

# Colorado History Chronology

**13,000 B.C.** Big game hunters may have occupied area later known as Colorado. Evidence shows that they were here by at least 9200 B.C.

**A.D. 1 to 1299 A.D.** Advent of great Prehistoric Cliff Dwelling Civilization in the Mesa Verde region.

**1276 to 1299 A.D.** A great drought and/or pressure from nomadic tribes forced the Cliff Dwellers to abandon their Mesa Verde homes.

**1500 A.D.** Ute Indians inhabit mountain areas of southern Rocky Mountains making these Native Americans the oldest continuous residents of Colorado.

**1541 A.D.** Coronado, famed Spanish explorer, may have crossed the southeastern corner of present Colorado on his return march to Mexico after vain hunt for the golden Seven Cities of Cibola.

**1682 A.D.** Explorer La Salle appropriates for France all of the area now known as Colorado east of the Rocky Mountains.

**1765 A.D.** Juan Maria Rivera leads Spanish expedition into San Juan and Sangre de Cristo Mountains in search of gold and silver.

**1776 A.D.** Friars Escalante and Dominguez seeking route from Santa Fe to California missions, traverse what is now western Colorado as far north as the White River in Rio Blanco County.

**1803 A.D.** Through the Louisiana Purchase, signed by President Thomas Jefferson, the United States acquires a vast area which included what is now most of eastern Colorado. While the United States lays claim to this vast territory, Native Americans have resided here for hundreds of years.

**1806 A.D.** Lieutenant Zebulon M. Pike and small party of U.S. soldiers sent to explore southwestern boundary of Louisiana Purchase; discovers peak that bears his name, but fails in effort to climb it; reaches headwaters of Arkansas River near Leadville.

**1807 A.D.** Pike crosses Sangre de Cristo Mountains to Conejos River in San Luis Valley and builds Pike's Stockade; placed under nominal arrest by Spanish authorities and taken to Santa Fe; later, he and his men are released.

**1820 A.D.** Numerous Native American tribes live in the Colorado area. The Utes live in the mountains, the Cheyenne and Arapahoe reside on the plains from the Arkansas to the Platte rivers, and the Kiowas and Comanches live south of the Arkansas River. The Pawnee tribe hunts buffalo along the Republican River and the Sioux sometimes hunt in the outskirts of the Cheyenne and Arapahoe lands.

**1820 A.D.** Major Stephen H. Long is sent by President Monroe to explore southwestern boundary of the Louisiana Purchase. Long's party came up the South Platte River. Long's Peak named for him. Dr. Edwin James, historian of Long's expedition, leads first recorded ascent of Pike's Peak. James Peak, west of Denver, named for him.

**1825 A.D.** Opening of era of fur-traders, trappers and Mountain Men - Bent brothers, Ceran St.Vrain, Louis Vasquez, Kit Carson, Jim Baker, James Bridger, Thomas Fitzpatrick, "Uncle Dick" Wooten, and Jim Beckworth - who established posts in Arkansas and South Platte Valleys.

**1832 A.D.** Bent's Fort, one of the most important trading posts in the West, is built by the Bents and St. Vrain near present city of La Junta.

**1836 A.D.** Texas becomes independent republic and claims narrow strip of mountain territory extending northward through Colorado to 42nd parallel.

**Early 1840's A.D.** Mexico granted lands to the wealthy, south of the Arkansas Valley and in the San Luis Valley hoping to secure claims against Texas or America.

**1842 A.D.** Lieutenant John C. Fremont undertakes first of his five exploration trips into Rocky Mountains. His last expedition, in 1853, took him through the San Luis Valley and into the Gunnison River country.

**1846 A.D.** General Stephen W. Kearney leads Army of the West along Santa Fe Trail through southeastern Colorado en route to conquest of New Mexico during Mexican War.

**1848 A.D.** By Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, Mexico cedes to United States most of that part of Colorado not acquired by Louisiana Purchase.

**1850 A.D.** Federal Government purchases Texas' claims in Colorado, and present boundaries of Colorado established.

**1851 A.D.** First permanent non-Indian settlement in Colorado is founded at Conejos in San Luis Valley; irrigation is begun; Fort Massachusetts established in San Luis Valley to protect settlers from Indians who believe that the non-Indians are encroaching on their land.

**1853 A.D.** Captain John W. Gunnison leads exploring party across southern and western Colorado. Gunnison named for him. Fremont's last expedition, seeking feasible railroad route through mountains, follows Gunnison's route.

**1854 A.D.** Treaties with Native American groups prove unsatisfactory which results in conflict as the Utes kill fifteen inhabitants of Fort Pueblo on Christmas Day.

**1858 A.D.** Green Russell's discovery of small placer gold deposits near confluence of South Platte River and Cherry Creek, precipitates gold rush from the East and "Pikes Peak or Bust" slogan. Montana City, St. Charles, Auraria, and Denver City are founded on present site of Denver. November 6, two hundred men meet here to organize County of Arapahoe, Kansas Territory. Pueblo founded as Fountain City.

**1859 A.D.** Gold is found by George A. Jackson along Chicago Creek on present site of Idaho Springs. March 9, first stagecoach with mail for Cherry Creek settlements leaves Leavenworth, Kansas. April 23, first newspaper in the region, the **Rocky Mountain News**, is published by William N. Byers. May 6, John Gregory makes famous gold-lode strike on North Clear Creek, stimulating rush of prospectors, who establish camps of Black Hawk, Central City and Nevadaville. October 3, O.J. Goldrick opens first school, at Auraria. Jefferson Territory is organized without sanction of Congress to govern gold camps; officers are elected. Prospectors spread through mountains and establish camps at Boulder, Colorado City, Gold Hill, Hamilton, Tarryall, and Pueblo.

**1860 A.D.** Rich placer discoveries cause stampede of miners to California Gulch on present site of Leadville. First schoolhouse is built at Boulder. Region continues to be administered variously by Jefferson Territory officials, and Miners' and People's Courts.

**1861 A.D.** Congress establishes Colorado Territory with boundaries of present state; President Lincoln appoints William Gilpin as first Territorial governor. July, Supreme Court is organized and Congressional delegates chosen. September, first assembly meets, creates 17 counties, authorizes university, and selects Colorado City as Territorial capitol. Manufacture of mining machinery begins. The population of the Colorado Territory is 25,371.

**1862 A.D.** Colorado troops aid in defeating Confederate General Henry H. Sibley's Army at La Glorieta Pass, New Mexico. Second Territorial Legislature meets for a few days at Colorado City, adjourns to Denver, and selects Golden as the new capitol. First tax-supported schools are established. First oil well drilled near Florence.

**1863 A.D.** Telegraph line links Denver with East; ten words to New York cost \$9.10. Plains Indians attempt to drive white intruders from their hunting lands on the Eastern slopes.

**1864 A.D.** Tension between non-Indians and the Native American tribes escalates. The massacre (Sand Creek Massacre) of Native American men, women and children in a Cheyenne and Arapahoe Indian encampment by soldiers and settlers stirs Native Americans to fresh violence and overland trails are often closed. Fort Sedgwick is established near Julesburg. Camp Collins established to protect travelers on Overland Trail. Later became Fort Collins. Colorado Seminary (now University of Denver) is chartered; Sisters of Loretto open academy.

**1865 A.D.** Indian attacks along trails reach highest intensity; food is scarce for settlers and prices high; potatoes bring \$15 a bushel and flour costs \$40 per 100 pounds. Fort Morgan established for protection against Indians.

**1867 A.D.** Denver established as permanent seat of government by territorial legislature meeting in Golden. **Golden Transcript** established by George West.

**1868 A.D.** Nathaniel Hill erects first smelter in Colorado, at Blackhawk, inaugurating era of hard-rock mining. Battle at Beecher Island in northeastern Colorado fought between U.S. troops and Native Americans as Northern Cheyenne and Sioux tribesmen laid siege for 9 days on 50 U.S. troops until reinforcements arrived. **The Pueblo Chieftain** established by Dr. M. Beshoar at Pueblo.

**1869 A.D.** The final military engagement between whites and plains Indians in the eastern part of the territory took place at Summit Springs.

**1870 A.D.** Denver and Pacific Railroad is constructed to connect Denver with Union Pacific at Cheyenne, Wyoming; the Kansas Pacific enters Colorado from Missouri River. Union Colony is established by Horace Greeley and Nathan C. Meeker at Greeley, and first irrigation canal surveyed there. The Greeley Tribune established. Population of Colorado territory 39,864.

**1871 A.D.** Colorado Springs is founded by General William J. Palmer. Denver and Rio Grande Railroad is built southward from Denver by Palmer. Colorado School of Mines established at Golden.

**1872 A.D.** Blackhawk and Central City are connected with Denver by railroad; Denver and Rio Grande reaches Pueblo. Agricultural settlements established throughout South Platte Valley. Out West, later the Colorado Springs Gazette, was established. This year signals an end to the major use of the "Mountain Branch" of the Santa Fe Trail.

**1874 A.D.** Colorado College is founded at Colorado Springs; territorial legislature appropriates \$15,000 for University of Colorado at Boulder, on condition that equal sum is raised by that city. W.H. Jackson, famous photographer of the Hayden Geological Survey, notes ruins of ancient cliff dwellings along the canyon on Mancos River.

**1875 A.D.** Lead carbonate ores, rich in silver, are found near present site of Leadville. Constitutional Convention of 38 members holds first meeting.

**1876 A.D.** Colorado is admitted to Union as 38th State; John L. Routt is elected first governor. Greeley's first industry, the tanning of buffalo hides, turns out 12 robes a day.

**1877 A.D.** University of Colorado opens classes at Boulder, with two teachers and 44 students. State Board of Agriculture is created to develop Agricultural College at Fort Collins.

**1878 A.D.** Leadville is incorporated; rich silver strikes on Iron, Carbonate, and Fryer hills soon make it one of the world's greatest mining camps. Central City opera house opens. First telephones are installed in Denver.

**1879 A.D.** Colorado College of Agriculture and Mechanic Arts offers instruction at Fort Collins. Nathan C. Meeker, Indian Agent on White River (near Meeker) and several employees are slain in Ute uprising. Major Thornburg and half of his command of 160 soldiers killed in effort to give protection to Meeker. Utes defeated.

**1880 A.D.** Denver & Rio Grande lays tracks through Royal Gorge and on to Leadville. Great Ute Chief, Ouray, dies. Dry land farming undertaken extensively in eastern Colorado. Population of Colorado, 194,327.

**1881 A.D.** Ute tribes are removed onto reservations. Grand Junction is founded. Small quantities of carnotite are found in western Colorado along with gold; later, this mineral is found to contain radium. Tabor Opera House opens in Denver, built by H.A.W. Tabor, famous Leadville capitalist.

**1882 A.D.** Steel is milled in Pueblo from Colorado ores. Company later becomes Colorado Fuel and Iron Company.

**1883 A.D.** Narrow gauge line of Denver & Rio Grande is completed from Gunnison to Grand Junction. First electric lights are installed in Denver.

**1886 A.D. The Steamboat Pilot** established at Steamboat Springs. Charles H. Leckenby becomes owner and publisher, 1893. Denver Union Stockyards are established, later becoming largest receiving market for sheep in the nation. Town of Lamar is founded. The last public hanging in Denver occurred when Andrew Green was executed for the murder of streetcar driver, Joseph Whitnah.

**1888 A.D.** Band of Utes from Utah under Colorow make last Indian raid into Colorado; they are defeated and returned to the reservation. Union Colony at Greeley completes 900,000 acre irrigation project. Cliff Palace ruins, in what is now Mesa Verde National Park, discovered by two cowboys.

**1890 A.D.** Passage of Sherman Silver Purchase Act raises price of silver to more than \$1.00 an ounce. New rich silver strikes are made along Rio Grande and Creede is founded. July 4, cornerstone of State Capitol at Denver is laid. October 3, first building of the State Normal School (now University of Northern Colorado) at Greeley is occupied. Population of state, 413,249. **Boulder Daily Camera** established by L.C. Paddock.

**1891 A.D.** Robert Womack's discoveries open great gold field of Cripple Creek. First national forest reserve in Colorado is set aside - White River Forest in Meeker area. Pike's Peak cog railroad begins operation.

**1892 A.D. The Denver Post** established. H. C. Brown opens Brown Palace Hotel in Denver.

**1893 A.D.** National panic brings great distress to Colorado. Repeal of Sherman Act strikes silver mining a paralyzing blow and adds to already acute unemployment problems. Grand Junction Sentinel established.

**1894 A.D.** State Capitol is completed at a cost of \$2,500,000. Colorado is second state in the nation to extend suffrage to women, following the precedent set by Wyoming.

**1899 A.D.** First beet sugar refinery is built at Grand Junction.

**1900 A.D.** Gold production reaches peak of more than \$20,000,000 annually at Cripple Creek, the second richest gold camp in the world. Population of State, 539,700.

**1902 A.D.** Constitutional amendment permits towns of 2,000 to adopt "Home Rule"; Denver becomes home rule city. Beet sugar refinery built at Fort Collins. David H. Moffat and associates begin construction of Moffat Railroad over the Continental Divide. Completed to Steamboat Springs in 1908 and to Craig in 1913.

**1903 A.D.** With Ben B. Lindsey as Judge, Denver Juvenile Court opens - the first such court in the United States.

**1903 A.D.** Mine, mill and smelter workers strike in many camps for higher wages and better working conditions; at Cripple Creek, strike results in much property damage and loss of life; all strike objectives in gold field are lost. Uncompahgre irrigation project, first federal government reclamation project in Colorado, is authorized.

**1905 A.D.** Colorado has 3 governors in one day in a political squabble. First, Alva Adams, then James H. Peabody, and finally Jesse F. McDonald. Construction of the six mile Gunnison water tunnel started by Bureau of Reclamation.

**1906 A.D.** United States Mint, Denver, issues first coins. March 12, National Western Stock Show is born with chartering of Western Stock Show Association following successful showing of about 60 head of cattle and horses and a few sheep and hogs in makeshift tent at Stockyards. July 29, Mesa Verde national Park is created by Congress.

**1908 A.D.** July 7, Denver municipal Auditorium, seating 12,500, is completed in time for the Democratic National Convention, when William Jennings Bryan was nominated the third time for President. August 1, Colorado Day is first celebrated, marking thirty-second anniversary of State's admittance to Union. Dome of the State Capitol is plated with gold leaf at a cost of \$14,680.

**1909 A.D.** Colorado attains first rank among states in irrigation area with 2,790,000 acres under irrigation. Gunnison water tunnel completed by Reclamation Service and opened, on September 23, by President William Howard Taft at the tunnel site. Western State Teachers College opens at Gunnison.

**1910 A.D.** Population of State, 799,024. Number of farms, 46,170. Colorado voters adopt a constitutional amendment giving to the people the right of the initiative and referendum. May 8, first long distance phone call made from Denver to New York City. First airplane flight in Denver.

**1911 A.D.** Colorado National Monument west of Grand Junction, created by Presidential order.

**1913 A.D.** State Tax Commission created by Legislature. Assessed value of Colorado property for tax purposes set at \$1,306,536,692. The "Big Snow of 1913" covers Colorado to a depth of 3 - 5 feet; transportation paralyzed for weeks. State begins licensing autos for the first time.

**1914 A.D.** Strike of coal miners in southern Colorado fields is climaxed by "Battle of Ludlow" near Trinidad; several men, women and children killed during hostilities between miners and the State militia. August: WWI begins.

**1915 A.D.** Worker's compensation measures are passed: State Industrial Commission is created. Rocky Mountain National Park created by Congress. Toll road for auto travel to top of Pikes Peak built by Spencer Penrose. Construction of Broadmoor Hotel at Colorado Springs started.

**1916 A.D.** Colorado adopts prohibition. Emily Griffith Opportunity School is opened in Denver. Mining of tungsten causes flurry in Boulder-Nederland area.

**1917 A.D.** April 6: Congress declares war on Germany and many Coloradans volunteer for service. Colorado reaches maximum mineral production, more than \$80,000,000. William F. "Buffalo Bill" Cody, Famous Indian scout, dies and is buried on Lookout Mountain, west of Denver.

**1918 A.D.** Agricultural production increased sharply to aid war needs. Dry lands plowed up to produce wheat. Colorado citizens purchase Liberty Bonds by the millions of dollars to help finance war. More than 125,000 Colorado men register for the draft for army service. Fitzsimmons General Hospital established near Denver. Coal production of state reaches new high of 12,500,000 tons. Impetus of war stirs development of mining of molybdenum at Climax, near Leadville - the nation's greatest source of the metal. Denver Tourist Bureau establishes free auto camp ground for tourists at Overland Park, Denver. Other cities follow suit during the next few years. Federal Reserve branch bank established in Denver. Colorado voters approve constitutional amendment providing Civil Service for state employees. November, 11, 1918, Germany surrenders.

**1919 A.D.** Post-war inflation brings higher prices to farmers and producers; prices of farm land high; wages high; boom times everywhere. Colorado enacts tax of one cent per gallon on gasoline, for building of roads. Monte Vista stages first Ski-Hi Stampede.

**1920 A.D.** Population of State, 939,629. Employees of Denver Tramway company go on strike. Aroused by editorials in **The Denver Post**, strikers raid Post building and do much damage to property.

**1921 A.D.** General Assembly creates State Highway Department with seven man Advisory Board. Colorado begins building concrete highways on main traveled routes. Pueblo suffers disastrous flood in June; scores drowned and property damage amounts to \$20,000,000. Post war deflation sets in and decline in prices brings trouble in the rural areas. During the next several years, numerous banks serving farming areas close, price and farm lands decline sharply from levels reached in World War I, and farmers clamor for farm relief.

**1922 A.D.** Coloradans vote \$6,000,000 in bonds for highway construction. Moffat Tunnel Improvement District is created by General Assembly for construction of 6.4 mile bore under Continental Divide to provide better rail connections between Eastern and Western Slopes of the State. First commercial radio license in Colorado is issued, to station KLZ. Daring daylight hold-up of Federal Reserve bank truck is staged as it leaves U.S. Mint in Denver and \$200,000 stolen. Robbery never solved.

**1923 A.D.** Oil discovered in Wellington field north of Fort Collins; flurry of oil stock promotion follows.

**1924 A.D.** April 26, Colorado is second state to ratify child labor amendment to federal Constitution. Celebration held in Greeley marking completion of concrete pavement between Denver and Greeley - first two major cities in State to be connected by paved highways. Ku Klux Klan secures domination of Republican party in Colorado and elects a pro-Klan Governor and U.S. Senator.

**1925 A.D.** Adams State Teachers College at Alamosa and junior colleges at Grand Junction and Trinidad are opened.

**1931 A.D.** Population reaches over one million.

**1941 A.D.** Denver recruiting offices swamped by over 2,000 enlistments during the month of December as United States enters World War II.

**1941-1945 A.D.** During World War II agriculture industry has greatest production in Colorado history.

**1941-1945 A.D.** Growth of military installations in Colorado mushroom.

**1942 A.D.** Federal government established [Amache](#), a camp for Japanese-Americans who were interned and relocated from their homes on the West Coast.

**1945-1950 A.D.** Federal government presence in Colorado grows, military installations and scientific institutions continue to develop while many veterans relocate to Colorado. These changes cause a steady increase in population.

**1958 A.D.** Air Force Academy is built near Colorado Springs and first class graduates in June, 1959.

**1950's and 1960's A.D.** Numerous water storage and diversion projects are constructed in response to increased agricultural and municipal water demands. Tourist and ski industries blossom. Population continues to increase.

**1960 A.D.** Colorado gets the Denver Broncos professional football team which eventually wins two Super Bowls.

**1962-1965 A.D.** Disposition of poisonous wastes into a deep well at the Rocky Mountain Arsenal results in earthquakes and hundreds of tremors around the Denver area.

**June, 1965 A.D.** A cloudburst on the upper reaches of Plum Creek in Douglas and Jefferson counties results in massive flooding along the South Platte River, causing widespread property damage and loss of life. The extensive damage extended from south of Denver all the way to Sedgwick County near the Nebraska border.

**1967 A.D.** Denver Rockets become Colorado's professional American Basketball Association team. In 1974 they are renamed the Denver Nuggets.

**1973 A.D.** Eisenhower Tunnel is built beneath the Continental Divide sixty miles west of Denver, making it easier to reach the ski slopes of western Colorado.

**1974 A.D.** Desegregation of schools in Denver begins as busing attempts to achieve racial balance.

**1970's and 1980's A.D.** Tremendous growth of Denver suburbs occurs.

**1970's A.D.** The population swells, traffic problems grow, and the "brown cloud" develops over much of the Front Range. Coloradans become concerned over the consequences of pollution and overselling Colorado and reject hosting the 1976 Winter Olympics as a result.

**July 31, 1976 A.D.** A cloudburst on the Big Thompson River results in a massive flood in Larimer County, killing more than 145 people.

**1980 A.D.** Coal mining production in Colorado on the Western Slopes hits all time high as United States becomes more dependent on energy resources at home rather than overseas.

**1982 A.D.** The state economic structure is shaken when the oil shale giant Exxon announces the closure of its oil shale development fields in Rio Blanco, Mesa and Garfield counties. Thousands are laid off and the economic stability of the western slope of the state is severely impacted.

**1980's and 1990's A.D.** Major growth of technological industries occurs in Colorado.

**1992 A.D.** The voters of Colorado pass a citizens' initiative to limit the growth of state and local governments with the passage of the TABOR (Taxpayer Bill of Rights) amendment to the state constitution.

**1993 A.D.** Colorado Rockies become first regional major league baseball team.

**1995 A.D.** Quebec Nordiques National Hockey League team moves to Colorado to become the Colorado Avalanche.

**1998 A.D.** Colorado voters elect the first Republican Governor (Bill Owens) to the statehouse in twenty-four years.

**2005 A.D.** Colorado voters passed at the November elections a five year tax package that will allow state government to retain excess tax revenues to fund various state programs that were previously targeted for reduction or elimination. Referendum C as it was called, was the first successful attempt at modifying the Taxpayers Bill of Rights which was passed thirteen years earlier.