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NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the Colorado Postal History Society will be on Saturday, November 18, 2023 at 1:00 p.m. at the Rocky Mountain Philatelic Library. Bring a Show and Tell item. We will see you there.

COLORADO POSTAL HISTORIAN
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COLORADO WANDERINGS

By Bill German

Robert Conley, editor of the *Roadrunner*, the journal of the Arizona / New Mexico Postal History Society and I had a collaborative article about Edith, Colorado / New Mexico a year-plus ago (*Historian* 36-4). Continual research has been done and Robert is ready for a follow-up article. One request he and I have of CPHS members is your scans of covers from Edith, either from Colorado or New Mexico. Please send me (email above) a high resolution scan of your

Edith covers (front and back, if anything on it). We would like a record of what postal history is actually out there.

It sure appeared to be a beautiful fall in Colorado this year. Hopefully, you were able to wander around to see it. That is one of the many things I miss about living in Colorado. Wandering to former town sites is another. Where did you get to this past summer and fall? Let us know what you discovered.

Remembering Andy Murin

By Robert Hamill

As noted in the last issue of the *Historian*, Andy Murin passed away post surgery June 15, 2023. From the foothills at Golden, CO to Thornton, CO and so many places all around I had the privilege of spending a lot of time with Andy doing fun things like exploring Colorado ghost towns, 1870s stage routes and trails and doing the necessary research prior to the trips. Andy's skill at getting information from local strangers was unmatched. We had so many fascinating road trips—great food, lodging, scenery and wonderful conversations. One research example, "Post Office Rock" west of South Fork, is likely not the rock shown on websites or Google Maps, but further east of Wagon Wheel Gap. More research is needed. Andy was an incredible mentor for anyone interested in all things Colorado.

Andy was a long time member and past president of the Colorado Postal History Society. He was also a member and volunteer at the Rocky Mountain Philatelic Library. For many years he annually assisted at the Rocky Mountain Stamp Show with setup, CPHS and RMPL tables and a couple of his daughters assisted at the show sign in table. (All four daughters helped with RMSS 2023.)

Family was foremost to Andy. He is survived by four daughters Christine (Fletcher), Susan (Dean), Jennifer and Andrea; eight grandchildren and one great grandson. He was predeceased by loving wife, Joyce and newborn infant daughter, Carolyn.

A true treasure of a man has left us, but our fond memories of Andy will last forever.



Alvin and its Five Locations

By Kenneth Jessen

Towns sometimes move, but there are extreme cases in Eastern Colorado. Julesburg, for example, is in its fourth location. Alvin has been located in six distinct places, all north of Wray in Yuma County. In all fairness, Alvin was not much of a town and amounted to no more than a store, post office and a residence – sometimes all under one roof.

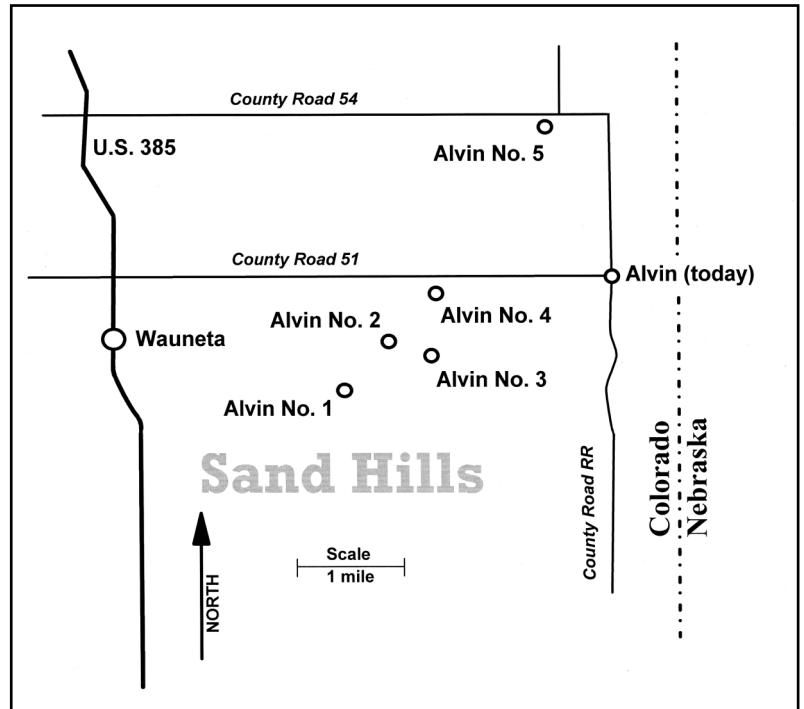
Alvin started in 1910 when A. A. Currence traded a store in nearby Nebraska for the Alvin Davis homestead just over the line in Colorado. A condition of the trade was that the store had to be named Alvin.

The little Alvin store got a post office in 1910 and prospered as the only place in the area where Sand Hill ranchers could sell their cream and eggs and purchase groceries, tobacco and other items. Currence sold the Alvin store and its post office to Jim Coast who moved it to his ranch. In its second location at that time, Coast sold the store to a Mr. Dick. The new owner moved the store to his property and a few years later, Dick sold the store to Pat Dempsey and H. D. Sigler. It was moved to Sigler's property. Dempsey bought out Sigler's share, and in 1918 constructed a new building. The sale of gasoline and oil was added to the Alvin store. He also had a car repair business coincident with the increase in popularity of the automobile.

Alvin grew to become more than just a roving store and post office. It was a place of community life where on Saturdays, as many as 50 people would

gather. They would buy things in the store, visit, bring their lunches and spend the day. Sometimes there was a foot race, a baseball game or horseshoes. On Sundays, some would bring their horses for a race. The Fourth of July marked the biggest celebration in Alvin starting with a boom created by setting off gunpowder under an anvil.

While in its fifth location, the Alvin post office closed in 1929 when daily rural mail delivery was established between Wray and Holyoke including a rural route that served the Alvin area. Jim Miles was the next owner of the Alvin store and the building was moved three miles to the intersection of county roads RR and 51. When Wilbur Stedwell bought the store from Miles, it stayed put. Sitting abandoned, maybe this was the end to Alvin's wandering ways!



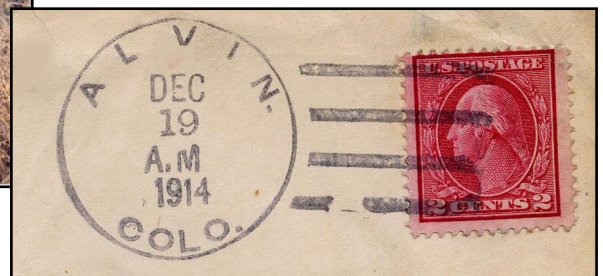
Map by Kenneth Jessen

These are the various locations for the Alvin store and post office based on a map by Glenn Scott and published by the United States Geological Survey.



Photo by Kenneth Jessen

This is Alvin today. Its post office and store moved five times and Alvin died in its sixth distinct location.



PMCC Museum Willett/Thompson Collection

Mining Town Gothic Turned Research Center

By Bill German

In a gorgeous setting in a valley on the East River with beautiful Gothic Mountain jutting skyward to its west and the Maroon Bells–Snowmass Wilderness to the east, Gothic was both a wild mining town and calm abiding place. At its peak of 8,000 residents the town was one of the wildest places in Colorado with the typical mining camp drinking, gambling and shady ladies. However, Gothic had almost no theft and only two murders.



Photo by George Lytle Beam

Gothic looking north towards Schofield Pass

High up the valley far from anywhere (actually Crested Butte where winter snowpack can get eight feet is down the road) gold was discovered at the foot of Gothic Mountain in June 1879 by John and David Jennings. Within a week there were 100 tents and cabins, by four months 170 buildings. Of those 170 buildings there were three stores, a hotel, butcher shop, barber shop and two saw mills. The calm side of Gothic at this time contained only one saloon and no gambling dens.

One year later Gothic with its 1,000 residents was the richest city in Gunnison County. The next two years millions of dollars

of gold and silver were taken out of ground. Some of the ore was valued at \$15,000 a ton.

Gothic became a supply center for the mining camps to the north toward and over Schofield Pass and the east around Aspen.

In 1880, Ulysses Grant visited the city. He visited a lot of boom towns on his trip west. Many towns tried to outdo the others. Gothic's attempt resulted in the noisiest parade in the history of Colorado.

Gothic had some of the best horseracing, a big sport in many mining camps. The city had four newspapers. One urged the wearing of badge of mourning when President Garfield was assassinated. Many in the town complied.

Snow was an ever-present danger. It often blocked roads to the mines and isolated the town. Snow slides killed quite a few citizens.

At its peak Gothic served as a transportation hub over Schofield pass to other mining camps, and included a smelting center, two schools, two hotels, two doctors, two lawyers, two dance halls, three sawmills working to capacity and plenty of saloons.

By 1884, most of the ore was gone. Like other mining camps, Gothic faded almost overnight. Shortly before this collapse two



Photo by Jeffrey Beall

Gothic today

newspapermen ran for mayor, Lee Wait and G. H. Judd. Wait won, but when the gold and the miners ran out so did he. Judd stayed, declared himself mayor. When nearby Irwin and Pittsburg mining camps emptied as well, he extended his jurisdiction to those deserted camps as well. He stayed, summer and winter, much of it by himself for more than 40 years until his death in 1930. Judd was the subject of numerous magazine articles and a 1928 movie.

Gothic's post office (known as Gothic City prior to 1883 or 1884) was in operation August 5, 1879 to June 22, 1896 during the mining heyday and again June 20, 1907 to January 31, 1914, so Judd wasn't alone the entire bust of Gothic.

Resources:

Colorado Post Offices, by William Bauer, James Ozment, John Willard, 1990.

Colorado Postal Encyclopedia – Gunnison County, by Bill Bauer, Colorado Postal History Society.

digital.denverlibrary.org/cdm/

Guide to the Colorado Ghost Towns and Mining Camps, by Perry Eberhart, Swallow Press, 1959, revised 1974.

Gunnisonhistoricpreservation.org
rmbll.org



PMCC Museum's Willett-Thompson Collection.

Gothic's Revival (Sort of) Into a Science Lab

Dr. John C. Johnson, biology professor at Western State College in Gunnison about 40 miles to the south, first visited Gothic in July 1919. He immediately recognized the rich biological diversity of the local area. He began to bring students to study the area around Gothic.

Garwood Hall Judd, known as "The Man Who Stayed" and was Gothic's self-appointed caretaker, saw in 1928 a chance for Gothic's revival. He played a key role in aiding Dr. Johnson and four others to purchase several Gothic buildings and land in order to start the Rocky Mountain Biological Laboratory (RMBL). RMBL is now one of the leading terrestrial field research stations in the world. Each summer 150 field biologists and students conduct research and classes in the wilderness surrounding Gothic. Initially the RMBL used many of the buildings from the mining days as laboratories, classrooms and dormitories. They have since built several of their own.

Seven buildings in the town site have been designated for their historical value including the Gothic Town Hall, Swallow's Nest, Ore House, Mammal Lab, Barclay Cabin, Mc Cloud Cabin and Richards Cabin.

Judd Falls, a popular hiking destination in the research area is named in G. H. Judd's honor. RMBL residents hold an annual potluck at the end of the summer for any residents who are still around to celebrate



Photo by Charlie DeTarr



Photographer unknown

Gothic Mountain, the town's namesake.

Colorado Name Origins

Gothic, Colorado was named for the nearby mountain whose afternoon shadow the town is in. The mountain was named by the Hayden Survey of the western territories. Survey Topographer Henry Gannett wrote in 1874 that the mountain's name came from "the spires and pinnacles in bas-relief upon its eastern face," causing it to resemble Gothic style architecture.

Source: *1001 Colorado Place Names*, by Maxine Benson, 1994.

COLORADO CORRESPONDENCE

By Andy Murin

Editor's Note: Colorado Correspondence is a look into the lives of people who lived in Colorado long ago. If you have a letter written by or to someone in Colorado, please share it with your fellow historians by sending your editor scans of the letter and cover (address information on page 2). Thank you.

This is a good letter from a son to his father about a farm being started. Handwriting is relatively neat for the period. The spelling and grammar have been left with the exception of adding in some periods for ease for reading. The writer did have some periods unlike many writers of the day.

Fort Collins, C.T.

Oct 30th 1870

Dear Father,

I suppose I might offer many excuses for not writing sooner, but will use none of them as a means of righting the wrong we have done you neglecting to answer your letter for so long. I can only promise to do better in the future.

We are enjoying the best of health at this time and hope this may find you enjoying the same. I have had a very busy summer, but expect to thresh on Tuesday so that will let me out with the crop for this year. I have been hauling potatoes to Greeley (our new

town) and getting ³/₈ cents per pound. Oats is 2¹/₄ cents, my crop this year is short as is most crops in this country. I had two many irons in the fire this year, witch is generally the case. I put in some crop on my place this year, and failed to get my ditch through in time so we have concluded to put ditch through and then farm. My cattle has done fine this summer, butter is worth fifty cents per pound, and will worth 75 in a month. American cattle is higher than they were when I came here. The beef is being shipped out as fast as they are old enough. There is a lady visiting here this summer who is reputed to be wealthy and has her money loned east who would let me have money at twelve per cent for four years to put into stock and I have a notion to risk a thousand dollars. My cattle has not cost me for feed since I have been here fifty dollars and a yearling calf is worth twenty dollars, two year old thirty, three year old forty, and I sold a pair of four year old steers this summer for \$125.00. They were fine though, what you think of it. Our new town Greeley is growing very fast there is about three hundred houses up and under way together, some them at a cost of five thousand dollars it is giving us a good market and it seems a little like home as I can do down one day and back the next. I am going

potatoes to Greeley (our new town) and getting ³/₈ cents per pound. Oats is 2¹/₄ cents, my crop this year is short as is the most of the crops in this country. I had two many irons in the fire this year, witch is generally the case. I put in some crop on my place this year, and failed to get my ditch through in time so we have concluded to put the ditch through and then put my cattle has done fine this summer butter is worth fifty cents per pound, and will be worth 75 in a month american cattle is higher than they were when I came here, the beef is being shipped out of the country as fast as they are old enough. there is a lady visiting here this summer who

day and back the next I am going down on Thursday next and expect to visit the newly married couple Mr. & Mrs. Holland they think here that they will part with Gilbert, Sprick, of Woodburg on Monday. Except many thanks for the picture, they are good ones. Carrie has promised to write some so I will wait this in greely and give her an opportunity to fulfill the promise. We spin in here to all and hoping to hear from you very soon, Remain your affectionate son
C. V. P. St. Peterson
Belle I will send you a piece of my new dress soon
there at a cost of five thousand dollars it is giving us a good market and it seems a little like home as I can go down one

Post Collins, C. T.
Oct 30th 1870
Dear Father
I suppose I might offer many excuses for not writing sooner, but will use none of them as a means of righting the wrong we have done you neglecting to answer your letter for so long. I can only promise to do better in the future.
We are enjoying the best of health at this time and hope this may find you enjoying the same. I have had a very busy summer, but expect to thresh on Tuesday so that will let me out with the crop for this year. I have been hauling

down on Thursday next and expect to meet a newly married couple Mr. and Mrs. Holland. They think here that they will start with Gilbert Smith of Wmsburg on Monday. Except many thanks for the pictures, they are good ones. Carrie has promised to write some so I will mail this in Greeley and give her and opportunity to fulfill the promise.

We join in love to all and hoping to hear from you very soon. Remember you affectionate son and daughter.

C.V. & F L Peterson
(unreadable)

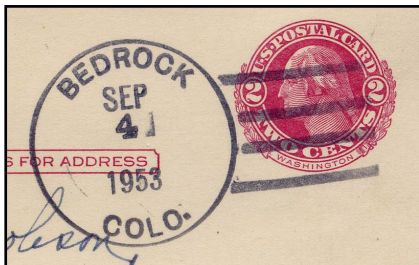
Sallie I will send you a [????] of my new dress, Carrie

The post script is in different handwriting.



FUN FACT

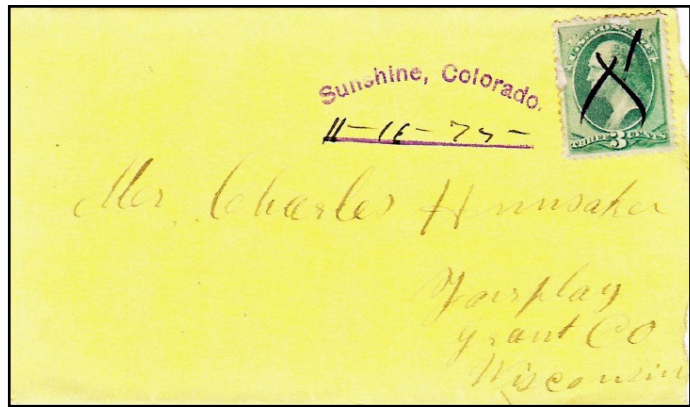
The first couple to be shown in bed together on prime time TV was Fred and Wilma Flintstone. Of course, we know Bedrock was their hometown. Colorado has a town named Bedrock. Were Fred & Barney and Wilma & Betty from Colorado?



PMCC Museum Willett/Thompson Collection

WANTED

Last Reported in a Private Collection



Sunshine, Colorado. November 11, 1875

If you have this cover or know where it is please let me know. I would like to buy.

Steve Morehead
520-241-2461
steveasc13@gmail.com

THE DISPLAY PAGE

Page Created by Andy Murin

BALFOUR

PARK COUNTY

Established: February 6 1894

Discontinued January 31 1907

Balfour was one of those strange mining towns in Colorado, it was on a flat plain in the middle of South Park, no mountains of any significance for miles around. Gold was discovered and the miners tried to make a go of it, it never produced much and the town was abandoned. What was unique about Balfour is that the Italian and Chinese miners from the nearby towns of Como were forbidden to even enter the town. After the town was abandoned, it was fair game for ranchers in the area to use what was left over for scrap. That, along with the severe winters in South Park had taken its toll on the townsite. Right now there is nothing to show the Balfour ever existed. Of the two photographs below, one was taken when Balfour was only 10 days old, which shows you how fast buildings, tents and structures were erected. The other photo is what the Balfour site is today

