



The



Newsletter

The WHA Newsletter is a semi-annual publication of the Western History Association.

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Denver or Bust! Denver is Site of the 49th Annual WHA Conference



With an eye to Colorado's rich mining history, Duane Smith offers an historical overview of Colorado and the conference destination site. He is a professor of Southwest Studies at Fort Lewis College and has authored over thirty books.

Gold found "in all places."

New York Times, September 20, 1858

The excitement generated by this and other bits of news about the glittering, beckoning promise of the central Rockies stirred Americans to rush westward from the economically depressed and war-threatened east. A few folks wandered out in late 1858 and squatted, winter locked, in Denver; most came the next year.

And that was not all. The year of 1859 witnessed two of the greatest mining rushes in American history. Californians stampered over the Sierra Nevadas to the silver-ribbed Comstock. Even that former steamboat pilot, Mark Twain, eventually arrived and left a wonderful account for posterity, *Roughing It*. For Colorado mining, the best first-hand accounts were all written by women—Harriet Backus, Mabel Barbee Lee, and Anne Ellis.

Pike's Peak or Bust: Americans wrote and read about the excitement, and before the dust settled, the rush ranked second only to California's of a decade earlier. Perhaps as many as 100,000 fifty-niners gambled that a season or two of mining would give them enough gold for a lifetime. It was, some hoped, a way to "get rich without working." Most of them "busted." As one old miner eventually confessed, however, "I never worked so hard in my life to get rich without working."

"Forty Years of the *Western Historical Quarterly*"

By David Rich Lewis, Editor, WHQ, and Professor of History, Utah State University.

The first issue of the *Western Historical Quarterly* appeared in mailboxes in March 1970, but the journal's inception began nine years earlier when interested history buffs, professionals, and academic historians met in Santa Fe and formed the Western History Association. During its early years, the WHA partnered with publishers of *American*

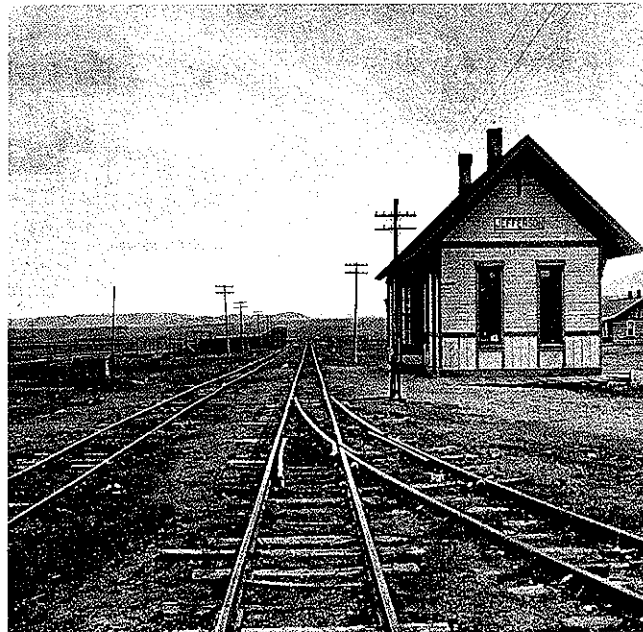
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It all started 150 years ago, but did not end with the fifty-niner miners. Colorado proved to be a mineral treasure chest that repeatedly tempted their mining descendents to scurry again and again up gulches, through valleys, and climb the mountains high. They searched and found gold, silver, lead, copper, zinc, uranium (pitchblende and carnotite), molybdenum, coal, marble, fluorite,

nickel, sulfur, and they even thought they might find rubies, emeralds, pearls, and diamonds. Industrial diamonds were actually found in the late twentieth century.

All of that lay in the future during those exciting days of fifty-nine. In reality, though, they were not that exciting for those who rushed west in the late winter. The discovery, which set off the rush had only been worth about 400 dollars, small pay for the two groups of 100-plus men and a couple of women (one of whom was the first woman to climb Pike's Peak), who had journeyed west the previous year. One group, the Russell party, had a California connection. That was the Cherokees who had found gold near future Denver in 1850 on their way west, but did not tarry there.

That winter, many planned, dreamed, and schemed to rush to the new promised land. And come they did—walking, riding, and driving their teams. What they failed to understand was that imagination



View of the train depot in Jefferson, Colorado, in Park County (1937). Courtesy of Denver Public Library

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West magazine to offer members a historical publication. But by 1967, WHA leaders recognized the need for an academic journal of their own, one that would solidify the scholarly reputation of the organization and the field of western American history. They knew the kind of high production values and professional editing they wanted, but finding an academic publisher proved difficult.

In the midst of the national turmoil marking the summer of 1968, administrations changed at Utah State University. In came a new president interested in expanding the university's claims to programmatic excellence. Western and regional studies fit USU's land grant mission, and History Department faculty reflected those interests, including connections to Frederick Jackson Turner and Frederick Merk going back to their National Summer School teaching stints in Logan during the 1920s. Professors Leonard J. Arrington and S. George Ellsworth quickly put together USU's bid and presented it to the WHA Council in October 1968. Over the next few months they hammered out a mutually-beneficial Memo of Understanding between USU and the WHA outlining obligations and journal operations. Signed on May 15, 1969, and renewed every five years since, this agreement established the *Western Historical Quarterly* and signifies Utah State University's ongoing commitment to the study of western history and to the Western History Association.

With the contract signed, Arrington and Ellsworth went to work creating the *WHQ*. The two half-time editors divvied up duties and assembled a staff consisting of an office manager, copy editor, and graduate student assistant. They furnished a classroom-turned-office in Old Main Hall with existing office equipment (including the two oak desks purchased in the 1920s for use by Turner and Merk) and set about the practical necessities of design, production, advertising, and institutional subscription sales, as well as the scholarly aspects of soliciting, reviewing, and editing the work of western historians. A whirlwind nine months later they mailed the first issue of the *Western Historical Quarterly*.

Many things have changed in the intervening years. While our offices remain in Old Main, we've

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40 Years of the *WHQ* (cont.)

moved from typewriters, paste-up layouts, and typeset to computers, graphic design, and digital printing. We've changed the look of the journal once, experimented with color illustrations, added features to highlight public history, and expanded access with online content. Looking ahead, our greatest challenges involve the economics of publishing and the digital future. *WHQ* editors have been in the forefront of such discussions in the field, carefully situating the journal to protect the interests of the WHA. Despite these changes, the fundamental values put in place by Arrington and Ellsworth (and refined by my predecessors Charles S. Peterson, Clyde A. Milner II, and Anne M. Butler) remain intact: attention to detail, a focus on evolving scholarship, and a commitment to our colleagues and the rising generations of western historians.

Four times a year, our dedicated office staff assembles the words and ideas of authors and reviewers into an issue of cutting edge scholarship. They make the journal happen, from copy editing, citation-

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40 Years of the *WHQ* (cont.)

checking, and cross-reading to the quality control of mailing each issue by hand, much as our predecessors did in 1970. Each year we welcome a new graduate editorial fellow and send one off—forty times—and each year we welcome four new Editorial Board members and send four off—a family of 151. We're supported in our efforts by a host of USU offices (in particular the Department of History, the College of Humanities, Arts, and Social Sciences, and USU's School of Graduate Studies) as well as contracted designers, printers, advertisers, and of course by the officers of the WHA. The *WHQ* is, in this way, a broad collaboration. But the most important part will always be you and your work—the innovative ideas that surprise us, that transform our field, that reshape the entire discipline.

From my seat behind the reputed "FJT Desk of History," the *WHQ* appears poised for another forty years of award-winning scholarship as the official journal of the Western History Association. Visit our website for more on the *WHQ*'s past and present, including George Ellsworth's 1979 essay on the early *WHQ*, "Ten Years: An Editor's Report," <http://www.usu.edu/whq/history.htm>.

THE Western Historical Quarterly

JANUARY 1971

THE FRONTIER AND I

Ray Allen Billington

A BRAHMIN IN BUFFALOLAND

Robert G. Atherton

THE MINING PROMOTER
IN THE TRANS-MISSISSIPPI WEST

Levi Atherton

MARK TWAIN'S ATTITUDE TOWARD
THE NEGRO IN THE WEST, 1861-1867

Arthur G. Pettit

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