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CULTURAL LIFE IN THE EARLY COLORADO
MINING COMMUNITIES

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CULTURAL LIFE IN THE EARLY COLORADO
MINING COMMUNITIES

by

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PREFACE

In the preparation of this thesis, a sincere effort has been made to present a description of the cultural life in the early Colorado mining communities in so far as education, the theater, and music were concerned. It was not the writer's intention to present a group of figures and tables but rather a readable account of the period from 1859 to 1875.

It was the writer's pleasure to reside in Colorado for several years and to visit a great number of the early mining towns and to know personally several of the pioneer men of those communities. In the lives of those who live in a community is history best narrated; and as the past fades into the distance the realization of Macaulay's statement will assume greater significance that "The history of a country is best told in the record of the lives of its people."

Materials used in this study were found in the libraries of the Colorado State Historical Society, the city of Denver, and Oklahoma Agricultural and Mechanical College. The writer's sincere and deep appreciation to the entire staff of these libraries, and especially to Miss Francis Shea, of the Colorado State Historical Society, who so generously placed the required materials at his disposal, is heartily acknowledged.

To Dr. George E. Lewis, Dr. O. A. Hilton, and Dr. Norbert R. Mahnken, an expression of gratitude for the inspirations and suggestions they so patiently offered is given.

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CHAPTER I

EDUCATION

It was not a very cheerful company of pioneers that hung around "Uncle Dick" Wootton's place on a hot August afternoon in the year 1859, just a few months after the discovery of gold in the ragged little twin settlements at the mouth of Cheery Creek, Auraria and Denver City.

Wootton's was probably the first two story frame structure to be built in the settlements. It was the leading hotel in Auraria, that raw town being but a jump from the equally raw Denver City.¹

The loungers at Wootton's were discussing the poor showings at the gold washings and the number of prospectors who were pulling out of the country in disgust, when they saw a train of prairie schooners crawling along out of the southwest.

At the head of the long procession was a covered ox-cart driven by a man who was flourishing a long, heavy whip, meanwhile bawling some very scathing remarks at the plodding beasts.

Then, as the wagon drew up before the hotel, his eloquence suddenly ceased, and while his oxen scrambled about and refused to stop in the dignified fashion he evidently had contemplated, there followed what one of the bystanders afterwards declared to have been "the most profane silence I have

¹ Nolie Mumeey, Early Settlement of Denver 1599-1860 (The Arthur H. Clark Company, Glendale, California, 1942), p. 87.

ever heard."²

The onlookers paid no more attention to the other ox-teams still some distance away, but stared in amazement at the new arrival. He was a man of about twenty-five years, with straight, wiry figure, hair worn even longer than was then the prevailing fashion in mining camps, and a well-regulated black beard. But it was not the man's face or beard or figure that invited the attention of the loungers at Wootton's.

It was his hat.

On the head of this driver of oxen was a high silk hat, or "plug" in the vernacular of Auraria and Denver City. The rest of his attire was in strict conformity with the hat. His clothes were of fine broadcloth, the coat cut in the modish Prince Albert fashion, striped trousers to match, while his linen was expensive and immaculate.³

"Fiat Justitia, rurat coelum!" [Let right be done, though the heaven should fall] roared the expensively attired stranger.

"What kind of language is that?" "Uncle Dick" asked Luke Tierney, the writer.

"Gosh, I guess it's Latin," replied Luke.

"Gee-Haw! Romane venio au hic maneo!" [Frankly I am here, and here I remain] roared the driver.

"Sounds beautiful," said one of the crowd which had gathered to see this different spectacle.

On Ferry Street, the stranger was questioned by one of the bystanders who could stand it no longer.

² Article by Helen Ring Robinson, Denver Post, April 9, 1911. Miss Robinson's mother was Miss Lydia Maria Ring, early Colorado teacher.

³ Ibid., p. 6.

"What brings you here, stranger?" he asked.

"Majora rerum initia," was the quick reply.

"What tribe talk is that?"

"I am glad to answer you, sir, that is Latin, and it means 'The beginning of greater things,' at least I hope."⁴

And so the first schoolmaster came to Colorado.

O. J. Goldrick, the most conspicuous teacher and the Beau Brummel of the early pioneer days of Colorado, was born in County Sligo, Ireland, and was a graduate of Dublin University. He had taught school for a time in St. Louis before a mere chance turned his face--and his historic plug hat--toward the new gold camp.⁵

Goldrick was a man of determination and persistence. Certainly he had the courage of his convictions. He thought everything depended on education and was a born pedagogue. There is no record of his ever trying the mines. He was Colorado's first educator and he did his work at a time when he had little material to work with or on and when education was about the last thing in the minds of the adventurers who were beginning to flock to Colorado in search of fortune.⁶ Gold hunting was their object in life, not book learning.⁷

It required marvelous physical courage to conduct a school in Colorado in 1859. In the first place Goldrick was looked upon as a joke by the thoughtless young men of those days because of his eccentricities of character and

⁴ Mumey, op. cit., pp. 149-150.

⁵ Robinson, loc. cit.

⁶ Denver Post, December 22, 1910.

⁷ G. E. Himman to Charles Howard, May 29, 1869, Manuscript Collection, Colorado State Historical Society Library, Denver, Colorado.

dress which he declined to abandon in spite of the derision he provoked. What an entertainment he provided for the "Pikes Peak or Bust" fortune hunters. The schoolmaster was compelled to submit to a hazing that he never forgot. Old army pistols were brought out, loaded and primed, and occasional shot were taken at the shining "plug" hat. Such playfulness, then as now, had a tendency to make a nervous man cringe, perhaps run and show cowardice. This was not so with Goldrick. Unconcernedly he pursued his way and the "plug hat and the long frock coat became a familiar sight on the single business street of Denver City."⁸

Very soon after his spectacular arrival he published a notice which fairly shouted from the columns of the Rocky Mountain News that he would forthwith open a "Union School" for the "proper training" of the youth of the settlements.⁹

Two hundred and fifty dollars were promptly subscribed by various pioneers to provide the proper "backing" and on October 3, 1859, "Professor" Goldrick opened the first school in Colorado in a little log cabin on the west side of Twelfth Street between Larimer and Market Streets, nearly opposite the "palatial double log cabin" of Andrew Sagendorf.¹⁰

The following is Goldrick's interesting description of the building:

. . . hut with a flat roof, a great conductor of snow and rain, a small hole in the gables sufficed for an unglassed window, and a strip of wagon cover tacked to the lintel hung down to the ground, covering the hole that a log carpenter left for a door until some sawmill could supply dressed lumber.¹¹

⁸ Denver Post, December 22, 1910.

⁹ Rocky Mountain News (Denver, Colorado), September 29, 1859.

¹⁰ Robinson, loc. cit.

¹¹ Mumey, loc. cit.

This school was a private institution. Its enrollment was thirteen pupils, including two half-breeds and two Mexicans. It continued open till late in the winter of 1859-'60.¹²

Goldrick re-opened the school in May, 1860, this time with an assistant whose name has not been recorded.¹³ Miss Indiana Sopris opened another private school the same day. Unfortunately no information seems to be available on her early life. The school was opened in one room of her father's house. She was the first woman teacher in Denver and in the territory that is now the State of Colorado. "Here she labored earnestly to instruct a dozen distracted pupils from a variety of texts brought from all parts of the country."¹⁴ Miss Sopris retired from teaching when she married the sheriff of Arapahoe County.¹⁵

Early in the spring of 1860 Mr. Abner R. Brown passed through the small mining town of Boulder on his way to the mines. Noticing several children of school age playing in the street he asked if there was a school in the community. Upon receiving a negative answer he told several of the citizens that if he did not find mining to his taste he would return to open a school. He soon returned and there under his initiative the first school building in the Territory of Colorado was erected in the summer of 1860.¹⁶

Mr. Brown's own description of this first building is worthy of quoting:

The citizens voted to build a good frame schoolhouse twenty-four by thirty-six feet, with a ten foot ceiling, lathe and plaster it,

¹² Rocky Mountain News, October 14, 1862.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ George F. Willison, Here They Dug for Gold (Reynal and Hitchcock, New York, 1946), p. 94.

¹⁵ Robinson, loc. cit.

¹⁶ Jerome C. Smiley, History of Denver (Baskin and Co., Chicago, 1901), p. 732.

put on a shingle roof and ornament it with a real brick chimney, with brick all the way from Denver, thirty miles distant. All of us agreed to take off our coats, cut down the trees, haul the logs to mill, and get them sawed into lumber on shares, with which to build the house. Being a carpenter myself I agreed not only to help cut and haul the logs, but to do the carpenter work on the building, and the citizens were to board me without charge. We finished the house October 15, 1861, at a cost of \$1,200. After the schoolhouse was finished we found that we had run out of money, and still lacked a stove. But we were equal to the emergency. We found a few sheets of tom iron, an eighth of an inch thick, down in the placer diggings, and I soon made a stove of it, two feet wide, two feet high, and four feet long. We bought large sheets of stove pipe iron in Denver, and I also made thirty feet of pipe, bending it round a wagon tongue and riveting it on a crowbar, and it fitted like a charm. The ladies of the place got up a fine supper in the schoolhouse, at which we had toasts and speeches, and they raised forty-two dollars in gold-dust taken out of Boulder Creek within the town limits, which they presented to me, and I soon strutted around town in a new suit of clothes.¹⁷

Not all communities in the mining regions of Colorado were as fortunate as Boulder in having citizens so ready to support a school and neither were many so fortunate as to have men like A. R. Brown to build and conduct the school. As has been stated previously, people were there for wealth and not for formal education.¹⁸ The great majority of miners had left their families at home when they came west in search of their fortune. In the entire territory in 1860 there were only 1,500 males and 600 females of school age in a total population of 34,000.¹⁹ The very nature of the people themselves and their objectives made education difficult. Mr. Hall in his History of Colorado says:

The very ends of the country met here and surged in a feverish activity. Heterogeneous masses collected by groups from the different

¹⁷ Abner R. Brown, "Reminiscences of Colorado's First Schools," The Mecca, II (June 30, 1900), pp. 12-13.

¹⁸ G. E. Himman to Charles Howard, May 29, 1869.

¹⁹ United States Eighth Census (1860) (Government Printing Office, Washington, 1866), p. 548.

states, made up all grades--collegians, embryonic statesmen, lawyers, aspiring politicians, slaveholders, abolitionists, merchants, clerks, mechanics, farmers, teamsters, gamblers, laborers, desperadoes, criminals of every sort, fugitives from justice, crowding, and jostling one another in a wild, indiscriminate scramble for spoils, assembled upon the extreme frontier over which there was no jurisdiction of law, local, state, or federal.²⁰

A few citizens in the various mining towns began to request schools for the children present and to deplore the activities of the young people. A correspondent for the Rocky Mountain News wrote in 1860 that a good common school was needed more than anything else in the way of a civilizer in Nevada Gulch, Missouri City, Mountain City and elsewhere in that vicinity.²¹

The children with idle times on their hands, soon began to drift to the places of excitement and to imitate the conduct of the adults. The correspondent to the Rocky Mountain News from Missouri City wrote:

In one of our saloons were lately seen four boys quietly seated around a card table, taking a quiet game of Euchre, none of which had arrived at the age of ten. What a school for progress.²²

Even in communities like Denver City where the private schools of "Professor" Goldrick and Miss Sporis were in operation, education was haphazard and the instructors had very little control over the conduct and attendance of the pupils. Eugene Teats, a lad of ten in 1860, whose father operated a hotel and livery barn in Denver City, had the following to say in regard to his schooling:

We all pretended to go to school to a Miss Sporis. We really did go to school in the forenoons, and in the afternoons kept out of sight. Our favorite place for lunch was a little saloon and restaurant on Larimer Street. . . . Many times at lunch when my three chums

²⁰ Frank Hall, History of Colorado (Baskin and Co., Chicago, 1901), p. 206.

²¹ Rocky Mountain News, August 1, 1860.

²² Ibid., September 12, 1860.

were under the influence of drink, they would try to force me to drink with them, and on several occasions they held me down and tried to force liquor in my mouth.²³

As more people poured into the mines in the latter part of 1860 schools of a sort began to open in the mountain communities. J. R. Dean opened a school at Mt. Vernon, on the road to the mining centers in June of that year.²⁴ A correspondent for the Rocky Mountain News wrote:

There are three or four schools carried on in log cabins in these cities [Nevada Gulch, Missouri City, Montana City] altogether, one of which I notice is conducted by your poetry contributor, Minnie Sweeney, Missouri City, who appears to be a smart and charming school marm.²⁵

The only requirement for opening a school was for the instructor to find the pupils and a place to conduct it. Equipment and qualifications of the teachers were secondary. One young lady who wished to open a school first secured two pupils to instruct and then set out to find a room for use as a school. The only one available was a twelve by sixteen log cabin with a dirt floor and a fire place. The pupils sat on a rough wooden bench and used dry goods boxes for desks.²⁶

These were not days for a faint hearted person to attempt to conduct a school. Many were the trials and problems of the early teachers. Only teachers of the type of Miss Lydia Maria Ring could expect to even partially succeed under the circumstances. She was a Massachusetts woman, no longer young, who had come to Cherry Creek settlement by caravan from Kansas, and had lived alone in a tent for several weeks before she could find more comfortable quarters.

²³ Willison, loc. cit.

²⁴ Rocky Mountain News, June 13, 1860.

²⁵ Rocky Mountain News, October 17, 1860.

²⁶ Emma Shepard Hill, Foundation Stones (Bradford-Robinson Printing Co., Denver, Colorado, 1926), pp. 111-112.

A valiant soul like that was not easily daunted by the hardships and perils of those early days. As for the little barbarians of the frontier town who would soon have made the life of a less resolute teacher unbearable, they speedily found their match in Miss Ring.

A week or so after the opening of her school she was walking, toward dusk, out toward the bounds of civilization near Arapahoe Street when two figures in war paint and Indian headdresses sprang out from behind a tree brandishing knives and shouting, "Heap scalp! Big white squaw!" at which, without a moment's pause, Miss Ring seized the nearest "Indian," and sternly announcing "Heap spank! Big white pappose!" laid on heavily, while the second of the two lads who had planned with jocund hearts to "scare teacher into a fit," loped away without waiting his turn.²⁷

Mr. Abner R. Brown in telling of some of the more interesting anecdotes of his life in early Colorado described the following incident:

I once saw a big, unruly boy of fifteen years come into school one day on his hands and knees to his seat. But just before he got there, the little slender lady teacher grabbed a stick from the pile of wood near the old fashioned fire place, planted her knees on his back and pounded him till he begged to be let up and promised to behave himself; and he kept his word.²⁸

The mining town teacher not only had to keep the students under partial control but had to, at times, also contend with the townspeople as well.

Mr. George F. Willison in writing about the town of Leadville says:

John Kane, owner of the popular Catalpa Saloon, staggers home to lunch, beats his wife into insensibility, and on his return invades the schoolhouse. He knocks down the clock, kicks it to pieces in sight of the frightened children whose "baby faces would have softened the heart of a Herod," and ends up by firing twice at the

²⁷ Robinson, loc. cit.

²⁸ Abner R. Brown, "Anecdotes of my Life," Manuscript Collection, Colorado State Historical Society Library, Denver, Colorado.

terrified children as they flee across the yard. Kane returns unmolested to his saloon.²⁹

The pioneer teachers in the Colorado mining town had great difficulty in earning a livelihood during these first days of the gold rush. Their income ranged from fifty to seventy-five dollars a month, depending on the number of pupils they could acquire and the number of parents who could be induced to pay for their offspring's formal education.³⁰ Many had to supplement their income with sideline endeavors. Among these was "Professor" Goldrick. Colorado pioneers love to discuss the singular and picturesque personality of the "Professor," and they tell many amusing stories about him. One of these concerns a duel to which he was challenged on account of one of his articles in the Rocky Mountain News, the "Professor" eking out his pedagogical income by acting as a reporter for this pioneer journal.

Goldrick had one bad habit--he would get tipsy now and then. And drunk or sober, he had a nervous dread of fire arms. He was no coward, however, and accepted the challenge valiantly. Then he proceeded to empty a bottle of whiskey in preparation for the trying ordeal. He appeared on the "field of honor" in a thoroughly befuddled condition. His opponent was hardly more sober, and the "seconds," who all along had been preparing the affair as a practical joke, took the cartridges out of both dueling revolvers. At the word "fire!" the two weapons snapped and Goldrick fell to the ground in the full tipsy belief that he was shot. At that moment one of the jokers emptied a bottle of red ink on the fallen man's snowy shirt front, and when the "Professor" opened his eyes a second later in surprise at finding himself still

²⁹ Willison, op. cit., p. 181.

³⁰ First Biennial Report of the Superintendent of Public Instruction of the Territory of Colorado, for the School Years Ending, September 30, 1871 (D. C. Collier Printing Co., Central City, Colorado, 1872), p. 56.

in the land of the living, he caught one glimpse of the spreading red stain and straightened himself out, moaning, "My God, I'm dead!"³¹

The territory was to wait two years before the first public schools were opened, although early in December, 1860, "a mass meeting to take action toward organizing a school district" was held in front of the Lindell Hotel with "Professor" Goldrick acting as leader, and with a packing box for his rostrum.³² Nothing materialized from this meeting because of the confused political situation in Colorado.

Within a year after the first discoveries of gold on Cherry Creek, definite steps were taken to secure the privileges of statehood. At the time of the discovery of gold the territory which now comprises the State of Colorado was part of the State of Kansas. The settlers under the leadership of General William H. Larimer asked Congress that the gold fields be cut from Kansas and organized as the Territory of Colona. When this request was refused a convention was called of self-appointed delegates who proceeded to establish a provisional government for the Territory of Jefferson as it was named. This action was recognized neither by the Federal government in Washington or by Kansas. Kansas continued to administer the region as the County of Arapahoe. The gold fields remained subject to two rival sets of authority till 1861, when Congress organized them as the Territory of Colorado.³³

With the advent of a legal territorial government it was now possible to have an organized public school system. The actual beginnings of such a system were made in a school act passed by the territorial legislature which

³¹ Robinson, loc. cit.

³² Rocky Mountain News, December 9, 1860.

³³ Willison, op. cit., pp. 20-21.

convened in Denver in September 1861.³⁴ But a school act was of no avail without some provisions for raising funds, and this provision was not made until the second session of the legislature, in July 1862.³⁵ County superintendents were elected to set up school districts in each of the counties. "Professor" Goldrick was chosen to serve in that capacity for Arapahoe County, that being the county in which Denver was located.³⁶ It was while serving in this position that he played a semi-clerical part in a lynching. Business had taken the "Professor" to a neighboring mining community, and while he was there a Mexican was caught robbing the sluice boxes. This was the man's second offense and it was promptly decided that the offender should be "strung up." "Professor" Goldrick was in the crowd that "tried" the Mexican and pronounced sentence upon him, and though the kind-hearted "Professor" declared himself opposed to lynch law he granted, as he put it, "that circumstances must occasionally induce patriotic citizens to revise his judgment." However, he protested that a doomed man should be given "the consolation of religion." "Pray!" he thundered at the Mexican. "Pray, I tell you!" But the cringing Mexican had apparently no prayers at his command, whereat the "Professor" made himself master of the religious ceremonies and, after recounting at some length the story of the crime, a black record which he assumed Divine Providence would accept as a sufficient excuse for the hanging, he concluded with the following prayer: "This man is unfit to live. He is an outcast unworthy of association with decent people--and so, O'Lord! take him to Thyself!"³⁷

³⁴ General Laws of the Territory of Colorado, Session I (Wm. Byers Printing Company, Denver, Colorado, 1862), p. 87.

³⁵ Ibid., Session II (Wm. Byers Printing Company, Denver, Colorado, 1863), p. 126.

³⁶ Robinson, loc. cit.

³⁷ Ibid.

A short time after the hanging episode the "Professor," perhaps because of his inability to curb his appetite for spirited drink, deserted the teaching profession for that of a news reporter.³⁸ In 1864 an event occurred, the reporting of which, brought to the "Professor" lasting fame in his newly chosen profession. This was the Cherry Creek flood. William N. Byers, owner and publisher of the Rocky Mountain News, knowing himself incapable of doing justice to the tragedy assigned the catastrophe to Goldrick. This was the result:

About the midnight hour of Thursday, the nineteenth instant, when almost all the town were knotted in the peace of sleep, deaf to all noise and blind to all danger, snoring in calm security, and seeing visions of remoteness radiant with the rainbow hues of past associations, or roseate with the gilded hopes of the fanciful future--while the full-faced queen of night shed showers of silver from the starry throne o'er fields of freshness and fertility, garnishing and suffusing sleeping nature with her balmy brightness, fringing the feathery cottonwoods with lustre, enameling, the house tops with coats of pearl, bridging the erst placid Platte with beams of radiance, and bathing the arid sands of Cherry Creek with dewy beauty-- a frightful phenomenon sounded in the distance, and a shocking calamity presently charged upon us. . . . Hark! What and where is this? A torrent or a tornado? These were the questions soliloquized and spoken, one to the other. Has creation's God forsaken us, and chaos come again? Our eyes might bewilder and our ears deceive, but our hearts, all trembling, and our sacred souls soon whispered what it was. Alas, and wonderful to behold! it was the water engine of death dragging its destroying train of maddened waves, that defied the eye to number them. . . . What does this mean? Have the wild waterspouts from all the clouds at once conspired to drain their upper cisterns, and thus drench us here in death? Have the firm foundations of the Almighty's earth given way, and the fountains of the great deep burst forth on fallen men, regardless of that rainbow covenant which spanned in splendor yon arc of sky last evening? . . . Here one man was launched asleep and naked on the watery ocean of eternity, to find his final fatal refuge only in the flood-gate port of death. Precipitately and in paroxysms, the tempestuous torrent swept along, bridging bank to bank with billows high as hills piled on hills--with broken buildings, tables, bedsteads, baggage, boulders, mammoth trees, leviathan logs, and human beings buffeting the billow crests. Next, reeled

38 Ibid.

the dear old office of the Rocky Mountain News as down it sank, with its Union flag staff, into the maelstrom of the surging waters, soon to appear and disappear between the waves as, wild with starts, in mountains high, they rose and rolled as if endeavoring to form a dread alliance with the clouds, and thus consummate our general wreck. . . . Great God! and are we all gone up, and is there no power to stem the tide, was asked all around. But no! The inundation of the Nile, the Noachian deluge, and that of Prometheus's son, Deucalien, the Noah of the Greeks, were now in danger of being out deluged by this phenomenon of '64.³⁹

The "Professor" continued his journalistic journey throughout the remainder of his life. He drifted to the larger cities of the "Rocky Mountain Empire" to pursue his talent but always returned to Denver, his first and last home in the west.⁴⁰ On November 26, 1882, the "Professor" departed from a life, if not well spent on earth, at least lived in the manner he himself dictated and with his picture forever stamped on the memories of his fellow frontiersmen.

Organization of school districts was going on in the other counties also. In Gilpin County, for example, David C. Collier, editor of the Central City Daily Miners Register was elected county superintendent and at once began the formation of districts.⁴¹ Collier, upon arriving in Colorado, had first settled in Denver City. There he followed the practice of law, and at the same time dealt in real estate, mining claims and stocks.⁴² In July of 1862 Collier moved his law office to Central City and purchased the local newspaper. In October of that year he printed an article in the Register protesting that Colorado had been four years a territory and there was not then a public school

³⁹ Willison, op. cit., pp. 118-119.

⁴⁰ Rocky Mountain News, November 27, 1882.

⁴¹ Hall, op. cit., p. 236.

⁴² D. O. Wilhelm, editor, Business Directory of Denver City and Auraria, 1859 (Byers and Dailey, Printers, Denver, Colorado, 1859), pp. 24-30.

in it. Of course, the territory had not been legally organized for four years but Collier's zeal won him the election in November, 1862. Much of the progress that was made in the early development of Colorado's educational facilities may be attributed to Mr. Collier, who remained as county superintendent of Gilpin County until 1868. He not only preserved in the performance of his duty as county superintendent, but as the editor of the Register he was able to wield an editorial pen in the effort to popularize local public education. He was possessed of a conviction that "children had as much right to an education as to the air they breathed." He believed the schools should be organized with the aim of being permanent institutions and his schools were the first permanent ones in the territory.⁴³

Within the next three years the schools of Gilpin County, under the guidance of Superintendent Collier, made rapid improvement. In his report to the Territorial Superintendent Collier wrote that three years earlier there was not in the county a schoolhouse worthy of the name. The largest school, that of Central City, occupied an old bowling-saloon. The second in size, at Black Hawk, was an abandoned billiard room. The third, that of Nevada, occupied a room that was alternately school-room, town hall, and ball-room. The rooms were uncomfortable, ill-ventilated, and shabby, with furniture to match. In 1868 every district, with one exception, owned a comfortable building.⁴⁴

The number of schools increased as new school districts were organized by the county superintendents in the various counties. The greater number of

⁴³ Hall, loc. cit.

⁴⁴ First Biennial Report of Territorial Superintendent, p. 94.

these could hardly be called schools. In Jefferson County, for example, there were twenty schools. Of these one-half were log buildings, which were very poorly furnished, and were always uncomfortable. Nearly all of these were furnished with long, rudely constructed desks, at which pupils sat upon benches of like length. A pail and a stove were usually supplied, but beyond those nothing was found except an occasional black-board, small and almost useless.⁴⁵

Lack of school money also hampered several counties. The county superintendent of Douglas County reported that three months in a year, on an average, was as long as their districts were able to keep the schools open. He did report, however, that several districts had voted special tax sufficient to lengthen out the term to six months.⁴⁶

The severe winter in the mountain counties was a big handicap to education. From Clear Creek County came the report that there was not a pupil deprived of the privilege of attending school, except during the winter season when many of their trails and roads were blocked with snow.⁴⁷

The children were expected to furnish their own text-books. As the fortune hunters came from every state in the Union a great variety of books were in use. The county superintendent of Clear Creek County continued his report with the following statement: "At present the greatest obstacle I have to overcome, is the want of a uniform series of text-books."⁴⁸ As late as 1870 the Territory could boast of but 132 books in school libraries.⁴⁹

⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 58.

⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 87.

⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 56.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 34.

In 1870 there were 160 organized districts in the Territory with 120 schoolhouses. Forty-one of these were frame buildings, four were brick, forty-four stone, twenty-five log, and six adobes.⁵⁰ There were 4357 pupils enrolled, with an average daily attendance of 2611, not quite sixty per cent of the whole number. Eighty male and eighty-four female teachers presided over the schools. Salaries ranged from sixteen dollars per month for the lowest male teacher and twenty-five dollars for the lowest female teacher, to a maximum of one hundred and seventy-three and one hundred dollars respectively. The average salary was sixty-nine dollars for male and fifty-four dollars for female teachers.⁵¹

In spite of the adverse conditions school teachers came to Colorado in great numbers. Soon school teachers were in excess.⁵² The wages paid teachers were on an average one-half more than they were in the states.⁵³ This served as an inducement to teachers to come to the gold fields.

The subjects taught were generally as follows: Spelling, reading, writing, geography, English grammar, arithmetic, elocution, vocal music, and United States history. The books used were: McGuffey's Speller and Reader; Mitchell's, McNally, and Monteith's Geographies; Roy's Mental and Practical Arithmetic; Pineo's Grammar; Goodrich's History of the United States, and Kirkham's Elocutionist.⁵⁴

As the mining towns became more permanent in nature with the passage

⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 33.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² G. E. Himman to Charles Howard, May 29, 1869.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ First Biennial Report of Territorial Superintendent, p. 64.

of years a widening scope of educational demands is evident. This is shown by a comparison of the first school law, of 1861, and the law of 1876, in reference to qualification of teachers. The early law required examination of teachers in spelling, reading, arithmetic, geography, history of the United States, and English grammar.⁵⁵ The latter law required examination in orthography, reading, writing, arithmetic, English grammar, geography, history of the United States--including the Constitution of the United States, physiology, laws of health, elements of natural science, theory and practice of teaching, and school law as pertained to the duties and responsibilities of the teachers.⁵⁶

Many of the county superintendents were neither qualified or experienced enough in school management to organize good schools. It was also unfortunate that the schools often became the center of constant political conflict that on several occasions almost resulted in bloodshed. Leadville was the scene of internal strife. Almost every day Dr. Robert E. Stewart, president of the local board of education, discharged from his post--or was himself discharged by--one B. F. Jay, "our notorious shilly-shally, wishy-washy, wit-starved expounder of vulgarity, this silly snipe or jay-bird, who calls himself by the name of the County Superintendent of Schools." The one who reached the schoolhouse first in the morning would forbid the other to enter. In one of their endless quarrels over jurisdiction, prestige, and spoils, Dr. Stewart met his rival with a leveled pistol and a command not to advance another step toward the school building upon pain of death.⁵⁷

⁵⁵ General Laws of the Territory of Colorado, Session I, p. 88.

⁵⁶ Ibid., Session XI (Wm. Byers Printing Company, Denver, Colorado, 1876), p. 123.

⁵⁷ Gillison, op. cit., p. 176.

Territorial Superintendent of Schools H. M. Hale deplored the lack of accurate reports from the county superintendents. The county superintendents in turn complained of the inefficiency of their predecessors.⁵⁸

During the early formative stage of the public school system the private parochial schools were of material benefit to both the students and the "infant" public system. The Catholic, Episcopal, Baptist, and Methodist sponsored schools permitted children other than those of families of their respective faiths to attend. This policy took care of the over-flow from the ill equipped public schools. They also had stern rules of attendance and behavior. Four absences would bring a warning, six a letter home and eight, expulsion. Pupils could not be kept from school to run errands or do chores.⁵⁹ The church mission schools were operated in the interest of the pupils and definitely performed a great service during those early days.

From the appearance of "Professor" Goldrick and his "plug" hat in 1859 to the silver rush of 1875 was one of the most interesting and certainly one of the most colorful periods in the educational history of our country. From the ignoble beginning made by those educational pioneers Mr. O. J. Goldrick, Mr. Abner R. Brown, Miss Indiana Sopris, Miss Lydia Maria Ring, and Mr. David C. Collier, the schools of the mining communities of Colorado made rapid advancement. From crude log cabins in remote mountainous country with little or no equipment, with no definite means of support, trying to meet the need of the most variable of populations the "Pikes Peak or Bust" fortune hunters saw their schools progress until they were operating as free public schools,

⁵⁸ First Biennial Report of Territorial Superintendent, p. 23.

⁵⁹ Daily Miners Register, April 2, 1867.

with organized districts, a tax program for support, fairly comfortable buildings, and qualified teachers.

So the "Professor" lived to see his dreams materialize, not for himself but for the children of the frontier.

"What brings you here, stranger?" he was asked.

"Majora Rerum initia!" was the quick reply.

"What tribe talk is that?"

"I am glad to answer you, sir, that is Latin, and it means 'The beginning of greater things,' at least I hope."

CHAPTER II

MUSIC

My name is Joe Bowers
I have a brother Ike.
I'm all the way from Missouri
and on the road to Peak Pike.
Busted by gum!¹

Although many gold seekers in Colorado experienced failure, as had Joe Bowers, the endless throng of fortune hunters continued on its way across the barren plains. The journey to the gold fields was not a pleasure jaunt. Hunger, privations, and hardships were met almost from the beginning. As the pioneers traveled westward their rainbow of dreams, with the pot of gold always at the end of it, remained always to urge them onward. As they moved along over the routes to the land of gold their supplies gave out and their animals perished from exhaustion. Many left their families and friends in unmarked graves by the side of the trail. But through all the heartaches, diversities, and toil, the great majority of people were happy, hopeful and determined. To keep their hopes high they turned to song as they made their way to what they hoped would be their fortunes. In every wagon train one would find a fiddle, jews-harp, guitar or accordian. With every group of men pushing and tugging hand-carts over the weary miles one would find a musical instrument of some kind. To these minstrels of the trail must be given credit for aiding many a discouraged, would-be miner across the many miles of endless

¹ Jerome C. Smiley, History of Denver, p. 239.

prairie.

Upon arriving at Denver City the pioneers raced on to the diggings where their interests were centered. There they scratched, dug and fought for the golden ore. But in the evenings when the day's search was over the miners had time to turn to lighter things. Many a rough, ill-clad gold hunter seated around the camp fire at night, sometimes dirty, wet and discouraged from the day's futile toil, sometimes jubilant after a lucky find, expressed his pent up feelings in song. Usually it was some old ballad remembered from the days at home in the states. Sometimes it was the individual's own creation. Usually his thoughts were expressed in a crude way but once in awhile the song was the work of a master.

In the first and only issue of The Cherry Creek Pioneer appears a song which, while hardly a musical gem, portrays the conditions in the year 1859.

Song For the Times

by a Frontier Individual

Tune—"Hard Times" come again no more [sic]
 There's a crowd in every village, and every
 town, astir,
 Who are going to gather up the gold;
 There's a sound in every cottage, and a wring
 in every ear,
 'Pikes Peak' is the land for the young and
 old.

Chorus -- 'Tis the life and the dream of
 the many,
 'Pikes Peak,' 'Pikes Peak,' the land of the
 brave and bold,
 Many ways we have wanderd and now we
 are told,
 'Pikes Peak' is the place to get the gold.

There's a young lovely maiden, scarce six-
 teen summers old,
 Whose thoughts o'er the distant prairie
 roam,
 Where the idol of her vision is digging for
 the gold--
 'Pikes Peak' is the place to make your
 home.

Chorus -- 'Tis the life and the dream of
 the many, etc.

Fare thee well, says the farmer to his loving
 child and wife,
 Be merry till the day we meet again,
 For we'll farm then no longer, but lead a
 happy life.
 'Pikes Peak' is the place to get the tin.

'I am tired' says the merchant 'of selling
 goods for years'
 When a fortune can be made in half the
 time.
 So he takes a barrel of whiskey, besides a
 sweitzer cheese
 'Pikes Peak' is the place of his design.

There is youths of every nation and men
 from far and near,
 Who are going to make their fortunes
 quick,
 There goes Paddy with his shovel, there
 Yoccup with his beer--
 'Pikes Peak' is the place to raise the chink.²

As the day came to a close, some of the miners were attracted by the lights of the many saloons and gambling halls. Every better "palace of chance" had its screechy orchestra, which usually consisted of four pieces-- fiddle, cornet, banjo, and piano. There the men accompanied by the orchestra, the clink of glasses at the bar, and the monotonous call-song of the gamblers at the tables, would raise their voices in those popular songs of the day:

² Cherry Creek Pioneer (Denver, Colorado), April 23, 1859.

"Lily Dale," "Twenty Years Ago," "Yellow Rose of Texas," and "Sweet Betsy from Pike."³

Oh, don't you remember sweet Betsy from Pike,
Who crossed the big mountains with her lover, Ike,
With two yoke of cattle, a large yellow dog,
A tall Shanghai rooster, and one spotted hog.

Chorus -- Oh good-by, Pike County, Farewell for a while;
We'll come back again when we've panned out our pile.

They soon reached the desert, where Betsy gave out,
And down in the sand she lay rolling about;
While Ike, in great tears, looked on in surprise,
Saying, "Betsy, get up; you'll get sand in your eyes."

Oh good-by, Pike County, Farewell for a while;
We'll come back again when we've panned out our pile.

The Shanghai run off and the cattle all died;
The last piece of bacon that morning was fried.
Poor Ike got discouraged, and Betsy got mad;
The dog wagged his tail and looked wonderful sad.

Oh good-by, Pike County, Farewell for a while;
We'll come back again when we've panned out our pile.

One morning they climbed up a very high hill,
And with wonder looked down into old Placerville;
Ike shouted and said, as he cast his eyes down,
"Sweet Betsy, my darling, we've got to Hangtown!"

Oh good-by Pike County, Farewell for a while:
We'll come back again when we've panned out our pile.⁴

These men of the frontier had a love of music, either as listeners or as performers. The mountains echoed with their songs and the blare of their bands. At first it was the saloon orchestras, then the theatre bands, and during the Civil War the regimental band called out to aid the work of the Union recruiting office.⁵ In 1864 a group of musically minded miners met

³ George F. Willison, Here They Dug the Gold, p. 80.

⁴ Satis N. Coleman and Adolph Bregman, Songs of American Folks (The John Day Company, New York, 1942), pp. 30-31.

⁵ Daily Miners Register (Central City, Colorado), August 25, 1863.

and organized "The Central City Brass Band."⁶ This was the first town band in Colorado. The next year the band made its first street appearance.⁷ The band was composed of amateurs; consequently, its performance was not consistent. Observers reported that at times it played with "rare melody and skill."⁸ At other times reports were less favorable.⁹

There was also considerable spontaneous singing. The diary of a pioneer reveals that the miners while at work sometimes "had a noisy time in the way of singing" and that later in the evening one might hear, while strolling the streets, a group of Cornishmen in a saloon singing "Trafalgar Bay" or "The Wreck of the Arethusa."¹⁰

From this spontaneous singing came the old ballads of the mining camps. Who the composers were no one remembers but the songs live on after these many years. Some like "The Happy Miner" reflect a carefree attitude:

I'm a happy miner, I love to sing and dance.
I wonder what my love would say if she could see my pants,
With canvas patches on my knees and one upon the stern.
I'll wear them when I'm digging here and home when I return.

Refrain:

So I get in a jovial way, I spend my money free.
And I've got plenty! Will you drink lager beer with me?

She writes about her poodle dog, but never thinks to say:
"Oh, do come home, my honey dear, I'm pining all away."
I'll write her half a letter, then give the ink a tip.
If that don't bring her to her milk I'll cooly let her rip.

⁶ Ibid., December 15, 1864.

⁷ Ibid., September 26, 1865.

⁸ Ibid., September 15, 1866.

⁹ Ibid., October 24, 1866.

¹⁰ H. J. Hawley, "Diary of Central City," Manuscript Collection, Colorado State Historical Society Library, Denver, Colorado.

They wish to know if I can cook and what I have to eat,
 And tell me should I take a cold be sure and soak my feet.
 But when they talk of cooking I'm mighty hard to beat,
 I've made ten thousand loaves of bread the devil couldn't eat.

I like a lazy partner so I can take my ease,
 Lay down and talk of golden home, as happy as you please;
 Without a thing to eat or drink, away from care and grief--
 I'm fat and sassy, ragged, too, and tough as Spanish beef.

I've never changed my fancy shirt, the one I wore away,
 Until it got so rotten I finally had to say:
 "Farewell, old standing collar, in all thy pride of starch.
 I've worn thee from December till the seventeenth day of March."

No matter whether rich or poor, I'm happy as a clam.
 I wish my friends at home could look and see me as I am.
 With woolen shirt and rubber boots, in mud up to my knees,¹¹
 And lice as large as chili beans fighting with the fleas.

In one of the first petitions submitted to the Denver People's Government was a demand for immediate action "to abate the nuisances existing in the city under the guise of games of chance: the "Strap Game," the "Thimble Game," and "Three Card Monte." The City Fathers passed such an ordinance but the games went on. "Here you are, gentlemen," cried a three-card monte expert. "This ace of hearts is the winning card. Watch it closely! Follow it with your eyes as I shuffle. Here it is, and now here, now here, and now--where? If you point it out the first time, you win; but if you miss, you lose. Here it is, you see. I take no money from paupers, cripples, or orphan children. The ace of hearts! It is my regular trade, gentlemen, to move my hands quicker than the eye. The ace of hearts! Who will go me twenty?"¹² The results were usually that expressed by a frontiersman in the song "In the Summer of Sixty."

¹¹ John A. Lomax and Alan Lomax, Cowboy Songs and other Frontier Ballads (The Macmillan Company, New York, 1938), pp. 383-384.

¹² Willison, op. cit., pp. 79-80.

In the summer of Sixty, as you very well know,
 The excitement at Pike's Peak was then all the go;
 Many went there with fortunes and spent what they had
 And came back flat busted and looking quite sad.

'Twas then I heard farming was a very fine branch,
 So I spent most of my money in buying a ranch,
 And when I got to it with sorrow and shame,
 I found a big miner had jumped my fine claim.

So I bought a revolver and swore I'd lay low
 The very next fellow that treated me so;
 I then went to Denver and cut quite a dash
 And took extra pains to show off my cash.

With a fine span of horses, my wife by my side,
 I drove through the streets with my hat on one side;
 As we were a-goin' past old "Denver Hall,"
 Sweet music came out that did charm us all.

Says I, "Let's go in see what's the muss,
 For I feel right now like having a fuss."
 There were tables strung out over the hall,
 Some was a-whirling a wheel with a ball;

Some playing cards and some shaking dice
 And lots of half-dollars that looked very nice.
 I finally strayed to a table at last
 Where all the poor suckers did seem to stick fast.

And there stood a man with card in his hand,
 And these were the words which he did command,
 "Now, gents, the winning card is the ace.
 I guess you will know it if I show you its face."

One corner turned down, it's plain to be seen,
 I looked at the feller and thought he was green.
 One corner turned down, 'twas so plain to be seen
 I looked at the feller and thought he was green.

So I bet all my money, and, lo and behold!
 'Twas a tray spot of clubs, and he took all my gold,
 Then I went home and crawled into bed
 And divil a word to my wife ever said.

'Twas early next morning I felt for my purse
 Biting my lips to keep down a curse;
 Yes, 'twas early next morning as the sun did rise
 You might have seen with your two blessed eyes,

In an ox wagon, 'twas me and my wife,
Going down the Platte River for death or for life.¹³

In 1861 the Mountain Musical Association was formed in Central City and was presenting "splendid concerts."¹⁴ The children also played a part in the musical entertainment by appearing in public musical programs sponsored by the Sunday Schools of the various camps.¹⁵

In the middle sixties the members of the "Bowen Family," consisting of four singers, were giving concerts in the mining communities. They offered these selections, among others: "Gay and Happy," "Wait Till the Good Times Coming Come," "Kissing is Fun," "Billy Boy," "Little White Church on the Hill," "North and South," "Mountaineer's Farewell," "We Meet Upon the Level," "The Valley of the West," and "One Flag or no Flag."¹⁶

Further evidence of the people's interest in music is the giving of private instructions in "the rudiments of vocal music" to the young people who could afford the cost. These lessons were given by the "Bowen Family" as they traveled through the "diggings."¹⁷ The public schools also offered training in vocal music as a part of their curriculum and often gave programs for the public.¹⁸

Local literary societies were formed in the mining towns. They served

¹³ Louise Pound, American Ballads and Folk Songs (Scribner's Sons, New York, 1922), p. 189.

¹⁴ Rocky Mountain News, February 27, March 13, March 20, 1861.

¹⁵ Tri-Weekly Miners Register (Central City, Colorado), March 16, 1863; Daily Miners Register, January 1, 1864 and December 24, 1864.

¹⁶ Daily Miners Register, January 15, 1865 and March 23, 1866.

¹⁷ Ibid., January 15, 1865 and April 8, 1865.

¹⁸ Ibid., March 30, 1865.

as a means of release to those people with musical talent. These meetings were usually quite elaborate affairs and included instrumental and vocal renditions of such songs as "The Raven," "Kingdom Come," "Spring," "Moonlight," "The Mocking Bird," "My Mountain Home," and "Marseilles Hymn."¹⁹ The desire of the people for a chance to play as well as to listen is found in the suggestion of concertinas, guitars, violins, and accordians as appropriate Christmas gifts,²⁰ in the possession of organs and pianos in some of the homes,²¹ and in the advertisement of sheet music by the local book stores. Some of the popular numbers for sale in Denver in 1872 were "The Little Old Log Cabin in the Lane," "Call me Darling Once Again," "The Vagabond," "Love's Pleading," "Sparkling Polka," and "Savior Breathe an Evening Blessing."²²

It was the custom in the mining towns for the "select set" to gather for sociables. After polite conversation had become dull and the refreshments had been consumed the group would gather around the organ or piano and respond to its urge to sing and to listen to solos. One popular vocalist in the circle was usually called upon to sing such old favorites, as "Kitty of Coloraine," "Norah, the Pride of Kildare," "Sweet Vale of Avoca," and the "Potatoe Famine."²³ It was also a custom in the mining towns for the "unselect set," and many of the "select", to gather in the larger beer halls. Each had a singer or two to render in a throaty voice, to suddenly hushed audiences,

¹⁹ Ibid., December 1, 1864.

²⁰ Daily Central City Register, December 2, 1869.

²¹ Ibid., February 27, 1872.

²² Rocky Mountain News, April 20, 1872.

²³ Francis C. Young, Echoes from Arcadia (Lansing Brothers, Denver, Colorado, 1903), p. 35.

such old favorites as "Silver Threads Among the Gold," "Cottage by the Sea," and "Papa, Stay Home, Don't Leave Me Tonight." Frequently, in sudden outbursts of deep emotion, the men showered a singer with silver after a particularly affecting number, for as one homesick miner remarked, "these poor despised beer hall singers were a sort of cropped angel after all."²⁴

In 1872, with the building of the Teller House on steep-pitched Eureka Street, Central City could boast, and did, of the largest and most civilized hostelry in the Pike's Peak country.²⁵ No sooner was the building finished than a "Professor" Barnum was employed by Henry Teller, owner of the Teller House and later United States Senator from Colorado, to organize and develop a brass and string band. The purpose of this band was to play for dinner programs at the hotel and on other suitable occasions.²⁶

The year 1872 was a great one in the history of Central City, the Teller House, "Professor" Barnum, and the young boys of the community. President Ulysses S. Grant made a trip to Colorado. While there he visited Central City and stayed at the Teller House. His reception was a very lively affair. Descending from the stage coach after a breath-taking drive up Virginia Canyon, President Grant was ceremoniously escorted along a path of solid silver bricks laid from the middle of the street to the entrance of the Teller House. The grand parade was staged to the accompaniment of "Professor" Barnum's brass band blaring forth with martial music and boys on the roof of a neighboring livery stable tossing snowballs at the President's plug hat.²⁷

With the coming of the bonanza days, the horny-handed miners, grubbing

²⁴ Willison, op. cit., p. 201.

²⁵ Ibid., p. 67.

²⁶ Daily Central City Register, May 26, 1872.

²⁷ Willison, op. cit., pp. 293-294.

for wealth by day, sought nightly relaxation in music and drama. As their wealth increased, their grand pianos, Steinway squares, and marble top furniture of walnut followed them over steep trails. The giving of the opera "The Bohemian Girl" in old Belvidere Theater, emphasized the need for a new opera-house for more ambitious attractions. With more home-made millionaires per acre than anywhere else, little Gilpin County demanded the very best, and got it. Rough miners plunked down bags of gold dust on the barrelhead to build their opera house in 1873. With the completion of the opera house many were now able to listen to the fine music and culture they had left behind.²⁸

This was the music of the mining towns of Colorado. With a little imagination one could almost transplant himself to the streets of Central City back in 1872 when, in the evening, one could hear the songs of the miners as they sang their songs in the saloons and on the streets, as an "electric oil and patent medicine man" sang and joked to the accompaniment of a banjo while Barnum's band played on the balcony of the Teller House and "two drums and a cracked fife" at Concert Hall added to the din.²⁹

One of the first to spread the news of the finding of gold in Cherry Creek was George S. Simpson.³⁰ Simpson spent the greater part of his life in Colorado. Living out his days in the mountains and along the streams he had learned to love so well.³¹ Many men, women, and children came to the

²⁸ Charles F. Collisson, "Opera Revived in the Heart of the 1859 Gold Rush," Etude, LXV (January, 1947), p. 9.

²⁹ Daily Central City Register, July 10, 1872.

³⁰ Eugene Parsons, The Making of Colorado; a Historical Sketch (A. Flanagan Company, Chicago, 1908), p. 128.

³¹ Mollie Mumey, Early Settlement of Denver, p. 43.

mountains as a result of George Simpson's discovery. Many stayed for the remainder of their lives. They learned to love the music of the wind rustling through the aspens and the murmur of the mountain stream as it made its way over the boulders. Mr. Simpson has beautifully expressed the wishes and feelings of these hardy pioneers with these words:

Lay me at rest on yon towering height
 Where the silent cloud shadows glide--
 Where solitude holds its slumberous reign
 Far away from the human tide.

I fain would sleep near the old pine tree
 That looks down on the valley below,
 Like a soldier guarding a comrade's grave,
 Or a sentinel watching a foe.

'Twas a refuge once, in bygone time,
 When a pitiful fate was near,
 When my days were young and full of love
 For a life I held too dear.

Through all the long years that have passed away
 Since that night of storm and dread
 I've prayed that the boughs that sheltered me then
 Might wave o'er my dust when dead.

Delve deep my grave in the stern gray rock;
 In its rigid embrace let me rest,
 With naught by my name on the stone at my head
 And the symbol of faith on my breast.

One mourner may remember where sleeps
 In his rock-ribbed tomb, the lone dead,
 May breathe for the loved one to heaven a prayer,
 A tear to his memory shed.³²

³² Muncy, *op. cit.*, pp. 42-43.

CHAPTER III

THE THEATRE

Lifes but a walking shadow; a poor player
That struts and frets his hour upon the stage,
And then is heard no more.¹

In the original male society of the mining towns of Colorado there were meager facilities at first for the expression of man's normal urge for sociality.² Some of the miners perverted their natural craving for recreational release by indulging intemperately in drinking and gambling, while others found more wholesome ways of employing their leisure.

However, this poverty of social activities did not long endure, for even in the early years efforts were made to supply this need of the miners, and as soon as women were present in the camps in greater numbers a more nearly normal social life was made possible. Soon single men and couples could choose among theatrical performances, balls, sociables, lectures, and numerous other recreational and cultural functions.³

As a result of this demand for entertainment a building was erected in July, 1859, on the north side of Larimer Street in Denver. This two story frame building was opened in August as "Apollo Hall." The first floor served

¹ William Shakespeare, Macbeth, Scene V, Act V (John W. S. Hows, editor, Shakespearian Resder).

² Henry Villard, The Past and Present of the Pikes Peak Gold Region (Edited by L. R. Hafen, Princeton University Press, Princeton, New Jersey, Reprint 1932), p. 79.

³ Rocky Mountain News (Denver, Colorado), December 12, 1860.

as a combination restaurant, gambling hall, and saloon. The second floor was converted into a general meeting place.⁴ A troupe under the management of Colonel Charles R. Thorne gave the first performance in the new hall on the evening of October 3, 1859. Colonel Thorne was a pioneer theatrical manager. He had staged performances in California and Australia. Thinking the possibilities of a theater in the Cherry Creek region good he decided to take a show west. He loaded his company into ox-wagons, bade Leavenworth, Kansas, good-bye and headed for the gold fields. After building a temporary stage at one end of Apollo Hall, Colonel Thorne and his troupe was ready to perform. Even with the temporary stage the theater was not satisfactory for good performances. The auditorium was a very roughly furnished place. The walls were rough finished and unplastered. The ceiling was the high pitched roof. For light Colonel Thorne placed twelve candles around the room. Candles also served as footlights. The theater would seat any three hundred and fifty people willing to pay one dollar in gold dust to sit huddled upon its rough and splintery wooden benches.⁵

The announcement of the theater was heralded in the Rocky Mountain News. The theater opened to a crowded house of gold seekers. The program began with a play "The Cross of Gold," with Colonel Thorne appearing in the role of Sergeant Austerlitz. A popular song, "Maggie's by My Side," was sung by Miss Flora Wakely; a dance by Mademoiselle Haydee, who was a half-sister of Flora Wakely, and a farce completed the evenings performance.⁶ Throughout the performance the customers and the actors were bothered by the din of

⁴ Nollie Muney, Early Settlement of Denver 1599-1860, p. 169.

⁵ Muney, op. cit., p. 170.

⁶ Rocky Mountain News, September 30, October 6, 1859.

clinking glasses, rattling billiard balls and uproarious songs rising from the saloon below.⁷

Not to be outdone by Denver City, James Reed erected Cobola Hall in the southwest corner of Ferry and Fourth Streets in Auraria which was across Cherry Creek. This theater was later known as Reed's Theater. The show opened Monday evening, October 24, 1859, with the Cibola Minstrels, who gave a very fine performance.⁸ Because of competition from Reed's Theater Colonel Thorne ended his performances in Denver with "William Tell" and fled his creditors never to return.

Mlle. Haydee assumed the management of the troupe and renamed it "Haydee's Star Company." The group was composed of Mlle. Haydee, her two half-sisters, Flora and Louise Wakely, and Mike Dougherty, a miner from Gregory Gulch who had great natural talent as a singer and an actor.⁹

After a short stay in Denver the "Haydee's Star Company" made a tour of the mountain mining settlements. Their performances at Mountain City, in Hadely Hall, were so well received that they stayed on through the first part of the year 1860.¹⁰ Hadely Hall was the roughly finished upstairs of a log building. The miners, clad in work clothes, boots, and hats, and wearing pistols at their belts, paid gold dust and black sand at \$2.50 a head to see Mlle. Haydee and her company perform.¹¹

⁷ George F. Willison, Here They Dug for Gold, p. 113.

⁸ Rocky Mountain News, October 28, 1859.

⁹ Willison, op. cit., p. 114.

¹⁰ Rocky Mountain News, January 25, February 1, March 21, 28, April 11, 1860.

¹¹ Ibid., February 8, 1860.

Mike Dougherty left the Haydee troupe, returned to Denver and formed a company of his own. He was joined by Jack Langrishe who became the most famous troupier of his day in the west. Among the plays presented by Langrishe and Dougherty were, "His Last Legs" and a farce "Nature and Philosophy." They were well received by the audiences not only for their low comedy, but also for their "Pat Casey," "Night Hands," and other popular songs of the day. They performed in Denver for six months before making a tour of the Clear Creek camps, playing at the Montana Theatre in Central City for six weeks.¹² The Montana Theater was described by a reporter for the Register in the following manner:

The interior is finished with white wash, and the drop curtain displays pictures of thick headed Dutchmen and women. A portrait that must have been meant for Shakespeare looks sadly up from its place near the saw-log that holds the curtain down. The benches are hard and stiff, but when the tinkling of the manager's bell signalled the rise of the curtain the people forgot their discomforts and were lost in the mimic allurements before them.¹³

During the time Langrishe and Dougherty were performing at the Montana Theater Mlle. Haydee and her star company was also attracting crowds in Central City. They were performing in the Olympic Theater. There they treated the people to a combination bill of a drama and a farce at each appearance. The dramas included "The Maid of Croissey," "Lucille, or the Broken Heart," "The Brotherhood of the Rose," and "Macbeth," and some of the farces were "The Wandering Minstrel," "Irish Tutor," and "Fellow Clerks."¹⁴

¹² Willison, op. cit., p. 114.

¹³ Daily Central City Register, May 2, 1869.

¹⁴ Rocky Mountain News, October 24, 31, November 7, December 5, 1860.

Langrishe and Dougherty continued to tour the mining camps with great success. They returned to Denver in 1861 and constructed their own theater, which was named the Denver Theater. There melodrama and farce did not exclusively hold forth on the stage. One of the programs advertised was a "Grand Vocal and Instrumental Concert by Alexander Sutherland, assisted by Thirty-one Performers, many of them lately arrived from the East." Sutherland was English and had served in the British army. He was a bugler and cornet player of renown, having blown the signal for the immortal Light Brigade charge at Balaclava. The program for the "Grand Vocal and Instrumental Concert" as announced was as follows:

Anvil Chorus (Mr. Meyers having kindly loaned six anvils,
to render the chorus more effective) . . Full Chorus
Cornet Solo Mr. Olmstead
Overture, The Lone Star, or the Opening of the Battle of
Charleston (the Overture to commence with a Salvo of
Artillery, Col. Potter and Capt. Hawley having kindly
loaned the use of cannon Full Chorus
Cornet Solo Mr. Sutherland

The St. Louis Serenaders in Quartette
will make their first appearance
Positively the Last Appearance
of
ALEXANDER SUTHERLAND
before his departure for the states.¹⁵

Mike Dougherty soon died of drink at Central City, and Langrishe established a dramatic circuit which each year provided Denver with a six months theatrical season. Central City had one of three months, while the remaining three months were variously divided among the other camps--Fairplay, Buckskin Joe, and Montgomery in South Park; French Gulch and Delaware Flats on the Blue River; Georgian Gulch and California on the upper Arkansas.¹⁶

¹⁵ Willison, *op. cit.*, pp. 114-115.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 116.

With the gold seekers coming to the mining camps in ever increasing numbers more and more theaters were erected. After a day's toil the miners demanded recreation, and there were numerous people ready to meet their demand. By 1862 Central City had several theaters. The play-goers could choose between the offerings of such plays as "The Soldier's Daughter," "Uncle Tom's Cabin," "Ruthven the Vampire," "The Iron Chest," "Toodles," "The Bottle Imp," and others.¹⁷

In the summer of 1863 an English traveler who was visiting Central City attended the Montana Theater, of which he wrote:

It was a rough-hewn building of pine with a parquette and a gallery capable of accommodating a large number. There I saw Hamlet performed, and though the ghost was not very spiritual, Gertrude not very queenly, and the courtiers not very courtier-like, the play was, on the whole, very well put on the stage; even the Prince of Denmark, if unlike Fletcher's impersonation, was I thought very well rendered.¹⁸

Sometimes the miners became very rowdy, especially when the entertainment was not to their taste. In August, 1863, the editor of the Daily Miners Register complained of the interruptions from the gallery. Some rowdies in the gallery picked up a man and threatened to throw him over the railing, but some one yelled "Don't waste him, save him to kill the fiddler with."¹⁹ On another occasion a number of pigs were carried by the miners into the gallery. When the lady soprano would reach her high notes the miners would twist the tails of the pigs to make them squeal. This naturally brought forth riotous laughter from the audience and confusion to the entertainer.²⁰ If

¹⁷ Rocky Mountain News, January 4, March 29, 1862.

¹⁸ M. O. Morris, Rambles in the Rocky Mountains (Smith-Elder, London, England, 1864), p. 216.

¹⁹ Daily Miners Register, August 20, 1863.

²⁰ Ibid., August 23, 1863.

the show was dull or not to the miners' tastes, riots sometimes would break out. Chairs would be jerked out from under members of the audience, lights blown out, stoves pushed over, benches torn down, the doors taken off, and usually some one was wounded by gun fire.²¹

As darkness began to settle over the mining towns the miners' steps would be directed toward the various places of amusement. To attract the men's attention the theater brass bands were formed by the theater management. These bands livened up the spirits of the men and soon the streets took on a festival atmosphere. Every evening the brass bands took their place before their particular show house. There they struck up to contend in friendly rivalry for an hour or more. Then, one by one, they marched off with a great roar of brass and pounding of drums to parade through the town from one end to the other. Small boys followed along behind with banners telling of can-can dancers, female bathers, daring tumblers, dramatic performances, Negro minstrels, musical concerts, and other entertainment.²² A boy carrying a lamp trooped along side of each musician so that he could read his music. Sometimes the lamp carrier would turn to wave at some friend on the sidewalk and catch the tinsel trappings of the musician's uniform on fire. When this happened the music would stop abruptly and the lamp dropped, as the boy took to his heels, hotly pursued by the musician, who would be blocked and tripped by the miners as they cheered on the frightened boy.²³

After parading through the town, the bands would reassemble in front of their respective theaters to play again until nine o'clock, when they

²¹ Willison, op. cit., p. 211.

²² Daily Central City Register, August 19, 1871.

²³ Willison, op. cit., p. 208.

would go inside as the curtain went up, sometimes not to go down again until three or four in the morning.²⁴

The theaters often offered attractions direct from the larger cities of the east. One of these was "Around the World in Eighty Days" produced by the Kiralfy brothers, Imre, Arnold and Bolossy, which performed at Denver, Central City, and Leadville.²⁵ The Kiralfy brothers carried a company of several hundred persons with camels, elephants, tigers, lions, and such as added scenery for their show. The production was based on Jules Vernes classic Around the World in Eighty Days.²⁶

The performance was divided into thirteen scenes, each scene depicting a stop on the trip around the world. There were daring robberies, duels, elephant hunts, grand parades of Brahmin Priests, battle scenes and rescues, brilliant oriental festivals, dances by lovely ladies in sumptuous attire, Sioux Indians on the war-path, women captured by the Indians, the United States troops to the rescue, ship wrecks, boilers bursting, life boats being launched, ships sinking beneath the waves, and, to end it all, barely making it around the world in eighty days, with fond hearts united, a triple wedding.²⁷ The show was staged with magnificent scenery and sound effects. The miners paid five dollars in gold dust for admittance and sat open mouthed with awe throughout the entire performance.

One of the pioneer theatrical producers in the mining camps was Charles Algernon Sidney Vivian, an English actor, who in 1867 founded the

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid., p. 209.

²⁶ Edward B. Marks, They All Had Glamour (Julian Messner, Inc., New York, 1944), p. 22.

²⁷ Ibid., p. 27.

Jolly Corks, from which in time emerged the Benevolent Protective Order of Elks. Vivian played in the various mining towns and eventually landed in Leadville. There he took over a mammoth tent and converted it into the Vivian Opera House. He presented several plays to the gold digging theatergoers, one of them being "Oliver Twist," but the enterprize soon failed. Vivian then did variety turns at the Grand Central and other Leadville theaters. He died in Leadville in March, 1880. Nine years after his death his body was removed to Elk's Rest in Mt. Hope Cemetery, Boston, Massachusetts.²⁸

One performance that never failed to please and hold the attention of the miners was "Nana, the Lovely Blond," at prices ranging from one dollar for general admission to five dollars for private boxes. The program was as follows:

Song, Dance and Mirth
and
Emotional Novelties

A Host of Talented Artists
and
BEAUTIFUL WOMEN

Four Hours
of Elegant Pleasures, blended with
a voluptuous feast without coarseness,
concluding with Harry Montague's
Spicy, Sensational, Melodramatic
Comedy,

entitled

THE
N A N A lovely N A N A
BLONDE

Or, the Miser's Pet

²⁸ Willison, op. cit., pp. 209-210.

Adopted from Material selected from
Emile Zolo's [sic] intensely interesting
novel of the same name.

AND terminating with a Quadrille D'
Amor (love quadrille), in which Nana
And her friends will illustrate

The Poetry of Motion a la mode.²⁹

The saloons, to draw customers from the regular theaters, came forth with a new type of show-house called the "wine theater." The admission was free, but the miners were required to patronize the bar. The auditorium was generally upstairs over the saloon. The performers were usually Negroes who sang and danced to squeaky orchestras or wandering stage performers on the downward trail. The main attraction was the girls who sang and danced on the stage and then mingled with the crowd encouraging the buying of drinks. Their costumes consisted of a short skirt, short sleeved blouse with a low neckline, and plenty of beads, flounces, feathers, and spangles. The price charged was fifty cents for a glass of beer and seventy-five cents for a drink of whiskey. As soon as the house girl saw that the miner was either broke or had spent all he intended to she would go on to a newcomer to repeat her performance there. When a miner refused to buy more drinks he was expected to leave. If he should demur he might be thrown out by the house bouncers. This was often a painful experience for the miner and, when the miners friends came to his aid, often resulted in a wild free-for-all riot with the saloon torn upside down.³⁰

As the mining camps became more stable in population and more wealthy, some of the people began to demand opera performances. The San Francisco

²⁹ Ibid., p. 209.

³⁰ Ibid., pp. 210-211.

Opera Company was one of the first to come to the mountains of Colorado. A large crowd of Central City citizens applauded their presentation of "Le Grande Duchess de Gerolstein." They performed in the Montana Theater in July, 1869.³¹ The Emma Abbott English Grand Opera Company made a tour of the mining towns. They played at Leadville and presented the following operas: "King for a Day," "Chimes of Normandy," "La Traviata," "Martha," and "Fra Diavolo." The latter was the most appreciated, but even in this the camp was somewhat disappointed. The pioneer miners wanted action and the opera did not provide it. In "Fra Diavolo" only two shots were fired, and only one man was killed. Then, the bed chamber scene wasn't all the miners expected it to be, because of Miss Abbott's prudish rendition of the episode.³²

Probably the most famous of the mountain opera houses was that at Central City. There opera held sway through the bonanza days with some of the greatest stars of the opera world performing before the rulers of the "richest square mile on earth." After the mines of the Central City area played out the opera house was abandoned and fell into ruins. In 1931, thanks largely to the initiative and imagination of Ida Kruse McFarlane, who was the daughter-in-law of the original builder, Edna James Chappell, pioneer Denver woman, and Anne Evans, daughter of Governor Evans, a campaign got under way to save the opera house and restore it to its proper function. The restored opera house is one of the most beautiful small theaters in America. The first offering in the restored opera house was by Lillian Gish in "Camille" in 1932. In 1933 Gladys Swarthout appeared in "The Merry Widow" and Walter Huston in "Othello" held the stage in 1934. The operas have been

³¹ Daily Central City Register, July 6, 1869.

³² Willison, op. cit., p. 217.

given each summer, with the exception of the war years, since its restoration. They are considered among the better musical performances in America.³³

Thus ends the story of the cultural life in the early mining towns of Colorado. Each pioneer miner, merchant, school-teacher, lawyer, minister, actor, blacksmith, farmer, and housewife had a part in the making of a better life for those who followed them. Denver, Leadville, and Central City stand today as monuments to the industry, perseverance, foresight, and honest sweat and toil of those hardy pioneers who came to Cherry Creek in search of wealth. To such men as "Professor" Goldrick and Abner R. Brown, Charles R. Thorne and Jack Langrishe, William Byers and D. C. Collier, Henry Teller and Horace Tabor the people of Colorado, Denver, and the entire Rocky Mountain section will forever be indebted. The poem "Denver" tells of the early hardships of the pioneers and the result of their work. The poem really exemplifies the story of Colorado as well as the story of Denver.

Denver

There are still many daring deeds
Of a city's birth to be told,
Of the brave pioneers who came west
To prospect and seek yellow gold.

They crossed over desolate plains
By a dim and treacherous trail,
They eagerly sought for wealth
For their venture must not fail.

They followed dangerous ways
By well-marked and winding streams,
They forged on by wagon and cart
To win their expectant dreams.

They travelled day after day,
But at night by camp fires would chat,
Till they came to the confluence
Where Cherry Creek joins the Platte.

³³ Ibid., pp. 294-295.

There they found a place to camp
Which seemed to be just right,
And the City of Denver, today,
Stands on that early site.

Soon other men gathered there,
Cast lots with those straggling few.
And out from that pioneer group
Small settlements started and grew.

Many men who knew poverty's curse
Were banded in fortune's quest,
And swiftly and surely there rose
A city that ranks with the best.

It was gold, ever gold, they sought
To strengthen their losses with gains;
Its finding led on the stampede
Which builded the Queen of the Plains.

Today, it pays honor to those
Who dared to be pioneers bold--
The Denver, so shining and fair,
Which was built by the seekers of gold.³⁴

³⁴ Mumey, op. cit., pp. 199-200.

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Mr. Brown tells many incidents of the pioneer days of Colorado, in which he himself participated. These accounts are of value to any student writing on the early days of Colorado.

Hawley, H. J., "Dairy of Central City." Manuscript Collection, Colorado State Historical Society, Denver, Colorado.

Mr. Hawley personally viewed the building of Central City and lived in the town for many years. His diary of Central City is a well kept document and afforded great help to the writer, especially in regard to background and atmosphere.

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Mr. Himman was a school teacher at Central City in 1869. His letter to Charles Howard, a graduate of the Illinois Normal School, contains a very interesting description of early educational facilities in the mining towns and a comparison of those in Colorado with the conditions in the states for the same period.

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Cherry Creek Pioneer (Denver, Colorado), April 23, 1859. Newspaper Collection, Colorado State Historical Society, Denver, Colorado.

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very graphically describes the attitude of the people of the states in regard to the Pikes Peaks gold rush.

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The files of this paper were useful because of the great amount of primary material on all phases of the cultural life contained in them. Before changing the name this paper was the Daily Miner's Register.

Daily Miner's Register (Central City, Colorado), 1863-1863. Newspaper Collection, Colorado State Historical Society, Denver, Colorado.

This paper was originally the Tri-Weekly Miner's Register. Its files contain a great deal of primary material used in the preparation of this thesis.

Denver Post (Denver, Colorado), 1910-1911. Newspaper collection, Colorado State Historical Society, Denver, Colorado.

Much of the material used in writing of O. J. Goldrick was taken from the files of the Denver Post. The article by Helen Ring Robinson, "When the Schoolmaster Came to Denver," appeared in the Post issued April 9, 1911. Miss Robinson was the daughter of Lydia Maria Ring. She personally witnessed many pioneer incidents and was informed of many others by her mother.

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The files of the News are complete and were used to cover the period from 1859 to 1875 not only in Denver but in the surrounding communities as well.

Tri-Weekly Miner's Register (Central City, Colorado), 1862-1863. Newspaper Collection, Colorado State Historical Society, Denver, Colorado.

The primary material gained from the files of this paper were very valuable in the writing of this paper as they gave to the writer an account of events in the gold fields as witnessed by trained observers.

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D. C. Collier Printing Co., Central City, Colorado, 1872.

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former addresses of the business men of Denver and Auraria in 1859, including several men who are mentioned in connection with the early cultural life of Colorado.

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Many ballads of the American frontier are found in this book. One of them, "Sweet Betsy from Pike," appears on page 24 of this thesis.

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Dr. Perrigo's disertation gave this writer many valuable leads for the finding of material for this thesis. Although it is unpublished this writer considers Dr. Perrigo's "History of Central City" one of the better works on early Colorado history.

Typist: Grace Peebles