

John Potter.
Colorado Springs, Colo.
18 E. Dale Street

Colorado Springs, Colorado, A.D.1901

To the citizens of Colorado Springs in the year A.D. 2001, a kindly greeting.

In the making up of the contents of the Century chest to be opened by you one hundred years hence, it has been assigned to me to write of the early settlers and their hopes. I was assigned to this topic from the fact, I suppose, that I was one of the earliest little group of pioneers that came to the beautiful plateau of prairie land on which the city stands for the purpose of making the prospective settlement our future home.

It was thirty years ago that we came and pitched our tents near the little stream now known as Monument creek; and from that time to the one in which I write this letter, Colorado Springs has been my permanent home.

It has been my delightful experience to witness the birth and substantial growth of one of the most beautiful and prosperous cities in the United States from the pitching of the first tent to its present goodly dimensions. It has been an experience not given to every one, and one which of course I never shall have again.

In the settlement of the colony nearly every state in the Union was represented, though the largest proportion of settlers by far was from the New England states and those known as the northern middle states, whose peoples were mostly descendants of the early settlers of New England.

There was also a quota of foreign-born citizens. The proportionate number was small, but among them were to be found those who have been among the foremost in promoting the prosperity of the city.

What may be stated as the southern element of the population was principally from the states of Missouri, Kentucky, Tennessee, with a small sprinkling from most of the other southern states.

The great civil war had ended but a few years previous to the first settlement of the city, and many graves, north and south, were still moistened with the tears of bereaved ones whose husbands and sons and brothers had fallen in the conflict.

Many of those who had participated in that long and bloody war, both from the north and the south, met here to fraternize and join their efforts in making permanent the little settlement that they looked forward to as the future home for themselves and their descendants.

There was no unfriendliness between these two elements. In the true American spirit, the animosities engendered by the war were relegated to the great battlefields on which they

culminated, and those who had but lately confronted each other in the strife of battle now met to work shoulder to shoulder for the best interests of all.

As to the hopes that inspired and actuated the earlier settlers of the place to abandon their former homes and move to a distant and unsettled country, it is probably safe to say that few came with any specific purpose in view other than to in some way better their then present condition.

The late war had left the entire south prostrate in every way and overwhelmed in a great desolation from which there was but little of recovery before another generation at least, and there were but few openings there where energy might hope to reap its due reward.

In the North, a great reaction from the unnatural prosperity created by the demands of a great war for material of all kinds at high prices had taken place, and there was over production in manufactures of nearly every kind and also in farm productions.

In addition to this condition of things, the disbandment of the great northern armies threw a multitude of young and active men into the fields of labor where already the supply was greater than the demand.

To these causes more than to any other was due the rapid filling up with settlers of most of the western states and territories after the war. It was from this element of discontent in the east and south that not only Colorado Springs, but nearly every other city and town of any permanency in the west found its pioneer builders.

Their principal hope and aim was to find openings more liberal to energy and ability than those offered in the eastern and southern states, with a determination to adapt themselves to such practicable and available ones as might be found.

Of course there was always in mind the alluring prospect of quickly attained wealth from the veins of gold and silver that lay hidden in the mountains of some of the new territories; and it is probable that no pioneer of Colorado Springs was altogether indifferent to the possibilities of this nature when he elected to make the place his future home.

The social conditions of Colorado Springs during its infancy were very pleasant. The number of the inhabitants was small, and there was a general and congenial acquaintanceship through out. There was hardly more than one social grade, and all were in it.

The absence of public drinking saloons and disreputable places of resort made the village unattractive to the lawless and rougher element of mankind who were so much in evidence in many young western settlements where little or no attention was paid to the enforcement of the laws.

The minister and the school teacher quickly followed the mechanic, and little edifices for the public school and for church purposes were among the first to dot the beautiful townsite.

The first dwelling houses were cheap, and often rough, affairs, and were too small to admit of social gatherings being held in them; but the churches and a diminutive city hall were utilized for the purpose.

A literary and debating society was organized; questions of general interest were discussed, and productions of the local literary talent were read and criticized. These meetings were very popular to all and the place of gathering was generally filled to its utmost capacity.

The present labor question presented no perplexing problems here at that time. The mechanics were besought on every hand to do work in their respective lines at the earliest possible moment and at their own prices. All day long the sounds of saws and hammers filled the air, and at the hour for quitting work the tools were left scattered about where last used, with no apprehension on the part of the owners that they might be found missing on the following day.

In the election of incumbents to the public offices little or no attention was paid to the political convictions of the respective candidates. Those who were elected to office went in either on their well-known merits and qualifications or on their general popularity, which, in its way, meant a recognition of merit.

And so the embryo city began its life and growth with a happy and contented and prosperous community from the first. There was no squalor nor suffering from poverty in the place. The people were generally intelligent and law abiding, and of a decidedly religious tendency.

To nearly all who came, the change of home proved a gratifying success, and but few ever returned to again live in their former places. Some who came with but little in view but to earn their living by honest toil to be paid for in fair wages, eventually acquired great wealth, as wealth is reckoned in this age. Others to whom political prominence was the great desideratum realized their aspirations to an ample degree.

Not a few of the early settlers eventually found themselves in comfortable circumstances from the tremendous increase in value of their real estate holdings alone. Lots in certain parts of the city that were first sold to the pioneers by the town company for one hundred dollars would in many instances now readily sell for twenty five thousand dollars, and in some cases would bring a considerably larger sum. Some also acquired great wealth from successful mining operations in different parts of the state.

From the first there has seemed to be a witchery about the place that causes all who live in it to love it and to feel more than contented to abide in it until called to another life. Circumstances beyond control, and in some cases discontent, have caused some to

remove to other places; but a large proportion of them returned when able to do so, with the firm conviction that there was no other town in the country that was its equal for a permanent and enjoyable home.

The present century, now so young, will, ere its close, through scientific advancement, bring many conveniences and comforts and pleasures to future generations of which those now living can form no idea. But applied science will never be able to furnish them with the fine spirit of charity, the hearty geniality, and the spontaneous good fellowship that so permeated the social atmosphere of Colorado Springs during its earlier years. For these blessings they must seek where material science is of little avail, as all previous generations from the beginning have had to do.

Your sincere well wisher,
John Potter