



The DENVER WESTERNERS
ROUNDUP

September-October 2021



Courtesy Wikipedia

*Santa Claus as drawn by Thomas Nash
in the "Christmas Furlough" Issue of
Harper's Weekly of January 3, 1863*

The Jolly Old Elf Called Santa Claus

By Everett Brailey

(presented December 18, 2019)

The Jolly Old Elf Called Santa Claus

By Everett Brailey

He has been on many publications' covers throughout the decades, featured in periodicals and included in many books. So, who is this historic person that almost every American recognizes and is featured on the cover of this *Roundup*? The origin of this elf was probably inspired by a biblical verse in John 3:16 that started: "For God so loved the world that he gave...." Any Christmas celebration, whether religious or secular, begins with love and most folks accept the idea of sharing love with others, and the receiving of love from them is the heart of Christmas celebrations.

What better time to know what it is like to be loved and to know the joy of sharing love with others than at Christmas. Perhaps this was the beginning of what we call the Spirit of Christmas, and other than the Christ Child, who best embodies that love and generosity better than Santa Claus? In the movie *Miracle on 34th Street*, Kris Kringle says: "Christmas isn't just a day, it is a frame of mind." He is so right.

As the early Christian church struggled to establish its theology and traditions, a structure came slowly into existence. That structure revolved around its worship practices and its formation of a church year. In 137, the Bishop of Rome ordered the birth of Christ to be celebrated with its own festival. Borrowing in some cases from other cultures, the church began to establish certain days for special commemorations. One of these commemorative days was placing the birth of Jesus on December 25. This was done under the reign of Emperor Constantine in the year 325. This reinforced the growing association of love and giving on December 25 and the Holy Communion Mass, Christ's Mass easily became shorted as Christmas.

This first connection to Santa was a young man who became a monk. His name was Nicholas. According to tradition, Nicholas was born on March 2, 270, in the Asia Minor city of Patava or Patras, now modern-day Turkey. When his parents died leaving him with great wealth, he began to find ways to share his wealth.



Courtesy Wikimedia Commons

A Large Icon of St Nicholas painted in 1294
for the Lipnya Church in Novgorod, Russia

One of the stories about Nicholas centered on a widower who could not provide dowries for his three daughters so the daughters could marry. The widower was afraid that he might have to sell his daughters into slavery. As one version of this story goes, Nicholas dropped a bag of gold through the window of the widower's house on three different occasions, one for each of his daughter's doweries. Another version of the story adds that the bags fell into the maidens' stockings or maybe wrapped in the stockings. Still another version has the bags dropped down a chimney. A secret delivery, a chimney, some stockings. On another occasion, Nicholas was said to have performed the miracle of raising three boys from the dead.

There is a painting entitled *The Miracles of St. Nicholas of Bari* illustrating this story. It was painted around 1330 to 1340 by Ambrogio Lorenzetti. The painting shows Nicholas sharing his wealth. This painting presently hangs in the Louvre museum in Paris.

Nicholas moved to the city of Myra, present day Demre, where he became the Bishop of Myra. Here Nicholas became well known for his generosity. He died on December 6, 343. The church commemorates the Festival of St. Nicholas on December 6. His fame increased a great deal after his death, to the point that the Church declared Nicholas a Saint. Following in his stead, it became a custom to give gifts on his day, December 6. Known for his piety and kindness, Nicholas became the Patron Saint of children and sailors, among other such designations.

Ironically, in 1969, the Roman Catholic Church lowered Nicholas' status from saint "to a revered legendary hero" and the Vatican II Council went so far as to say that there never was a bishop named Nicholas. Philip Snyder, in a book entitled *December 25* writes: "From (Nicholas') own period, not one single shred of evidence proving that he ever lived can be found." This might be true but why ruin a good story?

Nicholas is usually portrayed either as a monk going door to door, or as a bearded Bishop in canonical robes. "May the good Saint drawing near, fill your cup with Joy, my dear." This harkens to the theme of a generous Saint giving to the poor. "Wishing you a bright and happy Christmas."

After Nicholas, the celebration of December 25 as Christmas began to expand, and the concept of December 6 and the celebration of St. Nicholas grew with it. Celebrations of Christmas began to highlight some angelic messenger or messengers. They even had the three kings delivering gifts on January 6, Epiphany Day, the day that celebrated the coming of the three Kings. The fame of St. Nicholas spread north, through Germany into the regions of Scandinavia and Russia. Some folks say that the idea of reindeer came from the northlands. Both the Christmas and the Nicholas concepts revolved around the giving of presents, gifts of love and generosity.

In Germany, a popular winter celebration was that of Yuletide. The Christian concept of Christmas began to move into the Yuletide celebration, and the traditions began to merge together. Nicholas was still an important part of the Christmas celebration. So much so that some would impersonate him by giving gifts to the good children and a switch or lump of coal to the bad children. "Naughty or nice?"

Along came the Protestant Reformation. The reformers scorned the concept of St. Nicholas because they had little respect for the Roman Catholic Church's Veneration

of Saints. There were other church Christmas traditions of the Virgin Mary, the angels and the wisemen which were also discouraged. The reformers believed that the thoughts of those folks overshadowed the real meaning of Christmas, the baby Jesus.

Yet the idea of gift giving and a special character that facilitated that purpose remained. But it was becoming necessary for the St. Nicholas of centuries ago to make some changes in his identity.

Downplaying the place of the saints like Nicholas, the reformer Martin Luther pushed for more emphasis on the birth of Christ. He supported a South German tradition of an angel-like figure accompanying Nicholas, a young girl called Christkind. She would be a blonde, who would wear a white and gold robe with a crown and she carried a Christmas tree. She was a messenger of Jesus. Added to the Christkind is a star which leads Nicholas and Christkind on their way. They are accompanied by a deer. The Christkind represented peace and serenity, and she brought presents. The Christkind would eventually change from a young girl to a man, known as Kris Kringle.

A new creation was added, a sidekick named Knecht Ruprecht. It became Knecht's job to question the children about their behavior over the past year. He would deal with the naughty kids, bringing coal, or sometimes a beating with a switch. The story of the gift giver and his aides has forever ranged from the loftiest sublimity to the deepest scariness.

In Austria, Nicholas' side kick was Krampus, and as far as his duties were concerned, Krampus and Knecht were a matched pair in dealing with the naughty. In France, Father Christmas was personified as "Pere Noel" (Papa Noel). Pere Noel rode on a donkey. His side kick was Pere Fouettard, a Dutch pronunciation for Black Pete. His job was to take care of the naughty. Pere Noel wore a long red robe, and he carried his presents in a basket.

In England, the emerging figure was called Father Christmas and he too brought the children presents. Other English Christmas traditions revolved around large roasts, decorations, a blazing fire in fireplaces, lots of Christmas caroling and much revelry. Father Christmas had a long green robe with a wreath of ivy or mistletoe on his head. When one sees the John Leech illustration in the first edition of Charles Dickens book, *A Christmas Carol*, the Ghost of Christmas Present strongly resembles the images of Father Christmas.



Courtesy WikiCommons
 "The Ghost of Christmas Present" by John Leech,
 in the First Edition in 1843 of "A Christmas Carol"

The Italians had their own Father Christmas image, but they called him Babbo Natale and Babbo delivered his gifts on Christmas Eve, a new addition to the emerging figure of Santa Claus. The Danes had their Julenissen (the Christmas elf); the Fins had Joulupukki (a man transformed into the Yule Goat) while the Swedes called the same Yule Goat, Jultomten. All three brought gifts at Christmas time.

In the Netherlands, the Dutch retained a great emphasis on Nicholas and his December 6 date on the church calendar. The “Sint Nicholas” story went like this. Every year in November, Sint Nicholas came to the Netherlands from Spain, riding a horse across the sky at night. Later, the horse was replaced by reindeer to propel Santa’s movements. Some pictures of Father Christmas seem to have an American influence, when a turkey is added to the picture. Other pictures of Father Christmas show a holly wreath suggesting an English pre-Christian tie to the Druids.

In the Middle Ages, Saint Nicholas became “Sinterklaas.” Sinterklaas had the appearance of Bishop Nicholas—a long red cape, a Bishop’s miter hat and crosier (shepherds crook). The emphasis remained on the giving of gifts to the children. But for the adults, the emphasis was placed on having a good time, drunkenness and debauchery and other such “festive” activities.

Sinterklaas wore a Bishop’s robe, making a connection to the earlier St. Nicholas. He also had a sidekick, Zwarte Piet or Black Pete. Black Pete’s role was to keep track of the kids who were naughty. But Black Pete eventually became a good person and as such faded from existence.

When it came to the New World, it was the Dutch who made many of the new contributions to what would become our “right, jolly old elf.” The Dutch came to the area in and north of New Amsterdam, later to become New York City. They brought along their Sinter Klaas, but these new Americans also brought along St. Nicholas.

By the mid 1770s, their Christmas celebrations were becoming well known. One of those Dutchmen would become a great American author. When this man is discussed, most people remember the great characters of his creation that lived along the Hudson River, the scary headless horseman of *Sleepy Hollow* and the man who went to sleep, *Rip Van Winkle*. Writing under the pseudonym of Diedrick Knickerbocker, Washington Irving wrote a book called *A Knickerbocker History of New York* in 1809. John Pintard, founder of the New York Historical Society, planted the idea of making St. Nicholas the Patron Saint of New York.



Courtesy WikiCommons

Washington Irving described
St. Nicholas as a “Jolly old Dutchman.”
Portrait by John Wesley Jarvis (1809)

In his book, Irving's description of Sinter Klaas began a revolution that would carry through for 150 years. Irving replaced the red bishop robes with a jolly-sailor type character. He gave Sinter Klaas an ample beer belly, a jolly "little" fellow who would lay a finger alongside of his nose to mount his horse-drawn wagon and disappear over the rooftops.

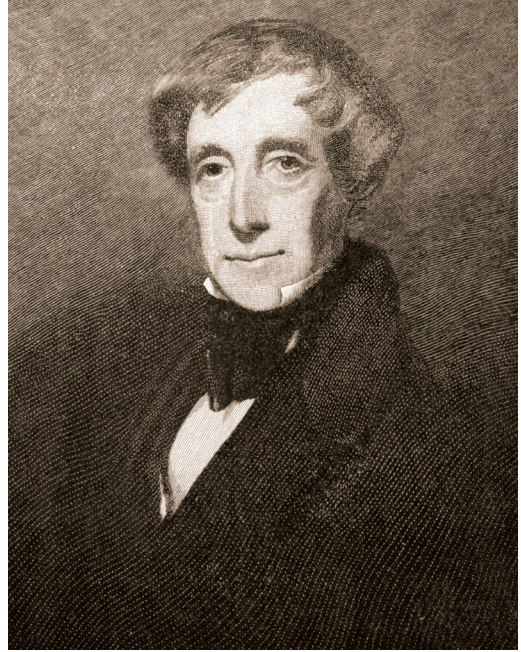
Irving's book also noted five Christmas stories depicting some contributions of the English settlers to the area such as feasts, decorations, caroling and stockings hanging from fireplace mantels.

In 1821, an anonymous artist illustrated a children's poem book entitled *Old Santa Claus With Much Delight* and added some new twists to the Santa Claus mystic. It highlighted the arrival of Santa Claus on Christmas Eve. "Old Santa Claus with much delight, his reindeer drives this frosty night. O'er chimney tops and tracks of snow, to bring his yearly gifts to you."

During this same period, there was an accomplished Episcopal minister, the son of a Bishop. Having written *The Compendious Lexicon of the Hebrew Language* in 1809, he became a scholar of great renown. He was a Professor of Oriental and Greek literature and a Professor of Biblical Learning at a local seminary, and he taught both Greek and Hebrew languages.

His name was Clement Clarke Moore and he was a straight-laced, conservative theologian. On Christmas Eve, 1822, the minister took a sleigh ride to get his turkey dinner. Along the way he met his handyman, Jan Duychinck, a bearded cheerful man with a pipe. After returning home, he thought he would write a frivolous poem about Christmas for his three daughters.

Moore wrote his *A Visit From St. Nicholas*, "arguably the best known verses ever written by an American." Who would ever believe such a distinguished scholar and clergyman would ever have anything to do with such nonsense? A year later, on December 23, a copy of the poem found its way into the local *Troy Sentinel* newspaper with its author listed as anonymous. It was years before the dignified professor would admit that he had authored this literary "lie." "Even today, Moore's poem remains influential propaganda" regarding Santa Claus. *'Twas the Night before Christmas*, the title of Moore's poem with which we are most familiar, became a bonanza for the Santa Claus description.



Courtesy WikiCommons

Clement Clarke Moore Park in Chelsea, New York City is named after Moore

Moore reinforces the ties between Santa and Christmas Eve. He has the sleigh on the rooftop from where Santa slides down the chimney with a bag of toys on his back. And Moore even named the eight reindeer: Dasher, Dancer, Prancer, Vixen, Comet, Cupid, Donner and Blitzen. It seems that other lists of reindeer had Dunder and Blixen, German for Thunder and Lighting, instead of Donner and Blitzen.

The story of *Rudolph, the Red Nosed Reindeer* is a creation of Montgomery Ward's Robert L. May in 1939. Two-and-one-half-million copies were printed in 1939, another three-and-one-half-million copies were in the 1946 reprint. May's friend Johnny Marks wrote the song and cowboy star named Gene Autry made Rudolph a household name with his recording in 1946, selling 1.75 million copies.

In the 1964 motion picture, *Rudolph*, it was said that Donner was Rudolph's father. Zoologist Andrew Hebard, who deals with reindeer, said that male reindeer lose their antlers after mating early in the fall. All images of Santa's reindeer show antlers on all eight reindeer, indicating that all are females. If that's true, can Donner be Rudolph's "father?" But then why ruin a good story?

By 1845, Kris Kringle and Santa Claus had become synonymous. Once we had the verbal descriptions, it was time for the artists and illustrators to add to our Santa Claus mystic. An illustration appeared shortly after Moore's poem. It shows the reindeer running four abreast and pulling a sleigh over the snow.

The first major Santa illustrator for Moore's story was Thomas Nast (1840-1902). Nast was the head illustrator for *Harper's Weekly* from 1862 to 1886. He is sometimes referred to as the Father of the American Cartoon. A political/editorial caricaturist (cartoonist), Nast illustrated the issues of his day. And many of his illustrations were not flattering to his subjects. Nast's first sketch of Santa showed a bearded man in a star and stripes outfit giving gifts to Union soldiers at Christmas time in 1862.

Later, Nast took the words of Clement Moore and adjusted them, doing thirty-three illustrations of Santa, changing the little pudgy figure to a much larger and somewhat more somber character. Over the years Nast's Santa became a bit friendlier. There's a sketch of Santa enjoying a leisurely pipe before descending down the chimney with his bag of toys.



Courtesy Wikipedia

Nast's most Famous Drawing, "Merry Old Santa Claus," from the January 1, 1881 Edition of *Harper's Weekly*

The work of Nast established the beginnings of our contemporary Santa. He added some more features to our hero. A fur-trimmed bright red coat donned Nast's Santa, while he read his children's letters; he builds toys in his workshop with elf helpers; he closely monitors children's behavior throughout the year; he has kids sit on his lap; and he lives in Santaclausville at the North Pole (December 29, 1866).

In 1849, in a story called *A Christmas Legend* written by James Rees, Mrs. Santa Claus makes what is believed to be her first appearance, though it is a brief one. Mrs. Claus later makes a cameo appearance in the book *Lill's Travels of Santa Claus and other Stories* by Ellis Towne, Sophie May and Ella Farmer. In 1889, Katharine Lee Bates, the author of the words for *America the Beautiful*, wrote a poem, *Goody Santa Claus on a Sleigh Ride* in which Bates highlighted a pro-feminist Mrs. Santa Claus. Goody is a shortened version used for "good wife." Noted screen actress Angela Lansbury portrayed Mrs. Santa Claus in the 1996 musical production of *Mrs. Santa Claus*.

Another famous artist contributed to the Santa Claus mystic, Newell Convers Wyeth, the famous N C Wyeth. Wyeth has reindeer on the housetop, Santa in the chimney, and the bag full of toys. But Wyeth's Santa had a large nose which quickly disappeared as others expanded the image.

In the first half of the twentieth century, the most influential and largest circulated magazine in the country was *The Saturday Evening Post*. The artistic work of two of *The Post's* illustrators, one right after the other, is recognized as superior to all others. Joseph Christian Leyendecker (1874-1951) had 322 cover illustrations in his forty-four years with the *Post*. Leyendecker gave Santa Claus some more visual detail.

One of Leyendecker's illustrations printed on the cover of *The Post* on December 27, 1919, shows Santa behind a window cover. He added his own interpretation to some of the same themes: Santa working with his elves building toys; Santa listening to kids' wish lists; Santa hugging a child with a heavy bag on his back; and Santa plotting his Christmas Eve travels on a globe.

By December 1891, the Salvation Army had adopted the use of Santa Claus ringing bells while accepting donations in their kettles. When William Booth, the founder of the Salvation Army, died, Leyendecker did a December 1912 cover for *The Post* showing a grief stricken Salvation Army Santa leaning against a chimney for support.

Leyendecker was followed by Norman Rockwell (1894-1978) as *The Post's* main illustrator. Rockwell had been influenced by Leyendecker while he developed his



Courtesy Wikimedia Commons

Joseph Leyendecker's December 7, 1912
Saturday Evening Post Cover Art

own style of illustrations about American culture. We see Santa sitting at his desk reading the many letters he has received.

Rockwell did 323 covers for *The Post*, one more than Leyendecker. Like Leyendecker, many of his Santa illustrations were his version of already established traditions and legends created. "The World is his province; he knows his territory better than astrologists or meteorologists, and he knows every child by name."

Laura Virginia O'Hanlon Douglas was born July 20, 1889. She often said that she was anonymous from January to November. Why? Because in 1897, as a little eight-year-old girl, Laura, known mainly by her middle name Virginia, wrote a letter to her local newspaper, the *New York Sun*. In her letter, she asked a simple question: "Is there a Santa Claus?"

An editor for *The New York Sun*, Francis Pharcellus Church responded by writing an editorial which appeared in *The Sun* on September 21, 1897. He wrote: "Yes, Virginia, there is a Santa Claus. He exists as certainly as love and generosity and devotion exist, and you know that they abound and give your life its highest beauty and joy. Alas, how dreary would be the world if there were no Santa Claus! It would be as dreary as if there were no Virginias."

Church finished that editorial with: "No Santa Claus! Thank God, he lives, and he lives forever. A thousand years from now, he will continue to make glad the heart of childhood." Virginia continued to celebrate her famous letter and Church's response right up to her death in 1971.

Though his name is not as well known as Leyendecker or Rockwell, the work of our third great Santa Claus illustrator is very well known. His name is Haddon Sundblom and he created a "friendly, jovial, hard-working Santa." He worked from 1931 to 1964 for Coca-Cola. In 1931, Sundblom started a Christmas campaign with his first illustration of Santa highlighted by that familiar Coca-Cola line, "Santa takes time out for the pause that refreshes." Sundblom used a friend, Lou Prentiss, a retired salesman, as his model for his Santa Claus.

Coke has had more than forty original Sundblom drawings that have adorned Coke bottles, billboards, store display posters, cans, cartons, serving trays, popcorn cans, tree decorations and many other items of promotion. And what would Christmas advertising be without Santa Claus? Sundblom's Santa remains the most recognizable Santa.



Courtesy WikiCommons

Rockwell learned from Leyendecker, but quickly added his own Style to the Saturday Evening Post

One can even see Sundblom's Santa in today's Coca-Cola Christmas promotions. Sundblom made a portly, vicarious and grandfatherly image for his Santa.

In 1931, it was against the law to try to entice children with advertising. Coke could not show kids drinking their soft drink. The Coke company had decided that they wanted to increase their sales in the wintertime by encouraging kids to enjoy their favorite drink. Times are definitely different today, but in 1931, Coke had to find a way legally to increase sales. Coke could not show children drinking a Coke.

Sundblom came to the rescue. He created a Santa who is preparing to enjoy a Coke from the refrigerator and being discovered by a child. It worked, and people today enjoy a sentimental picture of a surprised Santa totally unaware of the significance of the picture. Even the United States Post Office got into the act with their 2018 secular Christmas stamps showing four different poses of Sundblom's Santas.

The last influence to be shared is a mix between the department store Santas and the movie Santas. That reference is the 1947 movie, *Miracle on 34th Street*. The last line of the concluding court scene is unforgettable. Character actor Gene Lockhart as Judge Harper says: "If the United States Government recognizes this Kris Kringle as the one and only Santa Claus, this Court will not dispute it. Case dismissed."

In summary one sees the following: "Santa Claus is generally depicted as a portly, jolly, white-bearded man, sometimes with spectacles—wearing a red coat with white fur collar and cuffs, white fur cuffed red trousers, red hat with white fur, black leather belt and boots and carrying a bag full of gifts for children.

Santa Claus is said to make lists of children throughout the world, categorizing them according to their behavior and to deliver presents, on the night of Christmas Eve. He accomplishes this feat with the aid of his elves who make the toys in his workshop at the North Pole and his flying reindeer who pull his sleigh. He is commonly portrayed as living at the North Pole and laughing in a way that sounds like 'HO HO HO'."

He is so much more than a storied gift giver. Santa Claus is a symbol of hope and happiness, of generosity and benevolence. Santa Claus is simply one of the most beloved legends our country has ever embraced. In Santa we see love and generosity. So we celebrate. We celebrate the need for love and giving. And we once again look forward to our visit this Christmas from our "right, jolly old elf." And we will again hear him exclaim as he drives out of sight, "Happy Christmas to all, and to all a good night."



Courtesy WikiCommons

*Leyendecker's Christmas 1925 Cover.
He also established the Tradition of using
Drawings of Babies for New Years Issues*

There is not much more we can say about Santa. Little has been written about Santa and Christmas Eve, so here is the end of the story written and known as *'Twas the Night Before Christmas* and written by Clement Clarke Moore (1779-1863).



*'Twas the night before Christmas,
when all through the house,
Not a creature was stirring, not even
a mouse.
The stockings were hung by the
chimney with care,
In hopes that St. Nicholas soon would
be there.
The children were nestled all snug in
their beds,
While visions of sugar-plums danced
in their heads.
And mama in her kerchief, and I in
my cap,
Had just settled our brains for a long
winter's nap.*

*When out on the lawn there arose such a clatter
I sprang from my bed to see what was the matter.
Away to the window I flew like a flash,
Tore open the shutter, and threw up the sash.
The moon on the breast of a new-fallen snow
Gave a luster of midday to objects below;
When what to my wondering eyes should appear
But a miniature sleigh and eight tiny reindeer,
With a little old driver, so lively and quick,
I knew in a moment it must be St. Nick!
More rapid than eagles his coursers they came,*



*And he whistled and shouted and called
them by name.
"Now, Dasher! Now, Dancer! Now,
Prancer and Vixen!
On, Comet! On, Cupid! On Donner and
Blitzen!
To the top of the porch, to the top of the
wall,
Now, dash away, dash away, dash away
all!"
As dry leaves that before the wild
hurricane fly,
When they meet with an obstacle mount
to the sky,*

*So, up to the housetop the coursers they flew,
 With a sleigh full of toys and St. Nicholas, too.
 And then, in a twinkling, I heard on the roof
 The prancing and pawing of each little hoof.
 As I drew in my head and was turning around,
 Down the chimney St. Nicholas came with a bound.
 He was dressed all in fur from his head to his foot,
 And his clothes were all tarnished with ashes and soot.*



*A bundle of toys he had flung on his back,
 And he looked like a peddler just opening
 his pack.
 His eyes, how they twinkled! His dimples,
 how merry!
 His cheeks were like roses, his nose like a
 cherry.
 His droll little mouth was drawn up like a
 bow,
 And the beard on his chin was as white as
 the snow.
 The stump of his pipe he held tight in his
 teeth,
 And the smoke it encircled his head like a
 wreath.*

*He had a broad face and a little round belly
 That shook when he laughed like a bowl full of jelly.
 He was chubby and plump—a right jolly old elf,
 That I laughed when I saw him, in spite of myself.
 A wink of his eye, and a twist of his head,
 Soon gave me to know I had nothing to dread.*



*He spoke not a word but went straight to
 his work,
 And filled all the stockings and turned with
 a jerk.
 And laying a finger aside of his nose,
 And giving a node, up the chimney he rose.
 He sprang to his sleigh, to his team gave a
 whistle,
 And away they all flew like the down of a
 thistle.
 But I heard him exclaim, ere they drove
 out of sight,
 “Happy Christmas to all, and to all a
 good-night!”*

Courtesy WikiSource

1844 Publication of the Poem; F.A.O. Darley Illustration from an 1862 Edition; Two illustrations from “Beautiful Gems from American Writers and Lives and Portraits of our Favorite Authors” (1901)

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For another Christmas story, this one without Santa, check out *Denver's First Christmas 1858*, the report to the *Omaha Times* of the happenings at Christmastime at "the mouth of Cherry Creek." Here's a link:

https://www.historycolorado.org/sites/default/files/media/document/2018/ColoradoMagazine_v14n1_January1937.pdf#page=8



Over the Corral Rail

*Compiled by Ed Bathke. Please submit your items of news, etc. to Ed.
Deadline is the 10th of the first month in the date of publication.*

Westerners Presentations

The Colorado Corral Zoom meeting in August featured “Along the Oregon Trail, 1862-1866,” by James H. Nottage. He provided a fresh understanding of the variety of opportunists crowding the Oregon Trail, the narratives of times telling of their interactions among travelers, soldiers, and mountaineers. James Nottage is Chief Curator Emeritus of the Eiteljorg Museum of American Indians and Western Art in Indianapolis and the founding chief curator of the Autry Museum in Los Angeles.

In October Colorado Corral member Geoff Hunt presented “What’s for Dinner, 1920,” a look at Colorado foodways in the 1920’s decade, with recipes, cookbooks, available foodstuffs, and favorite dishes, including those of the White House. Geoff retired in 2019 from twenty-two years as Professor of History at the Community College of Aurora and is currently a free-range historian.

Meeting in person in August the Pikes Peak Posse enjoyed a program by photographer Mike Pach, on his new book, *Colorado Springs Then and Now—Celebrating 150 Years*. Just published, the book features seventy-five pairs of photos. In September, a field trip visited to Jimmy Camp Creek Park, a historic area described in a posse meeting earlier this year.

At the September meeting Rocky Shockley and T. Duren Jones presented “Easy Hikes to the Hidden Past—History hiding in Plain Sight,” with selections from their book of well-researched trails with “treasure hunts” for relics of times gone by. Another recent book, *Louis McClure at the foot of Pikes Peak*, by Rich Carnahan, was featured in October. Denver-based McClure worked as an assistant of W. H. Jackson, and then established himself as a supremely gifted photographer with his images covering the state. Fifth-generation Colorado Springs native Rich Carnahan focused on the McClure photos documenting the early development of Colorado Springs.





Westerners Bookshelf



Civil War to the Bloody End—The Life and Times of Major General Samuel P. Heintzelman, by Jerry Thompson. College Station, TX: Texas A&M University Press, 2006. 464 pages, photographs, sketches, maps, footnotes, endnotes, index. Hardcover \$35.00

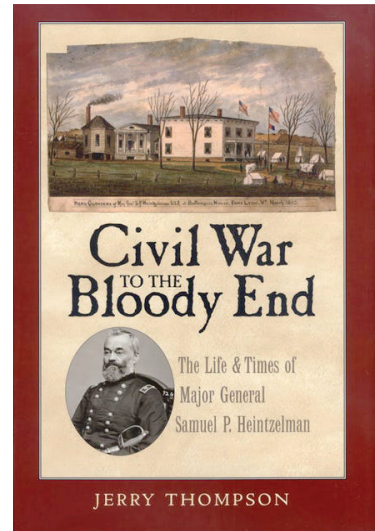
This is a life story where the reader can focus on the man or the times in which he lived. If focused on the man, Samuel P. Heintzelman, we may come away “under-awed.” Yes, he was a major general, a Corps Commander in the Union Armies through much of the Civil War, an advisor to President Lincoln and known as the “Second Father of Arizona,” but he comes away from that as the almost forgotten man. And, for good reason—ambition without self-perspective.

As a senior military leader during the Civil War, Heintzelman’s famed III Corps suffered major losses in many of the Army of the Potomac’s campaigns such as both battles of Bull Run and McClellan’s Peninsular Campaign. He stood on the door of greatness when one of his subordinate units was only four miles from Richmond during the summer of 1862 but withdrew due to McClellan’s poor intelligence network and timidity. Thereafter, always a critic of McClellan, he was shunted aside for not producing noticeable victories of his own.

Much of Heintzelman’s life, 1805–1880, was shadowed by his desire to make-good financially. He invested early and often in schemes that did not pay. Although bad enough in its own right by denying regular funds for his wife and family, he often and annoyingly tried to influence fellow Army officers and politicians to join in mining and investment schemes. His knowledge of geography and minerology of Territorial Arizona, gained through long years of military assignments at Fort Yuma on the Colorado River and in California, made him an expert on the Southwest when few others in the nation’s capital knew much about it.

If the focus is on the times, this book provides fascinating reading. Author Jerry Thompson tells a story well. Because Heintzelman knew almost everybody in national and local affairs, Thompson had many stories to tell. When General Phil Sheridan was appointed Military Governor of Texas and Louisiana during Congressionally-imposed Reconstruction, Sheridan was asked what he thought of Texas. He answered, “If I owned both Hell and Texas, I would live in Hell and rent out Texas!” Good story. Many more like that are in this book. Heintzelman may not become one of your heroes after reading this book, but the reader will come away with an ennobled understanding of the events that led to the Civil War and its aftermath. This book is worth the read by Civil War buffs and serious history students of the Southwest.

– Dan Shannon



Los Adaes—The First Capital of Spanish Texas by Francis X. Galan. College Station, TX: Texas A&M University Press, 2020. 400 pages, maps, drawings, photographs, footnotes, endnotes, index. Hardcover \$45.00

In many ways, this is the companion book to *Trammel's Trace*, a book reviewed in the Denver Posse's July-August *Roundup*. This book takes place 100 years earlier in the same nexus area of North Texas and Louisiana. If you are familiar with the names of Nacogdoches, Natchitoches, Natchez, and the Red River, you are in the right area.

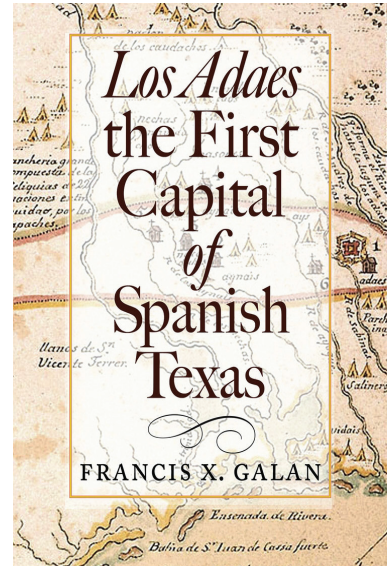
The Spanish government of new Spain in 1720 felt that it had to establish a presence near the French settlements in the Mississippi valley that abutted Spanish-claimed land. That they did with the establishment of Mission Los Adaes in 1721 in the heart of Caddo Indian country. With the consent of the king, the Spanish sent a governor to make this little mission town and fort the capital of the Province of Texas. Unfortunately, they did not send much else such as provisions or a large military garrison that would mark this place as a capital. This poor experiment lasted until 1773 when the capital was moved to an area that became San Antonio in the heart of the Lipan Apache country.

This book introduces us to more Indian tribes than anyone could guess existed. Those tribes tell much of the story. The French were much better at dealing with individual tribes while the Spanish seemed to deal poorly with Indians over many decades. Consequently, the French maintained an upper hand in the settlement of this border area. Even the Spanish settlers preferred to deal with the French who obtained imported manufactured good from New Orleans and the towns that offloaded on the Mississippi River.

Perhaps the greatest value of this book is the review of how after the fall of Quebec in 1759, the French ceded control of the Mississippi River to the Spanish to keep it from falling into the hands of the English. The French continued to dominate trade throughout the entire area though the governing was left to the Spanish. The Spanish military still had the garrison of St. Louis when the French sold Louisiana to the Americans in 1803. There were no French soldiers or officials present when William Clark (as a witness) accepted the turnover of the territory from the Spanish garrison in 1804. And the Spanish continued to give those large troublesome land grants to influential settlers as far upriver as what became Duluth, Minnesota.

In a way, this book reads like a family history. The records of the earliest settlement of Los Adaes contain the names of the settlers who were sent to build the new 1721 outpost. Those same family names are those of today's residents. These family ties to the area and to their Spanish heritage mark a loyalty to this Texas land that long predates the arrival of Americans. For that story jump ahead to the 1830s and read *Trammel's Trace*.

– Dan Shannon



Jim Bridger—Trailblazer Of The American West, by Jerry Enzler. Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 2021. 384 pages, maps, illustrations, endnotes, bibliography, index. Hardcover \$29.95

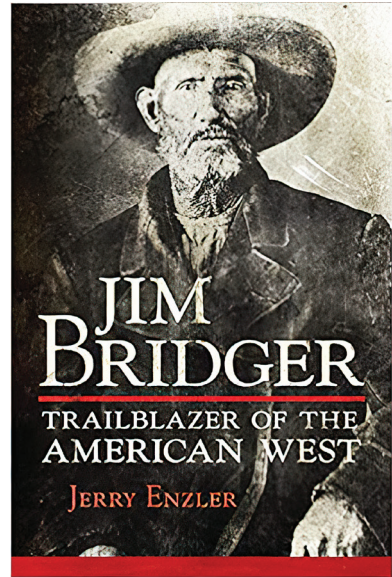
Those who have been to the recreated Wyoming fort that Jim Bridger established (with Louis Vasquez) in 1843 will come away thirsting for information about the man behind the name. This new book does not simply rehash decades-old information but utilizes newly found resources. Author Enzler has crafted the ultimate work about a nearly mythological American frontiersman, Jim Bridger.

Bridger was born March 17, 1804, in Richmond, Virginia and moved with his family to Illinois at age eight. As a twelve-year-old he lost his parents and his brother in quick succession, eventually apprenticing to master gunsmith Philip Cramer. In 1817 they traveled to Peoria to trade with the Potawatomi's—Bridger's beginning of a nearly lifelong relationship with various Indian tribes as adversary and friend. With no formal education, he never learned to read or write, the story of his life has to be recreated from sources written by other people—both for and about Bridger. For that reason, the author had to sift through contradicting information and had to fill in gaps with educated speculation.

The chronology of the work follows several phases of Bridger's professional life: fur trapper, explorer, emigrant guide and supplier, fort creator and U.S. Army advisor. His personal life is discussed, but Bridger seems to be a less than attentive husband and father while tragically losing three Indian wives and four of his seven offspring before his July 17, 1881 death. While the book is ostensibly about Jim Bridger, it is larger than that and it is filled with interesting ancillary facts. For example, "Illinois, named for the Illiniwek people" has no bearing on the story, but makes the book richer.

While the sheer numbers of characters mentioned is prodigious, so too are the important names that intersect with his life. To name a few, Mike Fink, Kit Carson, Father De Smet, Washakie, Jedediah Smith, Lt. John Gunnison, Jefferson Davis and Brigham Young were part of Bridger's life. That last person becomes a major villain in the tale, and indeed, Bridger's relationship with the Mormons is a rather unpleasant chapter, casting a very negative light on those settlers. In many ways they became more of a nemesis than the Indians, who at one point pierced him with two arrows—one of which causing a wound that plagued him from then on.

He was perhaps the first white man to taste the salinity of the Great Salt Lake in 1824 or 1825. In 1826, he was also one of the first Euro-Americans to enter the region that became Yellowstone National Park. He would spend the end of his life spinning yarns about this area that few believed. Indeed, Bridger guided an 1859 exploration of the Yellowstone area that included the man who would finally prove the tales' veracity



in 1871: Ferdinand Hayden who “was a sponge for all Jim Bridger could tell him.” This is a wonderfully rich book about “American’s greatest frontier scout of his era” and is highly recommended.

– George W. Krieger

The Women’s Bank–A Denver Success Story by Thomas J. Noel and Gail M. Beaton, Denver, CO: Colorado Studies Center, University of Colorado, 2021. 76 pages, photographs, bibliography, index. Hardcover

The second wave of feminism in the 1960s and 1970s triggered several new laws in the U.S. that favorably impacted women, one of which was the Equal Credit Opportunity Act of 1974. This act made it unlawful to discriminate against credit applicants based on race, color, religion, national origin, sex, marital status or age. Yet women continued to have difficulty obtaining financial credit. However, it stimulated an effort in parts of the country to create banks specifically for women. Some efforts were more successful than others.

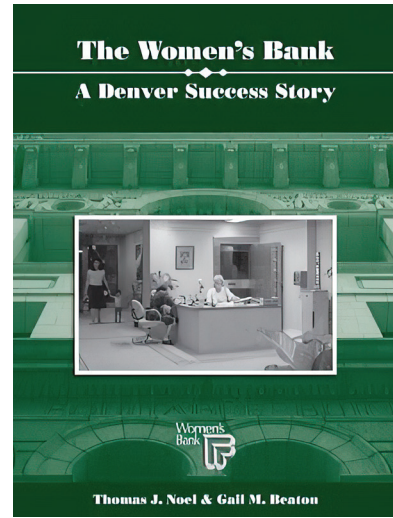
The group of leaders in Denver that came together to drive the creation of The Women’s Bank N.A. took the lessons learned by other attempts throughout the country and created what came to be the most successful attempt at a women’s bank in the country.

In this book Noel and Beaton provide a glimpse into the women who initiated the project, the banking environment in the 1970s and the process the founders went through to create The Women’s Bank N.A. A stunning array of women leaders in the Denver community rallied behind the concept and worked diligently to make it happen. LaRae Orullian served as founding president when the bank opened in 1977 and continued in that role until 1995. She brought many new approaches to customer service that helped to make the bank successful. Orullian also insured that the bank was a leader in the support of women in the workplace by paying men and women tellers equally when most banks at the time paid women 70% of men’s salary. The board of directors of the bank was presided over by Judi Wagner, who was one of the founders and a leader in the financial community. She was the consensus builder who brought diverging ideas and personalities together to make the project happen.

Other well-known women leaders in the Denver community who are highlighted in the book include Gail Schoettler, Joy Burns, Barbara Sudler Hornby, Jean Yancey, and Beverly Martinez to name a few: all were early investors and board members. They were supported by a national woman leader in banking, Mary Roebling, along with a few men such as Jack Stern.

This short glimpse into the making of a Denver success story is an easy, quick read although at times the flow of the story is disjointed and feels hastily pieced together. The book provides insight into how women leaders in Denver came together despite their differences to lead the way in providing equal credit access for all. The presentation would have benefited from additional analysis regarding the impact and outcomes to the banking industry and the women’s movement.

– Leslie Karnauskas



Thunder in the Mountains—Chief Joseph, Oliver Otis Howard, and the Nez Perce War by Daniel J. Sharfstein. New York, NY: W.W. Norton & Co., 2017. 613 pages, maps, photographs, drawings, footnotes, index. Hardcover \$29.95

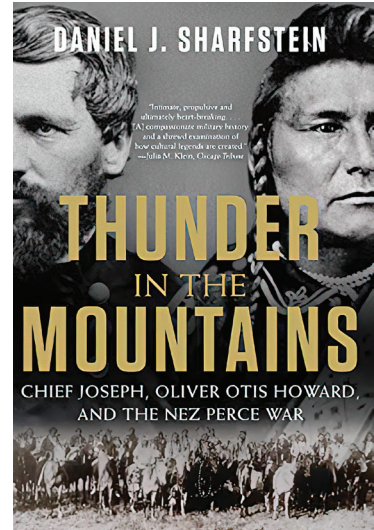
The Civil War ends. The chief protector of the rights of the newly freed slaves as head of the Freedmen's Bureau, O. O. Howard is removed from his job for overzealously advocating fairness and is sent to the Pacific Northwest to confront Indians. That is the setting in the years 1877 to 1879 in which, the one-armed battlefield casualty from the battles of Manassas meets the equally honorable leader of the Nez Perce Indian Tribe in Oregon, Chief Joseph.

Chief Joseph, who is not a war-chief, is constantly confronted with making right an unfair 1863 treaty that seemed to cede the Nez Pierce rights to his homeland, the Wallowa Valley (Eastern Oregon). Joseph and his band of Nez Pierce never signed that treaty, but the U.S. government's position was that these Indians must leave because they were part of the larger Nez Pierce tribe that had signed. Howard who wanted to secure rights for the newly freed slaves is confronted again with trying to secure Indian rights that were then unrecognized.

Several attempts at peaceably resolving the issue between O.O. Howard and Chief Joseph come to an ill end when young, radically motivated members of the tribe murder some settlers in the disputed valley. Then true confrontation comes between the U.S. military and the warrior tribe. Interesting encounters between tourists in the newly opened Yellowstone Park and the warrior Nez Pierce enliven the account. Tragedy awaits on all sides.

The book portrays two honorable men trying to do the honorable thing even when the societies they serve reject their attempts. An ennobling read.

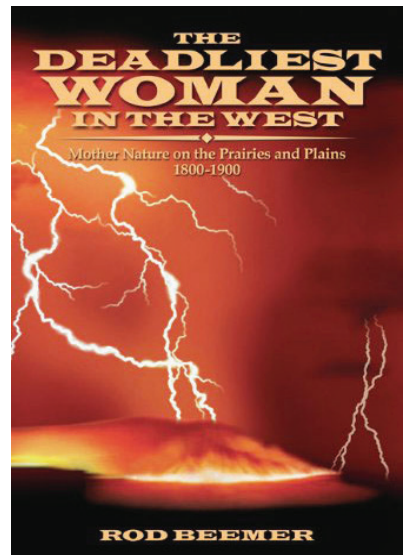
— Dan Shannon



The Deadliest Woman In the West—Mother Nature on the Prairies and Plains 1800-1900 by Tod Beemer, Caldwell, ID: Caxton Press, 2006. 392 pages, pictures, endnotes, bibliography, index. Softcover \$18.95

The author has compiled a history of the major natural disasters during the nineteenth century that happened in the area between the Mississippi River and the Rocky Mountains. There is a separate chapter on each type of natural occurrence—earthquakes, blizzards, tornados, prairie fires, droughts, thunderstorms, floods and hurricanes. Who knew there were so many?

In each chapter Beemer talks about specific occurrence of a disaster, but also fills in with lessons on weather and information about the historical



context and people in the area during the time of the disaster. The chapter on earthquakes was most surprising to me as we rarely hear about earthquakes in the middle part of the country. On December 11, 1811, a major earthquake happened, centered near New Madrid in the northeast corner of Missouri. There were aftershocks through February, 1812, with the highest estimated, using today's Richter scale, as 8.8 on February 7. By comparison, the great San Francisco earthquake in March, 1906 registered 7.8. Since the earthquake was close to the Mississippi, the author talks about paddlewheel boats and how they were affected by the earthquake. He cites a story where witnesses claimed the Mississippi River flowed backwards at one point as a result of the earthquake.

Using newspaper articles, personal journals and oral histories of people living in the area of the disasters, including Native Americans, Beemer is able to provide much detail about the various disasters that occurred. He writes about the reaction of animals, including their ability to detect a coming disaster and the impact it has on their behavior. He also talks about the psychological impact on people following the disaster, what he describes we would probably call PTSD today. He also includes stories that may or may not be true as they appear to be too improbable, but they certainly are entertaining.

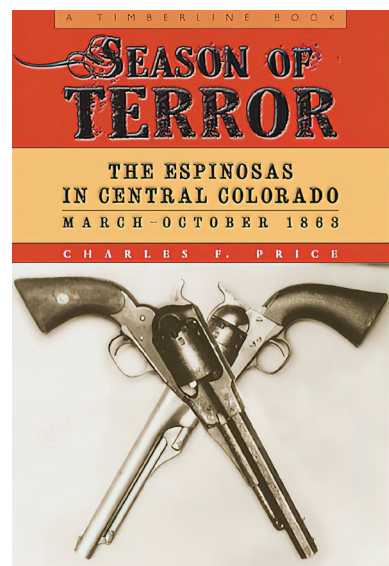
I offered to review this book because I did not read the complete title until after I received it. I usually prefer to review books about women, so without reading the complete title I was surprised that the woman chronicled in this book was Mother Nature. However, I happily found the work very engaging and informative. I would highly recommend it to anyone who is interested in a different view of the history of the prairies and plains.

– Leslie Karnauskas

Season Of Terror–The Espinosas In Central Colorado, March – October 1863, by Charles F. Price. Louisville, CO: University Press of Colorado, 2013. 352 pages, photos, maps, appendix, bibliography. Hardcover \$34.95

During 1863, the two Espinosa brothers (Felipe and Jose') and their nephew Jose' Vincente went on a vicious spree of murder and mutilation in Colorado Territory. This book (in the Timberline series) is the first account devoted strictly to those events and is as thorough as can be gleaned a century and a half later. The author had previously written several acclaimed novels of historical fiction. Interestingly in 2020, a novelized version of this story was published by author Adam James Jones, *The Vendetta of Felipe Espinosa*. In 2004, there had been a book by Bob Scott, *Tom Tobin and the Bloody Espinosas*, about the bigger story of the mountain man who ultimately ran to ground and beheaded two of the offenders (delivering them to Col. Tappan at Fort Garland). In James E. Perkins' 1999 book about Tobin there is a chapter about this affair as well.

"...[T]he generally accepted count is ten or eleven but the killers themselves boasted of having slain thirty-two...." "While they were killing Coloradans, the



attention of most Americans were riveted on [the Civil War].” These two lines from the book introduction neatly summarize the atrocities and history’s lack of attention on them. Bluntly, these were hate crimes on white settlers by three Hispanics from New Mexico that a few view as “patriotic figures resisting...the gringo infidel.” The picture of the Espinosas, however, show them to have been thieves prior to the killings.

Within a month of the first few murders, a detail from the First Colorado Infantry was sent to South Park from Denver to offer protection to area settlers and hunt for the criminals. With them was Private Ostrander who luckily kept a diary that gives some account of that action. That diary plus newspapers supply some of the author’s source material. Evidence left at the next crime scene plus survivors’ accounts caused whites to fear “every Hispano in South Park.” At that point a posse led by Capt. John McCannon joined the hunt and his notes along with accounts by Father Dyer (*The Snowshoe Itinerant*) help to fill in the next part of the story. Members of McCannon’s posse succeeded in killing one of the brothers (Vivian). The final hunt for and elimination of the other two outlaws by Tom Tobin (whose wife was actually related to them) is given in his own words.

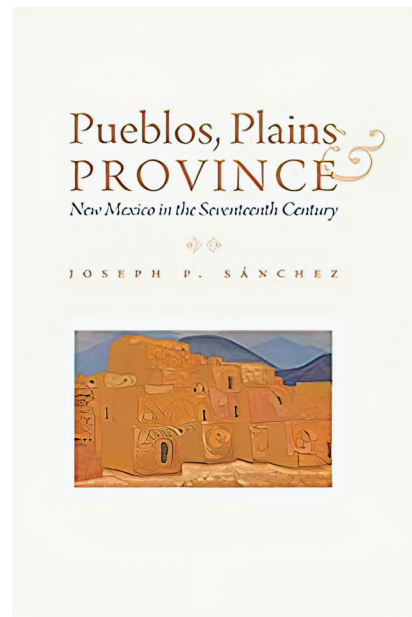
Much of the account (especially of the actions of the offenders) is speculative by necessity though there are many pages of supporting notes. Some sections that are not directly related to the story at hand (mainly about the Army) seem overly long, but do show the tenor of the times.

– George W. Krieger

“Pueblos, Plains & Province–New Mexico in the Seventeenth Century” by Joseph P. Sanchez. Louisville, CO: University Press of Colorado, 2021. 325 pages, end notes, index, drawings. Hardcover \$48.00

Even for those readers who are familiar with the exploration stories of de Anza, Oñate, de Peralta, and de Vargas, this new volume by Professor Joseph Sanchez is a refreshing modern presentation. Sanchez takes time to clear the slate and to present each character on an evolving stage without pre-conceptions or prejudices. He looks at the story of the colonization of New Mexico from 1595 through the Pueblo Revolts of 1680 and the reconquest. He writes as a neutral observer, not taking sides with either the native Indian cultures or the newly arriving Spanish. Through this approach, we avoid some of the “what were they thinking?” questions that linger from the traditional colonization reports.

Oñate surprises a collection of Puebloan leaders in 1598 when he asks for their submission to the Spanish crown. The surprise is that in this introductory meeting he already knows the names and location of at least thirty-seven of their pueblos by their Indian names. The problem for the reader is that we may not know those locations. When he strays from the familiar Rio Grande communities to the “Mountain Air” pueblos



you are left somewhat adrift. Prepare to keep your computer browser busy as you find Galisteo, Quarai, Tajiue, and Chilili and many of the other thirty-seven. A contemporary map is a necessity for this otherwise well-written narrative. It is unfortunate that such a map is not included.

Also, though informative, it is too bad that two chapters of this narrative are taken up by the unfortunate and ill-advised brawling between the “Two Majesties,” i.e., the governor and the church. The fight might be viewed as a contest for the allegiance of the native Puebloans, but it is portrayed as a peevish struggle between a governor who was incarcerated for nine months in an Inquisition lockup by an out-of-control church official, ostensibly for the ownership of a few buffalo calves. Excommunications and public atonements are thrown around in a frequency that greatly outdoes the Puritans of Cotton Mather’s New England seventy years later.

For lovers of New Mexico this retelling of the arrival of Europeans and the subsequent changing of the land and cultures is a stimulating journey to the past and a reminder of why we love visiting the remnants of this early colonial culture.

Posse members who take the time to look at the feature article in our January 1960 *Roundup* magazine (available on our website www.DenverPosse.org) will have a leg up on knowing the people and places that form the tale told in *Pueblos, Plains and Province*.

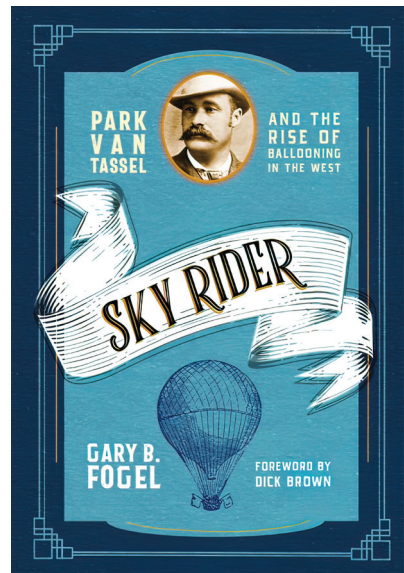
This book was made available to the Denver Posse in PDF form, one of the first in our e-Book Reader program.

– Dan Shannon

Sky Rider–Park Van Tassel & The Rise of Ballooning In The West, by Gary B. Fogel. Albuquerque, NM: University of New Mexico Press, 2021. 272 pages, illustrations, notes, index. Softcover \$24.95

Ballooning and Albuquerque have been synonymous since Sid Cutter founded the Balloon Fiesta in 1972. This book, however, goes back ninety years prior to that and introduces us to the man who first introduced ballooning to New Mexico, Park Van Tassel.

The author goes into a bit of the history of ballooning, tracing it from France to the U.S. in 1783. Born in Indiana in 1853, Van Tassel was bitten by the aeronautics bug at an Ohio fair. He ran a cigar shop in California then moved to Albuquerque and opened a tavern. It was plain that what he really wanted to do was take to the air, which he finally did after trial and error. As opposed to the hot air ballooning that we are familiar with today, Van Tassel and his contemporaries were using coal gas, a mixture of hydrogen, methane, and carbon monoxide. Over and over the author relates how much time it would take to fill the balloon with enough gas to gain lift. Predictably his first Albuquerque lift-off in 1882 also led to his first lawsuit when an onlooker was struck by a bag of sand used as ballast.



Van Tassel seemed to have mishap after mishap even into his later career and the author points out how lucky he was to live to the ripe old age of seventy-six. The book traces his movements across the country putting on paid exhibitions as Professor Van Tassel (with an extra "l"). He made a long trip to Australia and Asia with his show, getting more and more elaborate. He and Thomas Scott Baldwin had worked on the use of a parachute to add excitement to the ascension. This became his standard showstopper with a man or woman leaping out of the balloon which eventually even led to gymnastics on a bar at altitude. It is interesting how many performers took the last name Van Tassel even though they were not related to him. The book gives a litany of ascensions and the comings and goings in his troupe as he travelled around the world. The only personal life information about Van Tassel shows him marrying at least five times with predictably poor results since he was constantly on tour.

The author makes the point that Van Tassel should be remembered more than he is. He states that Thomas Baldwin gained the most notoriety of all the aeronauts "largely on the shoulders of others (who) have been minimized or forgotten entirely." This is a most unique topic that likely will appeal to Westerners for that reason.

– George W. Krieger DDS

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