

Read more about the stories that enrich Lafayette's heritage.

Women With Impact - Women played incredible roles in helping to build and shape the West, and in particular, Lafayette. From [Mary Miller](#), the town founder, and [Josephine Roche](#), the majority stake holder in the Rocky Mountain Fuel Company, to [Dolores Kellett](#), a star pitcher, and [Allie Flint](#), Lafayette's first poet laureate, here are the stories of these women. Learn more about Lafayette's first [telephone operators](#) and [Iva's Beauty Shop](#).

Hispanic Settlement - In 1776, Spanish explorers led by padres Atanasio Dominguez and Silvestre Velez de Escalante traveled 2,000 miles into new territory, most of which had never been seen by white men. Their journey included nearly all of Utah, large sections of Arizona and New Mexico and the western area of Colorado.

Front Range Stagecoach Stations - Before the arrival of the railroads, travel in the West was done on horseback or by wagon. A vital part of the development of the frontier was the network of stage stops that existed along the established trails, including two in the Lafayette area.

Homesteaders - In 1862 Congress passed the Homestead Act, which provided for the sale of 160 acres of unoccupied public land to homesteaders for a nominal fee. This opened up the West, including Colorado, to anyone with the courage and determination to make the trip and survive the challenges.

Coal Mining - Coal was first discovered in the Front Range near Marshall in the early 1860's. In 1868 the first coal fields were developed in Erie, after it was noted that prairie dogs were digging black "dirt" from their holes.

Chief Niwot - The Arapaho moved with the seasons – spending spring on the high plains hunting bison, moving north and west as the summer heat intensified, and returning each winter to the cottonwood groves along the banks of Boulder Creek, north of Lafayette, that protected them from the heavy snows that blasted the mountains and plains.



Mary Miller

MARY MILLER

[<back to top>](#)

Mary Miller could best be described as a woman of great vision. She and her husband Lafayette moved to the Boulder County ranch that would become the town named for him and in the mid 1870s discovered a vast vein of coal in the area. Mary Miller wisely kept claim to all the mineral rights and received royalties from mines on her property such as the Cannon and the Simpson.

The town was laid out about 1888-1889 and the original town deeds stipulated that no alcoholic beverages could be sold east of what is now Public Road, a rule that remained in effect until the early 1980s. She was devoted to the temperance movement and once ran for state treasurer on the Prohibition party ticket.

She organized the modest, family-run Miller Bank in 1892, which grew and in 1902 became Lafayette Bank. Mary Miller was elected its first president and at the time was likely the only female bank president in the world. In 1914, overburdened by about \$90,000 in bad loans to the United Mine Workers, the bank, then located at 400 East Simpson, collapsed.

She was known as the Mother of Lafayette, in part for her tireless organizing of local clubs and fraternal organization, and for her calm demeanor in the face of adversity that may have reached its worst on Jan. 24, 1900, when the town burned.

In 1892, she built the Congregational Church at 300 East Simpson St. that has since been converted to a community theater and was recently rechristened the Mary Miller Theater.



Mary Miller

JOSEPHINE ROCHE

[<back to top>](#)

Though Josephine Roche did not live in Lafayette, her influence as majority shareholder in Rocky Mountain Fuel Co. was widely felt among the coal mining families in the area. She disapproved of working conditions in her mines and in 1929, two years after the violent strike at the Columbine Mine, she agreed to a 2-year contract with the United Mine Workers that raised wages and instituted more humane working conditions and hours.



Fuel Co. Riders

She continued what her critics called her “highly touted social experiment” through the Depression and in a fierce wage war against Rockefeller’s Colorado Fuel and Iron Co. until her company declared bankruptcy in 1944. She is remembered by miners as “a good old soul.”

DOLORES "DEE" KELLETT

[<back to top>](#)

Born and raised in Lafayette, Dolores Kellett, standing, third from right in the picture, was a star pitcher in local, regional and national girls’ softball leagues.



Dee Kellett

For 12 years, Miss Kellett’s prowess as a hurler made her a regular in the sports pages of the Denver newspapers. With Dolores on the mound, the King Supers five times qualified for the world series of girls’ softball. Injury forced her into early retirement, upon which she became a competitive bowler.

Her home was originally just two rooms and was located on East Chester Street. It was moved in 1935 and a porch removed and another two rooms were added. In 1948, an indoor bathroom was added.

ALLIE FLINT

[<back to top>](#)

No hard or fast rules governed the position of Lafayette's Poet Laureate, to which Allie Flint was elected by acclamation in November 1947. Few town events went unacknowledged in verse and several of Mrs. Flint's poems are collected in Lafayette History: Treeless Plain to Thriving City.

She was born in 1877 in New York, came to Colorado in 1898 and after taking nurse's training and marrying, moved in Lafayette in 1908. She was the mother of legendary motorcycle cop Harry Flint and a supporter of religious, civic and social activities in the community.



Allie Flint

HELLO GIRLS

[<back to top>](#)

Telephone service came to Lafayette in July 1903, with M.F. Madison as owner and manager of the private company. Three years later, 112 Lafayette residents had phone service and a corps of operators, or Hello Girls, provided a critical link to the world outside. By 1910, most everyone could call the local operator for the correct time, weather predictions or to find out who was downtown. In 1921, the operators proved their muster when an afternoon cloudburst sent six feet of water rushing through town. Marooned tourists and worried out-of-town relatives kept the Lafayette Telephone Exchange hot for hours after the deluge.



Hello Girls

IVA'S BEAUTY SHOP

[<back to top>](#)

The building at 208 East Simpson has been home to many businesses over the years. First, Sarah Jane Kettle ran a sandwich and chili shop and later a dry goods store there. Then, in 1929, Hazel and Helen Graham rented the building and opened the H&H Beauty Shop. In 1933, Hazel married and sold her share of the shop to Iva Brown Whipple, who worked with Helen for a year until Helen married. Shortly thereafter, the shop was renamed Iva's Beauty Shop. It was the city's oldest continuously operated business.

HISPANIC SETTLEMENT

[<back to top>](#)



Duran Salazar

In 1776, Spanish explorers led by padres Atanasio Dominguez and Silvestre Velez de Escalante traveled 2,000 miles into new territory, most of which had never been seen by white men. Their journey included nearly all of Utah, large sections of Arizona and New Mexico and the western area of Colorado. In their company were an engineer and mapmaker, and several men who had previously entered part of the territory as traders. They were equipped and funded by the Catholic Church of Old Mexico, which was ruled by Spain at the time.

In 1821, Mexico won its independence from Spain and the Southwest became a part of Mexico. The Mexican American War of 1846 and subsequent treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo established the present boundaries between the U.S. and Mexico.

More and more freighting expeditions opened up the north south route through Colorado, giving additional mobility to the Hispanic population. Hispanos from New Mexico moved north and were joined by Mexican nationals. In the mid-1800s, the San Luis Valley became a stronghold of Hispanic tradition and culture in Colorado.

Mexican Americans were already prospecting for gold in the Platte River near present-day Denver when gold was "discovered" in Colorado in 1858. An estimated 100,000 gold seekers set out for Colorado in 1859, transforming the fledgling settlement of Denver into an important regional center. In their fervor to get to the gold fields of the Rocky Mountains, prospectors literally stumbled over veins of coal which were to become east Boulder County's mainstay for many years to come.

As industrialization came to the state in the early 1900s, there was a significant migration of Hispanos from south central and western Colorado. These newcomers sought work in the steel mills, sugar beet industry and coal mines as far north as Ft. Collins. Large numbers of Mexican

nationals migrated north for these same job opportunities and soon outnumbered the Hispano Coloradoans.

The Abeytas, whose history in Colorado goes back 150 years, are one of Lafayette's oldest Hispanic families. Even more venerable, the Archuleta family history dates back to the early Conquistadors. Edward Abeyta worked in the coal mines as did many heads of Lafayette Hispanic households in the early 1900s. Some of these hardworking coal miners included David Manzanarez, Lloyd Martinez, Emilio Silva, Henry Rosales, and Jose Benito Salizar.

The Joseph Martinez family came to Lafayette in a covered wagon in the early 1900s and Mr. Martinez worked as a crop harvester and farmer.

Another notable Lafayette citizen of Hispanic descent was Alicia Sanchez, whose name is honored by the Alicia Sanchez Elementary School.

STAGECOACH STATIONS

[<back to top>](#)



Waneka Stagecoach Station

Before the arrival of the railroads, travel in the West was done on horseback or by wagon. A vital part of the development of the frontier was the network of stage stops that existed along the established trails, including two in the Lafayette area.

Adolph Waneka came to the Colorado Territory in 1860 and built a two story stone structure which served as his ranch house and a stage stop. Stagecoaches would come to Denver from Fort Morgan, then head north along the old Cherokee Trail, to Longmont, Loveland, Fort Collins and Cheyenne. People traveled from the Fort Collins area, stopping off at the Waneka Station to rest and eat before continuing on to shop in Denver.

Mary and Lafayette Miller established the Rock Creek Station along the Denver-Cheyenne route at Rock Creek in 1863. In 1865, a special rider was sent along the stage route to bring the fateful news of President Abraham Lincoln's assassination. One day in the summer of 1867, a man got off the stage and asked Mrs. Miller if she could feed the circus troupe that would be arriving soon. She got to work and served hot meals to 100 performers from the John Robinson Circus, which was the first circus to come to Colorado.

HOMESTEADERS & FARMING

[<back to top>](#)

In 1862 Congress passed the Homestead Act, which provided for the sale of 160 acres of unoccupied public land to homesteaders for a nominal fee. This opened up the West, including Colorado, to anyone with the courage and determination to make the trip and survive the challenges.

The earliest recorded land acquisitions in the Lafayette area date from 1864, with George Pierce and Stephen Goodall receiving land patents south and east of what is now the City of Lafayette. In 1868 a patent was issued to William St. John for land that would eventually become the original site of the town.



Ewing Family Farmhouse - then

With the relatively temperate climate of the Front Range and the large tracts of land available, farming was the area's first industry. Despite plentiful water and sunshine, early farmers faced many difficulties. The prairie sod was tough to cultivate and grasshoppers were formidable foes. The Rocky Mountain locust descended on Boulder County farms and ranches by the billions throughout the 1860's, causing massive devastation to the area's crops.

Most pioneer farms and ranches have disappeared, replaced by subdivisions and strip malls. One notable relic from this era is the Ewing Centennial Farm, located at 1915 North 95th Street. Settled by John Ewing in 1885, this farm remained a working agricultural operation until the 1970's.

FRONT RANGE COAL MINING

[<back to top>](#)

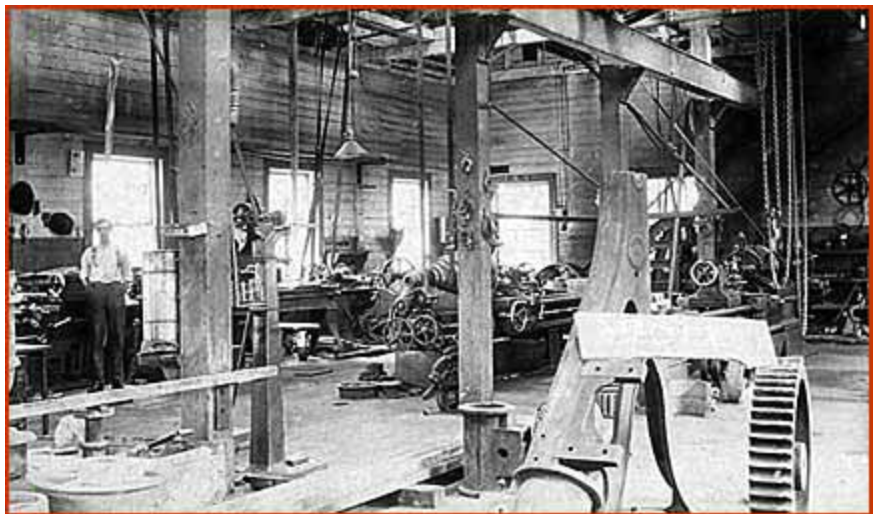


Thousands of years ago the inland seas that had covered the central part of Colorado at one time were draining, leaving vast swamps in their wake. These swamps consisted of an immense mass of vegetable matter that in time was covered by clay; sand and pebbles washed down from the mountains. These layers of decaying plant matter eventually formed the Tertiary coal formation found along the Coal Creek area.

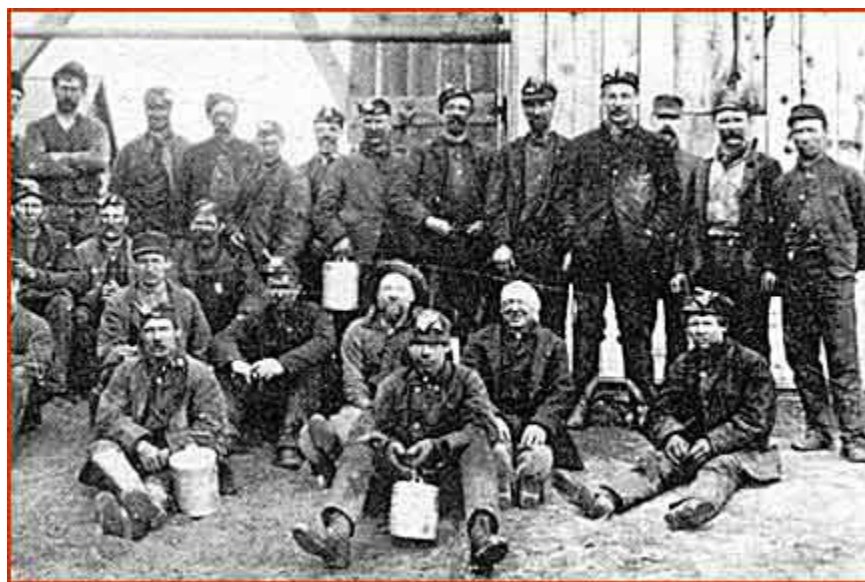
Coal was first discovered in the Front Range near Marshall in the early 1860's. In 1868 the first coal fields were developed in Erie, after it was noted that prairie dogs were digging black "dirt" from their holes. The widow Mary Miller hired John Simpson of Louisville to look for coal on her ranch and 1884 and the first shaft was sunk in 1887. The Simpson Mine opened in 1888 and remained active until 1926. By 1896 records for Boulder County listed Lafayette as one of the largest coal mining towns in Colorado, with five active mines at that time.



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Mining was dangerous, difficult work. Lafayette miners were involved in the strike at the Columbine Mine in 1927, during which six miners were shot and killed by mine guards. Five of these miners were buried in unmarked graves in the Lafayette Cemetery.



CHIEF NIWOT

[<back to top>](#)

The primary tribe of Native Americans who inhabited the Front Range when the European settlers arrived was the Arapaho. The name Arapaho may come from the Pawnee word for trader, as the Arapaho were great traders. Lakota Sioux called the Arapaho the Blue Sky People, while other tribes called them the Tattooed People, because Arapaho scratched designs into their skin using yucca leaf needles, then colored the wound with wood ashes to make an indelible tattoo. The Arapaho called themselves Our People or The Bison Path People.



Chiefs of Arapaho, Sioux, Cheyenne and Kiowa Tribe

The Arapaho moved with the seasons – spending spring on the high plains hunting bison, moving north and west as the summer heat intensified, and returning each winter to the cottonwood groves along the banks of Boulder Creek, north of Lafayette, that protected them from the heavy snows that blasted the mountains and plains.

Sometime in the 1820's a baby boy was born to the Arapaho people. When he reached for his mother with his left hand, he was given the name Niwot, the Arapaho word for Left Handed. Although no picture survives of Niwot, he was described in adulthood as "the finest looking Indian I have ever seen. He was over six feet tall, of muscular build, and much more intelligent than the average Indian. He did not braid his hair; it hung loosely over his shoulders. When wearing his war bonnet and full warrior's regalia he looked every inch a chief."

Niwot learned to speak English from his sister's husband, trader John Poisal. He was inquisitive and outgoing, and while many of his people hid from the white settlers, Niwot sought them out, visiting their trading posts to watch them and listen to them talk.

By the 1850's the Arapaho population had been devastated by disease and violence at the hands of white settlers. By the time Niwot was made the Boulder band's chief, the tribe consisted of only a few thousand survivors. Once Boulder was founded in 1859 Niwot moved his band away from Boulder Creek in an effort to avoid clashes with the whites. Despite this, trouble followed the Arapaho. In April 1860, while Chief Niwot and the other warriors were out hunting, a group of drunken whites led by Charles Gardner attacked the Arapaho camp on the bank of the St. Vrain. They raped females of all ages. Gardner was well known to the Arapaho as an unsavory character. He had killed and eaten his Arapaho wife during a blizzard one winter.

Despite repeated efforts to live peacefully with the whites, by the winter of 1861-1862 Niwot's people were desperately poor, hungry and diseased. Whites illegally settled on land promised to the Arapaho by the Treaty of Fort Laramie, decimating the supply of game upon which the Arapaho depended. As violence against his band increased, Chief Niwot reluctantly

moved his people onto the plains. Major Scott Anthony of Fort Lyon guaranteed the Arapaho's safety if they camped near the fort on Sand Creek. Instead of the promised safety the Indians received a surprise attack in the dark and freezing pre-dawn hours of November 29, 1864.

Colonel John Chivington and 550 troops surprised the sleeping village. White traders within the camp tried to stop the attack. Indians raised both a white flag and the American flag as signs of peace, but to no avail. By the end of the day 163 Indians, mainly women, children and old men, had been slaughtered.