

Dearfield

Former black community in Weld County, Colorado

**Blair-Caldwell African American Research Library
Denver Public Library**

Dearfield Collection
Blair-Caldwell
African American Research Library
2004

Provenance: The Blair-Caldwell African American Research Library purchased a portion of the collection in 2003; another installment was donated in 2004.

Ownership: Literary and copyrights have been assigned to the Denver Public Library.

Call Number: MS-ARL58

Size: 1 box (0.5 linear feet)

Processed By: Brent Wagner

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Community History

When O. T. Jackson decided to found a Negro agricultural colony, he considered homestead tracts in Larimer, Elbert and Weld counties, deciding upon the Weld location 30 miles east of the county seat, Greeley. In 1910, he filed on the homestead and began advertising for colonists. The name Dearfield was suggested by one of the early settlers, Dr. J. H. P. Westbrook, a physician from Denver. The name was adopted because the land was to be very dear to the hearts of the settlers.

The autumn of 1911 found seven families and three teams of horses in residence. The struggles of the colonists, most of whom had no agricultural experience, taught them techniques of dry land farming, livestock and poultry raising.

By 1921, the *Weld County News* (Nov.) proclaimed a colony of 700 people with improved lands worth circa \$750,000, livestock and poultry worth \$200,000 and an annual production of \$125,000. Then came the Great Depression and the years of the dust bowl. By 1940, only 12 people lived in Dearfield. O. T. Jackson put his mind to turning circumstances to a more positive position. He offered the colony to Governor Ralph Carr for use as an internment camp for Japanese prisoners of war. This failing, he even offered the townsite for sale, but there was no buyer. After his death his niece, Jenny Jackson stayed on in Dearfield.

Community History (continued)

A few deserted buildings still stand to remind those who knew its history, of the grand dream. As of 1998, attempts to preserve the townsite were being undertaken by the Black American West Museum in Denver, which submitted an application to the National Trust for Historic Preservation through the Colorado Historical Society.

-- text courtesy of James A. Michener Library, University of Northern Colorado

Scope and Content

The Blair-Caldwell African American Research Library Dearfield Collection contains four distinct items:

A binder entitled, "Dearfield Research" (compiled by Carol Taylor for the Storytellers Project) that contains a comprehensive index and 43 different documents (mostly newspaper clippings and journal articles) that relate to the community and its history. These documents span the entire twentieth century.

A binder entitled, "Dearfield: A Videotaped Interview with Erma Downey Ingram" (recorded in Boulder on 23 May 1998). Ingram was a resident of Dearfield from 1918-1925. The binder contains a transcript of her oral history interview.

One archival VHS ½" copy of Dearfield: The Road Less Traveled.

Two photo negatives of Dearfield.

Related material

Charles Rothwell Scrapbook (MS-ARL67)