyenne, Wyoming and on through the Rocky Mountains, which scared away some investors. Instead of being defeated at this obstacle, the citizens of Denver banded together and launched their own railroad venture. The Denver Pacific Railroad Company was founded that same year to connect Denver north to Cheyenne and to the rest of the railroad network. To do this, citizens banded together and, according to archaeologist Sarah M. Nelson, "subscriptions of stock in the project were solicited. The entire city was canvassed. It was pointed out that in order to save the city and its property values, everyone must come to the rescue. "Pay or Perish"

[4] Nelson, *Denver: An Archaeological History*, 174

was the slogan. The response was remarkable, for in a single day the subscriptions amounted to $225,000, and this from a little frontier city of less than four thousand people."[5]

Unlike other cities back east though, Denver was not looking to be a transportation hub. Denver did not have a future as a transportation city on a large network, like St. Louis and Chicago, but instead was a town built on commodities, and the railroad gave it a chance to sell them to a larger customer base. Because passage through the northern Rocky Mountains was founded earlier, on the Union Pacific route through Cheyenne, Denver missed out on the role as the transportation hub of the Great Plains.

A railroad line, however, was just the first of a few infrastructural improvements made in Denver in the early 1870s. Colonel James Archer, a prominent Denver citizen, proposed a gas works and water works project for the entire city.[6] Right after the railroad lines were laid, the Archer's gas works building was constructed just east of the downtown area, at 18th and Wewatta streets.[7] After the completion of his gas works proposal, Archer, fueled by his success, proposed another public service project. Under his guidance, the Denver City Water Company was formed in 1870 and the Holly Water Works was constructed, located at the confluence of the two rivers. Water was now readily available to Denver's citizens, who previously had to rely on well water.[8]

The expansion and growth of the railroads encouraged a massive migration of settlers to the west. Just within the young city of Denver "the population of approximately 5,000 in 1870 doubled in the two years following, and by 1874 had trebled."[9] The population increase had a positive impact on the city itself, as the historian LeRoy Hafen describes "business blocks and splendid residences sprang up. Real estate, which had been almost worthless, took on value and

[5] Hafen, *Colorado*, 183
[6] Smiley, *History of Denver*, 455
[7] Smiley, *History of Denver*, 455
[8] Smiley, *History of Denver*, 455
[9] Hafen, *Colorado*, 188

rose rapidly in price. Business increased amazingly, bank deposits and clearings were augmented, and an air of prosperity was evidenced everywhere. Denver had begun to provide the luxuries of the modern city with the municipal conveniences of the day."[10]

3.3 Statehood

Denver in the 1870s was a city making moves to become competitive within the larger United States. It was slowly shedding its rough pioneer image and its citizens were investing time and money to grow and stabilize the city. As this effort expanded, more interest grew in making the Colorado Territory a state, with Denver as the potential capital city.

The acceptance of the state of Colorado into the Union was a steady and laborious one; it took 18 years from the date that the Russell party of Georgia first found gold in the Rocky Mountains. On August 1, 1876, President Ulysses S. Grant signed the presidential declaration, confirming the admission of the State of Colorado into the Union, with the city of Denver as its capital. With its induction occurring the same year as the 100th anniversary of United States independence, Colorado was nicknamed the "Centennial State".

3.4 The 1871 Railroad Proposal and its effects

With all the development and growth in Denver, maps from the 1870s show a stark contrast from maps drawn a decade earlier.

Figure 3.1 – Stanton map with a railroad route proposal

A map drawn in 1871 by civil engineer Fred J. Stanton shows the growth of Denver and the arrival of the railway. The label "Auraria" had disappeared, instead taking the name "West Denver" officially and old Denver City had become "East Denver". The original street grids and

[10] Hafen, *Colorado*, 188

names of Auraria and Denver City, with the exception of McGaa Street, which had been renamed Holladay, were still there but were altered on their southern ends. This subtle change in the midst of the original Denver street names happened in 1873, when the leading members of the city, who used to venerate William McGaa and his efforts in establishing Denver, became embarrassed of his drunken antics.[11]

In the midst of the uncertain 1860s, the city limits of Denver were redefined. The United States received the title to the land of Denver from the American Indians back in 1860, and rezoned the city. While the original city grid did not run in a strictly north and south, east and west direction, the new city limits outside the original city grid did.

On the Stanton map, the southern and western edges of the original grid were cut, and in the case of the southern edge, erased entirely. The Congressional Grant of 1864 consisted of the old town grid and ultimately contained 960 acres of land, most of which was still unoccupied.[12]

A new street, named Colfax Avenue began, west of the South Platte River, crossed both rivers and continued straight east. This new avenue constituted the southern border of the Congressional Grant and erased approximately 200 blocks of both West and East Denver. This was easier to do given that these blocks to the south were platted out but not developed, making it easy to redraw the city grid south of the old city. The west end of Colfax Avenue met with the southern end of Boulevard Avenue which ran north and south on the western side of the South Platte River. The eastern portion of Colfax Avenue ran into another new avenue called Broadway Street which also ran north and south. Like Colfax Avenue, Broadway Boulevard became the eastern border of the Congressional Grant, but only to a point. Broadway terminated at the intersection of 18th and Welton streets, at the beginning of the Five Points neighborhood.

[11] Phil Goodstein, *Denver Streets*, (Denver: New Social Publication, 1994), 6
[12] Smiley, *History of Denver*, 443

The land area lying outside the Congressional Grant was now up for development. Hoping that the new railroad connection meant further development of the city, wealthy men bought large plots of land, and platted it for future sale. Arguably the most famous plot was owned by Henry C. Brown, who donated two blocks from his addition to the Colorado Territorial government, in the hope that the future State Capitol building would be built there. These new additions, including Henry Brown's, made up the future Capitol Hill neighborhood.

We also see a change in the natural features of Denver, especially in the route of the South Platte River. The stream originally made many southward bends in its course, but on the 1871 map the river had been pushed to the north and straightened. This altered the route of Cherry Creek where it converged with the South Platte further north as well. While this map does not show any signs of bridges between West and East Denver and their northern neighbor, Highland, it is safe to assume that they were still present, if altered. We also see the first evidence of an irrigation canal drawn from the South Platte. The Platte Water Company Irrigating Canal wound about and cut across the un-platted portion of southeast Denver, and provided easy opportunity for new development away from the dense city center.

The biggest addition to this map from earlier ones was the railroad lines. In this map we see the first evidence of the Denver Pacific Railway that ran southwest, parallel to the South Platte River, before it entered into East Denver. In this map, the railway line terminated at Block B, on the corner of "K" Street and in between Wynkoop and Wazee Streets. This map also showed the presence of the first train depot which occupied Block 25, southeast of the train lines on Blake Street. The Denver Pacific Railway line extended northeast along the South Platte and reached an intersection on the outskirts of the city. Here the line converged with two other railway lines and extended northwest to the northern Rocky Mountains, northeast towards the

present state of Nebraska, or east towards Kansas.

After the fire and floods of the mid-1860s, the older portions of Denver were rebuilt, but by the 1870s, these portions remained the same and development moved to the newer neighborhoods, especially Capitol Hill. Following the flood of 1864, those who could afford to move to higher ground did so to get away from the capricious stream. They settled in their new neighborhood, allowing them to commute into the downtown area, without having to suffer under the worsening living conditions there. Within a few years, mansions of various sizes and styles began popping up along Colfax and other streets with "no money spared, on the cupolas, towers, and mansard roofs. Most of these two and three-story homes were complete with carriage houses and servant's quarters, along with landscaped gardens, lawns and trees, and ornate wrought iron fences."[13]

In contrast however, the Five Points neighborhood on the banks of the South Platte River provided housing for the more marginalized group in society: the African Americans. The effects of the Jim Crow laws that followed soon after the Civil War were felt even in the Colorado Territory. Relegated to the lowest-paying jobs, the African American community was forced to live in the most unwanted location in Denver, along the polluted and noisy South Platte River and alongside the new railroad line. The Five Points neighborhood was originally a place filled with German and Jewish immigrants. The arrival of the railroad and its low-paying jobs for African Americans, meant that the neighborhood soon became the residence for these workers, especially because of its proximity to the rail lines.[14]

Figure 3.2 – Denver in 1872

With the prospect of further building development, a Denver real estate agency, Thayer &

[13] Dorsett, *The Queen City*, 88

[14] Laurie R. Simmons and Thomas H. Simmons, *Denver Neighborhood History Project, 1993-94: Five Points Neighborhood*, (Denver: Front Range Research Associates, Inc. 1995), 17

Stubbs published a real estate map of its proposed future for Denver. Additional irrigation ditches spider out from the river confluence. The Excelsior Mill and Merchants Mill ditches branch southwards away from the South Platte River and feed into West Denver and subsequently the Capitol Hill neighborhood.

Additional lines were also made to the railways in Denver. In the previous map, the train lines stopped in downtown East Denver, while in this map they extend into West Denver and then south away from the city. Instead of terminating at Wynkoop and "K" Street, the line continued along Wynkoop, across the Cherry Creek, and along 2nd street in West Denver, before turning south and following Adams Street south. This line then turned into the Denver and Rio Grande Railroad and continued to Santa Fe, New Mexico. Even with all this new growth, the main train depot remained in its original location on Block 25.

This map does not give us any clues to new buildings, but there was an advance in new green spaces. We see evidence of a "Villa Park" located south of Colfax Avenue and Boulevard Avenue, which had been extended. This park featured winding pathways and nodes of landscaping within a rectangular plot. There is not too much detail here, and it can be assumed that it is a proposed garden, not an accurate account of what was really there. On the opposite corner of the city was the state fairgrounds. While they appeared in the last map, here they are given more definition. At the northeast corner of the Five Points neighborhood is the Ford Park, which was a one mile horse track. A plot of ground was also slated for fairground use just north of the horse track, but no other details are shown.

3.5 Further Development

Figure 3.3 – Further development in 1872

This map, drawn by J.H. Bonsall and E.H. Kellogg, Surveyors and Draftsmen from Denver, looks almost identical to the map drawn by Thayer & Stubbs.

The Bonsall & Kellogg map is instrumental to any study of early Denver because it pinpointed landmark buildings. The location of the First National Bank was still on Block 20, on the southwest corner of "G" and Blake Streets. The Colorado National Bank was on Block 43, on the southeast corner of "F" and Holladay Streets. The American House, one of the first hotels in Denver, was on Block 19, on the southwest corner of "F" and Blake Streets. The first Presbyterian Church was down on Block 73, on the east side of "E" Street. The Congregational Church was on Block 107, on the northwest corner of "F" and Curtis streets. Wolfe Hall, a women's seminary school, was located on Block 120, on the northeast corner of "G" and Champa streets.

Figure 3.4 – Aerial view of Denver in 1874

If we fast forward to 1874 we see a different view of Denver. This map was more of an artistic rendering of an aerial view of Denver, drawn by Eli Sheldon Glover. Glover was based in Colorado and specialized in aerial drawings such as these, creating similar aerial maps of Black Hawk, Georgetown, Golden, Colorado Springs, and Pueblo. In light of the rapid development of the West, the need for romanticized cityscapes became popular. These drawings, while not entirely accurate in terms of the individual buildings and architectural details, were created to bolster civic pride in a city and also to promote and attract business investment in cities. They would sell for a couple of dollars a print. With the intent of romanticizing a town, these images "show bustling, prosperous communities, with modern industry, transportation, and

cultural facilities."[15]

Drawn from the perspective of the corner of the river confluence and looking southeast, the Glover print depicted Denver as it began to sprawl outward and away from the dense city center. Just east of the confluence, a natural levee system is seen. The Denver Pacific Rail line which followed the South Platte River into town was placed high on a constructed berm. The river bottom was unoccupied and filled with vegetation and trees. The land berms, constructed for flood control, continued down Cherry Creek. All the buildings that used to occupy the land where the berms were constructed were gone.

The Denver Pacific Rail line still passed through downtown East Denver while following the path of the South Platte River. The line then continued into West Denver before it continued and turned south. The print above shows a bit more of the surrounding area around the railway lines, however. The land between the train depot and the South Platte seemed to be reserved for industrial purposes. The Holly Water Works buildings were also located at the "F" Street bridge in West Denver along the riverfront. It also appeared that most of the buildings that line the railway were industrial and warehouses, large storage yards and containers.

The main focus of this map was on the downtown area of Denver. Most of the artists that drew these maps actually walked the streets of the cities they studied so their overall urban layout can be trusted, if not the smaller building details. This map still showed the commercial district of East Denver along the "F" Street corridor. With the exception of "F" Street, most of the building fronts faced the named streets like Blake and Larimer, and showed their sides to the numbered streets. We see alleyways cut down the center of the blocks and parallel to the named streets. The commercial sector was heavily developed alongside the Cherry Creek and Blake, Holladay, Larimer, and Lawrence Streets that bridge over into West Denver. It also appeared that

[15] Naomi Heiser, “Mapmakers and Viewmakers.”, libpress.colorado.edu, October 24, 2014, Web, July 17, 2015.

the boundary between the commercial districts and the residential were along "H" Street on the east side and Arapahoe Street on the south side. The residential blocks that extended away from the Central Business District went from very dense rows of houses to sparsely occupied blocks. Other buildings, such as churches, were clearly distinguishable among the homes but hard to differentiate.

Interestingly enough, the block later occupied by the Capitol Building was platted on the far edge of the map, but no building was shown there. A notation made at the end of this map mentioned how much Denver had grown in its civic institutions, stating that the city of 17,000 inhabitants had "5 railroad lines, 8 newspapers, 7 banking institutions, 4 public schools, 2 seminaries, and 13 churches."[16]

3.6 Denver, Capital City of the State of Colorado

Figure 3.5 – Map of Denver in 1878

In 1887, the opposing grids of West and East Denver were renamed to unify them across Cherry Creek. The named streets of East Denver stretched across to take over the numbered ones of West Denver, and the lettered streets of East Denver became numbered. The numbered streets stretched across and extended in decreasing order towards the southwest corner of West Denver. This can be misleading since it can lead to the false conclusion that the origin of Denver was at this point when it really took place at the confluence. Colfax Avenue stretched west, across the South Platte River and made connections to the diagonal streets of the older grid systems. The grid system of Lincoln Park and Capitol Hill were disparate and uneven, which meant city blocks varied in size depending on who owned the land and who plotted it. The section of Capitol Hill owned by William Evans is sectioned up differently than the adjacent

[16] Eli Sheldon Glover, *Denver, Colorado, 1874,* Map, 1874, 17 Jun. 2015

addition owned by Henry Brown. These uneven additions led to misaligned roads and weird connections. The old city grid intersected with the new grid by the extension of 23rd street southeast through the eastern portion of the Capitol Hill neighborhood.

New railroad lines are also added in this map. The original Denver Pacific Railway line still ran down Wynkoop Street into West Denver, but another line was added north in Wewatta Street. Smaller, pedestrian railway lines were added throughout the city at this time. The streets of Larimer, Champa, Welton, 6th, part of 15th, 16th, 21st, and Broadway all had smaller horse-drawn rail lines down them. It is important to note however, that the horse-drawn railway lines only went around the perimeter of the Capitol Hill neighborhood, but not down the main streets, whereas the Five Points neighborhood was streaked with them.

Some of the main commercial and civic buildings from the 1860s still remained in the commercial district in downtown East Denver. According to this map, the American House, one of the first high-end hotels, had moved east from Block 19 to Block 20 and occupied the southwest corner on 16th and Blake Streets. The U.S. Mint still occupied the southeast corner of Block 42, at the intersection of 16th and Holladay streets. The First National Bank headquarters as well, was on Block 47, and occupied the corner of 16th and Larimer Streets. The Colorado National Bank had remained in its original building on Block 43, on the southeast corner of 15th and Holladay Streets. No notation was made for the original 1st Presbyterian Church on Block 73, but a new Central Presbyterian Church is shown on Block 128, on the northeast corner of 18th and Champa Streets. The Congregational Church was still on Block 107, on the northwest corner of 15th and Curtis Streets. Wolfe Hall was also still on the northeast corner of 16th and Champa Streets, although the block number changed to 129.

The advent of the railroad did not trigger an immediate explosion in the size of Denver,

but it helped start it. Denver in the 1870s was a city preparing and preening itself for the future. With the Civil War behind it, the nation was looking forward to a brighter future, and Denver provided the perfect setting.

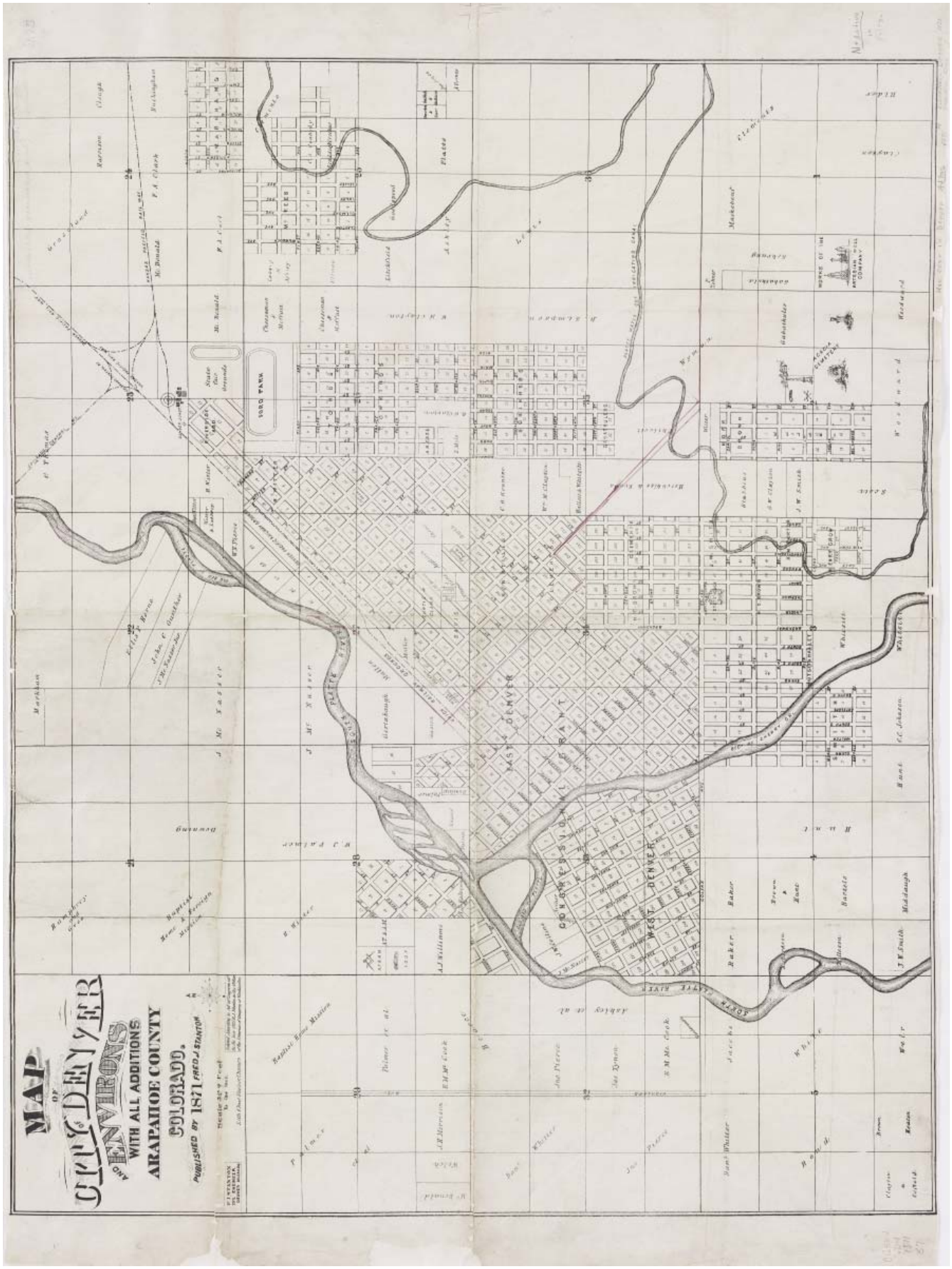

Figure 3.1 - Stanton Map with railroad proposal

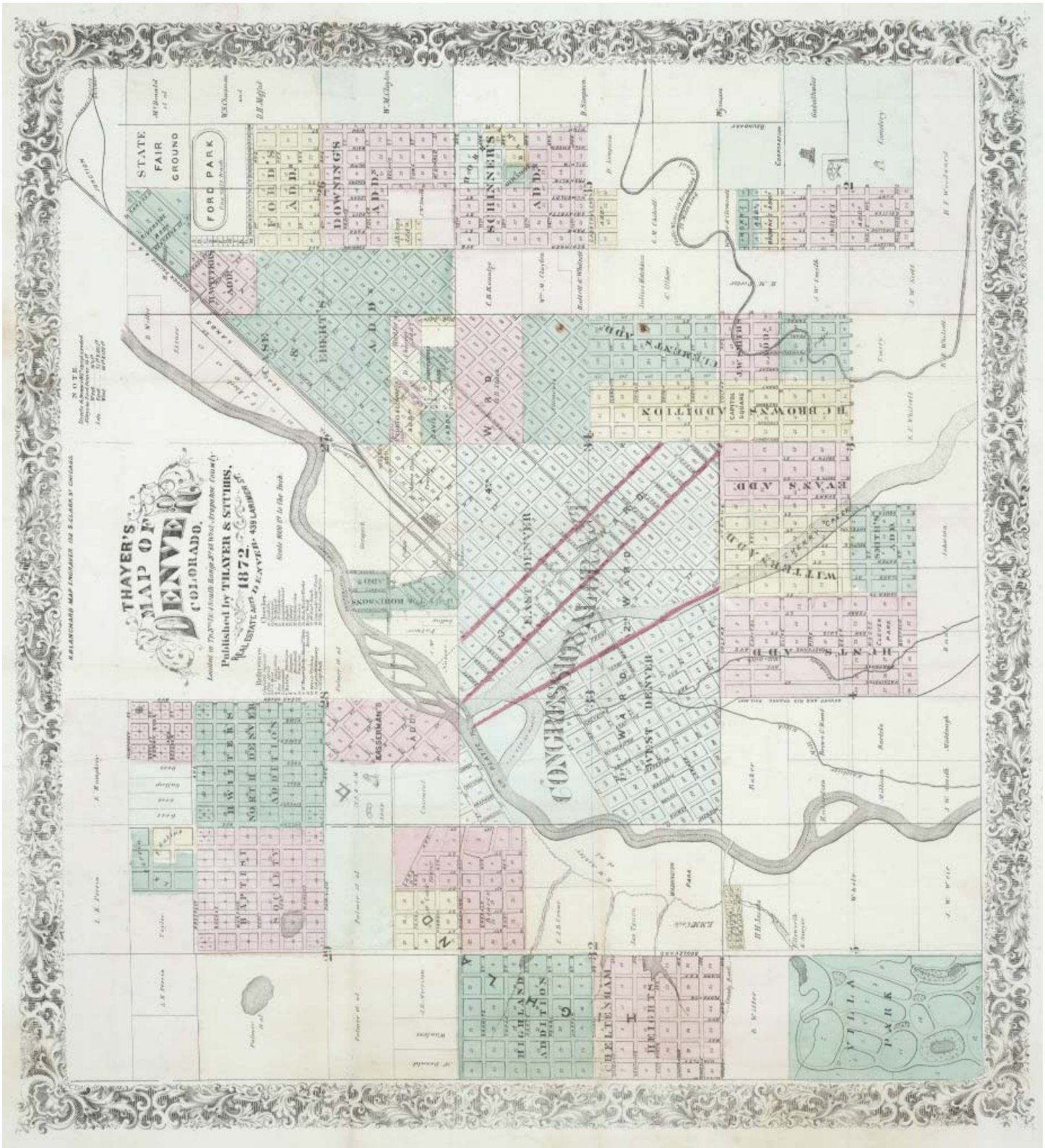

Figure 3.2 - Thayer & Stubbs Denver Map - 1872

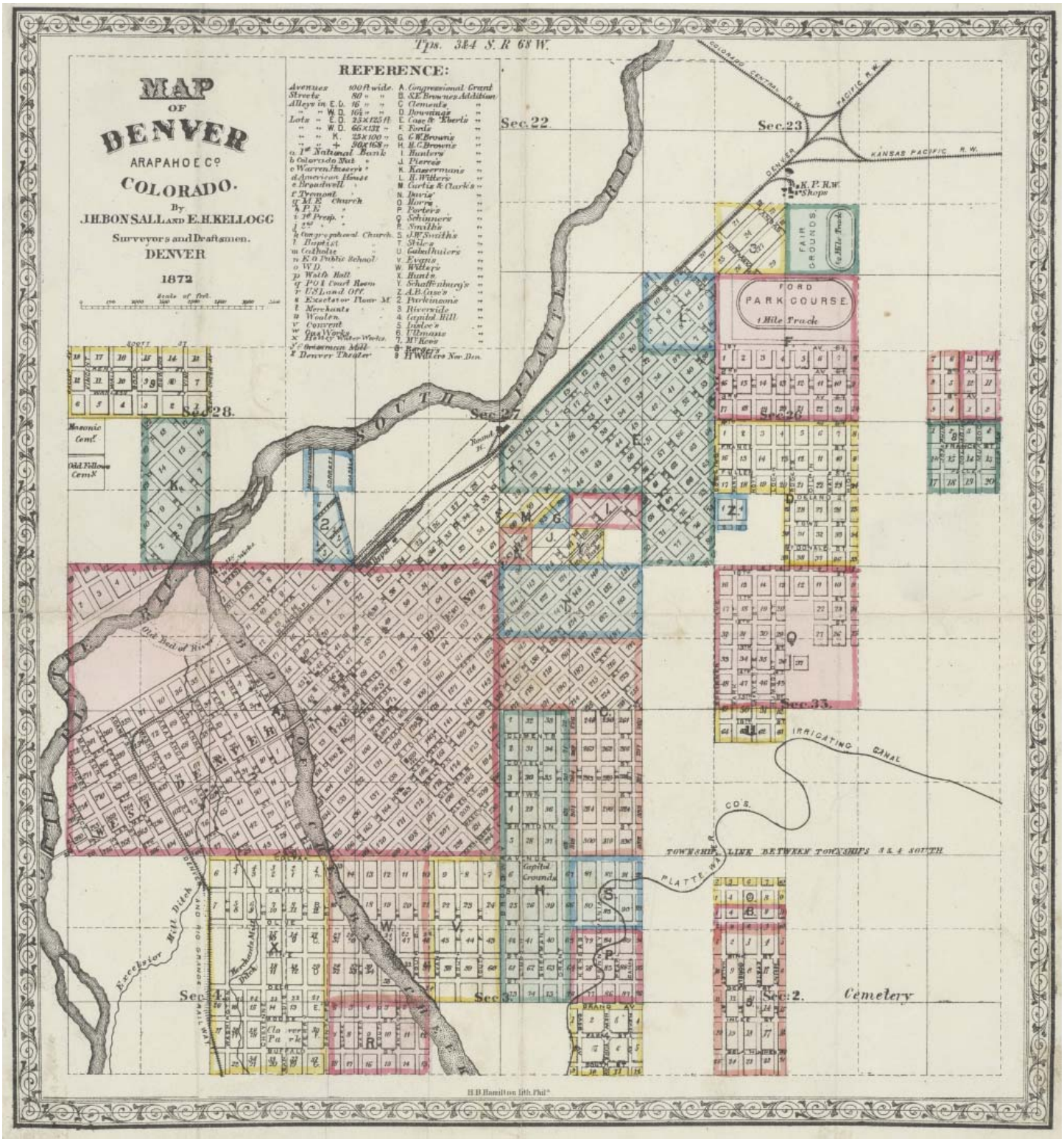

Figure 3.3 - Bonsall & Kellog Map of 1872

Figure 3.4 -- Aerial view of Denver in 1874 by Eli Glover

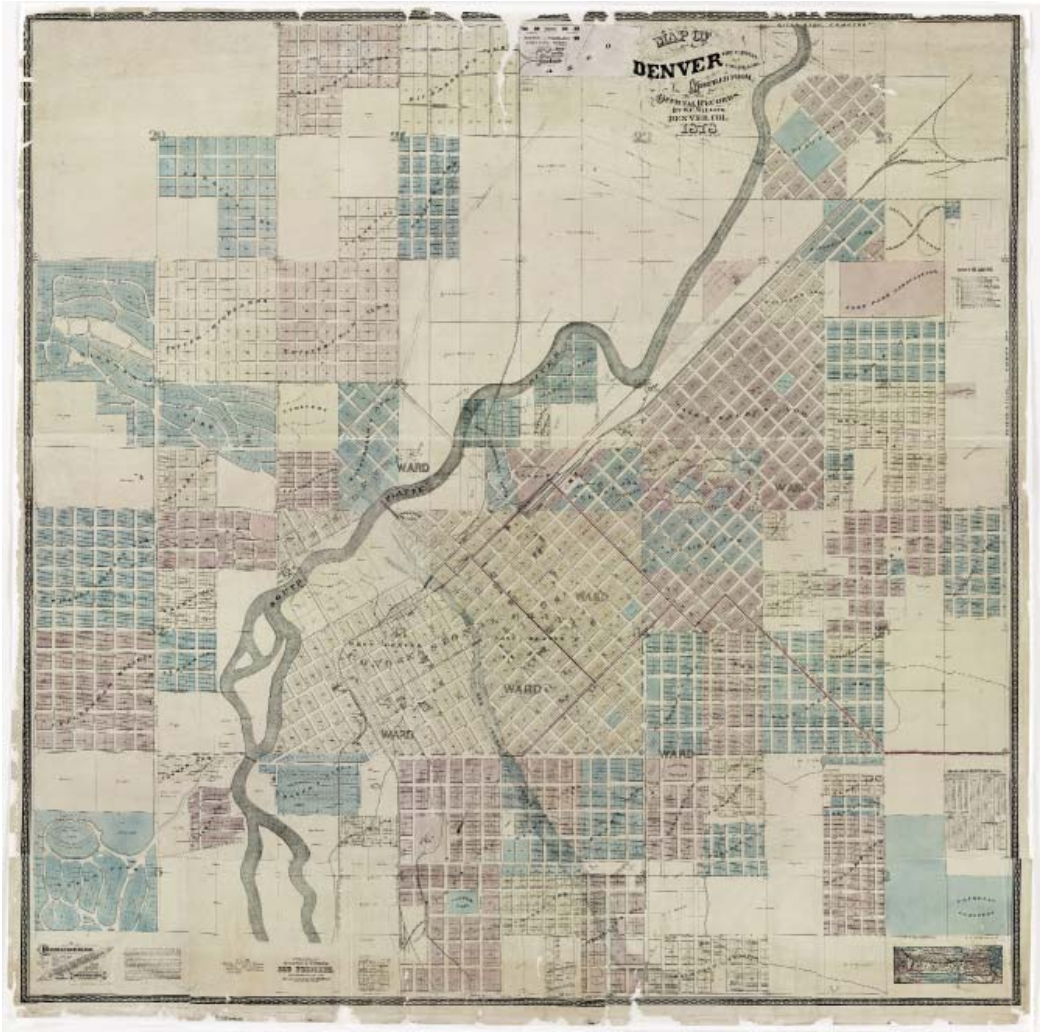

Figure 3.5 - Map of Denver in 1878

Chapter 4 – "The Prosperous 80s"

4.1 Population Boom

The building and population boom may never have happened in Denver during the late 1880s without the success of the town of Leadville in the mountains. Similar to how gold ore was the match that sparked the founding of the Cherry Creek settlements, silver ignited the growth of Leadville, and by association, the city of Denver.

Denver, leading up to the decade of the 1880s, had been laying the groundwork for an anticipated population flood, but the interest in the city was still lukewarm. Mines in the California Gulch, roughly 100 miles southwest of Denver, opened in 1874 to mine gold, but soon large silver deposits were found. In just a few years, "miners from all over the Rockies sank prospecting shafts and piled up ore for local processing or shipment to the lowlands."[1]

By 1880, Leadville was one of the biggest producers of silver in the state. Lead and silver were trading at high prices, silver so much so that "the value of the output was averaging over $14,000,000 per year."[2] The prominence of silver on the ore market at this time led the State of Colorado to be nicknamed the "Silver State". And once again, Denver became the supply center for a mining town.

4.2 Infrastructural Developments

The "bonanza" of the Leadville silver mines triggered a population boom in Colorado. With the discovery of silver came all the secondary business opportunities, especially in Denver. By the end of the 1870s, Denver became inundated with new immigrants and had the

[1] Abbot, *Colorado: A History of the Centennial State*, 104
[2] Hafen, *Colorado*, 235

infrastructure in place to handle it.

It is estimated that by the mid-1880s that "the population had increased nearly sixty per cent in five years."[3] For any city, this kind of population increase is large, but in the case of Denver, it meant the difference between a fragile, pioneering town, and a strong, multifaceted city. As a result of the influx in population, another source of wealth arose, real estate speculation. During the 1870s, Denver's population and building stock were still primarily confined to the original Congressional Grant, huddled up against the riverbanks to the west.

Some wealthier men, like Henry Brown, bought plots of land outside the Congressional Grant for relatively cheap prices. Not foreseeing the potential value of this land, plots that lay outside the city "could have been bought for $150 or $200 each, because the district was expected to remain on the outskirts, and it was not expected that the town would encroach upon Capitol Hill within the lifetime of any one then, if it ever did."[4]

While Denver had the means to get people into the city, and industries to employ them, the city could not house all of them. Given the stagnant growth,

> by midsummer of 1871 the entire city contained but 1,128 buildings of all kinds, one-half of them less than two stories high, and but few of them three. Generally, those more recently built were of brick, but a large proportion of the dwellings were frame, and there were still many log structures surviving from the pioneer era. The town as a whole consisted of buildings of a very inferior character if measured by present standards.[5]

And it was not just residences of varying typologies that were built, but buildings for the rest of the social fabric, including churches, schools, and new businesses. Some of the crown jewels of Denver's early architecture were built during this time period, such as the Tabor Grand Opera House, Denver Union Station, Trinity United Methodist Church, the Brown Palace and

[3] Smiley, *History of Denver*, 482
[4] Smiley, *History of Denver*, 480
[5] Smiley, *History of Denver*, 480

Windsor Hotels, and the Colorado National Bank Building.

4.3 City Growth

Figure 4.1 – Map of Denver in 1882

This aerial map showed Denver expanding out and away from the original Congressional Grant land. The outlying additions were platted and intersected with roads. The city was built up to the edges of these additions but had not quite spilled over into them as it would at the end of the decade. This map provided clues to other urban developments. The bridges that spanned Cherry Creek now appear to be made of iron, or some other kind of metal work, instead of the previous wooden bridges. We also see levees lining Cherry Creek, where before houses were built up right along the edge of the creek on the river bed. For the first time, Cherry Creek's route through the city was controlled and regulated.

The main railway lines still passed along the river route into West Denver before they turned south, but new branches had sprouted away from it. The Denver Circular Railroad cut away from the mainline in West Denver and headed south along the banks of the Cherry Creek on 13th Street. New lines are also seen coming into Union Depot from the north through the Highland neighborhood.

The industrial sector of Denver was located on this narrow strip of land between the South Platte River and the beginning of the city grid. The area was lined with railroad tracks, warehouses and industrial buildings. The Union Depot was still on the northeast corner of 18th and Wewatta Streets. The Gasworks and Steam Heating Company buildings were also extant, located just across 18th Street. While not noted, the Holly Water Works was still located at the 15th Street bridge on the South Platte riverbed

The commercial district was still bounded by the same streets; 18th Street to the east,

Arapahoe Street to the south, Cherry Creek to the west, and Wynkoop Street to the north. Like Glover's map from the previous decade, this map meant to romanticize the allure of Denver. Viewers saw a dense, bustling city, nestled up against two rivers with fertile lands on the outskirts for people to eventually occupy. Around the edges of the map are drawings of the large civic buildings in Denver. We see the grandeur of City Hall, Union Depot, Central Presbyterian and St. John's Church, Tabor Block, and the Tabor Opera House, that created the enticing image of a cosmopolitan city.

Figure 4.2 – Map of Denver in 1886

Rollandet's guide map, drawn in 1886, was one of the first maps created specifically for visitors to Denver. It gave a listing of all the major public buildings in the city and railroad and electric cable car lines. The old city grids of West and East Denver have remained relatively the same, but the major changes seemed to come in the Capitol Hill neighborhood. The inconsistencies in the platting of the additions had been fixed, finally making the Capitol Hill neighborhood one cohesive, gridded place.

New railroad lines are seen passing through Denver, especially lines that came in from the north. The Denver Marshall & Boulder, Colorado Central, Denver Utah & Pacific, and Burlington Railroads all descended from the north and passed over the South Platte River into Union Depot. The Denver Texas Gulf and Denver & South Park Railroads also branched away from the Denver & Rio Grande rail line as it headed south.

Street car lines were added in the mid-1870s and helped spur the growth of the suburbs. Lines spread eastward into the Five Points neighborhood, providing the lower-income residents with transportation access to the downtown area. Streetcar lines are seen on Larimer, 16th, Arapahoe, Champa, Stout, California, and Welton Streets, crisscrossing all over the downtown area. One line even extended south on 16th Street and continued south on Broadway Avenue

into the Capitol Hill neighborhood. Another line zigzagged its way through onto 13th Street south and then turned west on 11th Avenue, into the Capitol Hill neighborhood. Just like the residents of the Five Points neighborhood, the residents of Capitol Hill enjoyed access to the busy commercial district without having to live there.

4.4 Robinson's Atlas of 1887

Figure 4.3 – Robinson's Atlas Cover Page

Following the street name change in 1887, a new master map of Denver needed to be drawn, and an opportunity to create an accurate survey of the buildings and neighborhoods of Denver was presented. A huge advancement in the understanding of Denver's architecture and urban planning came from the 1887 Robinson Atlas. Civil engineers Elisha Robinson, Geo. E. Ryan, and R.H. Pidgeon from New York City were commissioned to record, survey, and draw all the occupied lots in Denver. It is the first close look at how the city changed street to street, instead of neighborhood to neighborhood.

Figure 4.4 – Robinson's Atlas Plate 1

Plate I was focused right over the confluence of the two main rivers. Here there was the border between the industrial riverbanks and the beginning of the commercial district. The buildings in the industrial sector, north of Wynkoop Street, were still made of wood and smaller in scale. The railroad lines passed through many of the blocks on this side, so it is safe to assume they were storage and industrial sheds. This type of use was continued along the rail line into West Denver. South of Wynkoop began the business district. Most of the blocks shown were densely packed with buildings all constructed from brick. These commercial buildings all faced the named streets that run east/west, with the exception of the 15th Street corridor. Noteworthy buildings on this block were the Union Depot, the American House, the U.S. Mint, the Post

Office, and the Barth Hotel.

Figure 4.5 – Robinson's Atlas Plate 3

Plate III was centered over the downtown commercial district. The edge of the industrial sector with the railways was just to the north along Wazee and some of Blake Street, to the south the blocks became more densely occupied. The majority of the buildings within this section were brick and most blocks were completely filled in on all sides. This plate displayed the subtle transition away from the downtown commercial district, southeast toward the more residential parts of the Five Points neighborhood. Some notable places on this Plate were the Tabor block on Block 68, the German Methodist Church on Block 77, and the Windsor hotel on Block 49.

Figure 4.6 – Robinson's Atlas Plate 4

Plate IV moved further south into the downtown area, into the older residential neighborhoods. The buildings were a mix of brick and wood and occupied individual lots on their blocks. The most notable buildings within this plate were actually churches, showing the diversity of faith and ethnicity in the growing population. The First Baptist Church and the Central Presbyterian Church were on Block 128. The American Methodist Church was on Block 142, the Swedish Church was on Block 158, and the Zion Baptist Church was on Block 93.

Figure 4.7 – Robinson's Atlas Plate 6

Plate VI moved south of Colfax Avenue and east of Broadway Avenue, right into the heart of the Capitol Hill neighborhood. This was a residential neighborhood that was very different from the ones seen before. The structures were larger and occupied more than one lot on the block, and with smaller structures behind that lined the alleyway. These smaller structures, we can assume, were carriage houses and stables for horses or even possibly extra storage sheds. The larger buildings that lined the front of the blocks were mansions, some of considerable size.

The Courthouse was probably the most notable building on this plate, being one of the few buildings in the city that was constructed from stone and was the only building that occupied the center of its own block (208). The First Congressional Church was on Block 174 along with the exclusive men's saloon, the Denver Club.

Figure 4.8 – Robinson's Atlas Plate 13

Plate XIII moved north, over the Five Points area. The streets of the old East Denver grid spread out along the pathway of the river with small buildings on blocks, but this neighborhood was different from Capitol Hill. While the buildings were a mix of brick and wood and small in size, they were packed more tightly into the center of the block, which made it more dense.

This block still had industrial buildings lining it to the north along the riverbed and scattered throughout the neighborhood. A lumberyard occupied Block 15, and a carriage factory on Block 52. Some churches also found their homes in this region too. Temple Emmanuel was on Block 116 and Trinity Memorial Church was on Block 118.

4.5 Architecture and the Gilded Age

During this time, the United States was in the midst of the Gilded Age. Fortunes had been made in the railroads, oil, and gold industries, and the cities reflected this, and Denver was no different. Just like the eastern seaboard, mansions of almost grotesque size began popping up and competing with one another as to whose could be the most luxurious. Large investments in public building projects were also made.

The 1880s saw some important structures built in Denver. The high-profile residents of Denver wanted to compete with the fashionable cities of the East and had the capital to do it. Instead of hiring famous architects from eastern cities, Denver was built on the designs of young architects who made their careers building Denver's new image. These architects, who are

discussed later, brought the popular styles to the West, and transformed them to create a unique and cohesive architectural image.

Buildings meant to display the owner's, and by reflection Denver's, success began popping up all over the city. Extravagant hotels, like the Windsor and the future Brown Palace Hotel, spared no expense on luxury and style. Entertainment venues, like the Tabor Grand Opera House, were also extravagantly luxurious, and drew large crowds, not just from Denver, but all over Colorado. With a strong infrastructure and dedicated citizens who used their own personal fortunes to benefit the city, Denver finally became a metropolis to rival any city on either coast.

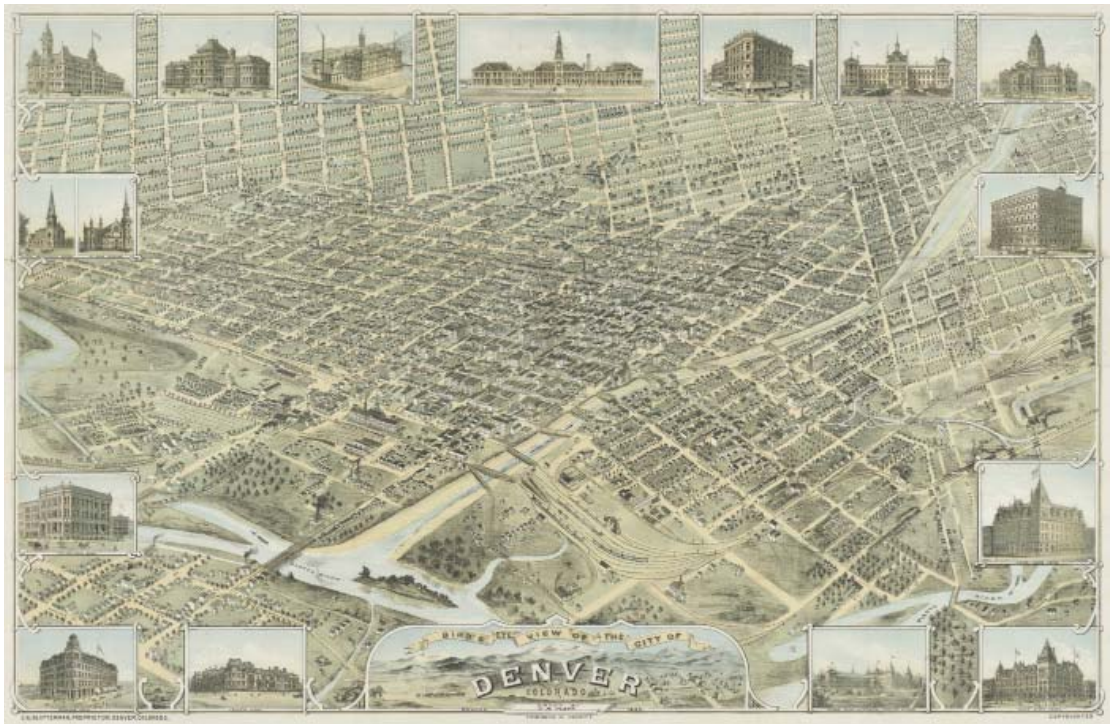

Figure 4.1 - Map of Denver in 1882

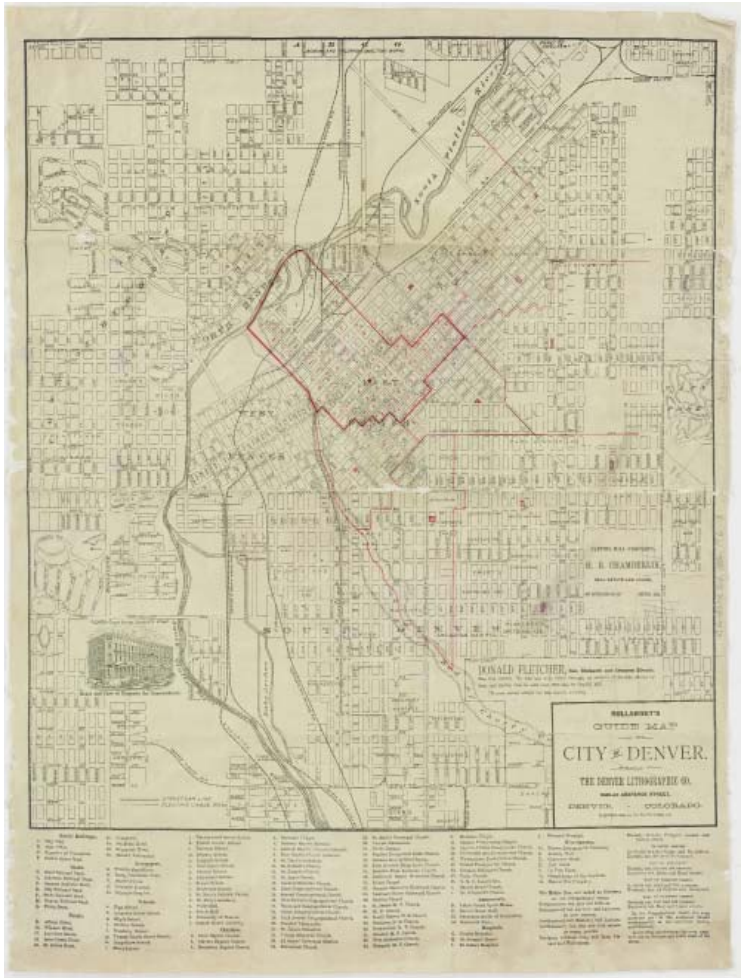

Figure 4.2 - Rollandet map of Denver in 1886

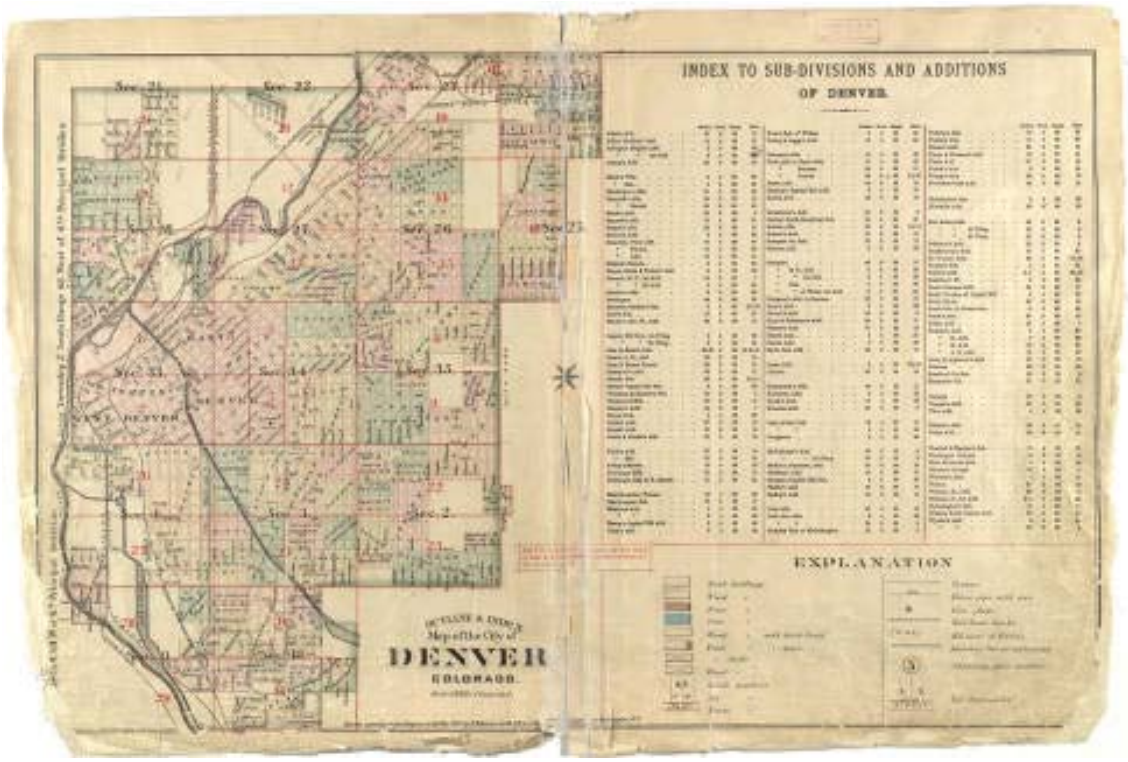

Figure 4.3 - Robinson's Atlas Cover Page

Figure 4.4 - Robinson's Atlas Plate 01

Figure 4.5 - Robinson's Atlas Plate 03

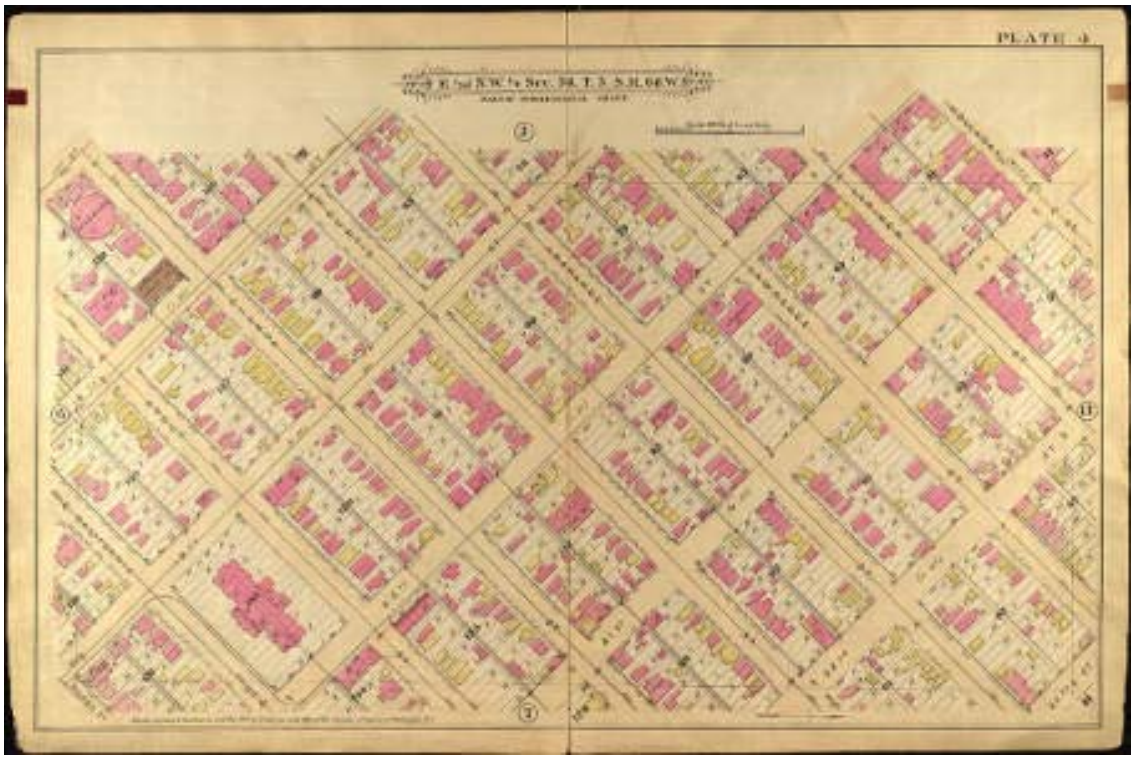

Figure 4.6 - Robinson's Atlas Plate 04

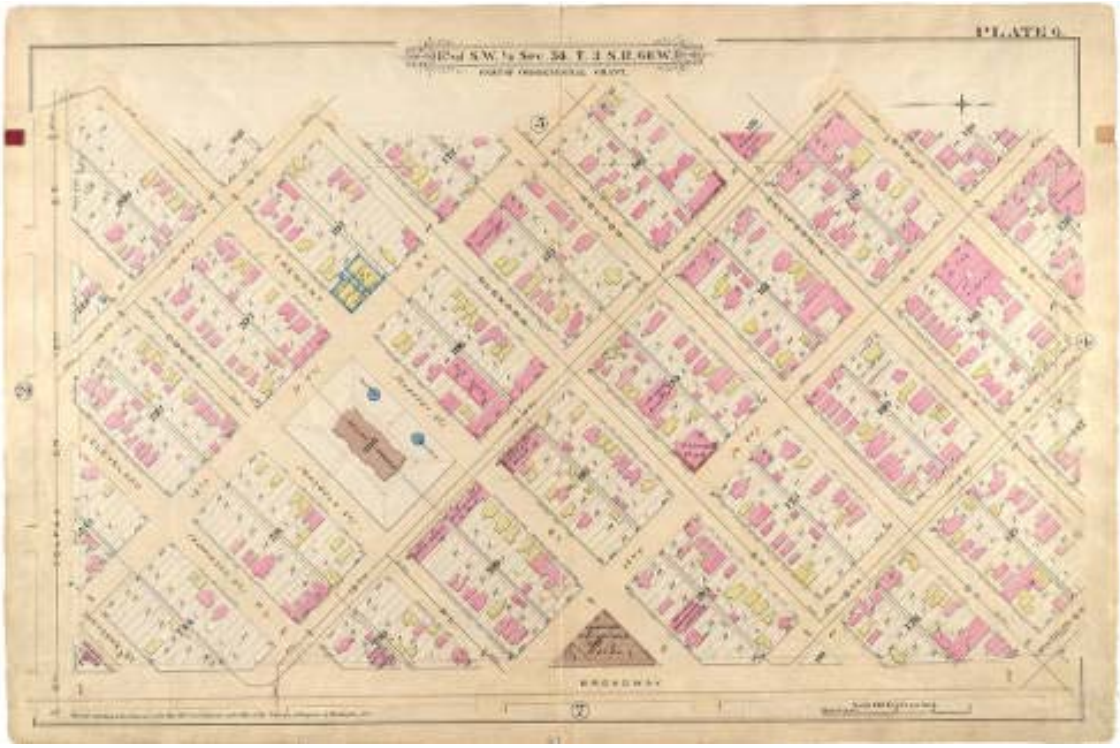

Figure 4.9 - Robinson's Atlas Plate 06

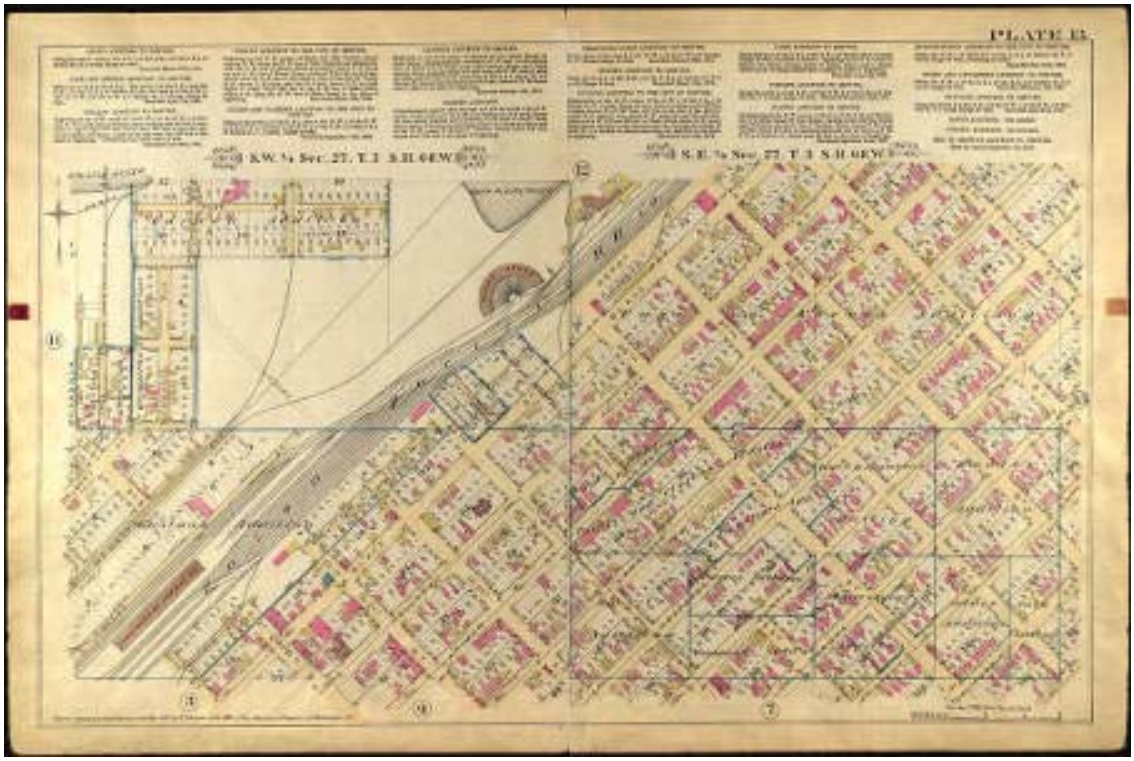

Figure 4.11 - Robinson's Atlas Plate 13

Chapter 5 – The Correction of the 1890s

5.1 Optimism at the turn of the decade

A lot of time and money was invested in the development of Denver's architecture, and the results were large and luxurious buildings built during the late 1880s. This optimistic feeling, while fleeting, continued into the next decade but was soon extinguished. The basis of Denver's economic success at this time rested upon one commodity, silver ore, which was at the mercy of the economy and politics of the larger United States. The seeds for the Panic of 1893, which brought Colorado's economy to its knees, were sown two decades earlier with the Coinage Act of 1873.

5.2 Coinage Act of 1873

Since 1792, the nation's currency had been minted from both gold and silver, a method known as bimetallism. The Coinage Act of 1873 was passed in April of that year, and abolished the use of silver to be coined into currency, in favor of the gold standard.

The dramatic backlash and drop in silver prices caused the federal government to backtrack and pass the Bland-Allison Act of 1878, just five years later. This was fortuitous timing for the town of Leadville in Colorado, which had begun extracting large amounts of silver ore only a year earlier. While the Bland-Allison Act essentially restored bimetallism to the nation's currency system, it was a very weak solution to a deeper problem. Gold was still the preferable metal to mint money, and the amount of silver ore that was being mined was still exceeding the demand, causing the price to fall again.

The citizens of Colorado, with their future economic survival based on the nation's full

return to bimetallism, threw its support behind the "Free Silver" movement of the late 1870s. While the previous Bland-Allison Act required the federal government to purchase between $2 to $4 million of silver each month[1], it was not enough to keep up with the supply. The solution seemed to come in another government initiative to buy up the nation's silver supply. The Sherman Silver Purchase Act of 1890, required the federal government to purchase 4.5 million ounces of silver each month.[2] However, once again, the demand for silver was still not high enough, and the price of silver continued to fall. With the prospect of the nation moving towards the gold standard, businessmen in Colorado began to feel anxious. For the next two years supporters of the "Free Silver" movement pushed back against the gold standard with diminishing results.

The effects of the decline in the price of silver started to seep into other sectors of Colorado's economy. Mines were closing which hurt the businesses that supplied them, causing a ripple effect throughout the rest of the state. According to historian Edgar Robinson, "the Panic broke in full fury in mid-July [1893]. People swarmed the streets. They stormed the banks amid scenes of wild disorder. In three days ten banks closed in Denver alone, while throughout the state, banks came down with a crash. Numbers of other business houses went to the wall. The real estate bubble in Denver burst, and building and loan associations went bankrupt."[3]

The Sherman Silver Purchase Act took the blame for the slump and was repealed at the end of the year, but a depression had set in after the initial panic, and persisted for several years to come. Many remedies were proposed, such as lowering interest rates on loans, but the root of

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[1] Edgar Eugene Robinson, "United States", http://www.britannica.com/place/United-States/History, n.d., Web., October 4, 2015

[2] Edgar Eugene Robinson, "United States", http://www.britannica.com/place/United-States/History, n.d., Web, October 4, 2015

[3] Hafen, *Colorado*, 252

the problem could not be fixed. The silver problem dominated the state legislature and following elections with no solid solution within sight. The state hoped for a return of bimetallism to provide a buyer for Colorado silver, but it was not to be. The election of William McKinley for President of the United States in 1896, a supporter of the gold standard, ended all hopes for the return to bimetallism.

5.3 Sprawl

The economic upheaval during this time cost many men their fortunes, but very little changed with regards to Denver and its growth. In 1895, ten years after its previous guide map, Rollandet published a new one, which showed how much the city had expanded. Suburbs began stretching away eastward, southward, and westward across the South Platte River. This map does not signify how much of the new suburbs were occupied, but the growth spurt was a tangible one.

Figure 5.1 – Map of Denver in 1893

In previous maps, City Park was the eastern extent of the city, with plots laid out but haphazardly and seemingly at random. In this map, City Park was surrounded by new development, with the land on all four sides plotted out. The new sections of the city that spread away from the core, instead of demolishing the original grid of the city, encircled and contained it. The same can be said of the land south of the Lincoln Park and Capitol Hill neighborhoods. The grids of both neighborhoods extended the same distance south, until they reached 6th Avenue, which ran parallel to Colfax Avenue. On the other side of 6th Avenue, another parallel grid began but with different plot sizes and road orientations.

5.4 Diversity within the city

By now the city of Denver had grown too big to be viewed at a large scale. Up until this time too, the population was relatively homogenous with some sections of the city housing minorities, such as the African American community within the Five Points neighborhood. After the population growth spurt of the 1880s, the demographics of Denver became more diverse and the urban neighborhoods established their own individual identities.

5.4.1 Union Station Neighborhood

Starting at the origin of Denver, the river confluence, the Union Station neighborhood took form. This neighborhood was bound by the rivers to the north and west, 20th Street to the east, and Market Street (formerly Holladay Street) to the south. Named for the train depot at the center, this neighborhood was a mix of industrial and commercial enterprises. This was a busy and bustling area of town, with passengers flowing to and from Union Station and cargo transported from the trains. The Holly Water Works and other industrial buildings still lined the train tracks and river banks. Further south of the depot was the start of the commercial sector of the city, and some of its more squalid districts. Stretching south to Market Street and east to 20th Street, lay "Hop Alley", or the Chinese neighborhood, and the red light district of Denver, that had been there for three decades.

The Chinese arrived at the same time as the railroads and settled, somewhat peacefully, in the Union Station neighborhood. The bordello district of the city had existed since its start in the early 1860s, and had been centered along Holladay Street. After McGaa Street was changed to Holladay, the Holladay family petitioned the city of Denver to change the street name again to remove any inference of the name Holladay with the bordello culture.[4] Holladay Street was renamed Market Street, and in 1915, was broken up again. Market Street terminated at Park

[4] Goodstein, *Denver Streets*, 6

Avenue and became Walnut Street, saving the residents the shame of being associated with the red light district.

Figure 5.2 – Block 18 from Wazee Street

This image was taken of John Tham's horse and buggy service company on Wazee Street that faced Block 18. The streets were unpaved and raised wooden platforms served as sidewalks. Three buggies with fashionable passengers waited outside in the street, with the buggy backed up against the boardwalks. Another buggy exited the stables to the west of the main office building.

The building that housed the John Tham's office had two levels. The bottom level had storefront windows with shades pulled down against the harsh afternoon sun, and the upper level had four smaller arched windows. The building was mainly constructed from red brick, with the detailing also in brick, and included the dentils that lined the cornice on top of the facade and the ornamental arches over the second-story windows.

Figure 5.3 – Block 14 on the left and Block E on the right

This photo was taken on 17th street, looking north towards the old Union Station in the background. Block 14 was to the left with the Oxford Hotel on its east side. The brick building on Block E to the right was the Hendrie and Bolthoff Manufacturing and Supply Company. Men sat at tables outside the front entrance, while a young boy approached a bicycle lying on its side by the street. The streets are paved and lined with streetcar rails, with a streetcar approaching Union Station in the distance. We also see how the downtown streets accommodated a variety of modes of transportation. Horses and buggies were relegated to the sides of the streets, both for parking and travel, while the streetcars moved down the center.

5.4.2 Central Business District (CBD) Neighborhood

Directly south of Market Street was the Central Business District (CBD). This neighborhood is bordered by Market Street to the north, 20th Street and Broadway Boulevard to

the east, Colfax Avenue to the south, and Cherry Creek to the west. This neighborhood transitioned away from the transient culture of the Union Station neighborhood and into the business heart of Denver. This sector of Denver hosted the largest business blocks, civic service buildings, and other public structures. For all the residents of Denver who moved to the suburbs, this was the district to which they traveled for work.

Figure 5.4 – Block 75 from the intersection of 16th and Arapahoe streets

This photo was of the southeast corner of the United States Post Office, located on the southeast corner of Block 75, at the intersection of 16th and Arapahoe Streets. Both streets are unpaved but the sidewalks are, and horses and buggies are visible on both streets along with street car lines.

The Post Office was a typical rectangular Beaux Arts building with a twist in regards to the dome. Like the Denver County Courthouse, the building was split into three distinguished levels, but the roof treatment was different. Instead of being a dome, the tower was capped with a mansard roof and a small cupola. The main entrance appeared to be on the long side of the rectangle that faced 16th Street, although horse carriages and passengers linger on Arapahoe Street. The entrance on 16th was at street level, while the auxiliary entrance for Arapahoe was up a short flight of steps.

This bustling business block was typical of the CBD. Heavy traffic of all kinds passed on the streets, and the sidewalks were usually filled with pedestrians. The 15th and 16th street commercial corridors still anchored the business sectors.

Figure 5.5 – Blocks 44 and 45 looking north on 14th Street

This photo was taken at the intersection of 14th and Larimer Street, looking north on 14th. In the far distance a bridge crossed the confluence of the two rivers. Electric lines crossed both streets, having just been introduced in downtown Denver. Bare bulbs are seen hanging

across 14th Street at every intersection in the distance. The stone building on the left was Denver City Hall, with pedestrians waiting to cross at its street corner. The building on the right served as a boarding house with a separate business on the ground floor.

Figure – 5.6 – Block 16, on the north side of Wazee Street

This photo was of the north side of Wazee Street on Block 26. This long, brick building advertised for supplies such as towels and a meat market. Women, who probably worked in the butcher shop, are seen in the second-story windows above. Horse carriages, without their horses, were lined up on the street outside the front entrance, waiting to be loaded for delivery.

Figure 5.7 – Arapahoe County Courthouse

This image was of the northwest facade of the Denver County Courthouse. It occupied the entire Block 208 and was close to the southeastern corner of the CBD. The streets are paved and had sidewalks. Cable cars were evident along Tremont and horses and buggies were parked along Tremont as well.

The courthouse was the only building on this block, dominating the center. The landscaping consisted of pathways from all four corners of the block, and Tremont and Wasoola Streets. The negative space between these pathways was composed of manicured lawns. The building itself was a rectangular, classic Beaux Arts building, popular for civic buildings at the time. Symmetrical along the long axis, it was split into three levels that were clearly defined on the exterior facade. The building also featured the main entrance with a large arched opening on Tremont Street. A large cupola and dome sat on top of the center of the building.

Figure 5.8 – The Windsor Hotel on Block 67

This building was the Windsor Hotel on the northeast corner of Block 67, at the intersection of 18th and Larimer Streets. The surrounding streets were unpaved and with streetcar lines along Larimer Street. The sidewalks were paved, signifying that this hotel was in

a nicer neighborhood. The building was styled after French chateaus and composed of five levels, with the top level incorporating a mansard roof with dormer windows piercing through it. A tower rose up from the corner of the building with a sign that advertised "Windsor". The building was a brick structure with a stone facade, which gave it a lighter, more airy when compared with the darker, heavier buildings with brick facades that surrounded it.

Figure 5.9 – Block 100, southwest corner of 15th and Champa Streets

The Lunt & Co. House Furnishers occupied the shop on 1513 Champa Street. This large shop had a show room with storefront windows on the main floor and offices above.

Figure 5.10 – Block 174, southwest corner of 16th and Welton Streets

The Masonic Temple building, seen here, faced 16th Street. It is a rather large building, considering the surrounding context, with five stories. The building is made of the same red brick as its neighbors, and still stands on the 16th Street pedestrian mall today. The building was designed by Frank Edbrooke in the Richardsonian Romanesque style that became popular in Denver.

Figure 5.11 – Block 139

This image was taken at the intersection of 16th and California Street. Groups of pedestrians are walking up and down 16th Street, and you can see lines of horse carriages parked along 16th Street on the other side. Interestingly enough, a woman is seen walking alone on this street, without any obvious sign of a male chaperone. Large office buildings lined either side, with large awnings that shaded the ground floor entrances, but there is no signage as to what services are housed in them.

5.4.3 Auraria Neighborhood

Across Cherry Creek to the west lies the Auraria, or West Denver, neighborhood. This neighborhood was bounded by the two rivers on three sides and Colfax Avenue to the south.

This region of land was located on lower terrain and adjacent to two rivers that had a habit of flooding. As a result, this section of Denver was not a highly desirable place to live, which set rents and living conditions lower. Poorer immigrants, Eastern European Jews for example, took up residence in this neighborhood.[5] This area was not a complete a slum however. A commercial district existed close to the banks of the Cherry Creek.

Figure 5.12 – Blocks 1 and 243

This image was of the intersection of 13th and Lawrence Streets, located in the commercial section of the Auraria neighborhood, next to Cherry Creek. This view is along Lawrence Street with Block 1 in the center and the edge of Block 243 along the left side. This image was taken at the western bank of the Cherry Creek, looking into West Denver.

Horse carriages and street car lines intermixed along Lawrence Street but not 13th Street. We see the Hotel Boulevard that was on the corner of Block 1 and the Griffith Shoe Factory that was behind it. Pedestrians and horse carriages clogged 13th Street, which gave more evidence to its existence as the commercial district.

5.4.4 Five Points Neighborhood

The Five Points neighborhood was one of the oldest residential sections of Denver. Indeed, instead of drawing a new grid, the original one extended eastward outside the 1864 Congressional Grant zone. In its beginning, this neighborhood housed middle-class immigrants, mainly from Germany, but after facing persecution and housing discrimination, a wave of African Americans moved into Five Points, and displaced the previous European population.[6]

The Five Points neighborhood took its nickname from the intersection of 27th Street, 26th Avenue, Washington Street, and Welton Street. This nickname met with some resistance from

[5] Laurie R. Simmons and Thomas H. Simmons, *Denver Neighborhood History Project, 1993-94: Overview History of Denver Neighborhood Development,* (Denver: Front Range Research Associates, Inc. 1995), 33

[6] Laurie R. Simmons and Thomas H. Simmons, *Denver Neighborhood History Project, 1993-94: Five Points Neighborhood,* (Denver: Front Range Research Associates, Inc. 1995), 17

some Denver residents who feared this neighborhood would be compared to the infamous slum in lower Manhattan. Despite its unpopular connotations, the name "Five Points" stuck. This neighborhood was bound by the South Platte River to the north, 20th Street to the west, 20th and Park Avenue to the south, and Downing Street to the east. Perhaps because of the social exclusion from the rest of Denver's society, the African American community relied upon themselves and grew a small city within Denver. Instead of falling victim to the unjust persecution, this neighborhood thrived well into the middle of the twentieth century.

Figure 5.13 – Block 92, northeast corner of 22nd and Arapahoe Street

This image was of Block 92, on the southern side of Arapahoe Street. Unlike the neighborhoods in downtown Denver, this area had a mix of large commercial buildings and smaller, almost residential ones. We see the largest building, a gymnasium, flanked by smaller buildings advertising Grossman's Progressive Laundry on its side, with smaller, gabled buildings to the opposite side.

5.4.5 Capitol Hill Neighborhood

When the silver tycoon Horace Austin Warner Tabor moved from Leadville to Denver with his fortune, he settled in the Capitol Hill neighborhood, and the rest of Denver's elite society followed suit.[7] In a short span of time, the open prairie that lay outside the downtown area became dotted with large mansions. This neighborhood was in the shape of an "L" and bounded within Colfax Avenue, Cherry Creek, 6th Avenue, Downing Street, and 20th Avenue.

Figure 5.14 – Mansions in the Capitol Hill neighborhood

This photograph has an unidentified location, but is a snapshot of what the Capitol Hill neighborhood looked like. Large mansions lined the streets, with ample room between them. These two story homes appeared to be made of brick with hip or gabled roofs. One of the houses

[7] Laurie R. Simmons and Thomas H. Simmons, *Denver Neighborhood History Project, 1993-94: Capitol Hill Neighborhood,* (Denver: Front Range Research Associates, Inc. 1995), 12

in the distance even had a cupola on top. Large bay windows were featured on some, and almost all the houses seen here had a porch. Fences lined the property of these homes, but the lawns were not manicured; it almost seemed as if wild grass is growing. In contrast to the Five Points neighborhood up north, the houses here were enormous displays of wealth and status.

Figure 5.15 – H.A.W. Tabor's Mansion

One of the residences on this street was H.A.W. Tabor's House on Sherman Street. In this photograph, a man (not H.A.W. Tabor) posed in his carriage in the street outside of the house. The house was set up on a berm, accessed by a set of stone stairs off to the side of the street. This gave the house an air of remoteness; that a visitor must enter private, special land to gain access to the house, and that it did not belong on the common street.

The building was two stories with a possible attic that faced Sherman. A porch shaded the front entrance, also accessed by a set of stairs. A balcony can be seen on the second story, placed among the dormer windows.

5.5 Conclusion

Like many of the industrial cities of the east coast, Denver suffered the adverse effects of a capitalist market in the late nineteenth century. While markets in the east dealt with the unionization of the labor markets and consolidation of corporations into a monopoly market, Denver dealt with the problems of a one-commodity economy. When that one commodity fell, it almost took the entire state of Colorado down with it. While the state did not completely fail, it felt the consequences for years to come, and they do not always immediately show up in the architectural fabric of a city, instead they affect a city deeper in its social roots.

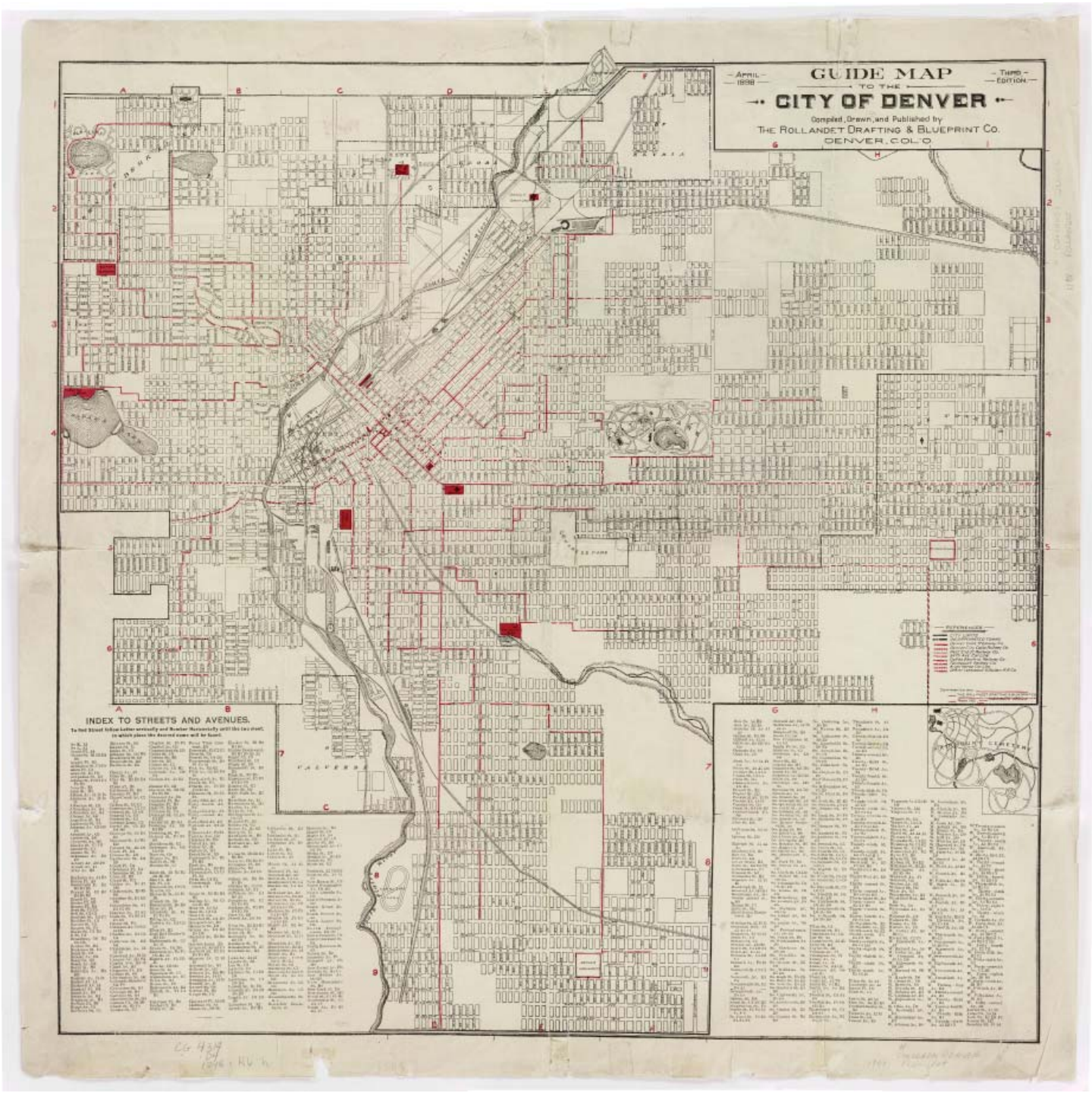

Figure 5.1 - Map of Denver in 1893

Figure 5.2 - Block 18 from Wazee Street

Figure 5.3 - Block 14 to the left, Block E to the right

Figure 5.5 - Blocks 44 and 45 looking north on 14th Street

Figure 5.6 - Block 16, on the north side of Wazee Street

Figure 5.4 - Block 75 from the intersection of 16th and Arapahoe Streets

Figure 5.7 - Arapahoe County Courthouse

Figure 5.8 - The Windsor Hotel on Block 67

Figure 5.11 - Block 139

Figure 5.9 - Block 100, southwest of 15th and Champa Streets

Figure 5.12 - Blocks 243 & 1

Figure 5.10 - Block 174, southwest corner of 16th and Welton Streets

Figure 5.13 - Block 92, northeast corner of 22nd and Arapahoe Streets

Figure 5.14 - Mansions in the Capitol Hill neighborhood

Figure 5.15 - H.A.W. Tabor’s Mansion

Chapter 6 – The 1900s and the City Beautiful Movement

6.1 Economic and Social Disparity

As Denver approached the turn of the century, it became a city of larger and more complex problems. A wave of migration to the West and an increase in immigrants coming to Denver caused the population to increase by 60%.[1] This influx of new demographics and cultures caused an increased strain on the already overburdened infrastructure of Denver and exacerbated the tense social relationships existing between communities.

As the population grew, different sectors withdrew into their own communities and comfortable spheres, and rarely ventured away from them or into another part of the city. This social clannishness only worsened the economic problems of the city, as communities refused to reach out and help one another.

The Panic of 1893 caused massive unemployment and sent many households into poverty in Denver. With the collapse of the silver mining economy, thousands of unemployed men began to drift into Denver, creating havoc. Crime began to rise and social unrest began flaring up.

Prostitution went hand in hand with the poverty that gripped Denver. While countless stories were told about the successes of miners that found their fortune in the hills, the case more often than not was that many men lost everything digging for gold. The journey west was not a cheap one, after which a miner had to establish a new life for himself, and possibly a family, in a new city. That miner would then disappear for months into the mountains, sometimes never to return, leaving behind their families. There were not many professions for women during this time period, especially in a city with limited economic opportunities like Denver. In their

[1] Nelson, *Denver: An Archaeological History*, 151

desperation, some were forced to resort to prostitution to make a living for themselves and their families. This situation also meant that a small population of orphaned children, with no adult supervision, ran wild in the streets of the downtown business district. Running in packs, "several bands of boys loitered near the saloon around Wazee and Blake Streets, pestering passersby verbally, if not physically."[2]

Even though Denver became host to a variety of ethnic and social groups, and even in the midst of all the economic problems, the city rarely experienced any public disorder or violence towards a certain ethnic group. While the Chinese remained within their quarters on 'Hop Alley' near the Union Station, they had been left in relative peace, but they soon were the target of frustration and malice.

Anti-Chinese sentiment began to rise, fueled by similar campaigns in the East and in San Francisco, which came to a head in October of 1880.[3] A public disagreement between a Chinese man and a white man in Denver erupted into a full-scale riot in the Chinese quarter, resulting in a single Chinese fatality and massive property damage. The riot was short, lasting only a day, by the following morning it was quelled. Compared to larger riots of cities to the East, this riot in Denver was miniscule, but shook a city that did not have much experience with large civic disorder. After the riot, the intimidation felt by the Asian community meant that the Chinese population continued to dwindle into the mid-1900s.

The power elite of Denver continued to occupy the Capitol Hill neighborhood and the surrounding, outlying suburbs. This neighborhood was very exclusive, in that the residents were concerned only with taking care of their immediate surroundings, and were involved with a passive aggressive competition with each other. Their streets were paved and clean and their

[2] Dorsett, *The Queen City*, 93
[3] Smiley, *History of Denver*, 471

lawns and mansions manicured, while not sparing much money or time in improving the surrounding districts of Denver. In fact, according to a history of the city, "Denver had over 800 miles of streets. Of this total, only twenty-four miles were paved, and all these were all on Capitol Hill and in the business district".[4] In the view of many citizens, "Denver's power elite took care of themselves and neglected other parts of the city."[5] This did not generate a lot of goodwill from the less-fortunate population who resided outside of the Capitol Hill area.

This population, instead, had to deal with an increasing number of issues. Denver at the turn of the century had a severe pollution problem. The smelters and other industries along the South Platte River, along with the railroad lines, filled the air with a choking grey haze that coated everything around.[6]

Streets that were not paved were dusty and ugly. The only relief from the constant dust was a sporadic rainfall that turned the streets to mud, and sometimes washed away the wooden sidewalks. Without a public trash service, litter and waste cluttered the gutters and streets mixing with the mud. Up until the 1880s, human waste was drained into the South Platte River, which contaminated it and caused a stench that seeped into the city. A sewer system was installed, but the boom in population quickly overwhelmed it, creating the same problem again. This city still held the promise for a bright future and a fresh start, but the reality of it was undermining any optimistic allusion of any newcomers. The rapid growth of Denver created more problems day to day with no solutions to help mitigate them. It was an incredibly tough job to try and reconcile the varying interests with no clear solution in sight. That was until Robert Walter Speer was elected mayor in 1904.

[4] Dorsett, *The Queen City*, 110
[5] Dorsett, *The Queen City*, 110
[6] Dorsett, *The Queen City*, 91

6.2 Mayor Robert W. Speer

Figure 6.1 - Robert Walter Speer

Born in Pennsylvania in 1855, Speer initially moved to Denver to seek help for his tuberculosis. He initially worked as a clerk in a downtown department store before entering public service as the Denver City Clerk in 1884. He worked for another 20 years in the government sector, building up relationships with varying interests throughout the city before deciding to run for mayor. This portly and charismatic man with a business mind was elected mayor in 1904 and ushered in the City Beautiful movement in Denver.

Where Speer excelled was in his skill as a mediator and a negotiator. Speer was neither an optimist nor a pessimist, but instead saw humanity for what it was: flawed but with the best of intentions, and he tried to improve the condition of all. To do this, Speer advocated the principles of the City Beautiful movement.

The City Beautiful movement was an idealistic theory of social life in the early twentieth century that manifested itself, not always successfully, in architecture. Following the design precedents of landscape architect Frederick Law Olmsted and architect Daniel H. Burnham,

> the City Beautiful solution to urban problems - transforming the city into a beautiful, rationalized entity - was to occur within the existing social, political, and economic arrangements. City Beautiful advocates were committed to a liberal-capitalist, commercial-industrial society and to the concept of private property. They recognized society's abuses, but they posited a smooth transition to a better urban world. City Beautiful proponents were, therefore, reformist and meliorative, not radical or revolutionary. They accepted the city optimistically, rejecting a return to a rural or arcadian past.[7]

Speer had traveled to Chicago to see the World's Columbian Exposition in 1893 and brought the City Beautiful ideals he saw there back with him to Denver. Speer believed that by cleaning up the city and beautifying it, Denver could heal its social and economic wounds. First

[7] William Henry Wilson, *The City Beautiful Movement*, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1989), 78

he had to involve the city's many interest groups, and get them to work together first, before he could move forward with these plans.

Speer met with opposing parties and successfully identified the underlying needs of each. Instead of overruling and dominating different groups, he listened to their problems and worked to find a solution that would not just benefit their specific party, but the city of Denver at large. From gambling dens and saloons that were at risk of closure,

> Speer got money to help the needy. In return, the Speer-controlled police force closed its eyes to violations of liquor and gambling ordinances. Speer developed a similar working arrangement with Denver's madames. They provided money for the party and welfare coffers, and Speer reciprocated by allowing them to do business as long as they remained cloistered around Market Street and avoided abusing customers.[8]

With money and communication flowing throughout the city, Speer moved forward with his plans to beautify the city. Speer did not cater to one specific party with his improvement plans, but instead his vision of a better Denver included its benefits for all. He wanted to build places and public space that could be used by everyone in Denver. In his mind "the City Beautiful was not simply another art gallery where people gazed upon but never touched the treasures. While such emotional and psychological stimulation was important, people needed places to find physical involvement as well."[9]

6.3 The City Beautiful Movement in Denver

One area that needed improvement was in the quantity of parks that the city had. By 1903, the city had twelve parks, described by William Wilson as being obtained "through negotiation and public foresight, the parks acquired were Congress Park, purchased from the federal government in 1873 and originally a burial ground; City Park, the largest at 320 acres,

[8] Dorsett, *The Queen City*, 133
[9] Wilson, *The City Beautiful Movement*, 160

purchased from the state in 1880; and Washington Park, bought from a series of private owners beginning in 1889. All were in what was rapidly becoming the fashionable residence section of Denver. This circumstance was not the result of a deep-laid plot but rather because the lands were high, remote at the time of purchase, and, in the case of Congress and City parks, cheap."[10]

While these parks by themselves were beautiful, they were removed to the nicer neighborhoods of Denver, and away from the general public. They were also located far away from the rivers, in case of floods, and therefore away from the more populated districts. As a result, the parks were not used by poorer residents, or as active as they could be.

Speer understood the relationship between improvements, land values, and boosterism[11] and used his political ingenuity to involve the general public in improving their public parks. The parks were given more amenities to encourage people to visit and engage with them. City Park, for example, "with its zoo, natural history museum, lakes, electric fountains, varied landscapes, and diversified recreational activities, was becoming an urban multi-purpose park."[12] This encouraged visitors to visit and play in the park, instead of standing safely behind the lines and gazing upon beautiful artworks and sculptures at a distance.

Mayor Speer worked to connect the parks with a boulevard system which opened up transit within the city. These boulevards, such as Monaco Street Parkway and Syracuse Boulevard, were wide and inviting and stretched across Denver, connecting parks together into a greater boulevard system.

Denver had the precedents of Chicago and Seattle's approach to the City Beautiful movement to draw from, but the setting of Denver was extremely different. Both Chicago and Seattle had easy access to bodies of water, while Denver was situated in the middle of a dry

[10] Wilson, *The City Beautiful Movement,* 170
[11] Wilson, *The City Beautiful Movement,* 175
[12] Wilson, *The City Beautiful Movement*, 187

prairie and a string of mountains. This lack of water affected the amount of trees and foliage in the city, a key concept for City Beautiful. In the beginning, when Denver was just a mining village that shared the banks of the South Platte with the local Indian tribes, only a handful of cottonwoods dotted the banks of the rivers, leaving the rest of the landscape sparse and dry. This changed soon thereafter. City Ditch, dug in 1865, supplied water to areas of Denver that did not border the industrial corridor of the South Platte River, encouraging sprawl and development. This also led to opportunities for new vegetation.

Speer gave away over 100,000 trees to residents to plant on their land, breaking up the brown cityscape of Denver. Instead of streets that were choked up with tall, dark, and dreary buildings, wide boulevards lined with trees were cut through the city giving it a chance to breathe. The biggest contribution by Mayor Speer, however, was in the Civic Center grounds.

6.4 1907 and the beginnings of the Civic Center

In 1905, Denver's City Hall remained uptown, west of the intersection of 14th and Larimer Streets. Located on an awkward triangular plot in the middle of downtown Denver, this building had no relationship with the Colorado State Capitol, built some fifteen blocks away to the south. Its existing relationship with the surrounding downtown context was also a cramped one, having been jammed up against Cherry Creek with no landscaping to buffer it against the surrounding downtown buildings. The proposed plan for the new Civic Center focused more on a public plaza, bordered by the State Capitol building, three proposed buildings, and two large monuments, described by William Wilson as “emphasizing accessibility, utility, harmony, and celebration. The idea of civic buildings appealed, too, because the first generation of permanent civic structures typically was scattered about the central city landscape to take advantage of

cheap sites or to placate various downtown interests. Denver well illustrated the problem."[13]

The new Civic Center included the existing State Capitol building, along with the mint, a new Denver library, a civic auditorium, and a memorial dedicated to the first pioneers of Colorado. Speer asked for and accepted donations from various private donors to fund this great project, one donation coming from the Andrew Carnegie foundation to fund a new library. All the ideals of celebrated history and civic beauty were achieved in this grand plan, but a problem arose with the choice of site.

Figure 6.2 – 1906 Robinson Plan

The existing State Capitol building, at the intersection of Colfax Avenue and Broadway Boulevard, was also at the intersection of the old city grid and the new suburban grid platted outside its boundaries. The first Civic Center proposal was drawn up by architect Charles M. Robinson from Virginia. Born in Pennsylvania in 1867, Robinson worked for a few smaller firms in the Midwest, before forming the firm Smith & Robinson in 1891. In 1906, he set up a new practice in Richmond, Virginia. His work was mainly in the education sector, designing school buildings and master plans for college campuses, like James Madison University, beginning in 1908.

In 1906 he proposed a master plan which had the Civic Center jump diagonally across into the old street grid, occupying the southeast corner of 15th, 16th, and Cleveland Streets. This proposal was awkward at best although it was made with noble intentions. Robinson tried to unify the two discordant grids by forcing the Civic Center to occupy the intersection of Colfax Avenue and Broadway Boulevard. His proposal meant that 16th Street had to be extended to Broadway Boulevard and cut through existing buildings and blocks, but did not solve the underlying problem of reconciling the two grids. Pedestrians still needed to cross awkward

[13] Wilson, *The City Beautiful Movement*, 235

street connections to reach the other side of the park, ultimately slicing the plan in two.

Speer's dream was to complete this Civic Center, and he was not to be deterred. In 1907, with help from a real estate man named of John S. Flowers, a second proposal was put forward. Instead of swinging the Civic Center northwest into the old city grid, this proposal was set due west, staying in line with the new grid of the Capitol Hill neighborhood and running parallel with Colfax Avenue. This proposed plan occupied the plot containing the State Capitol building, and the three blocks directly west of it, all the way to the eastern side of Cherokee Street. This plan, however, disregarded the existing city hall and mint in downtown.

Figure 6.3 – The MacMonnies Solution

The solution came with the arrival of Frederick MacMonnies. Frederick William MacMonnies was not an architect, but a sculptor by trade. MacMonnies was born in Brooklyn, New York in 1863 and attended the Ecole des Beaux Arts school in Paris, France from 1884-1888. He later opened a studio in Paris in 1888 before returning permanently to the United States in 1915. An accomplished sculptor, he was commissioned to build the fountain centerpiece for the World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago in 1893.

One year after its submission, he took the Robinson plan of a civic center that faced directly west and developed it further. Instead of a rectangular park, truncated and cut up by streets, this plan took on a cruciform shape. The Capitol Building anchored the eastern end, and the long axis stretched westward, parallel to Colfax Avenue, until it reached the proposed civic building on the western end. The short axis started west of the center, on Acoma Street, and ran north into Colfax Avenue. Two semicircles capped the ends of this axis, a southern polygon cutting into Acoma Street and its neighboring blocks, and a northern one, jumping across Colfax Avenue and into Cleveland Place. Another municipal building was built south of the library, balancing out the symmetry of the plan.

Considerably cheaper, and more in line with City Beautiful ideals of symmetry and beautification of civic buildings, this plan was met with approval, but its implementation was far from easy. Robert Speer was replaced as mayor in 1912 by Henry Arnold, who also succeeded to the post of guiding the Civic Center design. Arnold favored the Civic Center plan of Frederick Law Olmsted Jr., mainly because of the landscape designer's fame. He scrapped the MacMonnies plan, hired Olmsted Jr., and went back to the drawing board. Olmsted Jr., however, did not devote a significant amount of time to his design proposal, and left many design decisions ambiguous and unresolved. Speer was re-elected as mayor of Denver in 1916 and once again took control of the Civic Center design.

In 1917, Speer brought in Edward H. Bennett, from Chicago. This working relationship was more successful because in Bennett, "Speer found a man of independent and wise judgment who realized the mayor's vision while overriding his uninformed enthusiasms."[14]

Bennett went back to the MacMonnies plan of 1907 and improved it. He kept the existing and proposed municipal buildings in place and further developed the surrounding landscape. On the south semicircle, he proposed an outdoor concert garden, with seats facing away from the plaza. Directly north, occupying the other semicircle, he placed reflecting pools, no doubt to act as a landscape buffer between the noisy downtown district and the plaza. The rest of the square, south of the proposed library and museum, was divided up into symmetrical lawns and patterned pavement. A fountain was located on axis with the Capitol Building and the proposed City Hall, but it was off axis with the concert garden and reflecting pools. More vegetation and lawns occupied the land west of the fountain, before reaching the edge of the Capitol Building.

[14] Wilson, *The City Beautiful Movement*, 248

6.5 The Final Civic Center Design

Figure 6.5 – The Final Design

By 1918, construction had started on the Civic Center, but with some changes in place. The two semicircles that anchored the short north and south axis were not to be truncated by 14th and Colfax Avenue, instead, both streets were diverted around them. Instead of reflecting pools in the north semicircle, a memorial, dedicated to Denver mining engineer John H.P. Voorhies was designed. Directly south, and facing towards one another, the Greek Theater was the ultimate result of the needed outdoor amphitheater. Today, this theater is used for public demonstrations and gatherings such as the protest calling for gun control following the Columbine High School shootings in 1999. A fountain was never constructed south of these memorials, instead elaborate gardens and landscaping occupy them, with steps heading east towards the Capitol Building.

In terms of landscaping, the Civic Center has changed rather drastically from its original City Beautiful plan. In earlier photographs, the landscaping consisted only of manicured lawns and a patterned plaza. Street lights dotted the edges of the lawns and new trees were planted in the lawns. In the present day, these trees are full grown and conceal the grassy areas with shade. Some of the manicured lawns were reclaimed for colorful gardens and new public seating is scattered throughout the pavement.

All the buildings on this site are of the Beaux Arts tradition, popularized by the World's Columbian Exposition of Chicago in 1893. The proposed City Hall, rectangular in every proposal made, became a semicircle and faces the plaza, just like the memorials on its sides. This was the last building to be completed, in 1932. The classic Beaux Arts building features a temple front emphasizing its main entrance with symmetrical wings that swing out on either side. A tall, thin cupola, also not featured in any of the previous proposals, sticks up from the temple front. The main entrance is centered on the long axis, in line with the front entry of the Capitol

Building on the other side of the square.

The proposed museum on the south side of the City Hall was never built, which broke the proposed symmetry of the plaza. The library, built in 1910, before the design of the square, is also a Beaux Arts style building. It has gone through many uses, including a library and public events center, and has been renamed the McNichols Building.

6.6 Conclusion

While not necessarily successful in fulfilling the ideals of the City Beautiful movement, the Civic Center remains a popular public space today. The underlying purpose of the square was to provide a place for the common citizen to take a break from the grind and bustle of the downtown district, and while the plaza itself was wide open and relatively calm in comparison to its neighboring business district, the success of it stopped there. The plaza was too sterile and removed from the city to provide an interactive and lively social space. The buildings were too large and isolated from the surrounding landscape to invite people to sit by them and regard them as anything other than stoic governmental structures.

The plaza itself was also too static and rigid. With no place to sit and nothing to watch except grass grow, there was nothing exciting to draw people in. The Civic Center became a transition point between the residential neighborhoods of Capitol Hill and the bustling downtown commercial district.

That has changed however, and today the Civic Center has grown in prominence in the public's mind. With the addition of the new Denver Public Library and scattered museums to the south of the original plaza, the Civic Center has become the heart of the growing arts and cultural community of Denver. More events are being held within the plaza and it still remains a place to

escape the crowded noisy city.

Figure 6.1 - Robert Walter Speer

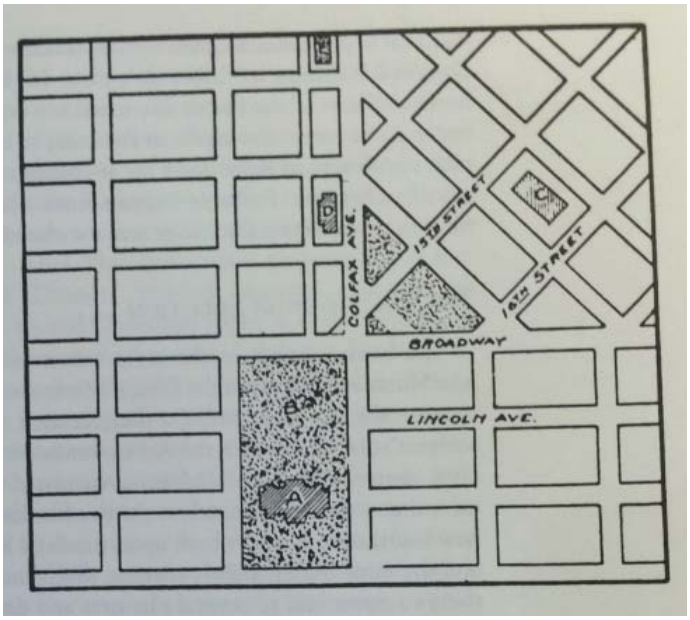

Figure 6.2 - 1906 Robinson Plan

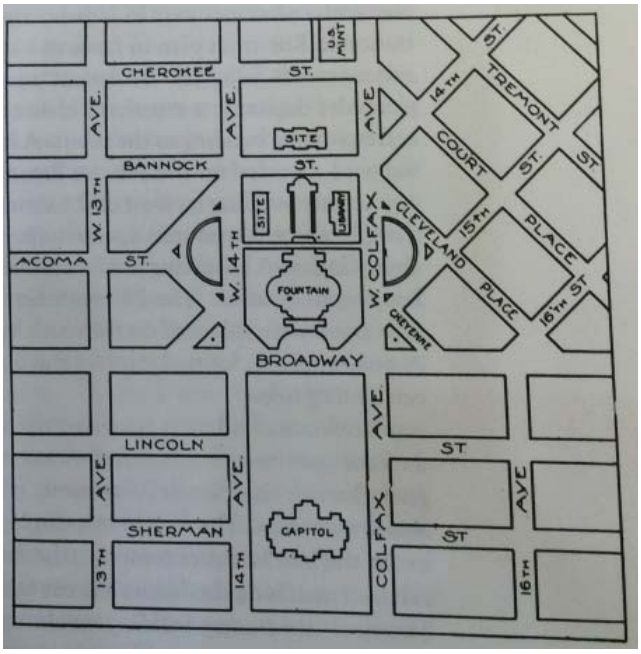

Figure 6.3 - The MacMonnies Solution

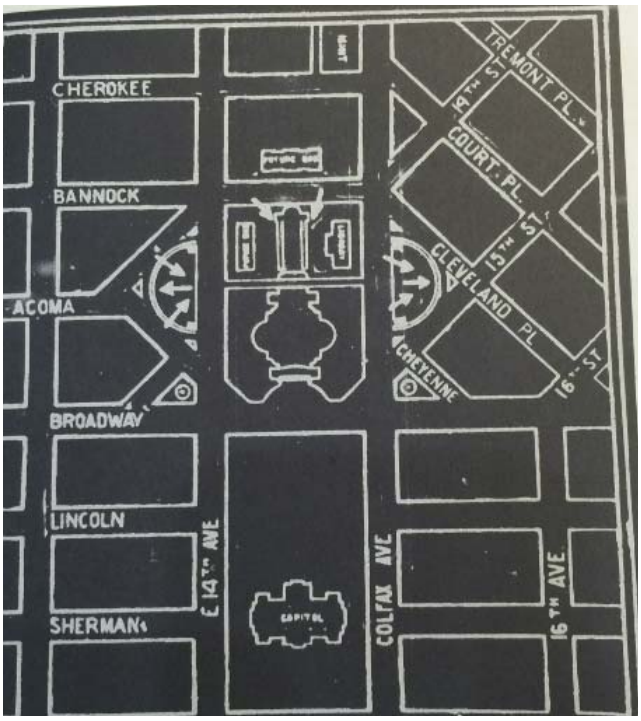

Figure 6.4 - The Final Design

Chapter 7 – The Tabor Grand Opera House – 1881

7.1 Case Study Introduction

Up to this point, this thesis has taken a distant view of the urban development of Denver, but what about the architecture? When studying maps and images of the city, it is easy to see the specific challenges that faced Denver, but how did these challenges affect the buildings? What were the styles and architectural precedents of the city's landmark buildings, and how did they adapt to meet Denver's situation?

To explore these questions, I focused on a specific time when Denver's architectural identity took form, the 1880s. During this decade, incredible amounts of capital were invested in making Denver a city worthy of competing stylistically with eastern cities, and as a result, a number of beautiful structures went up.

Four buildings were selected from this time period for their architectural and historical significance. These buildings not only give a glimpse into the life in the Gilded Age of Denver, but also into the design identity of a city unlike any other. Three of them still stand today while the fourth met the wrecking ball decades ago. To better understand the hectic and frenzied time period of these buildings, they are organized chronologically by their date of construction: the Tabor Grand Opera House (1881), Trinity United Methodist Church (1888), the Brown Palace Hotel (1892), and Denver Union Station (1881-1914).

7.2 H.A.W. Tabor

Figure 7.1 – Horace Austin Warner Tabor

It would be a mistake not to mention Horace Austin Warner (H.A.W.) Tabor, a man

primarily responsible for the development of Denver into a metropolitan city. Arguably, if it was not for him and his ambition, Denver might have never left behind its pioneering roots. H.A.W. Tabor involved himself in the political, financial, real estate, design, and social aspects of improving a city and its image in the process. Tabor led an extraordinary life in both the private and public sphere and his life was honored in Colorado history classes for decades to come.

Tabor was born on November 26, 1830 in Orleans County, Vermont. His parents, of English heritage, were poor and provided very little in terms of educational improvement and advancement. Instead of going to school to gain knowledge of the working world, Tabor learned by starting work at a young age and observing how businesses were run.[1]

Tabor remained in Vermont, working as a stone-cutter until he reached the age of 25. He moved to Maine two years later and worked for the man who would soon become his father-in-law. Tabor married Augusta Pierce in 1857 and decided to try his luck in another economic field. Right after they married, the Tabors set off for the Kansas Territory to try their hand in farming.[2]

They traveled by railroad to St. Louis, Missouri, and then took a five-day boat ride along the Missouri River until they reached Kansas City. They stopped and "purchased a yoke of oxen, a wagon, new farming tools, and some seeds before heading west."[3] They eventually settled roughly 130 miles west of Kansas City, in Fort Riley, and set up their homestead.

The Tabors settled into their new, but rough, life on the frontier. Tabor, always on the lookout for advancement, involved himself in the rough politics of the unruly Kansas Territory before the Civil War.[4] Augusta stayed home and watched over their small baby, Maxcy. Augusta had a hard time adjusting to life on the American frontier without the typical creature comforts.

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[1] Evelyn E. Livingston Furman, *The Tabor Opera House: A Captivating History,* (1972), 7.
[2] Furman, *The Tabor Opera House: A Captivating History*, 7.
[3] Furman, *The Tabor Opera House: A Captivating History*, 8.
[4] Furman, *The Tabor Opera House: A Captivating History*, 14.

Along with setting up a new house with barely any resources, “there were many Indians in the territory, causing Augusta much worry. The numerous rattlesnakes terrified her, too, and she could not keep them out of the cabin for they crawled inside, seeking shade. Augusta found that the only safe place to sit was on a three-legged-stool – with her feet tucked under her.”[5]

But rumors of gold just west in the Pike's Peak region began filtering through Fort Riley. After several disappointing crop harvests, Tabor decided to uproot his small family again and try his luck in the gold mines of the mountains.

In 1859, the Tabors moved to the Rocky Mountain region. After a pioneer by the name of Abe Lee found gold in the California Gulch, outside the small town of Oro, about 100 miles west of Denver, Tabor helped him stake his claim and, it is estimated that in the year of 1859 “his prospecting and mining brought him $5,000.”[6] Understanding that mining was a seasonal activity and that he needed to provide for his family in the off-season, Tabor opened a general store in the town of Oro, selling supplies to miners and townspeople throughout the year. The Tabors originally moved this store to wherever the new mining operation would set up, but after a few years, they settled the shop permanently in the town of Oro, as the nearby mining camp of Leadville exploded in population.

The Tabors were popular townspeople, with friendly Augusta working in the store, and H.A.W. becoming postmaster, and then the first mayor of Leadville. The tale of H.A.W.'s management skills is one of contradiction. While he was effective in bringing order to the rowdy pioneering town of Leadville, he was careless with his finances. The Tabors were known for their generosity and “Tabor carried thousands of dollars on his ledgers which he never collected.”[7] This generosity and lack of fiscal responsibility would come back to haunt him in

[5] Furman, *The Tabor Opera House*, 8
[6] Furman, *The Tabor Opera House*, 14
[7] Furman, *The Tabor Opera House*, 14

his later years.

After acquiring a fortune from the mines of Leadville, the Tabors moved to Denver, which had more opportunities for social and political advancement. H.A.W. wanted the city of Denver to be the pedestal upon which he displayed his massive wealth, but the city was lacking in architectural prowess. Denver had not expanded much in the two decades of its existence, and it also lacked any grandiose buildings that displayed its ego and wealth as the cities of the eastern United States did.

The opera was a place to do that. In those days, was a place for elite society to see and be seen, but there was no grand opera house in Denver. Tabor had financed and built an opera house in 1879 in Leadville, but wanted to do it again, and on a much grander scale in Denver, so he started shopping for land downtown.

7.3 The commission of the Tabor Grand Opera House

The Tabors moved to Denver in the early spring of 1880, and H.A.W. immediately set about buying up buildings and property in downtown Denver. In March, he purchased the buildings and the lots on Block 97, on the southwest corner of 16th and Curtis streets for $57,000[8], believing that this was the proper site for his opera house. He now needed an architect.

Following the devastating fire of 1871, Chicago underwent a massive rebuilding effort and became a design mecca of sorts for aspiring architects and designers. Tabor thought this was a good area from which to poach an ambitious architect to design one of the first large public buildings in a growing city. His sights landed on Willoughby James Edbrooke and his business partner at the time, Franklin Pierce Burnham (no relation to the future World's Columbian

[8] Daniel and Beth Barret, *High Drama: Colorado's Historic Theatres*. (Montrose: Western Reflections Publishing Company, 2005), 53

Exposition architect, Daniel Burnham).

Edbrooke was born in Illinois in 1843, but little is known about his early life.[9] No formal education can be attributed to his career, so we can assume that his professional training came in the form of an apprenticeship under his father, Robert. Edbrooke began practicing architecture in Chicago in 1868, at the age of 25, and 11 years later formed a partnership with Burnham.

A little more is known about Burhnam, who was ten years younger than Edbrooke. His father was a carpenter and sent Burnham to Old Moseley School, a public school in Chicago. When he turned fourteen, Burnham worked in the architectural offices of J.H. Barrows in Chicago, and twelve years later, he partnered with Edbrooke for a design proposal for the Wesley Avenue School at the University of Notre Dame. The two architects had done a number of buildings throughout the eastern United States, and one of their most notable later commissions was the Georgia State Capitol in 1884.[10] For the Tabor project in Denver, Burnham assumed the role of chief designer, while Edbrooke oversaw the project site and general management.

Tabor commissioned them to design his new opera house with an eye to elegance and extreme luxury. In H.A.W.'s world, money was not an obstacle. To achieve this extravagant dream, Edbrooke and Tabor traveled to the eastern United States and toured the grand opera houses in other great cities. Three weeks later, they returned and proceeded with their work. The existing buildings on Block 97 were demolished and construction began on the Tabor Opera House in May of 1880.[11]

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[9] John D. Milner, *National Register of Historic Places Inventory – Nomination Form: Federal Aviation Administration Records Center (Old Court House)*, (Martinsburg, 1973), 3

[10] Los Angeles Herald, Volume 37, Number 77, 17 December 1909 — NOTED ARCHITECT DIES SUDDENLY

[11] Barret, *High Drama: Colorado's Historic Theatres*, 53

7.4 Architectural Style and Precedents

The style of the Tabor Grand Opera House is one of eclecticism. Many historians have categorized it under several different styles, but this opera house does not belong to a singular one, but to a combination of many. Among the many styles appropriated to it, the Tabor has been called "Modified Egyptian Moresque", Second Empire Classicism, High Victorian, Renaissance, and Romanesque.[12] Instead of adhering strictly to one style, the Tabor became a mixture of all.

The Second Empire style, sometimes synonymous with the Baroque Revival, originated in France and was popular from the mid-1860s through to the 1880s. This style is characterized by its large scale and mix of baroque features, such as over-large mansard roofs and domes set over square bases. This style can be seen in the overall massing of the Tabor Grand Opera House. The opera house is capped by a mansard roof that is almost hidden due to a large number of dormer windows punching through it. The large, square tower that dominated the corner of the opera house is also typical of Second Empire Classicism in the United States. Architectural historian Richard Brettell even goes so far as to connect the Grand back to the Louvre, stating "the massing of the building may have been derived from the palace type exemplified in Visconti's 1852-57 addition to the Louvre. This massing – a long facade interrupted by a central entrance tower and two corner towers – was well-known in American architecture of the 1870s."[13]

The High Victorian style, sometimes referred to as a sub-style of the more popular Gothic Revival, originated in England and was popular from the 1860s to the 1870s. This style was more characterized by its ornamental features than formal qualities. Buildings typical of this style were usually heavily textured, polychrome, and with Gothic features. The Tabor utilized

[12] Richard R. Brettell, *Historic Denver: The Architects and Architecture, 1858-1893,* (Denver: Historic Denver, Inc., 1973), 35

[13] Brettelll, *Historic Denver,* 35

Gothic arches in its facade, but the overall feeling of immense verticality was what made it a High Victorian building. This building, at five stories high, was one of the tallest buildings in Denver at the time and did nothing to hide that. The tower was capped with a steep hip roof and all the dormer windows are capped with gable roofs. Richard Brettell, once attempted to draw comparisons with buildings across the globe, stating,

> the English "picturesque" silhouette combined with the wrought iron detail, the lack of any clearly defined mansard roof, and the use of somewhat Gothic segmental arches to give the building a decidedly High Victorian character. It seems to have more to do with the Law Courts Competition of 1869 and the other buildings which came out of England's Houses of Parliament than it does with the symmetrical and often lumpy classicism of the American Second Empire style itself.[14]

The Tabor also had some Renaissance features, but like the other styles assigned to it, they were on the surface level. On the exterior facade, the Renaissance application of pilasters divided up the window patterns and hints at column capitals were seen. While they had a similar appearance to Doric columns, upon closer examination they are just prominent cornice lines.

While symmetry was an important aspect of Renaissance architecture, it was attempted here at the Tabor, but not fully. The building was centered on its square tower at the corner, and extended away in two directions. Two smaller towers flanked the ends of the building, but not at equal distances from the main tower. The building was essentially a rectangle, but the facade application tried to fit a square massing. As a result, the secondary tower along 16th Street was set in the middle of the facade, while the secondary tower was set at the end of the facade facing Curtis Street.

[14] Brettell, *Historic Denver*, 36.

7.5 Programming and site

Figure 7.2 – Exterior perspective from 16th and Curtis Streets

The opera house was sited on Block 97, occupied the southwest corner and was bordered by 16th and Curtis Streets. While the tower loomed up over the corner, it did not serve as the main entrance for the theater, which was actually located around the corner on 16th Street, by the secondary tower. Located there was a large, arched entryway that served for the entrance.

Built at the beginning of the great building boom of the 1880s, the Tabor was originally alone in terms of neighborhood context. At the beginning of the decade, photographs showed the opera house standing alone, with some buildings on neighboring streets, but the opera house was the tallest building in the immediate downtown area. Right after the theater was built, there were a few smaller buildings just behind it on 16th Street, but they were soon gone.

Within the decade, as construction boomed in downtown Denver, the surrounding area of the Tabor was built up. In later photographs, the old Post Office is seen peeking around the corner of the Tabor, as it occupied the corner of 16th and Arapahoe Street. And even further north on 16th Street, there is a brick building in the distance with a sign on its south side that advertised the location of Frank Edbrooke's architectural practice. Along Curtis Street, more office buildings had gone up, stretching far beyond the borders of the image. These buildings, while not as tall and domineering as the Tabor, fit into the architectural context of the opera house, which gave the impression of a cohesive architectural language.

While only horse carriages can be seen parked along the curbs in earlier photographs, in later ones, cable-car lines were added on both 16th and Curtis Streets. The Denver Tramway streetcar system utilized cable cars from 1888 to 1900, when they were replaced by electric trolley cars.[15] Electric lines and poles also dotted the skyline (and block the view of the Tabor

[15] Regional Transportation District. "A Timeline of streetcar service in Denver," http://www.denverstreetcars.net/history.htm, n.d., Web, November 23, 2015

from across the street). Also within this decade too, the streets went from unpaved at the time of the Opera House's completion, to paved. By the turn of the century, the horse-carriages that lined the curbs were replaced by automobiles, neatly parked alongside both streets.

The building sat right up against the sidewalk, at street level with the pedestrians. The ground floor was about two stories high, and featured store front windows that were lined with square columns with Corinthian-imitation capitals. These storefronts, while they allowed for plenty of natural daylight and great interior views in the evening, probably caused thermal and glare problems for the interior. In earlier photographs, the windows remain uncovered and the viewer can see into the interior; but in later images, these windows were covered on the exterior by large awnings clumsily attached to the building's exterior. Exterior signage, not seen in earlier photographs, was applied to the tower and the main entrance of the opera house.

What is interesting about this theater was the disassociated relationship between the exterior facade treatment and the function of the building on the interior. The view from the outside gave no clue to the function of the inside. All we were given to understand from the architectural design was that it was a very large building.

7.6 Design

The theater inside was insulated within the building by a protective layer of circulation. The theater alone was a large one, five stories high and approximately 75 feet wide and 150 feet in length. A visitor to the opera entered through the arched main entrance on 16th Street,

> flanked by marble columns with capitals of carved flowers, leaves, and musical emblems. Overhead “The Tabor Grand Opera House” was cut in relief, and higher still, the owner's name appeared. A marble entrance led to a softly lit rotunda, which contained the box office, then to the foyer of the parquet. A splendid, gas lit chandelier illuminated the broad, crimson-carpeted stairways, the lovely cherry-wood newel posts and balustrades, two huge mirrors, and two large panel paintings

> on either side of the entrance to the parquet – one of the Fleur de Lis, the other of sunflowers.[16]

Visitors ascended the stairways that lined the auditorium or walked along the perimeter before entering it. What a visitor saw from the exterior looking into the windows were the circulation pathways that lined the auditorium, keeping the theater safely separated from the noisy exterior.

Figure 7.3 – Tabor auditorium interior

The theater featured a large proscenium arch that loomed above the stage, divided into a half-circle on top of a square, and was made of dark cherry wood with exquisite and minute detailing. There were two panels that occupied the semicircular and square spaces of the arch, painted by Robert Hopkins.[17] The semicircular panel depicted Hector saying goodbye to Andromache, while the square panel provided backdrop scenery for the plays. The scene depicted in the photograph above is a rural countryside with crumbling classical architecture.

The proscenium arch was copied on the three remaining sides of the auditorium, which gave the illusion of an arched rib system found in Gothic architecture. The illusion was strengthened by the negative space left in the ceiling by the arches below, making a circular space for the lighting. This circular space was also concave, giving an illusion of a dome above the audience. A large chandelier hung from this ceiling, reaching eye level of the third balcony seats.

Figure 7.4 – Box A

The auditorium was three levels high, with extended seating on the ground floor in front but below the stage. The ground floor seating was separated into two sections and roughly held 700 people. The two upstairs balconies were split into four sections, and each held

[16] Barret, *High Drama: Colorado's Historic Theatres*, 53
[17] Barret, *High Drama: Colorado's Historic Theatres*, 54

approximately 350 people. The theater, overall, had a seating capacity of 1,500 people. Special attention was paid to the opera boxes that flanked the auditorium seating, facing the stage. There were six "closed" boxes in total, three on either side, and they were arranged vertically in a "pagoda-style." Six "open" boxes were located between the "closed" boxes and the general seating. These boxes were just semi-circular extensions of the regular seating and provided no privacy curtains. The railings of the balconies continued and then bumped out in a semicircle to encase the boxes. These boxes, seen in pictures, held up to 10 people each, and had curtains to help block the occupants from the view of the regular public if they so wished.

This arrangement was unique in theater design, as the seating of the Tabor did not extend all the way to the proscenium arch over the stage. This cut down on the amount of seats for sale, however, as the seats that would have been there would have suffered from poor acoustics and awkward sight-lines that would have given the visitors views of the actor's backs and scenery background.[18] Even with the diminished seating capacity, "the Tabor was one of the largest opera houses in the state's history."[19]

7.7 Details

The beauty of this building, however, lay with its extravagant and expensive detailing. H.A.W. Tabor spared no money when it came to decorating his opera house. The specialty boxes themselves featured "delicate cherry woodwork, thick carpets, Bourbon tapestries, and silk plush curtains of sage green, maroon, and gold."[20] The walls of these boxes were papered and wooden chairs with plush curtains were the seating choices.

Figure 7.5 – Seating underneath the balcony

[18] Barret, *High Drama: Colorado's Historic Theatres*, 54
[19] Barret, *High Drama: Colorado's Historic Theatres*, 54
[20] Barret, *High Drama: Colorado's Historic Theatres*, 54

The ceilings over the balconies could have remained blank, but not in this opera house. The ceilings were coffered and painted with floral designs, radiating away from light fixtures in the center. The railings and edges of the balconies were capped with wooden panels, carved floral designs and animal figures. All of these details, while carefully handled, were not always visible to the audience member from their vantage point; which further confirmed Tabor's original luxurious ideal. He wanted the best of the best, no matter where it was put or if anyone could see it.

7.8 Opening Night

The Tabor opened on September 5, 1881 to great aplomb, and it seemed the future of the Tabor Grand Opera House was to be a bright and successful one. The nervous energy that surrounded the opening drove Denver into a frenzy. In fact,

> the *Rocky Mountain News* was devoting a front page space to the announcement of Denver's crowning achievement – the opening of the Tabor Grand Opera House. Railroads offered excursion rates to persons living outside the city; low rates were available from Salt lake, Kansas City, St. Joseph, Missouri, and intermediate points; and special trains were run for parties of fifty or more from several cities in Colorado, including Boulder, Longmont, Fort Collins, Pueblo, and Colorado Springs.[21]

Police were called out on the rainy night to keep order on the streets of Denver, while the string of carriages depositing their passengers stretched down 16th Street and passed Curtis Street to the south. Tabor, no doubt because of his wealth and influence, leaned on the newspapers to report his grand opening. If he had a doubt about not being able to sell out the house on opening night, he was wrong. Indeed, all the seats were sold, with standing room fought over in the back. By eight o'clock that night, the audience was seated and absorbing their new surroundings

[21] Elmer Crowley, "The Opening of the Tabor Grand Opera House, 1881," The Colorado Magazine 18, no. 2 (1941), 43.

> with its high girdered ceilings brilliantly designed in gold, maroon, blue, orange, and black; its distinctive proscenium boxes looming up to within twenty feet of the ceiling; its grand chandelier suspended twenty-eight feet from the artistic dome; and the smaller gas fixtures gracefully styled. Could they fully appreciate the expensive cherry woodwork, the imported tapestries, and the crimson velvet plush seats? Surely nothing had been overlooked for the enjoyment and comfort of the patrons.[22]

H.A.W. Tabor was called on stage to welcome the new audience members to his lavish theater house and was given raucous applause. The play that night was a success and the opera house became the place to be for Denver's elite society.

7.9 The Later Years and Demolition

The Tabor served as the most popular opera house in Denver for the next 40 years, hosting many great plays and actors. The plays, mainly Shakespeare's most famous, were a popular and safe choice for the new society in need of culture in Denver. Famous actors, such as Edwin Booth, brother to Lincoln's assassin John Wilkes Booth, performed in Denver in April 1887. But just like its owner, the Tabor Grand Opera House met a sad and tragic end.

For the amount of time and energy that went into making the Tabor a pinnacle of luxury and decadence, its prominence on the Denver architectural scene was a short one. The move to Denver seemed to be the beginning of H.A.W.'s troubles. While he immersed himself in the political and economic sectors of the city, he spent more and more time away from Augusta, and they began to drift apart.[23] The catalyst for the greatest soap opera drama of Denver came with the arrival of a young woman by the name of Elizabeth McCourt. Nicknamed “Baby Doe”, Elizabeth was 24 years younger than Tabor. Their relationship, which began when the Tabors were in Leadville, culminated in the divorce of H.A.W. and Augusta in January 1883, just a little

[22] Crowley, “The Opening of the Tabor Grand Opera House, 1881,” 45.
[23] Furman, *The Tabor Opera House*, 28

over a year after the Tabor Grand Opera House opened. Two months later H.A.W. married Elizabeth in Washington D.C., and Augusta moved into a suite of rooms in the Brown Palace a couple of streets away from the opera house, supported by her loyal son, Maxcy.

The years that followed were filled with extravagant purchases, snide gossip aimed at Elizabeth, social ostracism, unsuccessful attempts at a political career for H.A.W., and two young daughters. The whirlwind lifestyle that the Tabors enjoyed came to an abrupt end, however, with the Silver Panic of 1893. The Tabors, already in debt from their spending sprees, lost most of their fortune when the silver from their mines in Leadville went unsold, and creditors demanded their debts be paid.

Another opera house, the Broadway Theatre, opened in 1890 and slowly began draining business away from the Tabor. H.A.W. mortgaged the Tabor in 1891, and was not able to make payments after the crash in 1893. Facing foreclosure, and after "litigation lasting eighteen months, Mrs. Laura D. Smith of Denver, who held one of the two mortgages on the theatre, took possession of the Tabor Grand on September 21, 1896. Thus ended the final link of Horace Tabor with the opera house of his name, the most prized of all his possessions."[24]

The loss of his opera house was something from which Tabor never fully recovered. He maintained a positive and popular reputation in the city of Denver; he still remained postmaster of Denver until 1898, but his business holdings bled through his fingers. He fell ill in the spring of 1899 with appendicitis and died April 10, just three years after losing his beloved opera house.

The Tabor limped along in downtown Denver for another six decades. It was converted to a silent-movie theater in the 1920s, but held out vain hopes that it could return to its glory days as a live-action opera house. This almost seemed to work as it hosted live performances and screen viewings, but revenues and patrons were drifting away and the large opera house slowly

[24] Barret, *High Drama: Colorado's Historic Theatres,* 62

emptied out.[25]

Figure 7.6 – Workers installing panel beneath scenic backdrop. The inscription reads "So fleet the works of men, back to the earth again, ancient and holy things fade like a dream."

By the 1950s, most of the building was empty and closed off, and by 1964, it was slated for demolition. In October 1964, the theater was torn down, while a population that was not alive during Tabor's heyday and did not understand its glorified position in Denver's architectural beginnings, stood by and watched it happen. One year earlier, Pennsylvania Station in mid-town Manhattan was demolished, sparking a national outcry, and two years after the Tabor was demolished, the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 was passed. If the owners of the Tabor had just held out for two more years, this opera house might have been saved. Instead, its demolition was met with little opposition, and the Tabor was quietly erased from the Denver streetscape.

[25] Barret, *High Drama: Colorado's Historic Theatres,* 63

Figure 7.1 - Horace Austin Warner Tabor

Figure 7.2 - Exterior Perspective from 16th and Curtis Streets

Figure 7.3 - Tabor auditorium interior

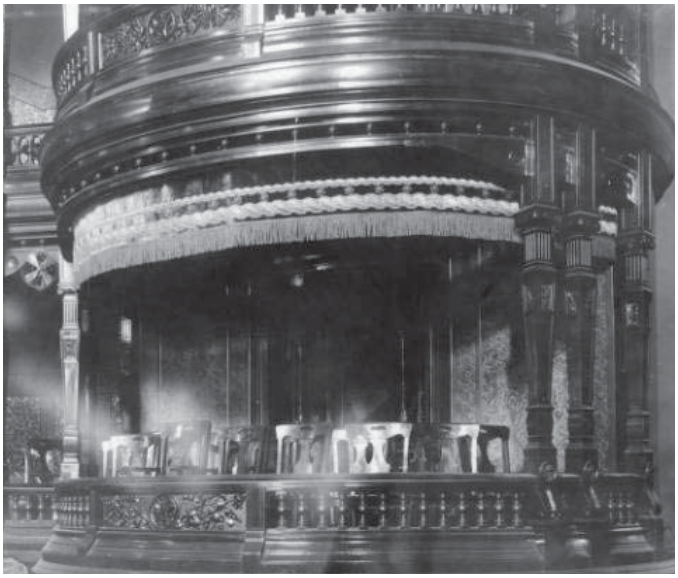

Figure 7.4 - Box A

Figure 7.5 - Seating underneath the balcony

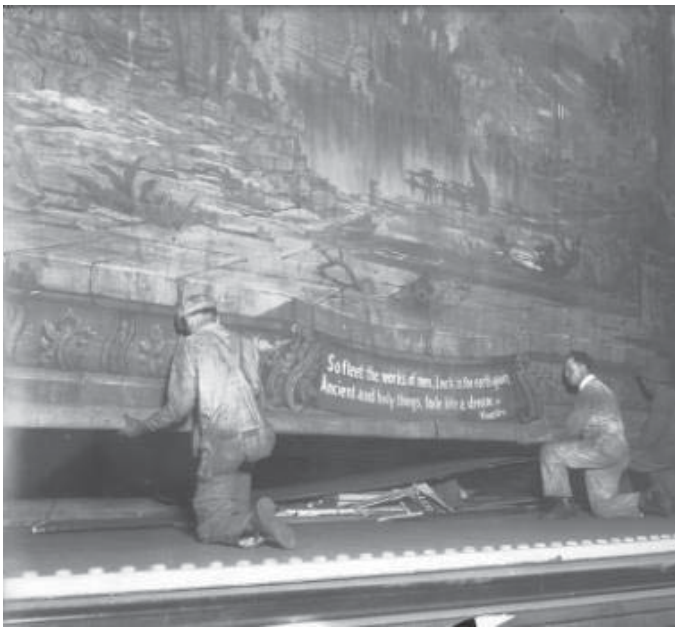

Figure 7.6 - Workers installing panel beneath scenic backdrop

Chapter 8 – Trinity United Methodist Church – 1888

8.1 The Contemporary Setting for Trinity United Methodist Church

Figure 8.1 – Trinity United Methodist Church in 2008

Trinity United Methodist Church is located on the northeast corner of the intersection of 18th and Tremont streets and Broadway Boulevard. This church, like the Brown Palace Hotel across the street, is located in the middle of the hectic downtown Denver scene. Also like the hotel, it seems a little bit out of touch with its surrounding context. It is a religious structure enclosed within a historic frame, surrounded and isolated by glass and steel commercial buildings. Cars drive through the busy intersection without a backward glance at the church that has stood there longer than the drivers have been alive. What is hidden from the naked eye is the history of this church and the role it played in the infancy of Denver's architecture.

8.2 The Methodist Congregation and the need for a Church

Religion, like the rest of civilized society, followed the prospective miners west into the Pike's Peak area. Denver in its early years was just a group of wooden buildings huddled along the waterways for miners to stock up on supplies, and had no designated buildings for religious services. Instead worshipers, led by the first Methodist minister in Colorado, the Reverend George W. Fischer, gathered together in small groups. According to author Lucille Hastings, services were “held outdoors under cottonwood trees on the banks of the South Platte River at the location now identified as 11th and Wewatta Streets in the present railroad yards with

participants seated on the dusty ground."[1]

This situation would continued throughout Denver's infancy, with the makeshift congregation sharing worship space in log cabins; sometimes while gambling occurred in the saloon on the other side of the interior wall. When Denver and Auraria City consolidated into one town, Fischer, along with fellow preachers William H. Goode and Jacob Adriance, settled on a small log cabin located in the old Auraria (approximately at the intersection of 11th and Wewatta Streets) portion of Denver. The building was modest in size and decoration with "a rough board door and one glazed window, a luxury imported from New Mexico, roof of clapboards with split shingles covered with dirt, through which the stove pipe extended from the little sheet iron stove in the corner, and floor of dirt."[2]

The post of a Methodist minister was a transient position in the Colorado territory, as all the founding ministers left just a few years after arriving in Denver. This constant flux in leadership, along with no permanent place of worship and competitions between the old towns of Auraria and Denver City, meant that the role of religion in the pioneer life came second to other primary needs.

The Methodist congregation moved around to different locations for a few more years before renting a small interior portion of Henry Brown's carpenter shop on Larimer Street near the Cherry Creek. This semi-permanent situation seemed to work, based on its downtown location and the generosity and carpentry skills of Henry Brown, but the flood of 1864 washed that away. Brown lost his carpentry shop to the waters, and the church goers, their worship hall.[3]

[1] Lucille Hastings, *Trinity Methodist Church: 18th at Broadway, Denver, Colorado, 1859-1959 One Hundredth Anniversary,* (Denver: Trinity United Methodist Church, 1959), 6

[2] Hastings, Lucille. *Trinity Methodist Church: 18th at Broadway, Denver, Colorado, 1859-1959 One Hundredth Anniversary*, 6

[3] Hastings, Lucille. *Trinity Methodist Church: 18th at Broadway, Denver, Colorado, 1859-1959 One Hundredth Anniversary*, 6

Following the 1864 flood, the people of Denver started reconstructing their city and for the first time a church was to be built, strictly for the Methodist faith. The Lawrence Street church was constructed on the corner of 14th and Lawrence Streets, right in the heart of the downtown commercial district, and opened on February 11, 1865. With a permanent establishment, the base of the Methodist religion grew steadily for the next twenty years.[4]

In the fall of 1886, the leaders of the church, led by Pastor Henry A. Buchtel, realized that the Lawrence Street church could not contain the size of the congregation in the future and looked at plans to expand. Once again, they turned to the help of Henry Brown as the church purchased the plot of land at 18th Street and Broadway Boulevard, across the intersection from the future Brown Palace Hotel. With money raised from the sale of the Lawrence Street Church and donations provided by the congregation, the commission for the new Methodist Church became available.

8.3 Robert S. Roeschlaub

Robert Sawyers Roeschlaub was born in Munich, in the kingdom of Bavaria (now Germany), on July 6, 1843. His father, Michael J. Roeschlaub, was a physician in the Bavarian court, and his mother, of Scottish descent, was from a family that relocated to Bavaria to teach agricultural science. Two years after his birth, his father uprooted his family and set sail for America to escape the oppressive rule of Ludwig I.[5]

Michael Roeschlaub, fluent in several languages and a physician, had his pick of

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[4] Hastings, Lucille. *Trinity Methodist Church: 18th at Broadway, Denver, Colorado, 1859-1959 One Hundredth Anniversary*, 7

[5] Francine Haber, Kenneth Fuller, David Wetzel, *Robert S. Roeschlaub: Architect of the Emerging West 1843-1923,* (Denver: Colorado Historical Society, 1988), 2

American cities to choose from, but he settled on a small town, northwest of Hannibal, Missouri called Palmyra. Michael, who chafed under the rule of autocratic Ludwig in Germany, probably did not feel comfortable in the slave state of Missouri, so he moved again. In 1849, four years after settling in Palmyra, the family moved northeast, to Quincy, Illinois, a free state.[6] He worked for the next ten years in Illinois and gained a reputation as a competent doctor. At this time, gold rumors came east from the Pike's Peak region, and Michael was given the opportunity to travel west in the company of the Illinois Secretary of State.[7]

In 1860, after graduating from high school, Robert entered the Quincy Academy. Unfortunately, one year later the Civil War broke out and Robert enlisted as a foot soldier. He spent the next four years in the army, and saw action at the Battle of Nashville. At the end of the war, he returned to Quincy, but did not go back to school. Instead, he found a job at a stationary store and, by virtue of circumstance, began his architecture career.[8]

Robert Bunce, an English architect who had practiced in Chicago, moved to Quincy after the Civil War to set up his own architectural business in late 1867 or early 1868. His offices shared the same building as the stationary store that Robert worked, and the two inevitably met, and Bunce took Roeschlaub on as an apprentice. Under Bunce's intense guidance, Roeschlaub learned the craft of architecture from conceptual design through to construction. He continued to practice and assist Bunce in his designs for another two to three years.

As often happens with relationships between apprentices and masters, the former outgrows the latter and looks to establish a career of his own. In the early 1870s, Roeschlaub decided to leave Bunce's practice and to start his own. The split was probably amicable, and a

[6] Haber, *Robert S. Roeschlaub*, 3
[7] Haber, *Robert S. Roeschlaub*, 3
[8] Haber, *Robert S. Roeschlaub*, 6

personal decision, based on Roeschlaub's choice of new location. He could have moved to Chicago and helped with the massive reconstruction effort following its devastating fire. He could also have stayed in Quincy and opened a rival practice. Instead he decided to follow in his father's exploring footsteps and moved westward, out to Denver, Colorado.[9]

He arrived in Denver in 1873, and instantly became the city's first and only architect. He opened up an office at 15th and Larimer streets; one block away from the Methodist Lawrence Street Church, and his timing could not have been more apt.

By virtue of scarcity, Roeschlaub received many architectural commissions that ensured that his career in the new city was a successful one from the start. His work ethic and dependability can also be attested to by the many repeat clients he took on, especially within the public school system. When he arrived in Denver, the rest of the country was in the grip of the financial panic of 1873. With many hopeful fortune seekers arriving in Colorado to try their hand in mining, the city was in need of more housing and amenities to keep up with the inflow of population. Denver was not severely affected by this recession and Roeschlaub was able to continue working and position himself for the economic upswing that followed.

With his dependable and reliable reputation established, Roeschlaub was called upon to design many structures in the building boom of the 1880s. At one point, in the space of two years, Roeschlaub had "constructed at least forty-four buildings. Among those were ten business blocks, five schools, twenty-four residences, one warehouse, a smelter (this one in the passing boom town of Gothic City), and additions to Wolfe Hall and Denver General Hospital."[10]

It was no surprise that he was called upon to design the new Methodist Church, based on

[9] Haber, *Robert S. Roeschlaub*, 9
[10] Haber, *Robert S. Roeschlaub*, 18

his past work relationships, commissions, and reputation with the church board members, or that this was done without having to compete with the new architectural firms for the commission. In the fall of 1887, Roeschalub completed the construction drawings and the cornerstone was laid on September 5. Construction took a little over a year, and just in time for Christmas, the first service was held on December 23, 1888.

8.4 Architectural Style and Precedents

Figure 8.2 – Central City Opera House

Roeschlaub's architectural influence came no doubt from his architectural partner in Quincy, Robert Bunce, and his relationship to the architecture of Chicago. Roeschlaub's architecture has a Richardsonian influence[11], much like many of the buildings in Denver in the late nineteenth century; and Trinity Methodist was no different.

Just a few years earlier, Henry Hobson Richardson had designed and built the Trinity Church in Boston, Massachusetts. The impact of this church became the epitome of the Richardsonian Romanesque style, and echoed throughout the design of Trinity Methodist. Similar elements like material choice for the facade and massing design are seen in both buildings.[12]

In 1878, Roeschlaub designed the Central City Opera House for the small mining community in the mountains west of Denver. In this building, Roeschlaub experimented with the gable and hip roof, transition spaces between the foyer and auditorium, and facade design. The building material choice in this opera house is seen in the material choice for Trinity Methodist.[13]

[11] Brettell, *Historic Denver*, 94
[12] Haber, *Robert S. Roeschlaub*, 28
[13] Brettell, *Historic Denver*, 96

Trinity Methodist is the architectural consolidation of all the lessons and practice Roeschlaub acquired in his two-decade career. All of Roeschlaub's buildings are studies in "parts combined to make a whole." Instead of working with a large mass, and then breaking it up into its different parts and pieces, Roeschlaub liked to work the opposite way. These components extended from circulation to function to spatial organization, but they were all designed separately. He designed the individual components and then worked them together into a mass.

Roeschlaub was also a very consistent designer. Instead of branching out and experimenting with different styles, he stuck to the Richardsonian style and refined his technique based upon his previous projects. His portfolio is a study of trial and error and building upon his experience to make the next commission a better design. While he was influenced in a broader scale, he also adjusted the styles to meet his designs, instead of making his designs fit into the large style.[14]

8.5 Programming and Site

Figure 8.3 – Artist Rendering of Trinity United Methodist Church

Trinity United Methodist Church is located in the southwest corner of Block 2 of Henry Brown's addition. While the block itself is a rather large, rectangular plot, the church only occupies a small portion, pushing up against the corner of the block.

This church was the return of Roeschlaub to religious architecture. His career, while broad and varied in commissions, he specialized in educational and civic architecture. He had to adapt to the religious constrictions of the church, while still pursuing his design ambitions.

The church itself is a rectangular massing with a vertical spire rising from the southwest

[14] Brettell, *Historic Denver*, 94

corner. There are two main facades that face Broadway Boulevard and 18th Street, facing west and south respectively. The first impression is that the church facades are symmetrical, aligned with the spire in the center corner, but this is not true upon closer inspection. While both facades have a gabled face with a turret at the end, the fenestration treatment is different for both, reacting to the program on the interior.[15]

The south facade, facing 18th Street, features a large rose window that opens up into the side of the sanctuary inside, above the balcony seating. A row of smaller, rectangular, stained glass windows are also facing the sanctuary inside, but lower along the pews on the first level. Another row of rectangular windows are set deeper into the stone and are aligned with the ground floor below. The facade is capped on the east edge by a rectangular turret with an octagonal drum set on top.[16]

The west facade, facing Broadway Boulevard, features a trio of stained glass windows instead of a rose configuration. Three arched openings, the middle one larger in size, hold stained glass modeled in the Gothic style. These windows are set behind the balcony seating on the interior, casting afternoon light into the sanctuary later in the day. Another rectangular turret, without the octagonal drum on top, is set in the northwest corner.[17]

The spire is the only predominantly vertical piece of this church, rising to 183 feet above the ground. It features the church bell tower and is symmetrical on both its west and south sides. The spire also, is rectangular at its base, but the steeple is octagonal in plan.[18]

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[15] Francine Haber, Kenneth Fuller, David Wetzel, *Sanctuary Floor Plan,* Photograph, *Robert S. Roeschlaub: Architect of the Emerging West 1843-1923,* (Denver: Colorado Historical Society, 1988), Print

[16] Haber, *Sanctuary Floor Plan,* Photograph, *Robert S. Roeschlaub: Architect of the Emerging West 1843-1923,* (Denver: Colorado Historical Society, 1988), Print

[17] Haber, *Sanctuary Floor Plan,* Photograph, *Robert S. Roeschlaub: Architect of the Emerging West 1843-1923,* (Denver: Colorado Historical Society, 1988), Print

[18] Brettell, *Historic Denver*, 64

The main entrance is located on the western side, along Broadway Boulevard. A small dais with five steps separates the main entrance from the public sidewalk. Three pointed arches project outward away from the exterior wall, and are set in the center of the west facade; all three acting as an entrance.

The roof system is a gabled one, with the apex in the center of the church. Four gabled arms stretch out to the four facades, and each corner is capped by a turret with a different roof line. The south facing turrets, including the steeple, are octagonal and rectangular in plan, while the north-facing turrets are rectangular with a hipped roof above.

From the exterior, the church appears to only contain two floors, based on the fenestration patterns and the known function of the building. From the exterior, it seemed that the main worship space is on the top floor, where the large rose windows and stained glass appear. The floor below was secondary space. A sunken courtyard is located on the northern side of the church, but this was a later addition and not featured in the original plans by Roeschlaub.

8.6 Design

Figure 8.4 – Sanctuary Floor Plan

Figure 8.5 – Transverse Section

While the facades are not symmetrical, the programming on the interior is. After walking up a few steps to enter the church on the west side, a visitor immediately steps down again into the ground floor. This floor acts as the main transition space and foyer for the sanctuary above. The room is roughly about 16 feet from floor to ceiling and features free standing columns

supporting the floor above.[19]

Figure 8.6 – View of the Sanctuary from the balcony in 2008

The floor above is the main sanctuary space. This space is roughly 84 feet wide and 124 feet in length. The floor is slightly ramped to allow for auditorium seating for the pews. The pulpit platform and organ are on the eastern side of the sanctuary, while the pews extend westward back into the building.[20] The pulpit features a raised dais with auditorium seating for the church choir, pushed to the back. A proscenium arch lines the wall punctuated with little lights. A large Roosevelt organ fills the interior space of the arch with the large pipes rising up and towering over the seated audience.

Not easily seen from the outside is the second rose window that is on the north facade. The orientation of the sanctuary means that afternoon sunlight peers through the western stained glass, filling the interior space with colored light. It also means that southern sun filters through the rose window on the south facade, while the northern rose window stays lightly illuminated all day.[21]

One would assume the interior structure was Gothic in nature based on the exterior treatment of the church, but that is not the case. Here, Roeschlaub deviates from the typical Gothic Revival treatment and encloses the inner sanctuary in a rectangular box with curved corners and edges. For the most part, the interior structure for the church is either hidden or given a secondary role. The fact that the structure is given a diminished role makes the visitor focus on the size of the interior space, which seems larger than the exterior of the church would

[19] Haber, *Longitudinal Section,* Photograph,_*Robert S. Roeschlaub: Architect of the Emerging West 1843-1923,* (Denver: Colorado Historical Society, 1988), Print
[20] Haber, *Sanctuary Floor Plan,* Photograph,_*Robert S. Roeschlaub: Architect of the Emerging West 1843-1923,* (Denver: Colorado Historical Society, 1988), Print
[21] Haber, *Transverse Section,* Photograph,_*Robert S. Roeschlaub: Architect of the Emerging West 1843-1923,* (Denver: Colorado Historical Society, 1988), Print

indicate.[22]

The pulpit is convex in plan, pushing out into the worship space, and the pews mimic the curve in a concave fashion. Four aisles cut up the seating arrangement, with two on the edges of the pews, and two radial aisles slicing the seating into thirds. The center seating portion is larger than the auxiliary seating. A level platform lines the western edge of the seating, and additional seating is located in the alcove that sits right above the main entry and underneath the stained glass windows.[23]

A balcony extends from the west side of the church out over the sanctuary. It wraps around all three sides of the sanctuary and only extends out by four pew widths. This means that the center seating area is encircled by the balcony above, and that the supporting piers underneath are relegated to the edges of the sanctuary, where they do not intrude too much on the sight lines of the visitors. Ten piers support the balcony above, and trace the back edges of the pews on the west side, but stick down in the middle of the benches along the auxiliary seating.[24]

The four corner turrets of the church house the vertical circulation. The western corners allow for access to all three levels of the church. They provide access to the main sanctuary above and exit into the back of the sanctuary, allowing visitors to continue walking forward into their seats. They then continue up to the balcony seating above. The circulation housed in the church spire continues up to the bell tower located underneath the church steeple. The eastern turrets also provide circulation, but to more private rooms. The southeast turret, for example, provides access to the private boxes above the sanctuary where expecting women could hear the

[22] Haber, *Sanctuary Floor Plan,* Photograph,_*Robert S. Roeschlaub: Architect of the Emerging West 1843-1923,* (Denver: Colorado Historical Society, 1988), Print
[23] Haber, *Sanctuary Floor Plan,* Photograph,_*Robert S. Roeschlaub: Architect of the Emerging West 1843-1923,* (Denver: Colorado Historical Society, 1988), Print
[24] Haber, *Longitudinal Section,* Photograph,_*Robert S. Roeschlaub: Architect of the Emerging West 1843-1923,* (Denver: Colorado Historical Society, 1988), Print

sermon in private.

8.7 Details

Roeschlaub put a lot of effort into designing every aspect of this church; the amount of detailed drawings cover everything between the pew ends to the railings lining the balcony edges. The kind of detail is mainly concerned with religious symbolism and Methodist detailing found in other churches.

Specifically with Trinity, the amount and groupings of elements help symbolize the Christian faith. There are 66 lights in the proscenium arch over the organ, the same number of books in the Bible. A carved sculpture of an angel is seated just below the pulpit in front of the pews. It faces the south side of the church, and according to members of the congregation, on Christmas Day every year, sunlight filters through the windows in the morning, illuminating the face of the angel.

The rose windows feature twelve panes of glass that radiate from the centerpiece, each one accounting for the twelve disciples of Jesus. The stained glass windows on the western facade at the back of the sanctuary are in a trio, a link back to the Trinity.

Figure 8.7 – Detail drawings of the pews and doors

The trim and chair rails that are found throughout the sanctuary have the Gothic pointed arch in the webbing between the pilasters. Other floral detailing can be found, such as the patterning in the wrought iron doors across the arched entrances, linking the church back to the Richardsonian Romanesque style.[25]

The treatment of the materiality of the exterior of the church is a study in contradiction.

[25] Haber, *Detail Drawings,* Photograph, *Robert S. Roeschlaub: Architect of the Emerging West 1843-1923,* (Denver: Colorado Historical Society, 1988), Print

The church is, for the most, constructed from one material. Rhyolite, a soft reddish sandstone, was quarried from Castle Rock, a small town south of Denver. This stone was roughly cut, leaving the exposed side with a rusticated feel that gave the facades a texturized aesthetic. The stones were laid in a horizontal, staggered running bond that emphasized the horizontality of the structure.[26]

However, the steeple of the church rises in such a dramatic fashion and ends with such a sharp point that it seems to want to emphasize the vertical. This contradictory relationship gives the church the dynamic feel of being pulled in two ways; neither being a vertical nor a horizontal structure.

The design for the structure of the church steeple was also expertly done. The octagonal steeple rose from a square base; meaning the four corners of the base were chamfered to create an octagonal base for the steeple to rest on. At this junction, four poles rise up on the interior of the steeple. These are then tied back horizontally to the spire, cutting the steeple into three sections. Diagonal bracing covers all eight sides of the steeple in three sections.[27]

8.8 Conclusion

Trinity United Methodist is great example of the Richardsonian Romanesque style in a vernacular setting. While Roeschlaub was a fan of this particular style, he took the basic elements, the treatment of materials, the massing, and decorative scheme, and made them his own. He did not copy, instead he took an international style and reinterpreted it.

You see this reinterpretation in the use of local building materials on the exterior. His

[26] Brettell, *Historic Denver*, 115
[27] Haber, *Robert S. Roeschlaub*, 64

solution to a difficult corner site is also remarkable. A spectator can stand in five different locations in downtown Denver and catch sight of the church spire; a fleeting glimpse of the past through the maze of the modern city.

Perhaps that is what is so beautiful about Trinity and why it is so popular today. Like the Brown Palace built later across the intersection, Trinity has survived the chaotic and messy growth and destruction cycles of downtown Denver. Some modifications and upgrades have been made to the church, but the essentials and overall architectural piece is still intact, almost more powerful than before, a tattered fragment of Denver's architectural history.

Figure 8.1 - Trinity United Methodist Church in 2008

Figure 8.2 - Central City Opera House

Figure 8.3 - Artist Rendering of Trinity

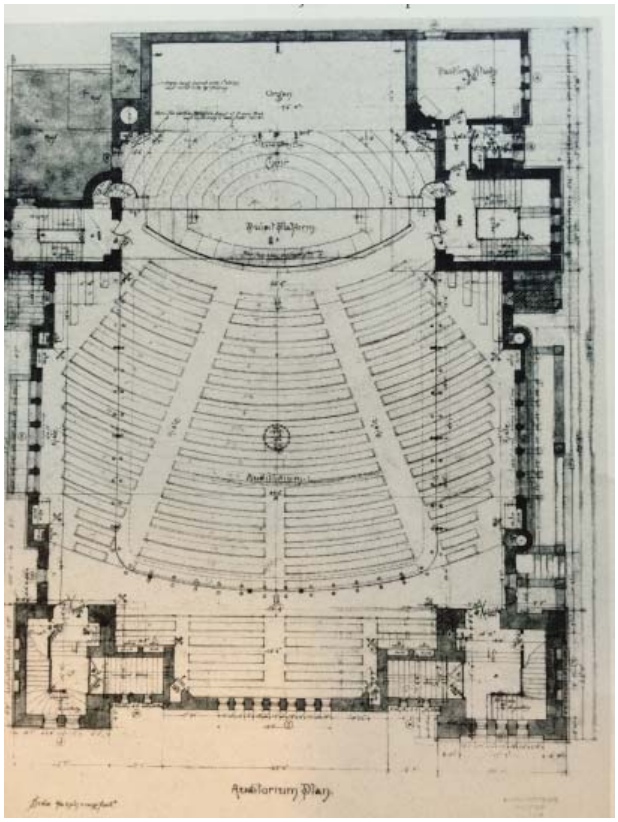

Figure 8.4 - Sanctuary Floor Plan

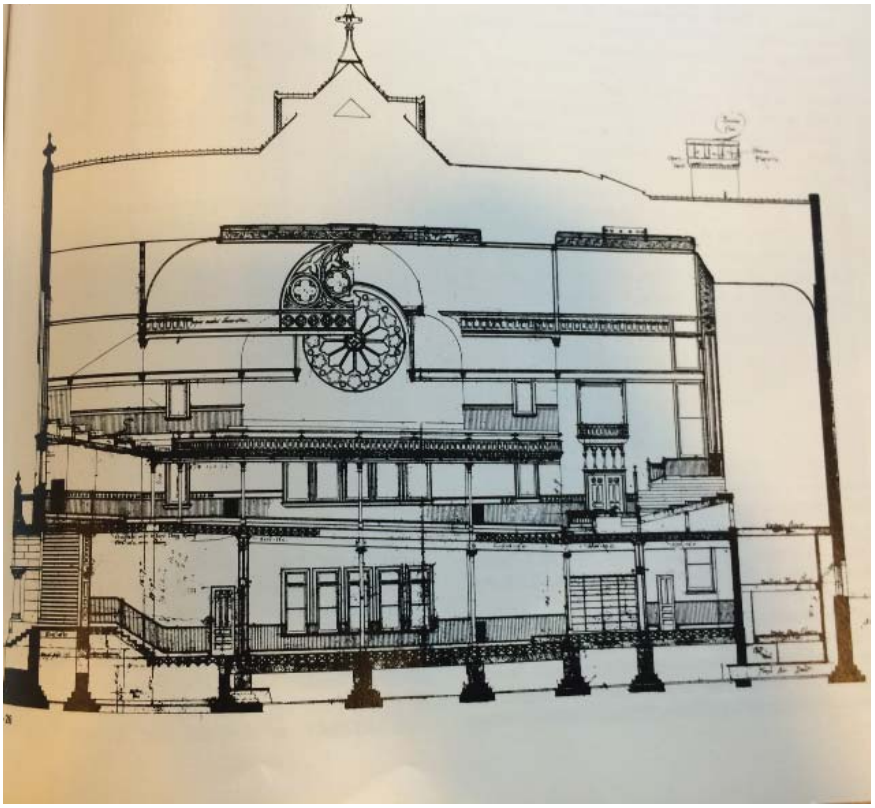

Figure 8.5 - Transverse Section

Figure 8.6 - View of the Sanctuary from the balcony

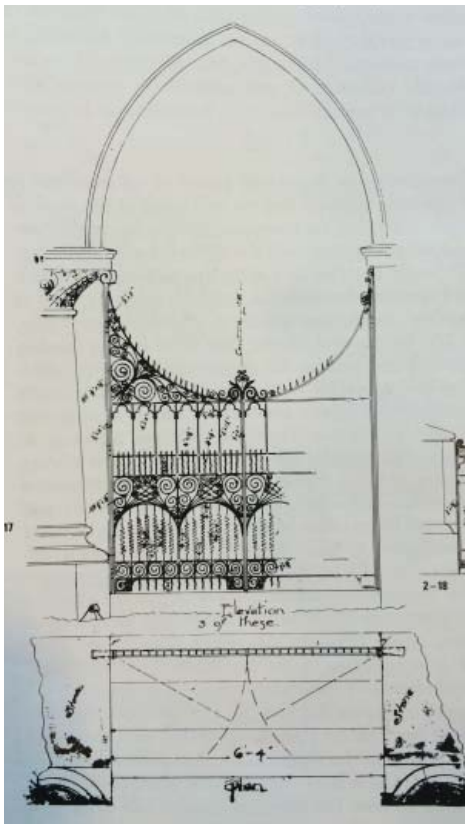

Figure 8.7 - Detail Drawings of trim and doors

Chapter 9 – The Brown Palace – 1892

9.1 The Contemporary setting of the Brown Palace

The Brown Palace presently sits at the intersection of 17th and Tremont streets, and Broadway Boulevard in downtown Denver. Located at the edge of the old Congressional Grant grid, the Brown Palace sits amid several modernist steel and glass buildings. Some pedestrians trickle through the massive intersection to the northeast of the hotel, but for the most part, the area is clogged with traffic traveling in six different directions.

Surrounded by contemporary office buildings that rise up and dwarf this "small" red hotel, what is not clearly discernible is that the Brown Palace has been with Denver from its infancy all the way into its modern era. While that is true of any historic building in any historic city, the Brown Palace provides a perfect snapshot of the Gilded Age in Denver. Since many of the city's historic and iconic buildings have disappeared, the Brown Palace gives us a taste of what the urban landscape and architecture of early Denver looked like during its boom years before the turn of the twentieth century.

9.2 H.C. Brown

Figure 9.1 – Henry C. Brown

The hotel's history began with Henry Cordes Brown, a businessman who came to Denver during its second gold rush of 1859. Brown was a carpenter by trade and spent his youth traveling around the western portion of the United States. Born in Ohio in 1820, he left home in 1852 for the Pacific Coast. He spent time in San Francisco during its gold rush and then moved north to Puget Sound. Utilizing his skills as a carpenter, he made a small fortune in San

Francisco, before moving back east to St. Louis, Missouri.[1]

Hearing the gold rumors that were coming out of the Rocky Mountains, Brown set off one more time for the new town of Denver. Instead of trying his luck at mining however, Brown saw that Denver acted more as a wholesale supply center instead of a mining city. He saw the business potential for his trade, and once again offered his services as a carpenter and a builder. His real skill set, however, laid in real estate development.

Figure 9.2 – H. C. Brown Addition

With a small fortune already established, Brown purchased plots of land to the east of the CBD neighborhood. The H.C. Brown Addition occupied all the land from Broadway Boulevard east to Grant Street; and between Deer and Clements Streets, a grand total of 34 city blocks. With shrewd business sense, "Brown gave ten acres on a hill in the middle of his homestead to the territory of Colorado in 1868."[2], with the intent that the state would use that land to build the new State Capitol Building. He reasoned that if the Capitol Building was built on the donated plots, the property values of the surrounding land would increase, including the land of his addition. The gamble paid off when the State Capitol Building was built in 1894, in the center of his addition. The State Capitol Building became a large piece in the future Civic Center project, and the surrounding land became part of the Capitol Hill neighborhood. His prowess as an astute real estate agent, and a man of financial means, was a key factor in the creation of the Brown Palace, located on the northern edge of his addition. Brown's reputation as a financier and businessman was well known, and by the end of the 1880s, he was asked to step in and rescue a financially struggling hotel project. In essence,

Henry Brown, therefore, was not the original founder of the Brown Palace, instead

[1] Corinne Hunt, *The Brown Palace: Denver's Grande Dame,* (Archetype Press, Inc., 2003), 19

[2] Debra B. Faulkner, *Ladies of the Brown: a women's history of Denver's most elegant hotel,* (Charleston: The History Press, 2010), 11

> the idea to build a hotel on the triangular patch at Seventeenth, Broadway, and Tremont originated with William H. Bush and an Englishman friend of his, James Duff. With money raised in England, they made the excavation for the foundation but ran out of capital before construction could begin. After a time, they persuaded Henry C. Brown from whom they'd gotten a provisional contract for the land to build a hotel.[3]

As part of the deal for providing the financial backing, Henry Brown negotiated to have the hotel named after him, while one of the initial members, Bush, oversaw the management.[4]

This hotel had major competition from the rest of the hospitality sector in Denver. It was built after one of the biggest building booms of Denver in the 1880s. It had to compete with the likes of the Windsor Hotel, which William Bush also oversaw, just a couple of blocks away, and the Savoy Hotel across Broadway to the west. Other grand buildings were built previously, like the Tabor Grand Opera House, to help provide a glamorous setting for tourists to visit. They could stay in the luxurious Brown Palace and see a show at the Tabor Grand Opera House, or experience the downtown life of Denver.

9.3 The Architect and his Precedents

Figure 9.3 – Frank Edbrooke

The architect for this new hotel was a returning figure in Denver's architectural history. Following his brother out west to oversee the construction of the Tabor Grand Opera House, Frank E. Edbrooke became the architect of the Brown Palace when his brother left Denver. After his success in Denver, Willoughby Edbrooke moved on from Colorado to design large federal buildings across the country, but Frank saw career potential in the young city and decided to stay.

Frank Edbrooke was born in 1840, and after serving in the Civil War in his twenties, settled in Chicago to study and practice architecture. Like Willoughby, most of Frank's previous

[3] Hunt, *The Brown Palace: Denver's Grande Dame*, 1
[4] Caroline Bancroft, *The Brown Palace in Denver,* (Denver: Bancroft Booklets, 1960), 3

architectural experience came from the reconstruction of Chicago following the disastrous fire of 1871.[5] His work also included hospitality design for the Union Pacific Railroad that stretched back east and to the north of Denver.

The two brothers came from similar architectural educations, and had similar design style inclinations, but with some nuance. Like Willoughby, Frank Edbrooke was a follower of the Richardsonian Romanesque and Chicago School styles that were sweeping the eastern seaboard and Midwest in the late 1800s.[6] Buildings of this style featured a heavy massing that dominated almost all the available space on the block. The massing, however, was cut up with extensive and fine detailing in its facade design. In terms of materiality, most of these buildings were constructed from rough-hewn stone to give them a rough texture and a historic look.

While the Tabor Grand Opera was a mixture of several styles, the Brown Palace stuck to two – Richardsonian Romanesque and the Chicago School - and drew precedents from iconic buildings of Chicago's building stock. The Marshall Field Wholesale Warehouse, by Henry Hobson Richardson, and the Auditorium Building by Dankmar Adler and Louis Sullivan had just been built a few years earlier in Chicago, and influenced the Brown Palace Hotel.

From the Marshall Field Wholesale Warehouse, Edbrooke designed his hotel in the popular steel frame system. The new steel frame allowed for a large atrium in the center of an otherwise massive and dense building, while also allowing for the hotel to reach a height of nine stories. This made it one of the tallest buildings in Denver, almost twice the height of the Tabor Grand Opera House that was built just a decade earlier

From the Auditorium Building, Edbrooke borrowed the Chicago School exterior facade system. Typical of this style, the exterior facade of the Brown Palace was split into three main

[5] Colorado Architects Biographical Sketch, Frank E. Edbrooke, Colorado Historical Society, 2002
[6] Brettell, *Historic Denver*, 21

levels. The ground floor was distinguished by roughhewn stone, the hotel rooms in the center of the building composed the middle, and then the penthouse suites on top composed the upper level, above a large cornice.

While Edbrooke did not copy the facade system exactly from the Auditorium building, there are some similarities. The arches that frame the windows of the Auditorium building are on the 7th floor, the same location as those on the Brown Palace. Also the Auditorium building paired two windows together, while the Brown Palace grouped three windows but with the same architectural language.

9.4 Programming and Site

Figure 9.4 – The Brown Palace from the intersection of 17th Street and Broadway Boulevard

The Brown Palace was unique in its setting because it was the first hotel that was not located right next to the railway lines. This hotel was actually removed from the bustling, hectic downtown area and located at the boundary between the business and residential districts. Patrons of the hotel had to hire carriages or walk the few blocks from the rail station with their luggage to reach the hotel; although it may be safe to say that if a visitor was able to afford a room at the Brown Palace, they could afford a carriage ride.

The site for the hotel was a difficult one to work because it was in the shape of an obtuse triangle. The surrounding land was only partially occupied, with only a few residential buildings nearby. This meant that the hotel stood out among all the one-story buildings on either side.

The hotel occupied the entire triangular lot, leaving no room for landscaping, but just a sidewalk on all three sides. Because of this shape, the Brown Palace had three entrances; one exiting out into the financial, shopping, business, theater districts. This flexibility with entry and egress kept the hotel from clogging up traffic and eased the use of the building for its patrons.

This triangular design also meant that every guest had a panoramic view of Denver and its surrounding plains. With no neighboring skyscrapers, the ample amount of sunlight throughout the year meant that each room was provided with a generous amount of daylight.

Figure 9.5 – The Brown Palace

The hotel was nine stories tall, making it the tallest building in Denver at the time.[7] The ground floor featured the main hotel lobby and had the highest ceiling height of the building. The subsequent six floors above were dedicated as rented rooms, with about 50 rooms for each floor. The eighth and ninth floors housed the dining and concert halls and private penthouse suites respectively. H.A.W. Tabor's son by his first wife, Augusta, Maxcy, partnered with the manager, William Bush, to help oversee the hotel's finances. Following his parents' divorce, Maxcy moved Augusta into one of the penthouse suites where she lived in relative comfort.[8]

The exterior facade of the hotel had a uniform application of red granite and sandstone from the states of Colorado and Arizona respectively.[9] On the ground floor, granite blocks are roughly hewn and textured at the three corners, similar to the Marshall Field Wholesale Warehouse, and large storefront windows with awnings open up onto the streets. The windows on the floors above are arranged in columns with three sets of windows per floor, starting from the first floor all the way to the ninth. The windows on the sixth floor are framed by ornamental arches made from the red granite. Cornice lines are seen above the ground, second, fifth, sixth, and finally the ninth floors.

The hotel featured 400 guest rooms in total, along with a dining hall, a ball room, and a convention hall. Artesian wells on site provided fresh water to the patrons, along with new technology, such as flushing toilets and electric ventilation. Most of the original furniture and

[7] Hunt, *The Brown Palace: Denver's Grande Dame*, 23
[8] Bancroft, *The Brown Palace in Denver*, 3
[9] William H. Bush and N. Maxcy Tabor, *The Brown Palace Hotel: Denver, Colorado,* (Denver, Carson, Hurst & Harper , 6

furnishings of the Brown Palace were from local Denver companies, like the Henry Bohm & Company, who furnished the hotel with its clocks.[10]

The biggest advancement for the Brown Palace, however, was its claim of being absolutely fire proof. In fact, it was one of the first buildings to be called so, since "no wood was used. Instead, the hotel was framed with wrought-iron and steel columns. All floors and partition walls were built of hollow blocks of porous terra cotta and surfaced with fireproof cement. Floor blocks were shaped to surround the beams and columns, thus protecting the iron from fire. Tests proved that the terra cotta could withstand 1,800-degree heat."[11]

9.5 Design

Figure 9.6 – 8th Floor Plan

To negotiate the triangular design, the floor plan was set out in a rather rational manner. The two sharpest corners were on the side facing Broadway, so rooms that required a lot of floor space (the ballrooms and convention halls) occupied those corners. Edbrooke found use for the narrow corners by placing stages and other functions in those areas, as seen in the eighth floor plan.[12]

The ground floor featured the three main entrances on each segment of the triangle. While all three used to be operational, today the main entrance faces Tremont Place, with the other two relegated to auxiliary status. With the hotel rooms and other programming space occupying the perimeter of the building, the circulation and public space was designed in the center, but that came with problems of its own as well. The hotel was a large one for its time,

[10] Bush, *The Brown Palace Hotel: Denver, Colorado*, 14

[11] Hunt, *The Brown Palace,* 29.

[12] Corinne Hunt, *Eighth Floor Plan, The Brown Palace Hotel, Denver,* Photograph, *The Brown Palace: Denver's Grande Dame,* (Archetype Press, Inc., 2003), 31, Print

and while ample amounts of daylighting penetrated the immediate interior of the building, that left the problem of a dark, central core down the center of the building.

To solve this problem, Edbrooke proposed a simple solution, and created an atrium. Unlike its triangular perimeter, the atrium is pentagonal in plan. It is not, however, a perfect pentagon, but a rectangle with a corner chamfered to make way for the hotel rooms facing Broadway Boulevard. This atrium only extends from the seventh floor all the way to the ground floor. A stained glass skylight is in place on the seventh floor, and the next two floors are built around this atrium.

This in turn relegates the main circulation of the building to the perimeter of the atrium. The circulation surrounding the atrium provides access to the hotel rooms on a single-loaded corridor. This allows visitors to gaze over balconies into the towering interior space of the hotel and the people seated below in the lobby on the ground floors. Vertical circulation was confined to two staircases on opposite sides of the atrium. Various other functions were stacked together with the vertical circulation, such as ventilation, waste stacks, and storage spaces.

Edbrooke provided a unique and sensible solution to a very tight and difficult site. The atrium allowed for expansive views of the interior of the hotel and admitted a large amount of daylight into the space. Artificial lighting was only necessary in the spaces underneath the atrium, away from any windows. The optical illusion of a complex shape inside a tight building gave the impression that the atrium was larger in plan that it really was. The circulation was easily accessible from all parts of the building and the pathways leading to each room were very rational and intuitive.

The only drawback to this design is that it works too well for the problem it solved in occupying a triangular site. The design, finely detailed and resolved, leaves little room for

reinterpretation and negotiation. While the hotel has undergone many modern day improvements, it continues to demand a daily case of making compromises between the historic integrity of the hotel and its need to modernize.

9.6 Details

Like the Tabor Grand Opera House, the Brown Palace strove to provide its patrons with the very best in luxury. The atrium is 56 feet square and covered with yellow stained-glass and iron ribs. The stained-glass, like most of the finishes, came from a Denver firm, the Watkins Glass Company, which is still in operation today.[13] The arches that line the atrium on the second floor are trimmed with beige granite and copper. Gas lights were initially installed in the arches, but have since been replaced with modern electric lighting. The balconies lining the perimeter of the atrium are edged with copperized cast-iron panels. These panels are delicate and detailed, and if you look closely, one of these panels was installed upside down. Over 12,000 square feet of golden onyx is used in the atrium.[14] This material choice has a pleasant effect, when sunlight reflects off of the panels, giving the atrium a pleasant, warm glow.

9.7 Conclusion

The beauty of the Brown Palace is in its enduring and adapting glamor. When it was originally built, the hotel stood out as the epitome of class, style, elegance, and top-of-the-line technology. It became famous in its own right and elevated Denver's status as a cosmopolitan city.

Today, the Brown Palace is dwarfed by the neighboring skyscrapers and busy, pedestrian

[13] Hunt, *The Brown Palace: Denver's Grand Dame*, 24
[14] Faulkner, *Ladies of the Brown*, 13

16th Street mall, but it still maintains an effect of mystery and elegance. These effects are executed in a different manner, however. When it was built, it was known for its state of the art technological advances, such as flushing toilets, but that interest has shifted now. The Brown Palace draws people today because of the charm of its historical elements. That is not to say that the hotel is not a modern one, but the Brown Palace is still popular among the hospitality sector of Denver, amongst hotels with the name Ritz and Hyatt, because of its uniqueness and history.

Figure 9.1 - Henry C. Brown

Figure 9.3 - Frank Edbrooke

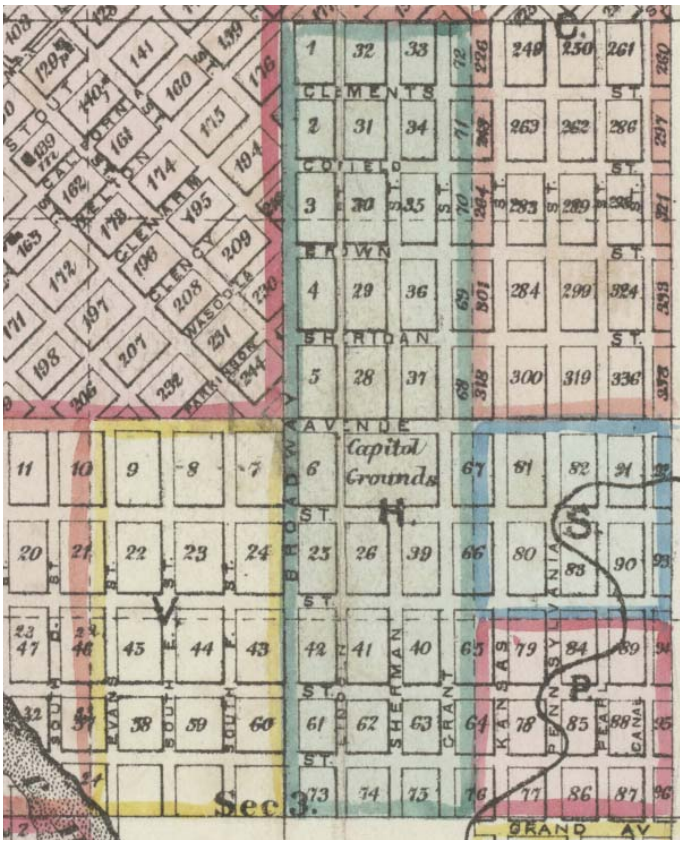

Figure 9.2 - H.C. Brown Addition (highlighted in green)

Figure 9.4 - The Brown Palace from the intersection of 17th Street and Broadway Boulevard

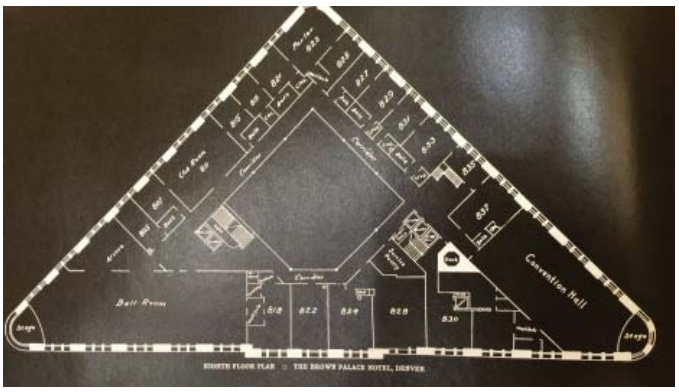

Figure 9.6 - 8th Floor Plan

Figure 9.5 - The Brown Palace

Chapter 10 – Denver Union Station – 1881 - 1914

10.1 The Need for a New Train Station in Denver

Figure 10.1 – Union Station

The final case study is of Union Station in downtown Denver. This depot was the center of the transportation hub in Denver and was integral to the success and growth of the city during the late nineteenth century. This building, unlike the previous three case studies, underwent many architectural changes during its 130 year existence, having had to adapt to devastating natural disasters and the changing conditions of transportation through Denver. This development can be traced through three distinct phases beginning in the early 1880s.

Union Station, sometimes referred to colloquially as the Union Depot, was situated within the heart of the Congressional Grant of 1864 that contained the original downtown grids. It occupied two city blocks, located on Wynkoop Street between 16th and 18th Streets and close to the South Platte River. The railroad lines, at the time, were located right behind the building, nestled alongside the South Platte River, allowing passengers to pass through the train station before exiting out into the city, or to transfer to another train.

The idea for Union Station was conceived in response to the need for one, centralized train depot to serve Denver. After the introduction of the first railway line into the city, the Denver Pacific line, a train depot was built at 21st and Wazee Street. This depot was located further west along the South Platte route, away from the downtown sector, to keep the commotion and noise of a train station separate from the residences of Denver.

Within the next decade, multiple new lines were added to the Denver circuit, along with three new train depots. Built in a hurry and without any forethought to the future, these depots

were constructed where empty land was available in downtown and close to the train tracks. The Denver South Park & Pacific depot was located 6th and Walnut Street, and the Colorado Central station was at 16th and Delganey Street.[1] Soon, the "depots began experiencing difficulties in transferring passengers and freight between depots, and in 1879, the Union Depot and Railroad Company was formed and it was determined that a new station should be constructed to serve all these railroads."[2]

Another change from the previous case studies is that the financing and support for this building did not just come from local businessmen. Walter Cheesman, a local entrepreneur, with stakes in Denver's water supply infrastructure and real estate speculation, looked back east for help building the new station. He not only needed financing, but he needed political clout to get the various railroad companies to agree to route their trains through the proposed station, all while paying a fee to do so. New York railroad tycoon, Jay Gould, who had made his fortune by financing railroads, proved to be just that person, and together "in 1880, representatives from the railroads that would use the station signed an agreement in which they stated that each railroad would pay for the use of the station on a percentage basis."[3]

With a financial agreement signed, the hunt for an architect began. Another deviation from the previous case studies involves the choice for an architect. In this case, the original Union Station was to be designed, not by a popular local architect like Frank Edbrooke or Robert Roeschlaub, but by an architect who also had eastern architectural influences.

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[1] Kenton Forrest and Charles Albi, *Denver's Railroads,* (Boulder: Johnson Publishing Company, 1986), 11

[2] SlaterPaull Architects, *Denver Union Station: 1701 Wynkoop Street, Denver,, Colorado. Historic Structure Assessment and Preservation Plan. Final Report November 2010,* SHF Project 2009-02-051, 10

[3] SlaterPaull Architects, *Denver Union Station.*, 10

10.2 The Architect

The commission for Union Station was given to William E. Taylor of Kansas City, Missouri, a seemingly odd choice for such a brilliant commission for the city of Denver. Taylor does not appear to have belonged to a firm, and instead was working alone when he drew up the plans for Union Station. So how did he receive such an illustrious commission?

William E. Taylor, Jr., was an architect based in Kansas City, Missouri. Not much is known about his early life, and even the year of his birth is estimated, but we can glean some details from his relationship with his stepfather. According to the 1880 United States Census, Taylor was 24 and living with his family in Kansas City, putting his year of birth sometime around 1856. His stepfather, Asa Beebe Cross, was also an architect and born in Camden, New Jersey in 1826. He moved to St. Louis, Missouri in the early 1850s, and studied architecture under John Johnston, who practiced in that city.[4]

In the late 1850s, Cross married Rachel Genevieve Taylor, a widow with a young son named William. Soon after their marriage, the new Cross family relocated to Kansas City where Asa continued his career as an architect. Probably a few years after working under his stepfather, William became a partner is his father's business, specializing in railway construction. The smattering of work that can be attributed to this architectural office followed the style of Classical Revival before moving into Romanesque and Renaissance Revival trends. A good example of this is the Wornall House in Kansas City, completed in 1858 in the Classical Revival Style. Other commissions finished after Union Station, such as the Keith and Perry building, showed a shift away from Classical Revival towards the Romanesque Revival style.

If his birth year is accurate, Taylor was only 24 when he was awarded the commission to

[4] *Asa Beebe Cross (1826-1894) Papers* (K0082); The State Historical Society of Missouri Research Center – Kansas City

design the new Union Station in Denver. Landing such an illustrious commission was the perfect step in establishing a bright career in architecture, but tragically in 1883, only three years after the completion of Union Station, William E. Taylor died at the age of 27.

This would account for the dearth of information found on Taylor, based on the fact that he died so young and had a very limited portfolio of work, especially solo work. Asa Cross continued to practice in Kansas City, designing many public and private buildings. Rachel Cross, née Taylor, died in 1890, outliving her first child by 7 years. Asa Cross died at the age of 68, in 1894, four years after Rachel.[5]

Walter Cheesman, like Taylor, was not from Denver but was born in New York, and worked as a druggist in Chicago as a young adult. Like many men his age, Cheesman followed the gold rumors to Denver in 1861, at the tender age of 23. He set up a drug store in Denver, and serviced the personal needs of the miners before he began investing in real estate, and established his fortune. It is probable that Cheesman heard of Cross's reputation for public buildings in Kansas City, and the fact that his business partner William specialized in railroad construction made the choice all the more popular. While Frank Edbrooke worked in the railroad industry before his move to Denver, he only worked in the hospitality sector; and he made a conscious move away from that line of work while in Denver.

Cheesman and Gould must have been confident that their plans to build a new train depot would happen, because the time-line following the design and construction of the depot was a very tight one. Cheesman, who seemed more involved with the design of the building, while Gould was involved with the financing,[6] may already have had an architect in mind. The railroad contract was signed in the beginning of 1880, and Taylor began drawing up the construction

[5] *Asa Beebe Cross (1826-1894) Papers* (K0082), The State Historical Society of Missouri Research Center – Kansas City

[6] SlaterPaull Architects, *Denver Union Station.*, 10

documents for the train depot immediately. Following his business's shift towards a Romanesque Revival style, the design of the new depot followed along the same lines, along with a dash of the Beaux Arts style. He completed the documents in the spring of 1880 and by the middle of the summer of 1881, the new Union Station opened.

10. 3 Phase I

Figure 10.2 – The original station

The depot was situated facing Wynkoop Street, which was unpaved at the time and with no accessible streetcar line. In earlier versions of this train station, railroad lines passed both in front of and behind the building, isolating the depot from the rest of the downtown district. This was probably done because existing train tracks were already set and it was easier to build the depot on the empty space between them than it would be to demolish the existing tracks and reroute the trains. Horses and buggies were used to transport passengers around, and in some images, can be seen parked right outside the office wings of the depot.

The design for the first phase of the Union Station was influenced by the Romanesque Revival style, and the depot was divided into four main components. The massing was split into three sections, with the main train concourse located behind the building, facing the train tracks and the South Platte River. The central hall was flanked on the southwest and northeast sides by two smaller halls that housed offices for the railroad companies. The massing appeared symmetrical, aligned along the main central hall in the center, but upon closer inspection "the spaces between the doors and windows of the north wing are narrower, reducing the length of the north wing by 30 feet as compared to the south wing."[7]

The main central hall was rectangular in plan, with two main levels, and capped by a

[7] SlaterPaull Architects, *Denver Union Station*, 10

mansard roof. A large (and somewhat out of proportion with the rest of the building) square clock tower extended out of the center, with four clock faces on all four sides of the tower. The main entrance was underneath this tower, through an arched, recessed opening.

Two wings extended away from the central hall and connected to two other masses with mansard roofs. These wings are also two levels in elevation, which kept the depot as a whole the same height, without regard to the clock tower. As with the main central hall, the wings had recessed openings in the center of the facade, but these seemed secondary and private compared with the central, primary entrance in the center.

10.4 Architect & Background – Phase II

Thirteen years after the completion of Union Station, an electrical short circuit caused a fire on March 18, 1894.[8] The central portion and the roof that covered the south wing were burned and the depot was in need of immediate reconstruction to keep the trains coming in. Unfortunately, the original architect was dead and another was needed to take his place.

The commission was given to Henry Van Brunt and Frank Howe of Van Brunt & Howe, also based in Kansas City. Henry Van Brunt was born in 1832 in Boston, Massachusetts. When he was 22, he graduated from Harvard College and immediately found work, eventually making his way to New York City. After serving in the Civil War, he returned to Boston and set up his own practice with classmate William Robert Ware, under the title of Ware & Van Brunt, and designed many buildings throughout the Boston area for the next 15 years.[9]

In 1881, after his time with his Boston firm, Van Brunt moved with his family to Kansas City and started a new firm with a former employee, Frank M. Howe. Van Brunt & Howe

[8] SlaterPaull Architects, *Denver Union Station*, 11

[9] Shettleworth Jr., Earle E. *Society of Architectural Historians. Brief Biographies of American Architects Who Died Between 1897 and 1947*. www.sah.org. n.d. Web. November 25, 2015.

worked on designs for the Union Pacific Railroad, which eventually led them to the commission for the reconstruction of Denver's Union Station 13 years later.[10]

Part of the reason why they were probably chosen to reconstruct Union Station was the fact that work produced by this firm followed the Richardsonian Romanesque style that Union Station was modeled after. In fact, one year earlier, they had designed the Union Station in Portland, Oregon, that had a similar formal massing. Van Brunt continued to work for another eight years before returning to Massachusetts in 1902. He died the following year, before seeing Union Station remodeled for the third time.

10. 5 Phase II

Figure 10.3 – Union Station Phase II

Van Brunt, instead of replacing the destroyed portions of the depot with exact replications of the missing components, took the design in a different direction. While conforming to the original style of the Romanesque Revival, new elements were introduced to the existing building.

The original mansard roofing was stripped off, even from the untouched northern portion of the depot, and replaced with a metal hipped roof. The original roof details of the dentils, fluting, and scrollwork were also removed.

Where the original building, and the remodeled one, was consistently two stories throughout, there was the illusion of varying height because of the undulation in the roof line from the previous design. This solid, uninterrupted hipped roof unified the roof line into a singular mass. This line extended along the straight, rectangular building, flattening its profile in

[10] Shettleworth Jr., Earle E. *Society of Architectural Historians. Brief Biographies of American Architects Who Died Between 1897 and 1947*. www.sah.org. n.d. Web. November 25, 2015.

elevation.

The central massing of the depot needed to be replaced entirely, and once again, instead of replacing it with an exact replica of the depot as it was before, the new portion kept within the same architectural style. The fenestration patterns of the north and south wings were copied over into the new addition, and the central block no longer had any hierarchy over the wings. The depot now appeared to be a unified piece of architecture. While this was sensitive to the original style of the depot, it reinforced the linearity and flattened the overall structure. The redesigned depot, instead of being broken up into three distinct pieces, now had the appearance of one large, long building.

The original clock tower that rose above the central portion of the train depot had to be replaced as well. Instead of another pyramidal clock tower, the new one became something of a castle turret. This tower, while different in its typology from the previous tower, still maintained its primary function of being a clock tower, with faces on all four sides. A steeply pitched hip roof topped off the tower, making it the only predominantly vertical piece in the whole building.

While sensitive to the composition and style of the previous building, Van Brunt's new addition dulled the depot into an ordinary train structure instead of a beautiful piece of architecture.

10.6 Architect & Background – Phase III

Figure 10.4 – Union Station Phase III

Railroads and their owners changed hands multiple times throughout history, and especially during Denver's early history. Another change headed towards Union Station in 1912, when “the Union Depot and Railroad Company dissolved and the Denver Terminal Railway Company was formed. In 1914, the existing station was deemed too small. Shortly thereafter,

the 1894 portion of the building was demolished and replaced with the current Beaux Arts/Renaissance style main train room."[11]

This time, however, instead of the commission being given to an out-of-state architect, a local firm was awarded. The local Denver firm of Gove and Walsh redesigned the center portion of the depot, and took the style in a different direction.

Aaron Gove was born in Illinois, after the Civil War in 1867. He moved to Denver in 1873, at the same time as Robert Roeschlaub. He attended Denver East High School and graduated in the late 1880s. Following his matriculation, he worked under Roeschlaub for four years until 1891. Following his internship, he studied architecture at the University of Illinois, before returning to Denver to continue working. [12]

After working for three years, in 1894 Gove partnered with Thomas F. Walsh to form their own architectural firm, Gove and Walsh. Gove met Walsh while working for Robert Roeschlaub in the late 1880s, while Walsh assisted on the Trinity United Methodist Church. Their firm specialized in large warehouse designs, with large buildings, such as the J.S. Brown Mercantile Building (which still stands today), dotting the downtown area.[13]

Figure 10.9 – J.S. Brown Mercantile Building

A steady stream of commissions began heading their way and they remained busy into the turn of the century. Most of their warehouse designs featured Renaissance Revival style facades, but they were restrained in their application of ornament to them. Instead they let the material characteristics take a front seat in their designs. In the J.S. Brown Mercantile Building, seven columns of windows were framed within a brick arch, similar to the facade treatment of the Brown Palace. They rest on top of the ground floor, which is punctuated by larger archways.

[11] SlaterPaull Architects *Denver Union Station*, 11
[12] Colorado Architects Biographical Sketch, *Aaron Morrill Gove,* Colorado Historical Society, 2002, 1
[13] Colorado Architects Biographical Sketch, *Aaron Morrill Gove*, 1

10.7 Phase III

Figure 10.10 – Front Facade

The new addition for Union Station would take a divergent approach to style. Instead of following the approach of Van Brunt and Howe of trying to mimic the same architectural style as the existing building, Gove and Walsh went with the Beaux Arts style. The new building featured a boxy, square mass that protruded towards Wynkoop, away from the main facade, breaking up the front elevation. The main entrance was not accentuated either, instead it was more discreetly nestled into the main facade along with ticket counters. The main facade also featured ornamentation that was based on the Renaissance Revival style. Indeed,

> the central block has three magnificent arched windows on the east and five similar windows on the west facade. These windows are surrounded by terra cotta ornament topped with a massive cartouche and scroll-work design. The east windows are flanked by blank niches which match the height and configuration of the windows. The building carries a terra cotta boxed and decorated cornice at the top which balances the large green painted wrought iron and glass canopy between the first and second floors. The decorative cornice features large round clocks on the street and track sides. The building is topped with a metal roof mansard.[14]

Figure 10.11 - Ground Floor Plan

What is interesting about this approach of meshing two styles into one building is that they seemed to improve the building. Gove and Walsh were very sensitive to the conditions of the existing building as is evidenced in their construction drawings. In the floor plan for the main waiting room, while it is easy to tell based on the exterior views where the old and new buildings meet, it is not so easy in plan. Gove and Walsh carried the existing room size and proportions through to the new addition so that there was not a major jolt in the architectural space. While this is true for the most part throughout the building, there are some dramatic

[14] SlaterPaull Architects *Denver Union Station*, 14

changes that take place.[15]

Indeed, as seen through the longitudinal section, the ground floor keeps a level ceiling height throughout, while the main waiting room above is double height, towering over the older wings on the sides. The five windows mentioned earlier are double height as well, and arched at the top. For the first time, the main central hall is as impressive on the interior as it is on the exterior.

Instead of two styles competing with each other for dominance, they seem to coexist rather gracefully. The new Beaux Arts addition instantly draws the attention of the visitor, but the side wings give it an anchor. Without them, the Beaux Arts section would seem small and unimpressive on its own.

10.8 Later Years and Renovation

As was the case with most train stations throughout the United States, Union Station saw a significant drop in passenger traffic following the Second World War. The depot limped along for a couple of decades while, slowly, train companies drifted away. The introduction of an airport in nearby Stapleton made matters worse in the late 1950s. Trains were still leaving Denver towards both the east and the west like Chicago, but not enough of them to justify keeping the entire building open.

Slowly, the Regional Transportation Department of Denver started integrating its services through Union Station in the 1980s. First bus stops were added outside the station and then eventually the company decided to buy the building and its property. Up until then, Union Station was essentially abandoned and empty, making it a target for vandalism. Just a few years

[15] Gove and Walsh, *First Floor Plan Union Station, Denver, Colorado*, Date: n.d., Photograph, Western History and Genealogy, Denver Public Library

ago, in 2011, metro lines that service the Denver city area, were added through Union Station. This precipitated a major renovation project to make Union Station the main port of transport through Denver again. This time, instead of being the primary depot for transportation out of the state, the station became the main depot for transportation throughout the city, and to the airport in the near future.

In 2008, Skidmore, Owings and Merrill, along with Hargreaves Associates, were commissioned to redesign Union Station again. The main building was kept intact, but the surrounding landscaping and smaller features like the new metro stations were needed. The interior of the main waiting station was cleaned up, but the major design details, like the windows, were kept the same. Restaurants now occupy the side rooms where offices used to be, and the main waiting room is filled with tables, chairs, couches, and even a billiard table. Some of the original waiting benches are placed closer to the train tracks for passengers waiting to depart, but this is the only vestige of an older travel time.

A traveler exits the station on the northwest side and immediately is on the waiting platforms for the metro trains. The tracks are covered with a linen tent to cast shade on the waiting travelers. Re-utilizing this old train depot as a stop for the city's existing metro system was a brilliant move. The building functions once again as it used to back at its time of construction. The renovation was completed in 2014, once again bringing Union Station to life.

Figure 10.1 - Union Station

Figure 10.4 - Union Station Phase III

Figure 10.2 - The Original Station

Figure 10.3 - Union Station Phase II

Figure 10.5 - Front Elevation

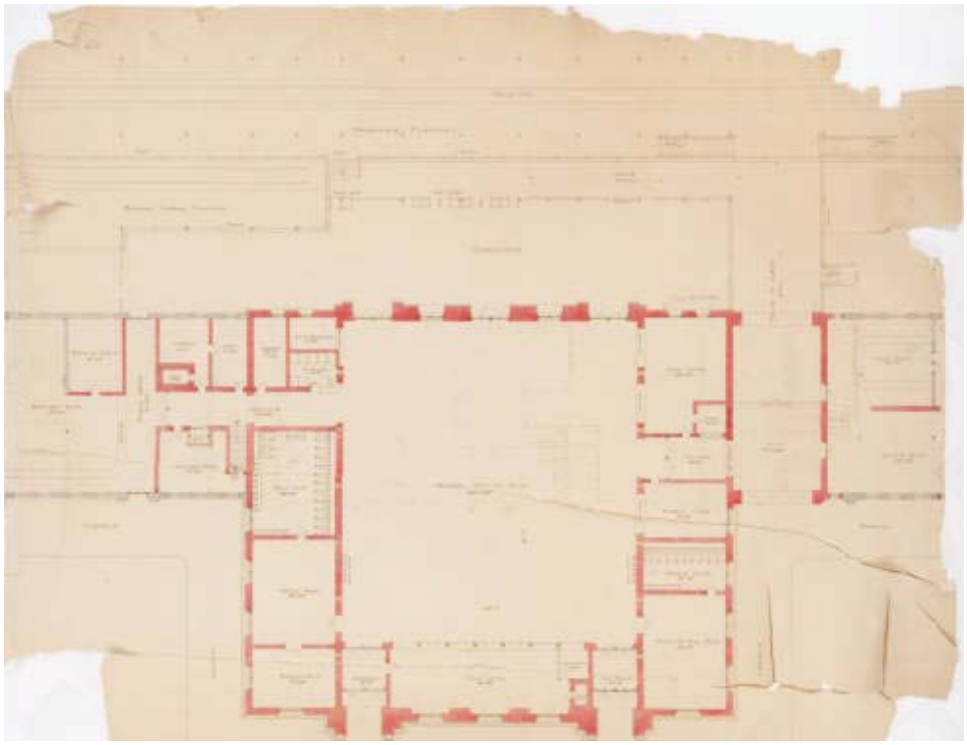

Figure 10.6 - Ground Floor Plan

Conclusion

Following the Panic of 1893, Colorado's economy slowly began to recover. However, it could no longer depend upon mining for its main source of income, and slowly diversified. Following the City Beautiful movement, the nation plunged into the Great Depression, and later the Second World War, and Denver's population and economy were not immune. During this time, the city suffered stagnant, if little, growth.

This changed following the end of the war in the mid 1940s. Within the next decade, Denver experienced another population boom. Riding an optimistic wave following the end of the war, Colorado was once again seen as the land of opportunity. Indeed,

> Despite the apparent lack of interest in industrial growth manifested by business leaders in Denver and the state at large, there occurred a boom in postwar Colorado that appeared to defy not only planners, but also the predictors. War veterans and their friends discovered the place boosters long had touted as "Cool, Colorful Colorado," and they flocked to it during these early postwar years. So did corporations, whose executives saw that the state offered them a number of advantages.[1]

However, Denver did not have the adequate building and housing stock to accommodate all these new arrivals. With some minor changes made during the City Beautiful movement, the majority of Denver's architectural fabric was built before the turn of the century. Without proper maintenance and upkeep, these buildings provided slum conditions at best. A massive overhaul of the Denver building stock was about to take place.

Facing the housing crisis in the 1950s, one solution was the creation of the Denver Urban Renewal Authority (DURA) in 1958. This independent agency was given the authority to acquire blighted property, through condemnation if necessary, relocate occupants of the property

[1] Athearn, *The Coloradans*, 311.

and affect its redevelopment.[2] The next two decades saw slum clearance that wiped large sections of Denver's historic architecture off the map.

DURA began by splitting up downtown Denver into large swatches to begin their evaluation. The 1960s saw the systematic and piecemeal destruction of downtown Denver, until the 1970s when the second phase of redevelopment began.

Arguably the most famous project during this period was the Auraria Urban Renewal Project that started in 1972. The old neighborhood of Auraria, the land that habitually was flooded by Cherry Creek in the beginning, was cleared and raised. A large campus was proposed that would house buildings for three institutions of higher education: University of Colorado – Denver, Metropolitan State University, and Community College of Denver. Today, this multi-college campus is so integral to the downtown Denver scene, that it is impossible to envision the city without it. However, almost all vestiges of old West Denver were wiped clean, including the old, juxtaposed street grid and tenement buildings. Not all historic fabric was wiped away, however, as the historic Hispanic St. Cajetan Catholic Church and the park on 9th Street were saved, revitalized, and absorbed back into the college campus and surrounding downtown.

With Denver's downtown area purged of dilapidated and decrepit buildings, DURA started rehabilitating the remaining buildings. If the previous decade was about the meticulous and systemic destruction of the existing building stock, the 1980s was a swing in the other direction.

New modern glass buildings infilled the empty lots, and their neighboring historic buildings began to be restored. Twenty years after the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, the preservation movement became popular in Colorado, and a rush began to save what

[2] DURA, Denver Urban Renewal Authority: 50 Years of Revitalizing Denver, (Denver: Denver Urban Renewal Authority, 2008), 8

was left in wake of DURA's actions in the 1960s. This movement continues today.

Today, downtown Denver is a patchwork of historic and modern buildings. The original Denver City grid of 1859, with the exception of a few name and route changes, is still in place and confusing to drivers. Denver is a curious example of a vernacular city with architecture that followed popular stylistic trends. Denver grew and adapted based on its own set of challenges and circumstances. It was not a city founded next to any major waterways such as St. Louis, Chicago, or San Francisco. Nor was it founded with the purpose of being a transportation hub on the railroad line like Cheyenne. Denver was the supply center and base camp for the rest of the state and its mining economy. The success of the city lay in adapting to other economies and uses.

Another feature specific to Denver was its survival despite being disconnected with the eastern United States, especially during its tenuous early years. From floods and fires, to social tensions and urban flight, this city has had to endure many hardships without the quick assistance from a neighboring city. It was alone on the prairie, and yet, despite all its obstacles, Denver thrived instead of failing.

As the city grew in the nineteenth century, instead of erasing the old to make way for the new, the city absorbed both. This is the characteristic I see that is special to Denver. Instead of erasing entire blocks of unused structures to build new modern buildings, the city worked to accommodate both. Walking around downtown Denver today, I see a great patchwork of historic and modern structures. Denver owns its history and capitalizes on it, by recognizing that its identity is wrapped up in its pioneering roots as well as its outdoor adventurist side. Almost all of the historic structures in the lower downtown region of Denver are occupied and repurposed for modern-day businesses.

Denver's image in the nineteenth century was one of the wild western frontier and the glory of the American Dream. The city's isolation, independence, and self-reliance meant that it created its own architectural language and image. It is almost as if Denver created its own architectural sub-style of the Richardsonian Romanesque: the Denver Revival style. The buildings of this sub-style are a mix of the Richardsonian Romanesque and Chicago style but the details of the buildings, such as material choices and site accommodation, are distinctive to Denver. With a hopeful look to the future and some careful diligence in preserving the historic city fabric, the lessons of Denver's early urban and architectural history will live on.

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