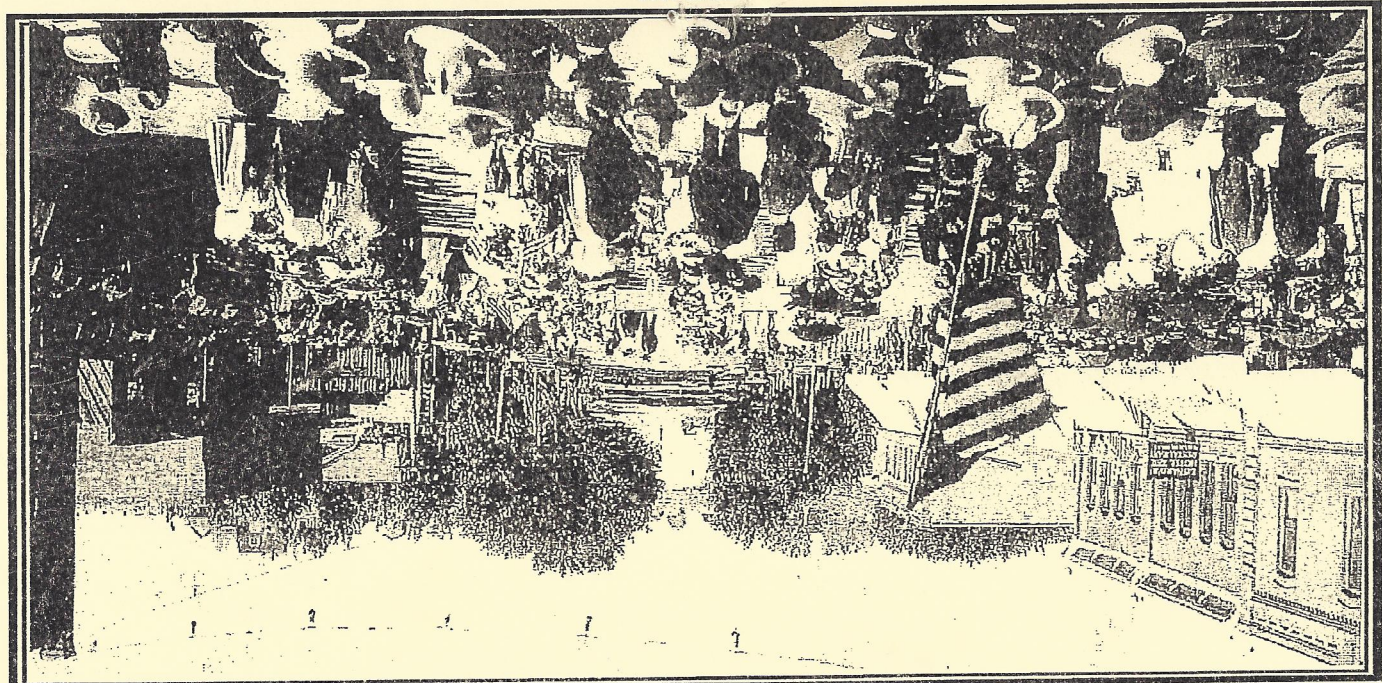


CIRCA 1900



OUR HISTORY - OUR HERITAGE



RIFLE COLORADO

RIFLE CIRCA 1926



PHOTOS COURTESY OF THE PAUL AND CARLA BERNKLAU COLLECTION

HISTORY OF RIFLE

To the rest of the world, Rifle seems an odd name for a creek and a town. However, Rifle Creek it is. From the creek's name, Abram Maxfield christened the town he mapped out for his homestead in 1883. A favorite story was that a traveler left his gun by a tree and named the creek Rifle when he went to retrieve it. Another story is that a rusty rifle was found by the creek, which is unlikely because rifles were too precious to leave behind. The name Rifle appears in the Hayden survey of 1876. Other stories can be found in "Rifle Shots" available at the Rifle Creek Museum, or online at rhsi.org (Rifle Historical Society). These early settlers christened each new place as they traveled, and it was often difficult to come up with a new name. Any peculiarity or oddity was seized on for use in a name.

1776- Escalante and Dominguez were in the area seeking a route from Sante Fe, New Mexico to California. They turned west and tried to cross the rugged hills west of Debeque.

1876- Colorado gained statehood and sent Hayden to survey the area which was then in the possession of the Ute Indians. That was the first time Rifle appeared on a map.

1882- After the Utes were moved to smaller reservations in Utah and southwest Colorado, the country opened up for settlement. Abram Maxfield and Charles Marshall left the mining camp on Battle Mountain in Eagle County to seek land to homestead. They rode two horses and led two pack horses into the valley of the Grand River (later renamed the Colorado River). At Rifle they parted ways with Maxfield claiming the land at Rifle Creek, while Marshall continued west. Maxfield went home to file the claim and brought his son Clinton to help him build his log cabin. It was in the middle of the block currently bounde

1883- Maxfield moved his family to his homestead. He stayed long enough in Glenwood Springs for his wife to sketch the small town, (the sketch is in the Frontier Historical Museum in Glenwood Springs) then moved on down the river. Soon after their arrival their son Roy was born.

1890- A bridge was constructed across the Grand River and the stock yards were built by the railroad tracks.

1898- Zieseniss and Todd opened a store.

1894– J.W. Hugus, built a store containing a Post Office and a Bank on the corner of 3rd and Railroad Avenue. Emigrants from Nova Scotia, Ed Mc Learn and Steve Day opened a store across the street with about \$500.00 worth of stock.

1895– Fred Munro moved from Antler's (5 miles east of Rifle) and was employed at Hugus Co. as Head Clerk. In 1900 he built his own store on the corner of East Avenue and 3rd Street. It now houses Garfield County offices.

1899– The D&RG Railroad reached Rifle on July 15th. Rifle became the largest shipping center in the State, shipping more cattle than Denver.

1901– Emil Hoffmeister came to Rifle from Glenwood Springs, where he was employed and decided Rifle was the place to establish his own business. He established a grocery and bakery on East 3rd Street, which he managed until his death.

1902– A major fire which started in the Hugus Store destroyed much of the downtown.

1905– The town was incorporated. The first city hall including a jail was built on west 3rd Street.

1910– Rifle Mountain Park was acquired by the community.

1924– Vanadium was discovered up Rifle Creek and a mill was built east of Rifle by US Vanadium. It was later acquired by Union Carbide and the mill was moved to west Rifle.

1934– The CCC built a log Community House in Rifle Mountain Park.

1944– The Navy began an experimental research project to refine oil shale at Anvil Point.

1982– May 2nd, Black Sunday, when Exxon closed their efforts to develop oil shale in our area causing a recession.

2005– Rifle became the center of a gas boom. 100 years as a city were Celebrated.

2011– Rifle continues to grow with a new Civic Center and Library. Centennial Park was opened and the Book Cliff Arts Council acquired the historic Hickman Farm on the east edge of town, for an Arts Park and Community Garden.

Revised by Betty Clifford 2012

HISTORY OF RIFLE

Questions about Rifle; from a school aged student (Nicole Louderback) for a school report, answered by Bob and Donna Bannon (volunteers for the Rifle Visitor's Center)

What are the most famed streets in town? Who are they named for?

**East Avenue- The oldest street in town; was referred to as
"Silk Stockings Avenue"**

Due to the town's upper class homes being built there.

Clarkson- named for an early general store operator and land developer.

**Prefontaine- Named for two brothers, Alf and Eph, who settled here in
1885 from Quebec, Canada.**

**Railroad Avenue- the Main Street in Rifle (connected the Railroad to the
township).**

**Munro- named for Fred Munro who came to Rifle in 1895, he opened the
first Grocery/ Hardware Store in 1900.**

What are the most historic buildings in town ?

**The McLearn Building - Built in 1902 by Edwin McLearn to house the
McLearn Mercantile Co. with the largest complete stock of
merchandise in the area at that time.**

Located at 3rd St and Railroad Ave. operating now as a Pub.

**The Methodist Church- was the first church built in Rifle in 1889, the
building was replaced with a brick structure in 1907.**

Located at 4th Street and Whiteriver Avenue.

The Rifle House- Located at 2nd Street and Railroad Ave. owned by Mr. Wiseman around 1900. Today the main level hosts business offices, with upper story being rooms for rent.

What if any battles were fought in or near your town?

The Meeker Massacre was fought on the White River, (outside Meeker) Ute Indians killed Indian agency leader Nathan Meeker and 10 others in an uprising in 1879.

The Book Cliff Range War was fought during the 1880's between the Cattlemen and the Sheep men over loss of range lands.

What special Holiday, Festivals or Fairs does your town celebrate?

Ice Fishing Contest in January, Golf Tournament and The Rifle Rendezvous in May, Garfield County Fair and Parade in August, Softball Tournament in September, Hunter's Information Tent and Chili Cook-off in October, Holly Days in December.

Details can be found @ riflechamber.com

What is the highest point in town?

Graham Mesa, east of town, at 5,542 ft.

What Indian tribes lived in the area before your town was founded?

The White River or Tabeguach Band of the Ute tribe.

Where did the first settlers of your town come from?

They came from all directions of the United States, Europe, and Canada. Through the Isthmus of Panama and Cape Horn, the Spaniards from the south and the mines of Colorado.

How did they get there?

The original pioneers came on horseback, as there were no roads, only Indian trails.

Who was the leader of the group?

Two men, Abram Maxfield the founder of Rifle and Charles Marshall were the first to settle the area. They came on horseback from a mining camp on Battle Mountain in Eagle County in 1882. Richard Hutchins and Tom Hickman and families came from St. Louis, Missouri in covered wagons around 1900. In 1901 they returned to St. Louis and brought back 35 people by train to settle in Rifle. Rifle was incorporated as a town in 1905.

What did the first town people do for a living?

They were ranchers, farmers, shop keepers, carpenters and blacksmiths.

Who was the town's greatest hero?

President Theodore Roosevelt. He came to Rifle and the surrounding area to hunt and meet with towns people.

What is the worst disaster to befall the town?

The fire of 1902 was thought to be the worst, it destroyed half of the business section of town. The town was resilient and rebuilt and prospered.

In the mid 1970's the Oil Shale exploration began, bringing growth to the area of workers and their families. For quite a few years Rifle was a "boomtown" the population growing to about 6500 people.

But, on May 2, 1982 "Black Sunday" occurred. Operations at the Oil Shale Plant were closed without warning leaving hundreds of workers jobless and homeless. They left the area in a steady line of cars and trucks, a time known as the "bust" period of Rifle.

By 1988 the community was well on its way to recovery and continues to show growth. New innovations have created that growth with time.