

Auraria History and Tour

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AURARIA AND DENVER: ----- Wednesday, January 18, 1860. ===== Early Days In Jefferson. It is our purpose, under this caption, to give from time to time such incidents, events and new discoveries--the first settlement and history of the various towns settlements and mining districts--the projection and completion of important enterprises and improvements--as may come under our notice, or of which we are able to to learn, from reliable authors and correspondents.

In this connection we extend an invitation to all those familiar with the projection and growth of the various towns, and the discovery and development of mines, to favor us with a history of the same, with dates as near as may be. We have lived in countries--quite new --where this want of knowledge of early events was sorely felt; and the interest and desire for such knowledge grows with years. A minute history, easy to preserve at first, in a few years is absolutely out of reach.

For these reasons, we have determined to undertake the task at once, and devote a portion of our limited time and space to a brief history of our adopted home: a history which those who desire can preserve without trouble, and which, we predict, will be highly prized in future years . We have not now facilities for learning the early explorations of this region, or any of the thrilling events in the lives of the adventurous traders and trappers who have roamed over it for the last forty years, and shall therefore confine our researches to more recent events, since the important discoveries of gold, and the occupation and development of the country consequent thereupon.

THE GEORGIA COMPANY. On the 9th day of February, 1858, a company Of Georgia miners, under the direction of the three Russell brothers, left their homes in Georgia with a view of prospecting this eastern slope of the Rocky Mountains. Their leader was W. Green Russell, who is now known through out this country---to most personally, to all by reputation. He had large experience, both in the mines of his native State, and in the golden hills and sparkling sands of California.

They made a pretty thorough exploration of the country near Pike's Peak, along the Arkansas and its tributaries; then moved northward and pitched their camp on Cherry Creek, some thirty-five miles above its mouth, where they found unmistakable and flattering indications of gold. Continuing their researches to the northward, they prospected the county in this immediate vicinity, for some miles up the Platte, and along Sandy and Dry Creeks, finding gold, in more or less quantity, distributed over the whole country. On the 24th day of June, 1858, they crossed the Platte river at the old military ford, which enters the river, from the south, immediately in the mouth of Cherry Creek.

After giving the surrounding country a pretty general exploration, they resumed their march to the northward, along the base of the mountains, penetrating the Black Hills almost to the North Platte, near where it is joined by the Medicine Bow; prospecting, and finding more or less gold throughout the whole course of their journey. They were driven back by a snow-storm, and again reached Cherry Creek about the 25th of September; since when a number of the company have always remained here. During the summer a large party of adventurers from Lawrence, Kansas came in, and assisted in the early development of the country. Altogether, there were, up to the middle of October, 1858, some sixty men in this vicinity, including the Georgia company proper, the Cherokee company, which joined the Georgians on the plains, on their way out, and the Lawrence company, which arrived soon after. Reports of the discovery of gold soon reached the States, and late in the season, numerous companies set out from the western frontiers.

Early in October a party arrived from Pacific City, Iowa: in the latter part of the same month, a party came in from Council Bluffs, Iowa, and another from Plattsmouth, N. T. On the 29th of October a company from Bellevue, Omaha and Florence, Nebraska, and Crescent City, Iowa, arrived, and on the 5th of November another party from the same neighborhood. Some ten days later a very large party from Leavenworth, Kan-

Subsequent to that time we will be unable to chronicle many of the arrivals, as they became more numerous, and consisted for the most part of small parties, attracting but little notice.

MONTANA, the first town projected in this region, was commenced in October, 1858, by members of the Lawrence company, and others.---Its site is on a beautiful point of land surrounded on three side by the Platte river and heavy cottonwood timber, opening out on the south-east to the boundless plain. It is five and a half miles above the mouth of Cherry Creek, and for some weeks was looked upon as a formidable rival to the cities projected at the mouth of that stream.

Some twenty log cabins were erected, covered with earth, and converted into very comfortable winter quarters, but the spring of 1859 saw them all deserted; some were removed to Auraria, some were thrown down, and a few yet remain. The town was never surveyed, and we believe is now held simply as a ranch or farm claim. Diggings that pay from one to four cents to the pan, surround the locality, and when water is brought in, corner lots, streets and commons will give way before the miner's pick, and rich pay, in shining gold will be his reward.

SAINT CHARLES, the next city in point of age, was projected about the same time, or very soon after Montana, we believe principally by the same parties. It occupied the hills and plateaus now covered by Denver. The first house—cabin—erected in the last days of October, 1858, may yet be seen on the east bank of Cherry Creek, between Blake and Wazee streets. It is built of round logs, and roofed with earth, the prevailing fashion of that day. Another foundation was laid near the present crossing of Blake and H streets. Two streets were surveyed, crossing each other at right angles near the last mentioned point.

Nothing further was done until about the middle of November, 1858, about which time the site changed hands, and took the name of Denver City, under which name we shall hereafter take up its history.

AURARIA comes next in order. the company that laid it out was organized in the last days of October, and consisted of one hundred members among whom were the members of the Georgia company. It was named after an unimportant mining town in Georgia. The name is very pretty, but, to a stranger, somewhat difficult to speak, and not easily remembered. The site occupies the point of land between the Platte river and Cherry Creek, for two miles above their junction.

In general outline it resembles very nearly the letter "U," the base, or opening, fronting south-west, Cherry Creek forming the left or south-eastern side, the Platte river the right or north-western side, both sweeping around, and forming a junction at at(sic) the lower or north-eastern point. To show the somewhat enlarged ideas and expectations of the projectors, we quote the claim boundaries as recorded: "Beginning at a point in the middle of the main channel of the Platte river, opposite the mouth of Cherry Creek, thence up the middle of the main channel of Cherry Creek two miles; thence north 60 degrees west to the middle of the main channel of the Platte river; thence down the same to the place of beginning," containing about twelve hundred acres. the "claim" to the land embraced in said sight was purchased--for what seems now a very small

consideration--from John S. Smith. William McGaa--better known as Jack Jones--and N. Jannesse--a half breed--all old Indian traders, who held it as "ranch" or farm claims.

They gave possession about the first of November, and on the 8th the survey was commenced by W. S. Foster, surveyor for the company, and since continued at intervals by Mr. Foster, and subsequently by Mr. Moody, until a few months since, when the whole plat was finished. the streets are eighty feet in width, crossing each other at right angles, running south 28 degrees west, and north 28 degrees west--true meridian--and their complement. Lots are 66 feet front by 132 feet in depth, twelve lots in a block, fronting south-east and north-west, and running back to a sixteen feet alley, dividing each block through the centre. Four principal avenues--two each way--intersecting near the centre of the plat, are each 100 feet wide. **FIRST IMPROVEMENTS.** Prior to the commencement of the survey, and even before a town was thought of, a large number of persons had pitched their camps here, and several had commenced building.

The first house was built by Ross Hutchins. It stands in Cherry stret, between First and Second, and is built of round cottonwood logs; is about 16 by 18, one story high, roofed with earth, supported by rough timbers. He began its erection about the 20th of October, and took up his residence there some four or five days later.

S. M. ROOKER was the first settler who arrived in the country accompanied by his family. He came from Salt Lake, and reached Cherry Creek on the 30th of August, 1858. He lived in camp some two months, and on the 22nd of October began the erection of a house near that of Mr. Hutchins, in the middle of what is now Cherry street.--Five days sufficed to complete it, and on the 27th he moved in, and became a householder. His house is of the same character as the one before described, though of a little larger dimensions, and is still occupied by Mr. R. and his family. Seven other houses were also commenced before the town survey, all near by those above mentioned, clustering among a little grove of ancient, gnarled and picturesque cottonwoods, that still shade their humble roofs.

EARLY SNOW. On the 29th of October, 1858, snow fell to a considerable depth, and forcibly reminded those who had been until then intent only on prospecting for gold, that winter was upon them, and shelter must be provided to protect them from its (fabled) severity. As a consequence, all act about building rude houses--for the most part of round logs, the cracks stopped with mud, and the roof of earth.--There was neither glass or nails, and many were the expedients resorted to for keeping out cold, providing a means of ingress and egress, and to admit a few rays of light. About one hundred an twenty-five houses were put up during the winter; in their style there was scarce a

shade of difference--walls of round or hewed logs, about eight feet high, the cracks chinked with blocks and plastered with mud, a roof frame of rough poles or split timber, covered with dry grass, and that covered with about six inches of earth . They were very dark, very warm, and--in the latter part of the winter, and in spring, when the snows melted and the rains fell--very wet; the rain usually continuing three days in-doors after the weather cleared up out-doors.

MESSRS. BLAKE AND WILLIAMS, from Crescent City, Iowa, brought in a supply of goods and provisions on the 29th of October, 1858, and opened the first trading house in the country.

MESSRS. RINNA AND NYE, from Bellevue, Nebraska, arrived a few days later with a stock of stoves, tin ware, and tanner's stock, and as soon as they could build, opened a shop on St. Louis street, between Second and third, which they continued to occupy until the completion of their fine store room on Ferry street, some two months since.

R. L. WOOTTON arrived with his family on the 25th of December 1858, the second white family in the country. Mr. W. came from New Mexico where he had been in business for several years. He brought a large train of wagons, loaded with goods, and immediately commenced the erection of a store house on Ferry, near Fourth street. He built of hewn pine logs, 20 by 32 feet in size, one and a half stories high, roofed with "clapboards," or "shakes." An upper floor was laid with boards sawed by hand, with a whip-saw--the first plank floor in the country.

THE CITY BAKERY was opened by E. Karczewsky, of Chariton, Iowa, and Henry Reize, of Omaha, Nebraska, under the name E. Karczewsky & Co., about the first of January, 1859, in a log cabin about sixteen feet square; but they were soon compelled to enlarge their quarters, and erected a commodious establishment near the new store of R. L. Wootton, on Ferry street. They built of logs, with frame front and shingle roof.

THE FIRST SALOON was opened in the latter part of December, 1858, by Messrs. Reid & Hiffner, in one of the most respectable looking of the "old time" houses, on the corner of Third and Ferry street. The building is now known as "Hote-de-Dunk."

THE FIRST WATCHMAKER'S SHOP was established in December, 1858, by J. D. Ramage, in a little cabin on the corner of Ferry and Fifth streets. THOMAS POLLOCK arrived from New Mexico on the 26th of December, 1858. He set about the erection of a blacksmith shop, in which he began work about the 10th of January, 1859. The old shop may still be seen on Fourth, between Ferry and St. Louis streets, but it was long since

abandoned for a more elegant structure near by. Kasserman & Co. opened the first carpenter shop, on the corner of Ferry and Fifth streets.

THE ELDORADO HOTEL, the first public house opened in the country, is a log building on St. Louis, between Fifth and Sixth streets. It was opened by Murat & Smoke, about the first of February, 1859, and had for a sign a silk flag floating from the peak of a lofty pine pole. The building is now occupied as the Union Bakery.

About the first of April, 1859, R. L. Wooton began the erection of a frame dwelling house, about 20 by 30 feet in size, on St. Louis street. About the same time, Thos. Pollock commenced the large building subsequently kept as a hotel, known as the Pollock House, and now occupied by Messrs. Jones & Cartwright as a store.

Thus stood Auraria at the time of our advent, in the middle of April, 1859--one hundred and twenty-five mud covered log cabins scattered along Cherry, Ferry and St. Louis streets, from the river south-westward parallel with Cherry Creek for one-third of a mile, eight or ten log houses with board roofs, two of them with frame fronts, and one with one plank floor. Of its growth since, we will speak hereafter.

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Early Days in Jefferson. AURARIA--CONTINUED. In our former chapter we thought we had brought the history of Auraria down to the middle of April, 1859, but since learn that we omitted some arrivals, and items of interest.

Messrs. Ming & Cooper arrived with five wagon loads of provisions in the month of January. J. E. Wootton & Co. brought in a large train loaded with flour in February.---They came from Mexico. In the latter part of March, R. L. Wootton---"Uncle Dick"---opened the "Western Saloon," on Ferry Street, where it still continues.

On the 7th day of April, John Stofel was arrested for the murder of Thomas Biencroff---his brother-in-law. The murder was committed near Vasquez River, four miles north of this city, and was a most vindictive and cold-blooded act. Stofel was examined before the County Judge ---H. P. A. Smith---and a jury of twelve men, and the prisoner committed for trial. The evidence was very conclusive: the prisoner confessing the deed, and even boasting that he followed his brother-in-law to this country for the purpose of killing him. There was no jail or place to secure prisoners, and the populace felt justified in taking extreme measures to prevent so infamous a criminal from running at large. On the 8th he was taken from the hands of the authorities, conveyed to an

ancient cottonwood near the intersection of Third and St. Louis streets, and hanged until he was dead.

OUR ARRIVAL. On the morning of the 19th of April, we first saw the famed Cherry Creek and its young cities, Denver and Auraria. On coming over the hills to the eastward, we looked down upon a motley group of log cabins, covered wagons and canvas tents. There was twice the number of houses we had expected to find, the walls of many of them built of pine logs, such as we had never dreamed of seeing in this country. We were met by a warm welcome on all sides a dozen houses were placed at our disposal, from which we selected the half story room over J. E. Wootton & Co.'s store, mainly because it had a plank floor and glass windows, neither of which another house in the country could boast.

On the night of the 20th snow commenced falling, and continued at intervals during the 21st. About sundown the wagons carrying the press, &c., arrived; a hundred willing hands assisted in unloading them, and before midnight the press was up, cases in place, and the click of the type was first heard under the shadow of the Rocky Mountains. All hands were ambitious to print the first sheet in the Territory of Jefferson, and success could be purchased only by diligence.— The press of the Cherry Creek Pioneer had arrived eight days in advance of us, but had not commenced work. We worked all of the first night, except for a couple of hours, all of the day following, and at ten o'clock at night the first sheet went to press, in the presence of a large number of citizens. Two or three copies were printed that night, in just twenty-eight hours after the arrival of the press in the city; the remainder of the first edition was worked off the following day.

Monday, the 25th of April, was so dark with low, dense clouds, and falling snow, that we were obliged to burn candles in our office during the entire day, by which to work. Both papers, the News and the Pioneer, made their appearance before the public—the latter for the first, last, and only time.

THE IMMIGRATION poured in rapidly during the months of April and May, and poured out with equal rapidity. The country, the people, newspaper correspondents, and the News were cursed loudly and bitterly. Thousands of men lost all respect for their fellow men, themselves, the truth, and even seemed to lose their good sense. Owing to the discouraging aspect of affairs, improvements almost ceased in the city, and every where else. With the single exception of the Pollock House, not a building of any importance was going up. In the latter part of May, owing to the discoveries in the mountains, matters began to undergo a favorable change. Emmigrants coming in,

instead of turning about for home, pushed into the mountains.---Nearly all the citizens did the same, to satisfy themselves, prospected a month or

so, and then returned to commence building and other improvements. Up to the first of July, however, there was no material change in the appearance of the city.

THE POLLACK HOUSE was opened by Thos. Pollok, on the 8th of July. It was the first frame building erected, and stands on the south-west corner of Ferry and Fourth streets, built in the form of an L, fronting about forty feet on Ferry and fifty feet on Fourth street; two stories high—the ground floor mother earth, the upper one of plank. R. L. Wootton finished and first occupied his frame dwelling house early in June. In July building improvements began to be pushed rapidly forward, and increased as the season advanced, until the exhaustion of nails, glass, &c., in the winter. We cannot follow them in detail, with the order of their date, but shall briefly notice the most important on the several streets in succession, and their condition at the present time.

FERRY STREET starts from the Platte River, a short distance(sic) above its junction with Cherry Creek, and runs nearly with the "backbone" between the two streams, being the third street from the creek. There is a substantial bridge now being built over the Platte on this street, by Smith & Co. It will be near two hundred feet long, twelve feet wide, and safely above highwater mark. The iron work for it is being manufactured in St. Louis. Passing up Ferry street, the first building on the right is the "House that Jack built", now the Capitol Saloon, by Jack O'Neil—a hewn log building, one story high, fronting some forty feet on Ferry street. It was built last winter.

Directly opposite is the new frame residence of Luke Tierney, one of the first settlers, a letter writer, and the author of a little book on this country, published at Pacific City, Iowa, in February, 1859. The next building of prominence is near the corner of Second street, built by Messrs. Ming & Cooper. It is two stories high. The lower story of logs was built last winter, roofed, and the roof fell in. Recently it was raised one story higher, of frame, and finished in good style. The main building is about twentytwo feet front by fifty feet deep, with a one story "lean to" of nearly the same dimensions, making two good store rooms. Passing several of the "old times" houses, we next reach

CIBOLA HALL on the upper right hand corner of Ferry and Fourth streets, built by Jas. B. Reid 22 feet front by 90 feet deep. It was built in August last, first occupied as a ball alley, and afterward fitted up for a theatre room, capable of seating comfortably some 250 persons. It is occupied by the Cibola minstrels, and is a popular place of amusement. On the same side of the street, next comes a barber shop, a retail store.—

"Phoenix Saloon" and McFadding's Saloon—all one story frame buildings, front 16 by 20 to 22 by 40 feet in size.

Next Middaugh's block, of two story, frame, about 50 by 60 feet, occupied as a boarding house, jeweller's shop, offices, &c. Opposite Cibola Hall is the JEFFERSON HOUSE, built in August by Messrs. Kinna & Nye, of frame, two stories high, fronting 44 feet on Ferry Street, and running back over 60 feet. The first floor is occupied, one half by the Jefferson House, the other half by Kinna & Nye's extensive stove and hardware store; the upper story by the Jefferson House chambers and a large dancing hall. Next of note is the

"OLD LONDON HOSPITAL," by Drs. Wilcox & McLachlan--the first drug store established in the country.— They will soon be compelled to enlarge their quarters.

CITY BAKERY AND RESTAURANT by Karczewsky & Co., occupies buildings of their own, 44 feet front by 60 in depth. It was the first, and still continues the most popular eating house in the city.

WESTERN SALOON, by Uncle Dick Wootton, comes next. The main saloon is 33 by 40 feet, with two ball alleys 132 feet deep. It is one of the ancient institutions, with modern improvements. Next is the old log building---Wootton's old store and the old Rocky Mountain News office---but alas! "how has the mighty fallen." A few months ago it was the proudest building in town, now it is insignificant, occupied as a saloon, called the "Young America," and said to be "low."

This brings us to Fourth street, and some of the most valuable ground in the country—except some of the big paying quartz leads. It is held at about \$25 per front foot, or \$1,500 to \$2,000 per lot. Next on the right is

JONES AND CARTWRIGHT'S mammoth grocery and provision store from which has been sold the past fall and winter near a thousand tons of goods.---

They occupy the old Pollock House, which has been extended to serve their necessity. Next door is the gun shop of S. HAWKEN, the oldest gun maker of St. Louis. He says he found more improvement and business here than at St. Louis when he first settled there, near forty years ago. Every one has heard of the fame of the "Hawken's rifle." No mountaineer considers himself prepared for the chase or the battle-field without one. Last week we saw in his shop the first rifle manufactured in this country. It bears on the barrel, "S. Hawken, Auraria, J. T."---The stock is of box-alder—native growth—and it,

as well as the whole gun, is equal in finish to anything we ever saw. Opposite is a retail clothing store, and next comes the establishment of

BUDDEE AND JACOBS, commission merchants, the former from Peoria, Ill., the latter from Omaha, N. T. They have a finely finished frame building, 22 by 70 feet, two stories high, the front finished in superb style. The first floor is occupied by the owners—the upper one as a Masonic Lodge room, which is finely fitted up.

A. P. VASQUEZ AND CO. come next. Their building accommodates two stores, with offices above. The first is occupied by V. & Co., as a provision and grocery store presided over by A. Pike Vasquez, who began trade near here in 1836, as an employee of his uncle—old Col. Vasquez—at his fort, six miles below this city. He says he never looked out on the plain without seeing countless herds of buffalo. The Indians and Mexcans brought in gold dust and sold it for \$2.50 per ounce.