

Appendix A

Byers Historical Information

Byers Early History

The early history of Byers prior to its settlement in 1866 is part of the broader history of the Great Plains and the role this region played in Anglo-European colonization and westward expansion. This narrative provides a short summary of key events that led to the eventual settlement of Byers and vicinity. It is not intended to be an exhaustive, all-inclusive history as it covers only a short, roughly two-hundred-year timespan. Other sources can provide more in-depth studies of these and other significant events in the region's history, as well as the important histories of its original indigenous inhabitants.

Pre-European Settlement

In the 1500s, the plains of present-day Colorado were home to the Ute people, who spent summers in the high country and winters at the base of the mountains. When the Ute people obtained horses in the mid-17th century, some bands began hunting bison on the plains. In the early 1800s, other tribes frequented the area including the Cheyenne and Arapaho, who had been pushed out of their homelands in the Midwest. Other native people that hunted and occupied the eastern plains in the 18th and 19th centuries included the Kiowa, Jicarilla Apache, Comanche, and Lakota.¹

1803 Louisiana Purchase

The United States acquired the eastern two-thirds of what would become Colorado through the Louisiana Purchase and added the western portion in 1848 through the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo.²

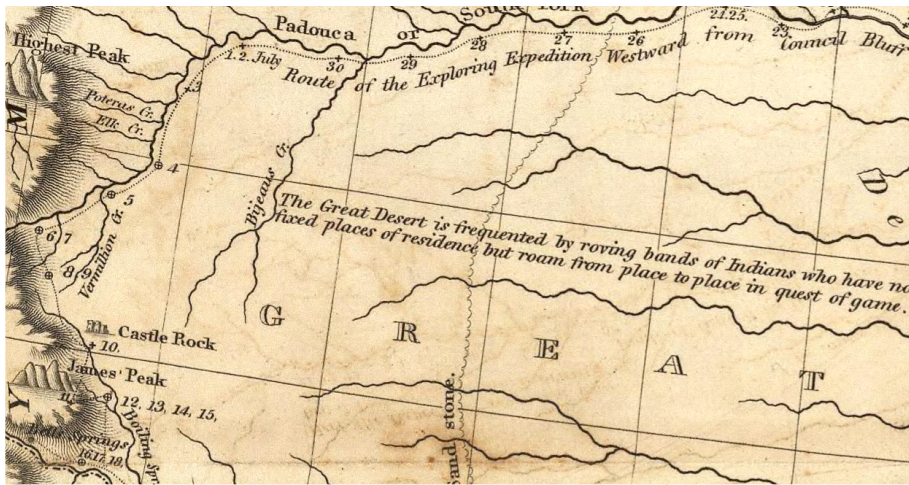
1820 Long Expedition

Major Stephen Long led an expedition to explore and report on the people, topography, plants, animals, and natural resources of the Platte River area. His was the first scientific journey into the region to map and find the source of the river, and to report the expedition findings to the President and Congress. Long and his party of scientists, geographers, and soldiers, twenty in all, left the Missouri River at Council Bluffs on June 6, 1820. Several days later, the expedition reached the Loup River and a settlement of Pawnee. Here French trappers Abraham Ladoux and Joseph Bijeau, also known as Joseph Bijeau dit Bissonet, joined the expedition and were paid one dollar per day, each.

Both Ladoux and Bijeau lived permanently among the Pawnee and traveled to the Platte headwaters on a number of occasions to hunt and trap beaver. In his journal, Edwin James, the expedition's botanist and geologist, wrote that Ledoux served as the party's hunter and farrier while Bijeau was guide and interpreter, being acquainted with several native languages. Bijeau in particular was invaluable to the expedition's survival, so much so that at the end of



Distant View of the Rocky Mountains, Samuel Seymour, Long Expedition 1820.³



A portion of a larger map drawn by Stephen Long for the Expedition to the Rocky Mountains.⁵ The map shows the expedition's route west from Council Bluffs and the month and day of each encampment.

the journey, Long honored Bijeau by naming a tributary of the South Platte River after him. Assigning Bijeau's name to this particular tributary seems significant, for it was here near its confluence with the Platte that on June 30, 1820, the expedition sighted the Rocky Mountains for the first time. Among many results of the Long expedition was the publication of journals detailing encounters with the indigenous people and scientific findings of the area's minerals, plants, animals, and insects. The expedition also produced a map that labeled the plains the "Great American Desert." In his writings of the expedition, Long described the area as "wholly unfit for cultivation, and of course uninhabitable by a people depending on agriculture for their subsistence."⁴

1851. Treaty of Fort Laramie

Signed in 1851 between the United States and plains tribes, including the Cheyenne, Arapaho, and Lakota people, the intent of the Treaty of Fort Laramie was to protect white settlers heading west across the Great Plains and to allow the United States to establish military outposts and roads in the area. The treaty gave the Cheyenne and Arapaho sovereignty over the Platte River basin, as far south as the Arkansas River as long as the tribes allowed settlers uninhibited passage over their lands. The treaty did not grant settlers the right to homestead on native lands.

1858. Gold Discovered

In the summer of 1858, prospectors discovered gold in and along drainages of the South Platte River near present-day Denver. Back east, word spread quickly and soon thousands of Americans headed west to the Pike's Peak region to seek their fortunes. They traveled to the area via a number of overland routes including the Smoky Hill, Republican, South Platte, and South Platte Cutoff trails.

By early winter 1858, makeshift towns sprang up throughout

the gold region. Most settlements initially consisted of tents, but soon more permanent structures were built. Regardless of building material used, the settlements were in direct violation of the Fort Laramie Treaty.

Most of the miners, speculators, and fortune hunters, as well as those seeking to profit from the miners rather than from mining itself, headed to either Auraria or Denver City, which were competing towns located on opposite sides of Cherry Creek near its confluence with the South Platte River. Among the early profit-seekers was William Byers, who established the *Rocky Mountain News*, Denver and Auraria's first newspaper published beginning on April 23, 1859.

1860. Treaty of Fort Wise

Under the 1851 Treaty of Fort Laramie, the area between the North Platte and the Arkansas rivers was recognized as Cheyenne and Arapaho land, as long as the tribes allowed free passage to west-bound travelers along the Great Platte River Road. The treaty did not however grant those travelers the right to mine gold or to build towns and settlements.

In 1860, in response to increased conflicts between the indigenous nations of the plains and early gold seekers and settlers, Congress authorized a



Map showing lands granted to the Cheyenne and Arapaho peoples under the 1851 Treaty of Fort Laramie and the 1861 Treaty of Fort Wise.⁷

"renegotiation" of the Fort Laramie treaty with the goal of extinguishing the Cheyenne and Arapaho rights to the gold regions. The result was the Treaty of Fort Wise, which established the Reservation of the Arapaho and Cheyenne of the Upper Arkansas, a region one-tenth the size of the area granted under the previous treaty. The United States agreed to protect the Cheyenne and Arapaho people and their lands provided that the tribes agreed to abandon their hunting and gathering livelihoods in exchange for adopting an agricultural way of life.

Eleven tribal leaders attended the treaty signing but later said that they did not understand the terms and they never intended to cede their rights to the land. The majority of the Cheyenne and Arapaho did not remain on the reservation, and skirmishes with settlers continued until the situation reached a boiling point on November 29, 1864, when United States troops killed 230 Cheyenne and Arapaho women, children, and tribal elders who were peacefully encamped along the Big Sandy Creek on the Colorado plains southeast of Denver.⁶

1861. Colorado Territory Created

February 28, 1861, President James Buchanan signed into law an act by Congress creating the territory of Colorado, carved from the existing territories of Kansas, Nebraska, New Mexico, and

Utah.

An 1862 map of the Colorado Territory changed the spelling of the creek that the Long expedition named in honor of Joseph Bijou to "Bijou". The name with this new spelling has remained ever since.⁸

1862. Homestead Act

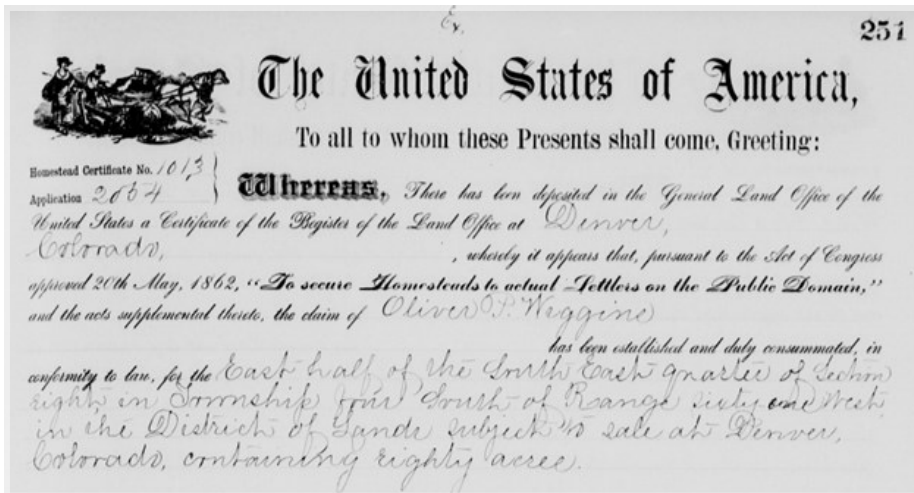
On May 20, 1862, the United States Congress passed the Homestead Act which accelerated settlement of the west. For a small filing fee, adult male or female heads of families, or those 21 years of age, were granted title of up to

160 acres of surveyed public land with the condition that they permanently reside on and cultivate the land for five years. Title could also be granted after six months residency and payment of \$1.25 per acre. Most of the land went to speculators, cattle barons, railroads, miners, and loggers. "Of some 500 million acres dispersed by the General Land Office between 1862 and 1904, only 80 million went to homesteaders."⁹

On Colorado's eastern plains, between 1862 and 1904, 16 people were granted homesteads in township 4, range 61 west, the area that would eventually become Byers. But by far, the largest land holders in this township were the Union Pacific and Kansas Pacific railroads, together owning six of the 36 sections.¹⁰

1862 Pacific Railway Act

July 1, 1862, Congress passed the Pacific Railway Act which authorized the Union Pacific Railroad and the Central Pacific Railroad to construct a transcontinental railroad from the Missouri River to the Pacific Ocean. For each mile of track, the railroads were granted 20 square miles of land in alternate sections laid out in a checkerboard pattern. The land grants were in exchange for the investment required to build tracks in specific locations across the west. Railroads were free to sell



Oliver P. Wiggins, Homestead grant of 80 acres in the east half of the southeast quarter, Section 9, Township 4 South, Range 61 West.¹⁰

their lands to settlers who would then establish communities.¹¹

1864. Sand Creek Massacre

At sunrise on November 29, 1864, at a bend in the Big Sandy Creek on the Colorado plains, about 140 miles southeast of present-day Byers, the United States Army attacked a peaceful encampment of Cheyenne and Arapaho women, children, and elders, killing 230 people.

For five years following the massacre, there were nearly continuous clashes between immigrants and Cheyenne, Arapaho, and Lakota warriors in northeast Colorado. The clashes culminated in the **Battle of Summit Springs on July 11, 1869**, along the South Platte River near present day Sterling, where United States soldiers defeated the Cheyenne Dog Soldiers.¹² Although a few skirmishes continued into the 1870s, the Battle of Summit Springs generally marked the end of Native resistance to Anglo-European settlement on the Colorado plains.

Byers Settlement

The Early Years

In 1866, Oliver P. Wiggins, a trapper, scout, and veteran of the Civil War, settled along the east bank of West Bijou Creek, where he eventually

constructed a general store to supply area ranchers and farmers.¹ The store also served as the first school and a post office, with Wiggins appointed as the town's first postmaster, a position he held from 1873 until 1884.²

Wiggins is credited with naming his homestead "Bijou" for its location along West Bijou Creek. At that time, there were at least two other places carrying the name Bijou; both waystations for settlers coming into Denver. One was located about 12

miles west of Fort Morgan, presumably at or near the confluence of Bijou Creek and the South Platte River, and the other was located along the Smoky Hill trail, in present-day El Paso County.

On August 15, 1870, the Kansas Pacific Railway was completed giving Denver its first direct connection to Kansas City and points east.³ The railway established a station adjacent to the Wiggins' homestead and continued to use the name "Bijou" until February 1875 when it was formally changed to Byers, in honor of William Byers, editor and owner of the *Rocky Mountain News*, and to coincide with the name of the post office which was known as Byers since spring 1873.⁴ However, frequently and for several years after renaming the railway station, the area continued to be known by both names, written as: "Byers station, on the Kansas Pacific railway"; or, "Bijou creek", "Bijou Crossing", and "Bijou station" to distinguish it from Bijou basin in El Paso County.

The selection of Byers as the new name for the growing community on Bijou creek generated some publicity in the Denver newspapers. For several days in March 1873, William Byers and S.W. Woodbury, one of Byers' staunchest critics and editor of rival *Denver Daily Times*, traded barbs about the new name, beginning with S.W. Woodbury's comment that: "A post office by the name of 'Byers' has been established at the Bijou Crossing of the Kansas Pacific Railway, in Arapahoe county. 'Byers' is the

Italian for 'Bijou' – hence the selection of this name."⁵

William Byers quipped: "The little *Times* has its joke at the name of the new post office out at Bijou creek. Its editor little suspects how near it came to being a serious matter for that thriving village. There was a proposition to name it for another Denver editor, but it was decided that such a title *wood bury* it beyond all hope of resurrection. The Italian editor of the *Times* learned that language of the Italian opera troupe which was here a week or two ago."⁶

The following day appeared this retort in the *Denver Daily Times*: "If, as the *News* declares, the selection of another name for Bijou station *wood bury* it beyond hope of resurrection, *buyers* would be foolish to meddle with it at all, so we cannot see that the matter is improved any."⁷

Byers ended the discussion with: "The *Times* has another joke on the name of the post office at Bijou, but it is so obscure that we find it impossible to see the point..."⁸

The completion of the Kansas Pacific Railway was a significant event for Denver as well as for Colorado's eastern plains. Settlements like Bijou became less isolated. Passengers could depart Bijou station and arrive in Kansas City less than 36 hours later. A little more than a decade earlier, this trip would have taken about one month in a wagon, along bumpy, remote, barren, and sometimes dangerous trails. The growth and expansion of Bijou station as well as other small settlements along the rail line, however, took promotional efforts by current residents and the railroad. The plains still resembled a great desert, inhospitable to farming, perhaps attractive only to stock growers with enough income to amass large acreages.

In 1873, O.P. Wiggins embarked on an experiment to prove that the arid soil could be productive. That spring, he planted a wide variety of trees, fruits, grains, grasses, and vegetables in the dry soil of the eastern plains. In a letter to the Kansas Pacific Railway, he reported that the trees, which were

GO WEST! GO WEST!!
TO THE FAIR FIELDS AND THE GREAT PASTURES OF
KANSAS
AND SETTLE UPON THE
Kansas Pacific Railway Lands

These Lands extend across the middle of the State, are unsurpassed for fertility, and produce the
FINEST CROPS IN THE WORLD!

THE CLIMATE IS MILD AND HEALTHFUL.
The Farmer can labor the year round. His Live Stock will need but little shelter.

THE LANDS OF THE KANSAS PACIFIC ARE THE BEST IN AMERICA.
They are settled by a thrifty people. They are already provided with markets. They are on either side of a great railway.
There are towns and stations at regular intervals.

SETTLERS THEREON HAVE SCHOOLS PROVIDED THEM.
They have communication with the world. Mails and telegraphs are established. No overflow to destroy and wash away your crops and land. No long winters and deep snows. No stumps to dig out before the plow. In Three Years you will have an Improved Farm worth Double the one at home.

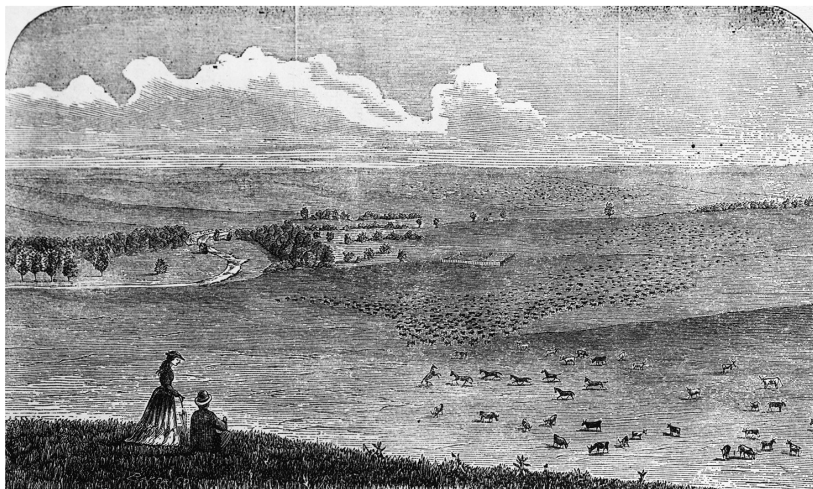
THE LANDS OF THE KANSAS PACIFIC RAILWAY COMPRISE OVER 7,000,000 Acres
They lie along, and for Twenty Miles upon either side of the railway, thro' Kansas and Colorado, for over seven hundred miles.
Be Sure to See these Lands before Settling Anywhere

A FREE PASS TO LAND BUYERS!
At our Office, immediately opposite the Union Depot in Kansas City, we have Maps, Plats, Samples of Products, etc. Call and see them. You will have ample time, and can get a Free Ticket and go out to view the Lands. For all information as to Lands in Kansas call upon or address
S. J. GILMORE, Land Commissioner, **SALINA, KAN.**
A. ROEDELHEIMER, Agent Kansas Pacific Railway, **1104 Union Ave., KANSAS CITY.**

Advertisement in *A Geographically Correct map of the Kansas Pacific Railway Showing the only Direct Route to Denver and All the Popular Rocky Mountain Resorts.*

cultivated from seed, for the most part survived through the summer. His black locust trees did particularly well without water. The box elder, elm, and silver maple needed some irrigation as did his cherry and crabapple trees. The pear trees however were a disappointment, all having done poorly with the limited amount of water available.

Wiggins raised oats, barley, alfalfa, and Hungarian grass which he reported fared well on the dry prairie. His corn, squash, turnips, tomatoes, beets, cucumbers, lettuce, strawberries, and raspberries, with some water supplement, were all a success. The peas and beans, with no water, were most successful. Only the potatoes, were a failure. Wiggins concluded his letter to the Kansas Pacific by stating: "The land here produces more vegetables than any I ever saw."⁹



Joseph P. Farmer's Ranch, Bijou, Colorado¹²

The railroad also did its part to enthusiastically promote and advertise settlement of the plains. With seven million acres of land for sale, located 20 miles on either side of its track through Kansas and eastern Colorado Territory, the railroad published flyers enticing settlers with hopeful, if not exaggerated, descriptions of the area as having a mild and healthful climate, with no deep snow or floods to wash away crops, and where there were no tree stumps that would be in the way of a plow. Perhaps only the latter would prove true.

Settlers were directed to contact one of the Kansas Pacific land agents in Salina or Kansas City where maps, plats, and free west-bound tickets were available to those interested in viewing the land before purchasing.¹⁰

It is difficult to determine how many settlers came west as a result of this enticement. Settlers on Colorado's eastern plains were not only independent, but they were resilient as well. Although Wiggins reported great success growing fruit trees, grain, vegetables, and berries in 1873, the ensuing years were challenging. The area suffered a severe drought in 1879 that extended into the following spring, followed by an early and prolonged winter. There were also frequent grasshopper infestations throughout the plains that devastated or completely destroyed crops.

Early settlers persevered, however. By 1874, O.P.

Wiggins had been living in Byers for about eight years. On April 16, the *Rocky Mountain News* reported that he was making several improvements on his homestead. He was also in the process of building a general store and enlarging his hotel. Other residents, mostly ranchers, living in the vicinity of Bijou in 1874, included Joseph P. Farmer, E. Russell, H.H. Metcalf, Jerry Coulehan, D. Holden, and A.K. Clark.¹¹

Many settlers found the rolling hills of Colorado's eastern plains ideal for raising livestock. Ranging and grazing freely on native grasses, the cattle and sheep supplied the growing city of Denver, western mountain and mining towns, as well as eastern markets, with beef and wool. Byers, or Bijou station, quickly became an important shipping point for area wool growers.

Keeping track of free-ranging cattle roaming the Colorado plains was an issue. On one occasion, the *Rocky Mountain News* reported that cattle herded to the Denver corrals in the lower part of the city were actually stolen from Byers' rancher J.P. Farmer and other ranches along Bijou and Kiowa creeks.¹³

To help manage their cattle, eastern plains ranchers participated annually in organized spring and fall roundups. The biggest roundup event seemed to occur each spring, where free-ranging cattle were herded to one location, separated, and the yearlings

branded. Because of the area's vastness, the eastern plains were divided into several roundup districts. Beginning in about April of each year, the *Rocky Mountain News* published the route and date for each district roundup. Although the route changed slightly from year to year, generally ranchers in the Byers area were responsible for helping to roundup cattle over a large area from River Bend on Big Sandy Creek to Deer Trail, west to Twenty-mile house, and sometimes as far west as Plum Creek.¹⁴

One year, the annual roundup spectacle became a tourist attraction as Denver residents boarded excursion trains to Brush, the central roundup site. City-dwellers enjoyed a day of watching cowboys in action; roping, wrangling, and branding their cattle.¹⁵

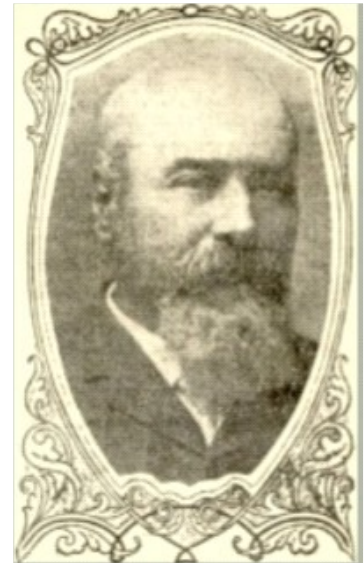
1876. Statehood

Jerome Chaffee, Colorado territorial delegate to the US House of Representatives, convinced his fellow House members that there were more than 150,000 people living in the Territory, thus meeting the threshold to become a state. On August 1, 1876, President Ulysses S. Grant signed into law a bill admitting Colorado to the union as the nation's 38th state.

By **1885** the *Colorado, New Mexico, Utah, Nevada, Wyoming and Arizona Gazetteer and Business Directory* reported that Byers had a population of 50 people.¹⁶ The town's businesses now included a hotel managed by H. Miller, a blacksmith shop operated by J. Bruster, and a railroad and express office operated by M.D. Briggs. The directory also noted that O.P. Wiggins, in addition to running his general store and serving as postmaster, was Justice of the Peace, and his son Frank was the area

constable.

The principal activity at the rail station at that time was the shipment of sheep and wool. P.T. Hunt, J.C. Shy, and F.D. West were listed in the directory as the area's primary sheep breeders although there were many others such as George Shy, Charles Owens (pictured right), C.J. Parrett, and Rollin Sherman. Owens in particular was one of the state's

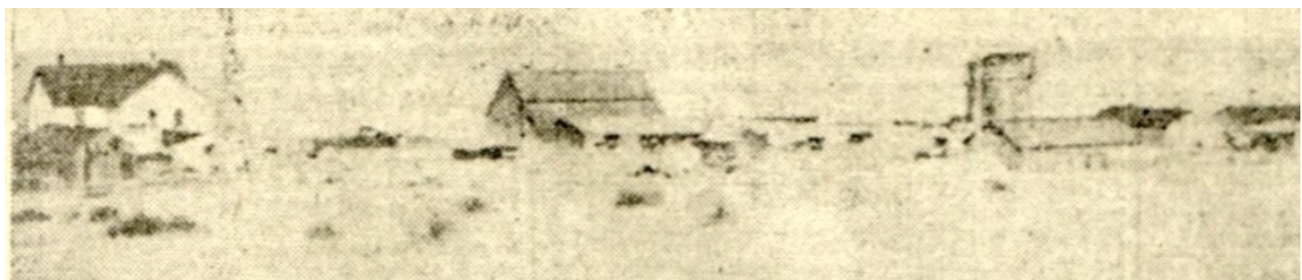


Charles Owens. *Rocky Mountain News*, April 24, 1904.

prominent wool growers and a resident of the Byers area since at least 1878.¹⁷ A *Rocky Mountain News* article published April 24, 1904, featured Owens as "the man of mighty flocks"; raising 3,300 sheep and breeding prized trotting horses on 5,000 acres of land he owned in the Byers area. Owens was also a partner in the Sam Palmer Stock company which grazed 1,800 shorthorn Herefords and 4,000 sheep on 15,000 acres along Kiowa Creek.

The 1885 *Gazetteer and Business Directory* identified other agricultural-related businesses in Byers at that time, including dairy farms operated by John Bains, Michael Schatz, and Henry Schliecker.¹⁸

In **1889**, local rancher, Leonard McDonnell, and Denver realtor and land speculator, John Fetzer purchased 160 acres from the state of Colorado and

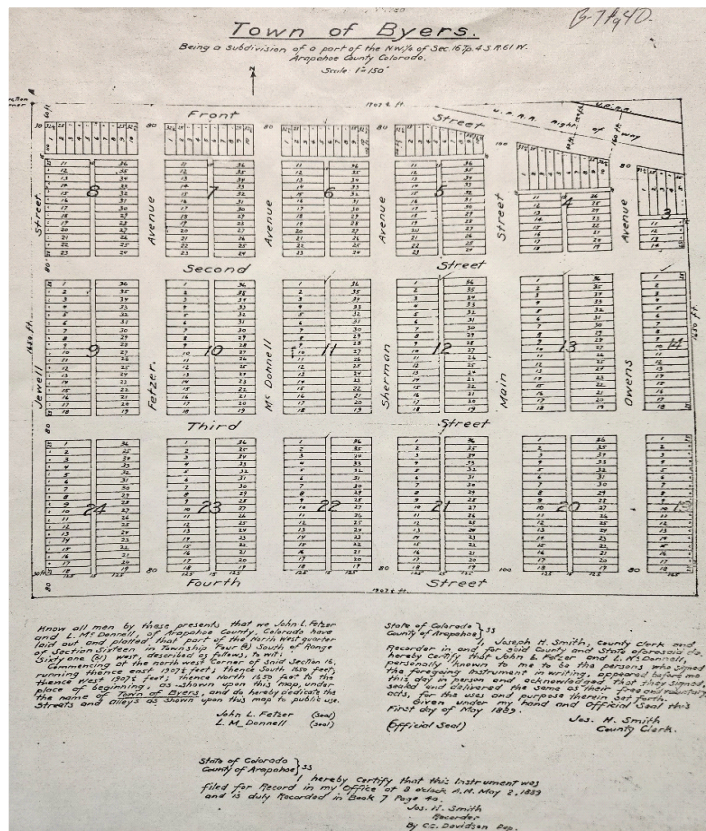


Photograph of Charles Owens' ranch in Byers. *Rocky Mountain News*, April 24, 1904.

platted the Byers town site (shown on right) located on the south side of the Kansas Pacific railway tracks and which consisted of 24 blocks, each with individual lots measuring 25 feet wide by 125 feet deep. A 15-foot wide north-south oriented alley ran down the center of each block. Eighty-foot-wide streets carrying the names of the platters John Fetzer and Leonard McDonnell, and well-known, local sheep growers Charles Owens and Rollin Sherman, ran north and south. The plat also included Jewell Street which was named for Leonard McDonnell's wife Leonora ("Linnie") Jewell. Intersecting east and west oriented streets were numbered Second through Fourth in descending order from the railroad tracks, south. Front Street, located adjacent to and generally paralleling the rail line, was 60 feet wide.

At this time, most of Byers' commercial businesses were located just north of the platted town site, adjacent to the railroad tracks, or in the case of the Wiggins' general store and a few other early businesses, on land claimed by the Kansas Pacific Railroad.

In 1913, the Union Pacific Railroad, owner of the Kansas Pacific, sought to remove the encroaching businesses from its right-of-way. In that year the railroad appealed to the United States Supreme Court an earlier ruling of the Colorado Supreme Court concerning title to a strip of land 400 feet wide, measured 200 feet from the centerline of the railroad track. The Union Pacific brought suit against George A. Snow, Robert W. Burton and others, and against Martin Sides and Walter Sherer, residents of Byers, seeking to remove them from land they occupied, that the railroad claimed it owned. Snow had purchased the general store from O.P. Wiggins in 1890, and later, Burton became his partner in the business. Martin Sides owned the pool hall and Walter Sherer managed the livery stable.¹⁹ The Colorado court found in favor of Snow, Burton, Sides, and Sherer. However, the United States Supreme Court reversed that decision.²⁰ The result was the removal of all buildings within 400 feet of the railroad right-of-way by 1917.²¹



Plat of Town of Byers, 1889.



Byers looking northwest circa 1910 showing the general store, restaurant, saloon, meat market, blacksmith shop and other buildings, some of which were on land claimed by the Kansas Railway. Photograph courtesy of Stacie May, Byers, Colorado

Would be County Seat

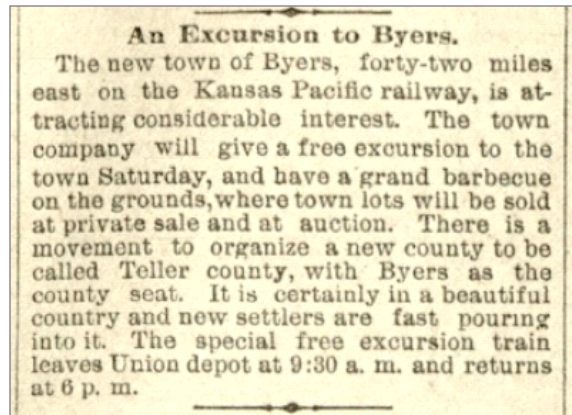
On at least three occasions, the town of Byers was selected to be the county seat of a proposed, newly created county carved from Arapahoe and Adams counties. The first attempt occurred in 1888, when there was a movement to organize the new county of Teller.²² This may have been intended as a promotion by the Byers town company to generate interest in the sale of town lots, which were officially platted the following year.

A second effort occurred in 1913 when State House Representative William D. Wright, Jr., of Denver introduced a bill to create the new county of Steele formed from portions of Arapahoe and Adams counties. The new county was to be named in memory of Justice Steele who died in 1911.²³

The third, and final effort occurred just two years later, in 1915, when Byers was proposed as the county seat of a new Carlson County, named in honor of the then Governor of Colorado, and formed from the eastern half of both Arapahoe and Adams counties.²⁴

Turn of the 20th Century

By 1900 the census reported that there were 168 people living in and around Byers. Most residents owned or worked on area farms, or sheep and cattle ranches, and several reported having immigrated from Canada, Mexico, Europe, Ireland, or Scotland. A few worked for the railroad, and others had what could be considered typical "in-town" jobs such as general merchandise, telegraph operator, teacher, blacksmith, and hotel operator. One individual, Julian Balenza, a 56-year-old widower from New Mexico, indicated his



Rocky Mountain News, May 18, 1888



George A. Snow house circa 1910. Photograph courtesy of Stacie May, Byers, Colorado.



George A Snow house, 254 S. McDonnell Avenue in 2025.

employment was "gambler". The first several years of the new century saw the construction of a few homes and businesses on the Byers townsite lots including the George A. Snow house. Constructed in 1904, this home, barn, and decorative wrought iron

fence appear today much as they did at the turn of the century.

Other prominent buildings constructed at the start of the new century included a new, wood-framed Episcopal church at the corner of 2nd Avenue and McDonnell Street.

Constructed in 1908, this church was the second building constructed by congregants, after the first building, located one block to the west, was destroyed by fire in February 1908, just four months after opening for its first service. The congregation managed to save the pews which were then installed in the new building.²⁵

Although it is no longer a church, the building remains a community gathering place for special events.

Despite the slow pace of home construction in Byers during the first decade of the new century, on September 19, 1908, real estate speculator O.H. Howe, president of the Minneapolis-based Howe-Heide Investment Company, platted a 42-acre section of land on the north side of the railroad tracks. Like the original town site, the lots were long and narrow, just 25 feet wide. His plat also included larger five-acre lots on the north and west sides, and a formal one-acre park fronting the railroad right-of-way.²⁶

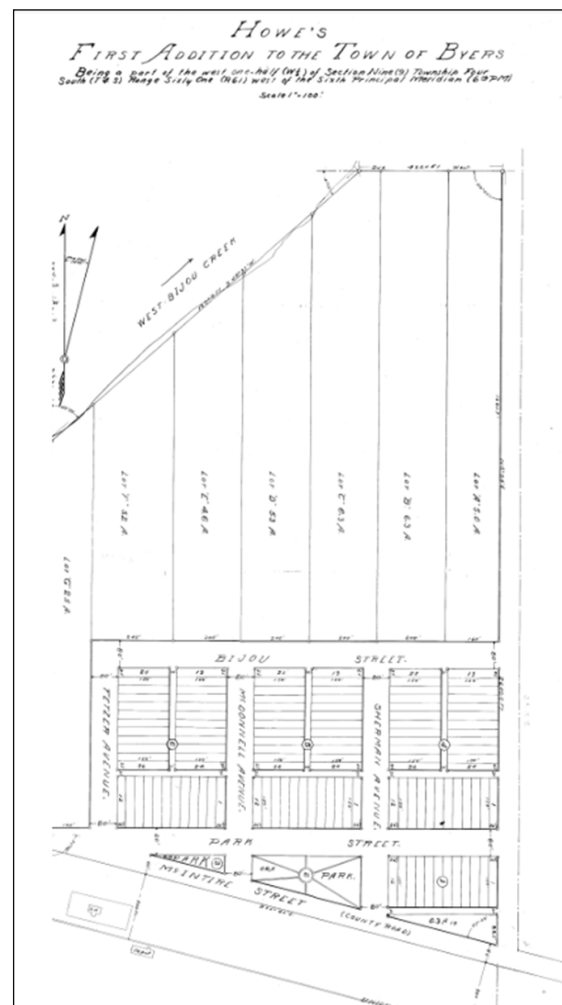
Howe was also actively involved in the promotion and sale of surrounding farmland.

By 1910, the pace of both residential and commercial construction in Byers increased. The census reported a population of 266 people. Like the previous census, most people worked or resided on farms and ranches around Byers. Fifteen residents worked for the railroad, primarily single men who immigrated from Greece. The town had its first physician, Frank McWilliams, a single 35-year-old man from Pennsylvania.²⁷

In 1910, the general store employed six people and was managed by 29-year-old Robert Burton. A local entrepreneur, Burton also owned a brickyard on the south side of town, today roughly in the vicinity of



184 S. McDonnell Street. Formerly Saint Paul's Episcopal church constructed in 1908 (County Assessor).



Howe's First Addition Plat, 1908.

Third Avenue and McDonnell Street. He employed several laborers locally and from Denver to make fired bricks from mud that was sourced on-site. The locally produced bricks were used in a number of Byers' buildings. Burton also owned and operated a lumber yard, an icehouse, and is credited with operating the town's first grain elevator.²⁸

Around 1910, Robert Burton constructed what was, at the time, one of Byers' most prominent buildings. Known as the Burton Block and located on Front Street, this was a two-story building constructed using bricks from Burton's own brickyard. Around this time, pioneer rancher, George Snow began construction on a new bank building at the corner of Front Street and Jewell Avenue (390 W. Front Street). In the construction, Snow also used bricks from Burton's local brickyard.²⁹ Today, this single-story building with its clipped corner front entrance looks much the same as it did over 100 years ago. In about 1912, Snow also began construction on a commercial building, known then as the Snow Building, located immediately east of his bank. This single-story brick building provided commercial space to at least three businesses. Most recently, the building was home to the Lippitt Hardware store (370 W. Front Street).

By 1920, Byers and the surrounding area grew to 442 people, increasing the population by more than 65 percent in just 10 years. Like the previous years, most of Byers' residents owned, or worked on area farms and ranches but the town's commercial enterprises expanded significantly in the decade between 1910 and 1920. New businesses included the town's first newspaper, the *Bijou Valley Granger*; a mechanics garage; a shoe repair store; a barber shop, pool hall, and ice cream parlor, located in the Snow Building (370 W. Front Street); two hotels; and the H & H Mercantile located at the corner of Front Street and S. McDonnell Avenue, and operated by local residents Hal Parmeter and Olin Hutchinson (310 W. Front Street).³⁰

During the 1920s, George Kelley constructed a general merchandise store at 186 W. Front Street. By the 1940s however, George and his wife Carrie converted the building into their private residence. Likely at this time, the Kelley's modified the original false front, removed the tall storefront windows, and enclosed the front door, moving the entrance to face S. McDonnell Street.

Beginning in the nineteen teens through the 1920s Byers also saw an increase in the number of homes



View of Byers circa 1910 showing from left to right, the Burton Block (two story); a single-story building (perhaps a residence); the Byers Bank; the Byers Hotel; and a residence. The George Snow house can be seen in the distant background, upper right. Photograph courtesy of Stacie May, Byers, Colorado



The George Kelley General Merchandise building located at 186 W. Front Street. By the 1940s, the Kelley's converted the store building into their residence. Photograph courtesy of Stacie May, Byers, Colorado

constructed on the platted lots south of Front Street. One of the best, unaltered examples of home construction during this period is the one and one-half story, clapboard sided residence located at 145 S. Sherman Street. This home retains many of its original features including an open front porch which extends across its entire front elevation.

On the north side of Byers, in the Howe's First Addition, very few commercial and residential buildings remain from this early period of Byers history. Notable exceptions include 51 W. Bijou Avenue. Originally constructed as a residence in 1919, this one and one-half story building with lean-to additions on the east and west elevations has been used for several businesses, most recently, a laundromat as well as residences.

Another building of note in the Howe's First Addition is a residence at 117 N. Sherman Street. Although it has been significantly altered, this two-story home was constructed just after the turn of the nineteenth century and was moved to Byers in the 1960s from a location about six miles east of town.³¹



186 W. Front Street pictured today. The building continues to be used as a residence.



145 S. Sherman Street, constructed in 1915. For a time, this residence served as the residence for the pastor of the adjacent Presbyterian Church. Photograph courtesy Arapahoe County Assessor. Image captured April 1, 2010.



51 W. Bijou Avenue.



117 N. Sherman Street. Constructed circa 1905.

End of Big Ranching

During the first decade of the 20th century, land speculators, railroad companies, and community boosters actively promoted settlement of the arid west. Advertisements regularly appeared in flyers, magazines, newspapers, and business journals across the country enticing readers to come to or invest in the west, including Colorado and its abundant farmland. The *Commercial West* was one such publication. A weekly, Minneapolis-based journal, the *Commercial West* represented banking and western interests, and regularly reported on agricultural prospects in eastern Colorado such as crop outlooks, weather, water and irrigation, and the availability and productivity of land.

In addition to articles, the publication contained advertisements from land speculators like that of the Howe-Heide Investment Company. Based in Minneapolis, with offices in Wild Horse, Colorado (a village southeast of Limon), company president O.H. Howe and vice-president P.O. Heide boasted holdings of 70,000 acres of farmland in eastern Colorado, all of which was for sale. The company's advertisement urged: "Now is the time to Buy – Colorado is the Place".¹

George Snow was an early resident of the Byers area, having homesteaded 160 acres along West Bijou Creek in 1894. By the turn of the twentieth century, he had amassed between 18,000 and 25,000 acres of ranchland across the rolling prairie. But by the early 1900s, Snow began selling small

tracts of his land to settlers that were intent on dryland farming. Other pioneer settlers like Charles Owens and Rollin Sherman, sold their ranches intact to land speculators, many from the Midwest, who in turn marketed the land to other investors or to companies interested in settling entire town sites.

The character of the Byers area gradually began to change as vast cattle and sheep ranches gave way to farms on more modestly sized acreages. Still, many settlers, mostly from eastern states or Europe, needed to be convinced that the dry plains were suitable for farming. In November 1907, an organized excursion to Byers showed prospective buyers that dryland farming, using proper, modern techniques, could be quite lucrative. Area farms selected for the tour included long-time residents John O'Connor and John Price, as well as newcomer Addison Teller, who had just settled in the area the year before. Tour parties were shown fields of wheat, oats, millet, alfalfa, and sorghum as well as corn, potatoes, melons, and squashes.

Most impressive was the farm of B.E. Goodale, the "cauliflower king." Originally from Long Island, New York, Goodale settled in the Byers area around 1904. He extolled the virtues of Byers' dry climate as ideal for raising fields of cauliflower which he harvested and sold primarily in Kansas City, clearing a profit of \$500 per acre. Key to his success was the high demand for cauliflower in eastern markets, his proximity to the railroad, and the availability of refrigerated box cars.²

The United States Congress also did its part to encourage farming and settlement on its remaining lands, much of which were located in the dryer regions of the west, away from rivers and streams. In 1909, Congress passed the Enlarged Homestead Act doubling the number of acres a settler could claim in the western states of Colorado, Wyoming, Utah, Arizona, Montana, Washington, and Nevada. Between 1910 and 1920, 43 homesteads were filed in the Byers area, some from long-time settlers seeking to expand their existing holdings.

Just a few months after the Enlarged Homestead Act was passed, the Colorado Agricultural Experiment

Station of the Colorado Agricultural College, later Colorado State University, published a series of bulletins instructing new settlers in the best dryland farming methods. Titles included *Dry Land Farming in Eastern Colorado* (1910), *Windmill Irrigation* (1910), *Notes on a Dry Land Orchard* (1910), and *Suggestions to the Dry-Land Farmer* (1919).

These publications proved instructive. In one publication, agricultural experiment station director L.G. Carpenter warned: "*The best hope of success is to be found in dairying and in poultry growing, with crops as an important adjunct, grown principally for forage... It is well that each intending settler should see the plains, learn the difficulties, satisfy himself whether he is adapted to them. ...those who do not understand the conditions, who are not adapted to them, or who do not have capital enough to tide over one or more unfavorable years are apt to meet with bitter disappointment. ... For those who meet the conditions with patience and intelligence there may be abundant success.*"³

The Need for Irrigation

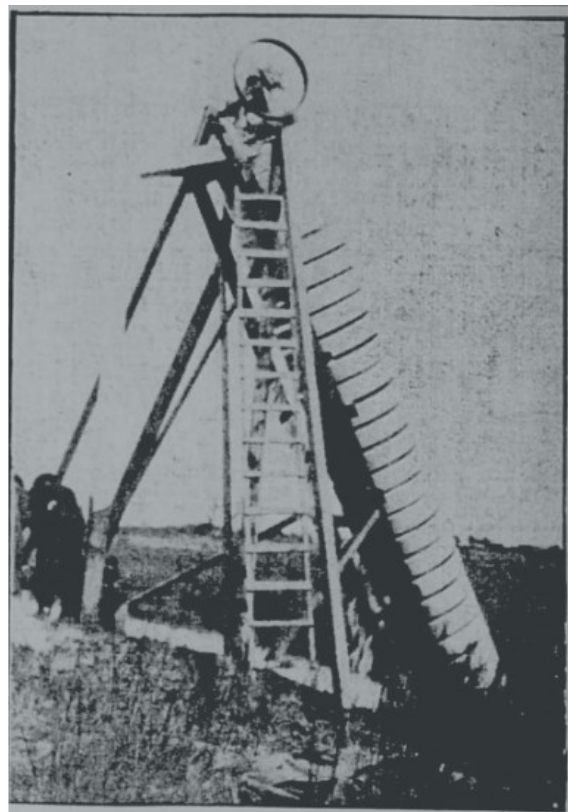
Although many settlers may have followed recommendations from the Colorado Agricultural College and adopted modern dryland farming techniques, an increasing number of farmers found that raising corn, potatoes, alfalfa, cauliflower, and other thirsty crops in an arid climate required irrigation to supplement the unreliable rain and snowfall. In fact, Colorado farmers as far back as the 1860s began diverting river water into ditches and canals to irrigate their crops. As of July 1907, the State Engineer reported that across Colorado 8,500 miles of ditches irrigated nearly 1.9 million acres. In the previous year alone over 3,300 miles of ditches and more than 500,000 acres were brought under irrigation.⁴

1907 also saw the incorporation of a considerable number of irrigation companies statewide, including the Hopewell Irrigation Company whose intent was to secure water from West Bijou Creek to supply Byers' area farms. Less than two years after incorporating, the company began construction of the nearly four-mile-long Hopewell ditch located west of Byers and extending north into Adams

County. Numerous smaller lateral ditches carried water from the Hopewell to individual farms.⁵

In addition to ditches and canals, during the early part of the new century, farmers and engineers began experiments in eastern Colorado to irrigate fields using well water; initially pumped to the surface by hand, and later by windmills and gas-powered motors.

In 1913, J.N. Grimes invented a "spiral lift" and put it into use on a farm west of Byers. Underground water was induced into a rotating spiral tube, which was described as a "spiral elevator". Although the awkward-looking invention managed to deliver an impressive 320 gallons of water per minute, the structure did not catch on.⁶



"The Spiral Lift, A New Invention for Irrigation", *Denver Weekly Post*. November 8, 1913.

Up to the 1950s, getting groundwater into fields required a significant amount of time and labor to

assemble, disassemble, move, and reassemble irrigation pipes by hand and even then, irrigating by this method could only reach a small number of acres. In 1952, Frank Zybach, a tenant farmer from Strasburg, invented a water drive, center-pivot irrigation system. Self-propelled and capable of irrigating 40 acres at a time, this invention was “perhaps the most significant mechanical innovation in agriculture since the replacement of draft animals by the tractor” and revolutionized irrigation worldwide.⁷

Byers and the Transcontinental Highways

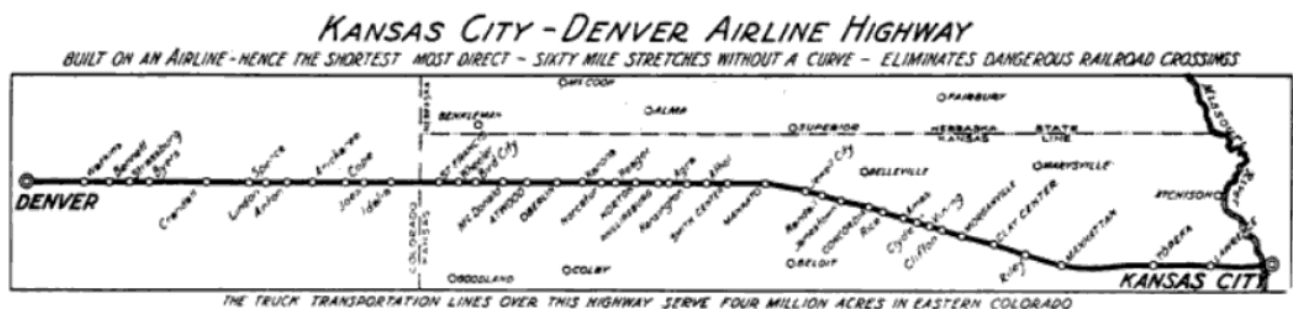
The first automobile, a “steam-powered locomobile”, appeared on Denver streets in 1900. Initially, it was a novelty affordable to only the wealthy. By 1908, Henry Ford introduced the Model T car to the American public for a cost of \$850; windshield, top, and headlamps were extra. The Ford assembly line streamlined manufacturing and by 1924, the Model T sold for just \$290.¹

As early as 1902, automobile enthusiasts began lobbying for the creation of a transcontinental motoring highway. The Lincoln Highway, the first national road, was completed in 1915 connecting New York and San Francisco.² The highway, however, bypassed Colorado entirely, opting for Wyoming’s South Pass route through the mountains just as the Union Pacific railroad had done nearly fifty years earlier. The following year, a number of other named highways entered Colorado from all directions including the Victory Highway, a 3,000-mile-long transcontinental route that connected New York to San Francisco, through Byers.³

Generally, the early motoring routes connected cities and towns along existing, established roads. Because of the confusing array of routes, guidebooks like the *Official Automobile Blue Book*, provided travelers detailed instructions on how to get from point to point, including road conditions, maps, and advertisements from approved establishments. The 1923 *Blue Book* described the 90-mile route between Limon and Denver through Byers as gravel to Deer Trail with the balance mostly dirt, over rolling farm and prairie country, and closely following the railroad. Along this route, the traveler drove sections of the Midland Trail (marked with orange or black and orange markers); the Victory Highway (yellow signs with blue lettering); the Pikes Peak Ocean to Ocean Highway (red and white markers); the Golden Belt route (yellow marker); and the White Way (black or black and white markers).

To protect motorists along its route from nefarious business practices, the Victory Highway Association designated approved establishments. Hotels, mechanic garages, retail stores, and cafes were identified with yellow and blue steel signs, similar to the road markers. It is currently unknown whether any of Byers’ businesses were officially designated as approved Victory Highway establishments.

Just five years after the Victory Highway crossed Colorado, there was a movement to create a shorter more direct route from Denver to Kansas City. On November 18, 1921, the *Littleton Independent* announced plans to construct an “airline” highway through Arapahoe County. Promoted by the commercial club of St. Francis, Kansas and the



Map of the Airline Highway, Colorado Highways, April 1922.

Kansas City-Denver Airline Association, the new highway followed a nearly direct line east on Colfax Avenue to St. Francis, Kansas, through Byers, which, depending on the source, cut anywhere from 60 to 100 miles from the Victory Highway route. Joseph Young, president of the Kansas City-Denver Airline Highway Association extolled the many benefits of the Airline route. Fifty miles east of Denver, farmers could haul hogs, sheep and other livestock directly to Denver markets without being forced to detour 75 to 80 miles. "It is such highways as this which will assist in developing highway traffic to the benefit of the entire United States."⁴

Both the Adams and Arapahoe County Commissioners adopted resolutions favoring the new highway, vowing to open it at once.

By 1923 the named highways were abandoned in favor of a numbered highway system. The Victory Highway became U.S. Highway 40, and the Airline route became U.S. Highway 36. The colorful signs and markings of the previous named highways were replaced with numerical highway identification signs which, initially were black numbers and letters on an orange background emblazoned on existing telephone poles. In the mid to late 1930s the Colorado highway department also began paving many of the highways with asphalt.⁵

It may be around this time that the official route of U.S. Highway 36 was moved about two miles north of Byers. Following Colfax Avenue straight east from



The Airline Highway/U.S. Highway 36, west of Byers in 1930. *Colorado Highways*. June 1930.

Strasburg, the route shaved less than 2 miles from the highway's overall distance. Being bypassed in this manner must have frustrated Byers' business owners. However, between 1954 and 1955, the alignment was changed again, back to the original route directing traffic through Byers.⁶

With its location at, and near, the crossroad of the Airline and Victory highways, Byers merchants certainly benefited by the increase in travelers through town. By 1930, Gothard Swanson and his wife Lillie built the Coronado Hotel and Café in block 2 of Howes First Addition, which was the block originally platted as a park. Constructed in the Spanish Revival architectural style, the building is one of Byers' most significant commercial structures.

In 1940, the hotel functioned more as an apartment



Coronado Hotel and Café circa 1950. Photograph courtesy of Stacie May, Byers, Colorado.



Coronado Hotel photographed in 2023. 177 West Old Highway 40.

building. Six of the school district's teachers resided at the hotel along with an extension service agent, two filling station employees, and the hotel's employees.⁷

The Swansons operated the hotel until Gothard's death in 1945. By 1948, Lillie was residing on Krameria Street in Denver. In about 1950, a single-story addition was constructed on the north side of the building for a grocery. Over the years, the building also housed a dress shop, ceramics shop, and most recently, a steakhouse restaurant.

In 1944, the United States Congress passed the Federal-Aid Highway Act authorizing the construction of a nationwide system of interstate highways. However, this act did not appropriate any funding for construction. It was not until passage of the Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1956 that funding for the highway system was finally resolved. Interstate 70 from Denver east to the Kansas line was completed in segments, beginning in the early 1960s. Each of the 12-mile segments between Bennett and Byers, and Byers and Deer Trail were completed relatively early; the first in 1964 and the latter in 1967.⁸

Drought, Fire, and Floods

The fifteen-year period following the stock market crash of 1929 was extremely difficult financially for most Americans, but probably the devastating economic impacts were felt most by those farming in the Great Plains. During the 1930s, most of the Great Plains states, eastern Colorado included, suffered from a decade-long drought along with excessive heat and almost continuous high winds, interspersed with grasshopper infestations.¹

By most current accounts, the devastating impacts from the drought were exacerbated by a decade or more of unsustainable farming practices. During the 1920s, more and more of eastern Colorado's grasslands were transformed into cultivated fields of wheat, sugar beets, corn, and other crops as farmers realized increasing profits following World War I. The tilled fields removed the critical structure or anchor that native grass roots provided to the topsoil. With that structure removed, the prolonged

drought during the 1930s dried the topsoil to a fine powdery dust which was then swept away in the wind. It was not uncommon for black clouds of dust to entirely consume farmsteads and towns across the prairie.²

In Colorado, impacts from the prolonged drought were felt most by those farming in Baca, Prowers, and Las Animas counties in the southeast corner of the state. Nevertheless, Arapahoe County farmers suffered as well. Between 1929 and 1935 the amount of acreage in spring and winter wheat dropped by more than 56 and 65 percent, respectively.³

In 1934, the Land Utilization Program, part of the Roosevelt Administration's New Deal programs to provide relief to affected farmers, began purchasing submarginal and eroded lands for the purpose of restoring or converting the acreages to grazing, forestry, wildlife, or recreation areas.⁴ Farmers were also paid to prevent wind erosion on their lands by planting tree windbreaks or reseeding to convert cropland back to pasture. In the Byers district, farmers received 20 cents per acre if they had the necessary equipment, and 40 cents per acre if they had to rent it. R.W. Burton was the program contact.⁵

The decade of the 1930s was also a difficult period for anyone owning or managing businesses in the Byers commercial district. In 1930, Byers had a growing commercial district. Along just three blocks of Front Street, Byers could boast that the town had three retail stores: George Kelley's general merchandise located at Front and McDonnell streets; the H & H Mercantile located on the corner of Front and Fetzer streets; and the Burton Mercantile Company.

By the end of the year however, fire destroyed the largest of the three stores. Located at the west end of Front Street, the Burton Block, a two-story, brick building, was constructed around 1910 by Robert Burton and housed the Burton Mercantile Company, the town's post office, and second story dance hall.

At the time, it was the largest store building

between Denver and Limon and was Byers' largest commercial building. The building's loss was a great blow to Byers as well as the surrounding communities. The fire was discovered at 5 a.m. on December 22, 1930. At that time, Byers did not have a fire department, so a number of residents formed a bucket brigade to carry water from nearby wells, working mostly to save adjacent structures, since it was clear that the Burton Block was a total loss.⁶

Another severe blow to Byers' commercial district came just a few years later, in June 1935. Following the wettest May in the 48-year climatic record in Colorado, floodwaters from West Bijou Creek inundated Byers' Front Street buildings. The White Hotel, located on the north side of Front Street near Jewell Street reported two feet of water on the ground floor. The flood also affected transportation routes like the Union Pacific railroad bridge west of town which was washed away along with hundreds of feet of track.⁷

This was not the last time that Byers would be inundated by floodwaters from the usually dry West Bijou Creek. Nearly thirty years to the day after the devastating 1935 flood, West Bijou Creek flooded again, undermining sandy stream banks and uprooting trees. At one point just north of town, vegetation was found under 12 feet of newly deposited sediment. The cause of the 1965 flood



Front Street prior to 1930, looking east. Buildings pictured from left to right: garage and livery; H & H Mercantile (white building); small commercial building; the Burton Block; the Snow building (occupied by a drug store, ice cream parlor, and barber shop); and the bank. Photograph courtesy of Stacie May, Byers, Colorado.



Railroad and automobile bridge washed out over West Bijou Creek near Byers. June 18, 1965. Photograph by Gary Guisinger. Denver Public Library Special Collections. X7378.

was attributed to several days of rain over a large area. Byers itself received nearly three inches of rainfall on June 15 while some areas of the Bijou

basin recorded up to six inches of rain. The result was not one but two floods. The first occurred on June 15 followed by a more devastating flood on June 17, which washed out or damaged bridges all along the Union Pacific main line, Interstate 70, and U.S. 40.⁸ In Byers, both the Union Pacific and U.S. 40 bridges were destroyed.

Clean up efforts lasted for months. On September 2, 1965, the *Aurora Advocate* reported that between July 2 and August 13, 45 members of the Neighborhood Youth Corps spent eight-hour days assisting in removing debris.



Front Street following the 1965 flood showing the muddy street in front of the Bank (right) and the Byers Hardware in the remodeled Snow Building. Photograph courtesy of Stacie May, Byers, Colorado.



Photograph of the debris and washed-out railroad bridge in Byers following the 1965 flood. Photograph courtesy of Stacy May, Byers, Colorado.

Residential and Commercial Construction: 1930 to 1942

Despite numerous hardships faced by Byers'

residents during the Thirty's, the period leading up to World War II saw the construction of a number of residences and commercial buildings around town.

During this time, Byers also saw the extension of electricity to the community, for the first time. On June 27, 1929, with an initial investment of \$4,000, Gothard Swanson, local entrepreneur and owner of the Coronado Hotel and Café, received approval from the Colorado Public Utility Commission to construct and operate an electric light plant and distribution system, incorporated as the Byers Light and Electric Company.¹ Just five months later, Swanson sold his interest in the company to Matt R. Williams of Deer Trail for \$4,300. Williams converted the system from direct to alternating current, constructed a 13,000 volt, 3-phase transmission line along Highway 40, and connected the town to his generating plant in Deer Trail. The total cost of construction was approximately \$10,000.²

New homes built in the 1930s, like 218 S. Sherman Street and 360 S. Sherman Street pictured right, were mostly modest, single-story residences with gable or hipped roofs, clapboard wood siding, and open front porches. In some cases, decorative fish scale shingles were added exterior embellishments, as shown in the home at 204 S. Fetzer Street, pictured below.

One of the more elaborate homes constructed during this time was 287 S. Sherman Street, a single-story brick home that features many Tudor architectural elements such as an arched front



360 S. Sherman Street, constructed in 1939.



218 S. Sherman Street, constructed in 1931, features a clipped gable roof.



204 S. Fetzer Street, constructed in 1932. This home is a good, in-tact example of the early 20th Century Vernacular architectural style featuring clapboard siding with decorative fish scale shingles in the gable ends.



doorway, paired double hung windows, and a chimney incorporated into the front elevation.



281 S. Sherman Street, constructed in 1931, features many Tudor-style architectural elements.

Post World War II through 1970

In the 25 years following the Second World War, Byers experienced a modest building boom. Between 1945 and 1970, 49 new homes were constructed, most filling in the vacant lots in the Town of Byers and Howes First Addition subdivisions. Several commercial buildings including two motels, a café, drug store, mortuary, restaurant, gas station, and machine shop were also constructed along Front Street, and highways 40 and 36. In 1945, congregants of the Mount Tabor Baptist church financed the construction of a new church building. Located at Third and South Sherman streets, it is reported to be the longest continually operating Southern Baptist church in

Colorado.

In 1953, perhaps realizing the community's potential for growth, Earl and Elise Vansyoc divided their eight-acre parcel on the east side of town into 63 residential lots, each a narrow 25 feet in width. Located east of Owens Avenue along the south side of Front Street, the Vansyoc's Bijou Valley Addition was the first new subdivision filing since O.H. Howe platted his First Addition 45 years earlier. This subdivision was slow to develop, however. Only five homes were built between the 1953 platting and 1970. Like the development pattern in the Town of Byers and Howe's subdivisions, new owners in the Bijou Valley Addition purchased multiple adjacent lots to gain space between themselves and their neighbors: more space than could otherwise be provided on the prescribed 25-foot-wide lots.

During the 25-year period after the war, Byers also



288 S. Sherman Street. In 1931, members of the Missionary Baptist Church formed the Mount Tabor Baptist Church and constructed this building in 1945.



277 S. Sherman Street. Modern brick Ranch styled home constructed in 1961.

experienced a shift in the predominate character of the community. Residential architectural styles gradually transitioned from the classical cottage of earlier generations to a more modern, low-slung, Ranch styled design that featured an open, rectangular floor plan, wide overhanging eaves, a minimal front porch, and an attached one- or two-car garage.¹ Although most of Byers' Ranch styled homes were constructed using wooden clapboard siding, probably the best examples of the modern ranch style in Byers are 277 S. Sherman Street and 70 W. 4th Avenue, both constructed in 1961 featuring brick veneer walls.

The 1970s

In 1970, Colorado was home to 2.2 million people. By the end of the decade, the state added another 800,000 people, a 31 percent increase. Over this decade, Arapahoe County's population increased 81 percent, from 162,000 in 1970 to nearly 294,000 in 1980.²

Unfortunately, it is not possible to infer Byers' share of the County's population as the available census tables only provide population information for incorporated places. Even without the data, it is clear that Byers' population increased in the decade between 1970 and 1980. Four new subdivisions were recorded: Grand View Estates, Keen Subdivision, Shades Addition to Byers, and Bijou Valley Estates.

Although no new commercial buildings were constructed in this decade, in 1972 the Archdiocese of Denver opened a new Catholic Church on West Bijou Avenue, and 76 new homes were built, most located in the Grand View Estates, Keen, and Shades subdivisions, and a small handful in the three previously platted subdivisions.

The predominate residential style in Byers remained the single-story ranch but a few designs added a two-story, mid-floor section. This Split-Level



70 W. 4th Avenue, a classic sprawling brick Ranch styled home constructed on a corner lot in 1961. The home has an attached two-car garage that is accessed from S. Sherman Street (right side of photo).

building form actually originated in the 1930s and gained popularity nationally in the 1950s through the 1970s. The design retains the low-pitched roof, overhanging eaves, and horizontality of the Ranch form but adds a two-story wing to the one-story section at mid-height, resulting in three staggered floor levels.³



222 E. 2nd Avenue, constructed 1973, exemplifies the Split-Level building form in Byers.

Another variation of the Ranch style theme is the Bi-Level building form. Also described as "raised ranch" or "two-level split ranch", this variation experienced its greatest popularity from the 1960s through the 1980s.

It features a raised basement which makes the lower level more livable by allowing larger, above grade lower windows than in the typical Ranch home. The at-grade front entrance leads to an interior landing with a short flight of stairs to the upper and lower living areas.

A good example of the Bi-Level form in Byers is 234 W. Bijou Avenue in the Howe's First Addition subdivision. This home has the added feature of the upper façade projecting over the lower level, giving the front entrance the appearance of being recessed.⁴



234 W. Bijou Avenue, constructed in 1973 representing the Bi-Level form of modern Ranch styled homes.

Notable Buildings

Byers' False Front Commercial Buildings

Byers has several false front buildings that span a nearly 100-year period of commercial construction within the community. The false front design was a common building type in the West between the late nineteenth through the early twentieth century and can be found from mountain mining towns to agricultural communities and railroad towns across the plains. Nearly all false front buildings are rectangular-shaped wood frame structures that are one or two stories in height with a gable roof that is mostly hidden behind a tall, wooden false front.

Particularly in the first few years of a community's development, the false front design was popular among shop keepers, hotel proprietors, and other entrepreneurs who were reluctant to invest in brick-and-mortar construction yet wanted to project an



Photograph circa 1910 showing the livery stable and blacksmith shop in the foreground and the H&H Mercantile (310 Front Street), upper left. Both buildings are examples of the false front design, typical of many early western communities. Also pictured is the Burton Block, upper right, a two-story brick building, constructed circa 1910. The livery was originally located on the north side of Front Street, on property owned by the Union Pacific Railroad. By 1917, it was removed, likely relocated about 150 feet to the south, its current location (330 W. Front Street), making this the oldest known surviving building in town.

image of stability, success, and permanence to customers. Early frontier business owners focused their spending on substantial front facades while relegating the secondary, less-visible sides of the building to cheaper construction materials. As communities grew and prospered, false front buildings were often replaced with more substantial brick construction.¹ In Byers, the false front building design remained popular into the 1960s.



Pictured above left: The H&H Mercantile, 310 W. Front Street, today the Byers Masonic Lodge #152.

Pictured above right: The livery and blacksmith shop, 330 W. Front Street, today a private residence.



186 W. Front Street, constructed circa 1920 by George Kelley for his general merchandise store. By 1940, Kelley converted the building into his residence. Likely at this time, the original false front was shortened and modified to a "stepped" design.



A row of false front buildings in the 200 block of Front Street. Pictured left to right:

268 W. Front Street, constructed in 1925.

278 W. Front Street, constructed in 1960, home to the American Legion Franz Alton Post No. 160.

298 W. Front Street, constructed in 1960 for the Gothard Swanson Chevrolet dealership. Gothard and Lily Swanson came to Byers in 1925 and operated an automobile and implement business. Swanson was very active in improving the Byers community. In 1930 he financed the construction of the Coronado Hotel and Café, 177 Old Highway 40, and began the Byers Light and Electric Company, bringing electricity to the town for the first time.



350 W. Front Street. Constructed in 1960, this false front features a stepped design.



75 W. Old Highway 40. Constructed about 1958/59, this building originally was a 10-unit motel.



Pictured left to right: 41 E. Highway 40, constructed in 1950, formerly a cafe; and 61 E. Highway 40, constructed in 1960, originally Thompson's Mortuary, later a number of businesses including a doctor's office, beauty shop, western shop, and paint store.

Other Notable Buildings

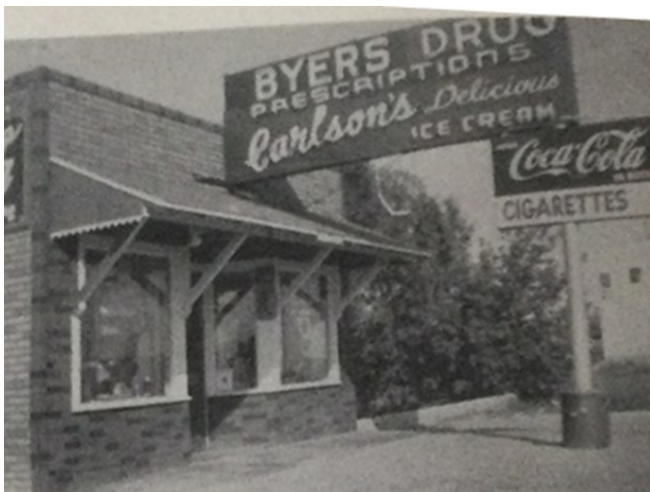


Byers Depot was constructed circa 1900. This building was originally located on the south side of Highway 40, southeast of N. Fetzer Street. Around 1974, the depot was partially demolished, and the surviving section was moved to a lot at 451 W. Front Street.

Photograph courtesy of Stacie May, Byers, Colorado.



451 W. Front Street showing the surviving section of the Byers Depot, currently being used as a private residence.



Pictured left: Carlson's Drug Store located on the northeast corner of Highway 40 and N. Sherman Street. This photograph was included in the 1958 Byers High School Yearbook.

Pictured below: 76 N. Sherman Street. Today Carlson's Drug store is a private residence. At some point horizontal siding was attached to the brick building.



Byers' Grain Elevators



Undated photograph of the Byers Elevator, located at the Fetzer Street railroad crossing. Photograph courtesy of Stacie May, Byers, Colorado.

Viewed from miles in every direction, there are arguably no buildings in Byers more prominent in the landscape than its three grain elevators.

The first and oldest elevator was located on the south side of the railroad tracks at the Fetzer Street crossing. It consisted of a number of wood-frame structures most likely built around 1910 by Byers' entrepreneur and businessman Robert Burton. By the early 1920s, the Byers Elevator was owned by the Denver Elevator Company with Burton acting as the local agent and 47-year-old Charles P. Switzer its daily manager. The elevator supplied wholesale and retail markets with grain, beans, bran, flour, and all other mill products.¹

Also located on the south side of the railroad tracks at the Fetzer Street crossing is the second of Byers' three elevators. Constructed by the Mayer-Osborn Company of Denver³, likely in the 1950s for the Farmers Union Marketing Association, the elevator's principal structures were also wood frame, but

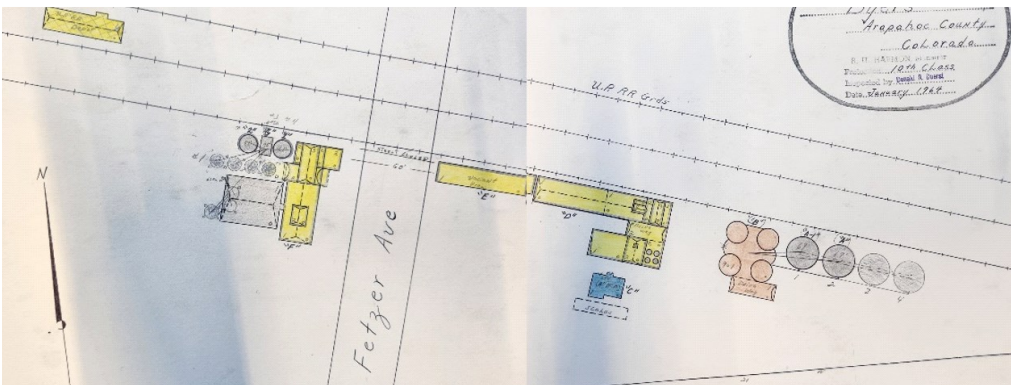
unlike the old Byers elevator, some of the exterior storage tanks, or silos, were constructed in concrete.

Railroad Crossings

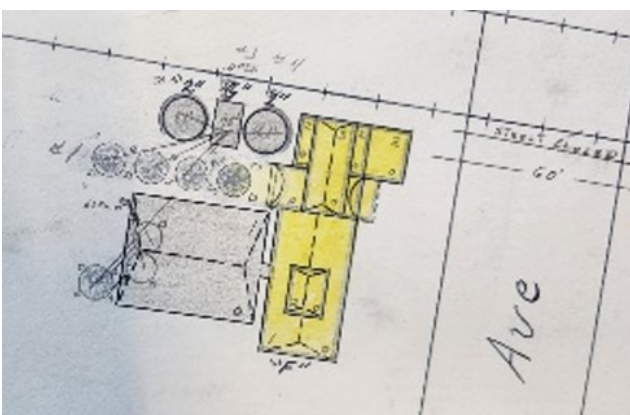
Until the 1970s Byers had two railroad crossings, one at Fetzer Street and the other at Park Street, just west of the school. However, likely in response to several vehicle-train accidents which occurred throughout the Front Range during the 1950s and 1960s including one especially tragic accident in Greeley which took the lives of 20 school children in 1961, the Union Pacific made safety improvements throughout its system in Colorado.⁵ The result was the closure of the Fetzer and Park crossings in the 1970s and consolidation into just one new crossing at Main Street which aligned conveniently with the I -70 interchange. Although severed, remnants of the Fetzer and Park crossings are still visible today along U.S. Highways 36 and 40.



Farmers Union Marketing Association elevator circa 1970s, looking south from U.S. 40. Photograph courtesy of Stacie May, Byers, Colorado.



Clip from the 1964 *Sanborn Fire Insurance Map of Byers* showing the Byers Elevator on the west side of Fetzer Street [labeled avenue], and the larger Farmers Union Marketing Association elevator to the east side. The train depot is pictured in the upper left corner.



Clip from the 1964 *Sanborn Fire Insurance Map of Byers* showing the Byers Elevator.

The color coding shows wood frame (yellow) and metal (gray) construction.²



Byers Elevator, 2023, looking northeast from Front Street. Sometime after 1964, the wood-frame main elevator buildings with their tall cupolas were demolished leaving the storage tanks, or silos, and a metal building.

Byers' third and newest elevator was constructed in the early 1980s⁴ by the Younglove Construction Company of Sioux City, Iowa for the Farmers Marketing Association.

Located at the far eastern edge of town near the intersection of S. Exmoor Road and U.S. 40, this elevator features tall slipform concrete tanks as well as two smaller metal bins with an overall capacity to store 386,000 bushels of wheat. Today, the elevator is owned and operated by Cargill, Inc.

Pictured right: Byers Farmers Union Marketing Association elevator, 2023, looking west from the Main Street crossing. The storage annex and metal frame of the old Byers Elevator is in the distance, behind the white concrete storage tank or silo.



Cargill, Inc., grain elevator, Byers, Colorado, 2023, looking northeast from E. Front Street.



Located at 318 S. McDonnell Street, this uniquely styled barn is associated with a single-family home to the east. Because of its tall center cupola, it is believed that this barn's principal function was for grain storage. The construction date is currently unknown.

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