

THE DENVER & RIO GRANDE RAILROAD DEPOT

Douglas County has always been a thoroughfare for travelers; from migrating animals, and early native peoples tracing trails to steam locomotives moving goods and people, and later to Interstate 25 that divides the east and west sides of the County. The Denver & Rio Grande Railroad Depot (large photo inside brochure) in Castle Rock still stands today.

CATTLE RANCHES

Douglas County's high prairie grasslands provided wide range for cattle ranches. With the high altitude and semi-arid conditions, cattle herds required many acres to roam. Ranchers looked for breeds that could thrive under harsh conditions and serve more than one purpose. The milking shorthorn was one breed that was common in Douglas County. Fall round-ups and annual branding events were part of life for cattle ranchers.



THE GRANGE

The social and cooperative opportunities provided by local Granges throughout Douglas County were well-appreciated by families living on farms and ranches. The

Grange organization supported and brought together those who made a living through agriculture, and hosted dances and entertainment for young people and their parents.



TIME FOR PLAY

Culture and recreation were valued by the early residents of Douglas County. They worked hard but made time to pursue the arts and to enjoy themselves and their communities.



DOUGLAS COUNTY HISTORIC PRESERVATION BOARD

The Douglas County Historic Preservation Board became a volunteer arm of Douglas County government on May 27, 1992. Our mission is to identify, preserve, and communicate the history of Douglas County, Colorado. DCHPB members are appointed by the Board of County Commissioners and represent all areas of the County. To learn more about our activities, go to douglas.co.us/community/historic.

The Douglas County Historic Preservation Board
is part of the Community Services Division
100 Third St.
Castle Rock, CO 80104
Ph: 303.660.7460
www.douglas.co.us/community/historic



A BRIEF HISTORY OF DOUGLAS COUNTY, COLORADO



*Dedicated to the Future
of the Past*

www.douglas.co.us/community/historic

ABOUT THE PEOPLE

Douglas County has a rich and colorful history. It was inhabited first by Paleo-Indians, and later by the Arapaho, Cheyenne and Ute Nations. Trappers and traders, such as Jim Bridger and Kit Carson hunted and traveled through the region. The Cherokee Trail and the Smoky Hill Trail both traverse Douglas County and were witness to thousands of pioneers heading to Colorado and west.

PIKES PEAK GOLD RUSH

The initial discovery of gold by the Green Russell Party on June 22, 1858, helped to trigger the 1858 Pikes Peak Gold Rush. More than 150,000 gold seekers traveled to Colorado to find their personal bonanzas. In 1889, author Frank Hall referred to Douglas County as the Birthplace of Colorado. Although the gold did not prove to offer untold riches, people did stay to quarry for rhyolite as an important building material in Denver and the entire area. Lumber mills in Douglas County also contributed to supplies needed to build homes and businesses.



DOUGLAS COUNTY AND FRANKSTOWN

When Colorado became a territory in 1861, the area was subdivided into counties. Douglas County was one of the original counties and was named for Stephen A. Douglas, famed orator, Senator and presidential rival to Abraham Lincoln. At that time, Douglas County extended from the Platte River to the Kansas border. Frank Gardner (pictured) built a settlement and fort along Cherry Creek. It was named Frankstown and served as the county seat until 1874.



OUR COUNTY SEAT

In 1874, Elbert County was created out of the eastern portion of Douglas County, and citizens voted to change the county seat to Castle Rock. The first Douglas County Courthouse was built in 1874. In 1889, a more impressive Courthouse was built using native rhyolite stone. This building was destroyed by arson in 1978.



DAIRY FARMS

As more families began to homestead and settle on the land, many dairy farms supported the growing population. A system of local creameries developed. Dairy farmers could deliver milk to the nearest creamery where butter and cheese were made and shipped around the state.



SCHOOLS

Education was important to the early ranchers and farmers. One-room schools dotted the countryside. These little schools served many purposes and were central in the social lives of the neighboring families. Some schools were built and used by the nearby families, and then, when those children all graduated, the building was moved to an area where younger children needed a school.

