



# The Broomcorn *Express*



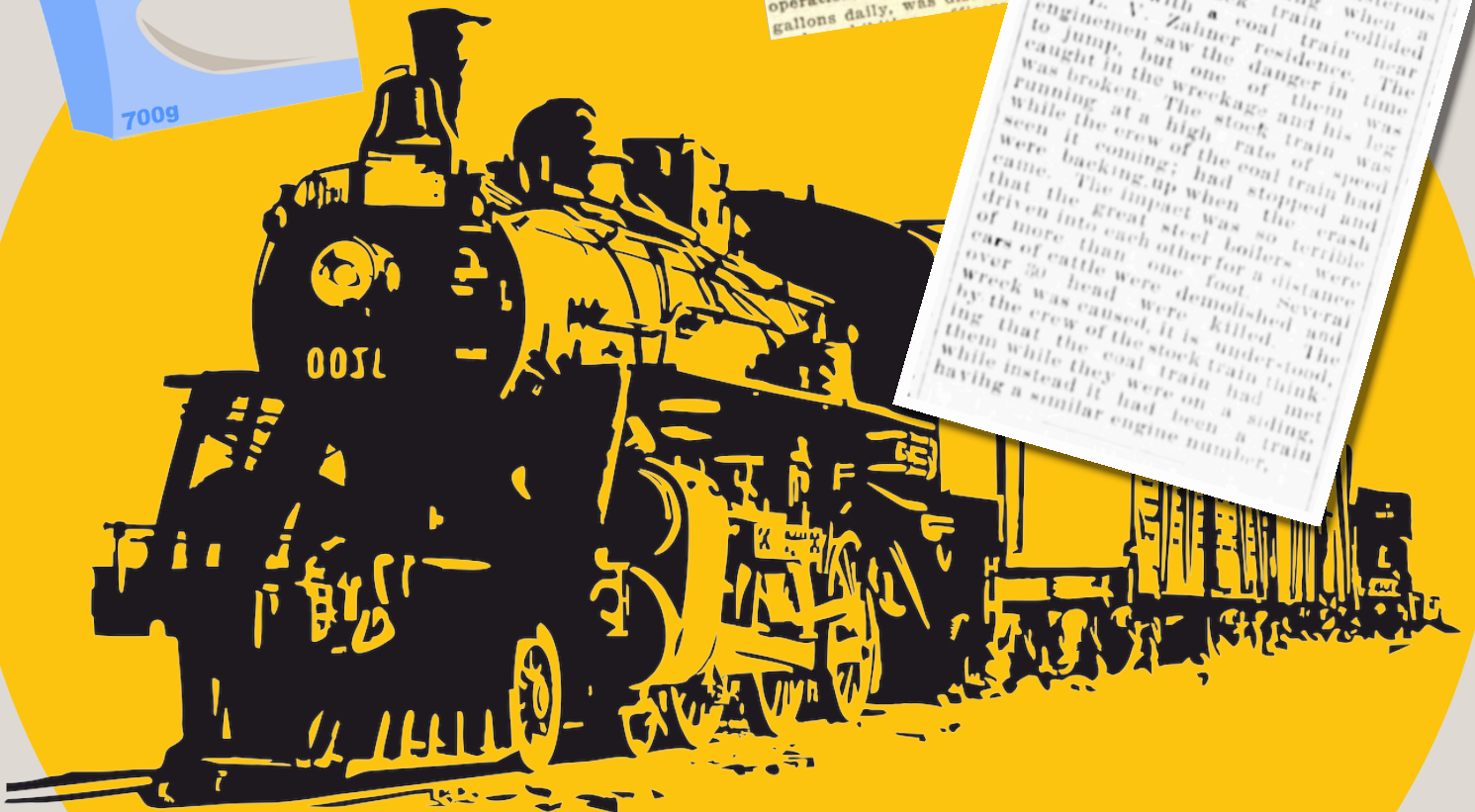
AGENTS TAKE FATHER,  
SON AND STILL IN RAID

Two Arrested Plead Guilty  
and Are Held on \$1,000  
Bond Each.

A completely equipped still  
operation, with a capacity  
gallons daily, was discovered

Another Train Wreck  
Near Broomfield

Burns Junction was the scene of another and more disastrous wreck Monday morning when a north-bound stock train collided head-on, with a coal train near the L. V. Zahner residence. The enginemen saw the danger in time to jump, but one of them was caught in the wreckage and his leg was broken. The stock train was running at a high rate of speed while the crew of the coal train were backing up when stopped and that the great impact was so terrible driven into each other for a distance of more than one foot. Several cars of cattle were demolished over 30 head were killed and several were caused, it is understood, by the crew of the stock train thinking that the coal train had met them while they were on a siding, while instead it had been a train having a similar engine number.



Broomfield History:  
Train Wrecks, Cereal Spills, Prohibition  
Shenanigans, Homesteading and More!

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# We are Rebranding!



In an effort to better achieve our mission, we are rebranding to remove name confusion with local organizations and make ourselves more easily identifiable in the local community and beyond.

The change is also a return to our roots as we look forward to celebrating our 50th anniversary in 2026! We were originally founded as the Broomfield Historical Society in 1976 during Broomfield's bicentennial celebration.

We will keep the same look and feel of our current logo so we can be easily recognized.

Stay up to date with our work and activities by visiting our website, <https://broomfieldhistoricalsociety.org> or find us on Facebook [@BroomfieldHistoricalSociety](#).



# A Sparkle in My Eye



**Andrea Margheim-Minnich**  
*President, Broomfield Historical Society*

Happy Summer, friends!

It is officially summer in my book! I have always loved addressing a few or a group of people as “friends.” That’s just who I am. I truly think of every human as my friend, especially those of you throughout the community whom I know in person, but really, everyone. I try to approach all new interactions with others in the sense that we have something in common even though we might not know it yet, usually because we’ve just met. I have a group of

childhood girlfriends that get together a few times a year, one on one, and I address them as “friend” and tell them I love them every time I speak with them. It’s always seemed important to me, even as a child, that another person would know my intentions by the time we were done with our interaction. Now that we have officially changed our non-profit name to the Broomfield Historical Society, do you mind if I still address you all as “friends”?

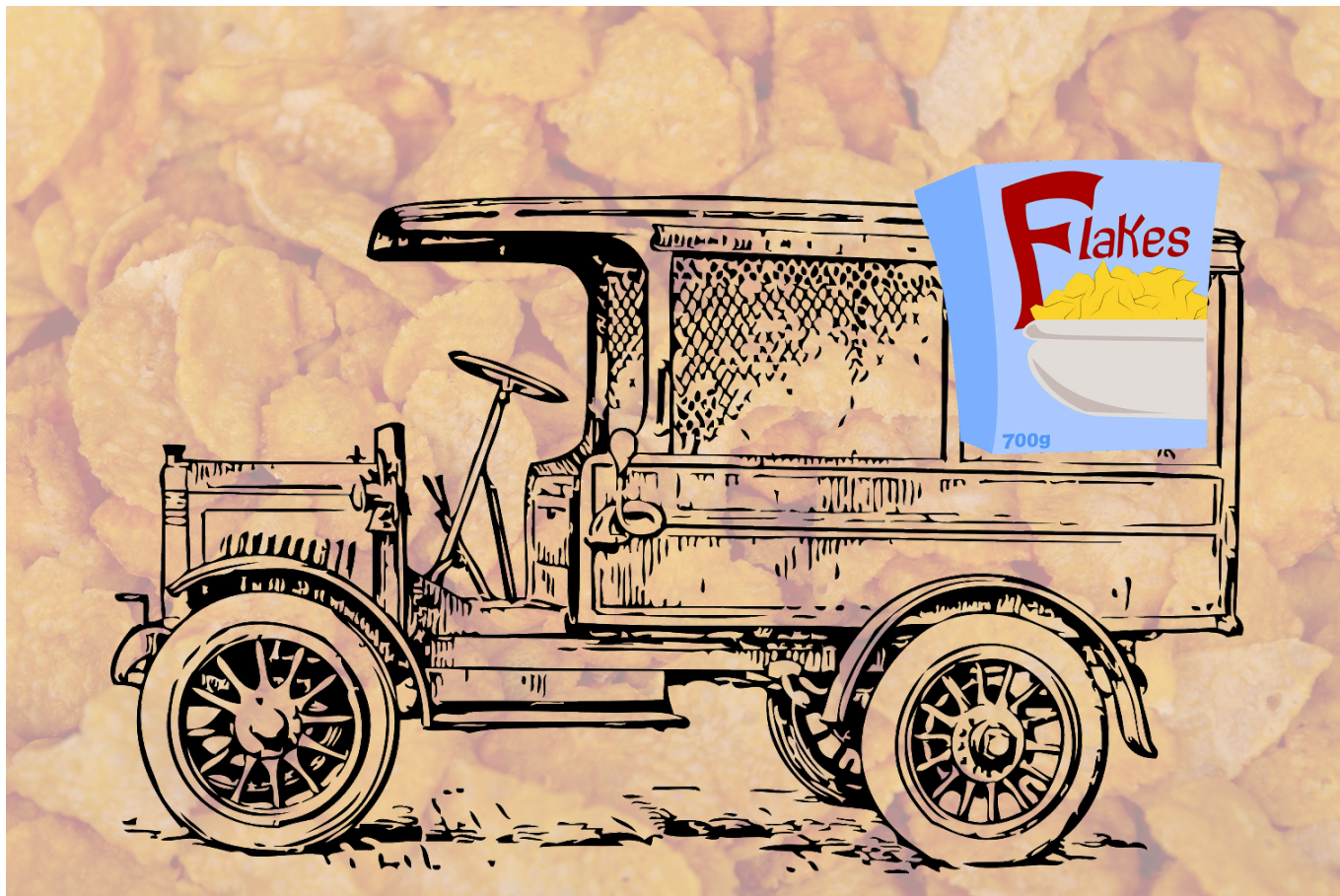
*Andrea*

Image by SimsalabimSabrina@Pixabay.com



# A Corny Disaster, or Broomfield Flakes Out

By David Allison, Broomfield History Coordinator



Images by Efotowelt and Open Clip Art Vectors @ Pixabay.com

Imagine the scene—it's a chilly February day in Broomfield in 1915. Two employees of Kellogg's cereal company are driving on West 120th Avenue, transporting boxes of Cornflakes, when a train from the Denver and Interurban Railroad suddenly crashes into the automobile, launching cornflakes into the air.

This crash, which took place on February 6, 1915, involved a Denver and Interurban railway car and a Kellogg Toasted Corn Flake

Co. delivery truck. Kellogg's used automobiles to deliver their shipments from Battle Creek, Michigan, to grocery stores in towns such as Broomfield.

In 1915, the population of Broomfield was only about 160 people. The city was an agricultural crossroads but did have a grocery store, a hotel, and a bank. In 1909, the city was able to add a railroad depot, which stands today as the Broomfield Depot

## A CORNY DISASTER

Museum. The railroad and its depot were a large part of how Broomfield received and exported its shipments of goods. Also, passenger car services had been added in 1904, which allowed people to travel to different local destinations on the train. At the time, trains were viewed as a safe and economical mode of transportation for many people. Any news of crashes and derailments made headlines in local communities.

This was also the case of the 1915 crash that occurred in Broomfield. On February 6, 1915, a Kellogg Co. truck was being driven by Mr. Fred L. Wright, who was accompanied by passenger and fellow Kellogg's employee, Mr. Paul Copeland. The two were traveling out of Broomfield at about 4 miles per hour. The railroad track, near the upcoming roadway crossing, was blocked from view by a string of boxcars. As the delivery vehicle approached the crossing, an oncoming Denver and Interurban railway car, going about 25 miles per hour, blew its whistle too late—just before reaching the crossing. There was not enough time for the Kellogg's truck driver to react, and the result was a collision between the train and the delivery truck.

The truck was spun around and pushed about 20 feet before stopping. The damages to the automobile included a smashed front end, a broken radiator, broken front wheels and axles, broken gas lamps, and damaged

fenders and rods. The railroad company took full responsibility for the accident, as the conductor failed to signal properly before entering the crossing. Fortunately, only the cereal truly suffered, as there were no casualties from this accident.

In the late 2010s, the Broomfield Depot Museum celebrated this inauspicious event with a program titled "CrashFest." Perhaps it's time to revive this tradition!

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### Sources:

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"Broomfield fetes fateful day for flakes," the *Daily Camera*, February 7, 2015, <https://www.dailycamera.com/2015/02/07/broomfield-fetes-fateful-day-for-flakes/>.

# Train Wrecks!

By David R. Feineman, Broomfield Historical Society



1909 postcard of train wreck, Broomfield History Collections.

The transition of Broomfield from a small agricultural community to a recognizable, defined town was supported by the introduction of railroad and interurban service into the Old Broomfield area. Train service enhanced accessibility from Denver and Boulder, both for passenger and freight movement.

As it turned out, although our site in the foothills might seem safer than railroads in mountain communities, there were historic train wrecks right here in Broomfield. Although eight people died in two train different wrecks on the east side of Highway 36 between 119th Place and 104th Avenue, you won't find a historical marker to tell their story.

## TRAIN WRECKS

But why write about these calamities here? Disasters are associated with locations and time frames, just like the rest of our history. Formalizing them as part of our narrative of Broomfield history lets them be both more understandable and less random. "Every disaster can be compared to one of the past. Understanding how it fits within the context of a region, culture, and history is vital to predicting how a current disaster will impact the population and surrounding environment."<sup>1</sup>

### 1908

Unlike the events that follow, this early incident deals not with a train wreck per se, but with a fatal pedestrian trolley car incident in old Broomfield. In an earlier article in the *Broomcorn Express*, we discussed the Kite Line service provided by the Denver & Interurban line between Denver, Broomfield, and towns further to the North. In 1908, Harry Patrick had just ridden the trolley from Denver to go to the Broomfield Mercantile Company, in which he was a part owner. Walking around a line of parked freight cars, he did not see an oncoming tram and was hit by the same one he had ridden to Broomfield an hour before which was now on its return trip back to Denver.<sup>2</sup> The elderly Mr. Patrick (age 67) was unconscious and placed back onto the same car to ride to Denver for medical attention but died before he arrived.

### 1909

The Broomfield Archives has a postcard that says the image that appears above was of a 1909 train wreck in Broomfield.<sup>3</sup> Even more tantalizing is the inscription on it that says it was at the same location as an earlier wreck. The rail connection to Broomfield was



1958 train wreck, Broomfield History Collections.

constructed in 1873, and by 1909, Broomfield had a depot with 19 passenger trains passing through each day. It is plausible that there were crashes around Old Town at that time, although I was unable to find any other supporting evidence for them. There were well-documented, serious Colorado train crashes in Colorado Springs and Dotsero in 1909, but given the distances, they would be unlikely to be confused with the Broomfield area and would not explain the advertisement for the Rocky Mountain News painted on the building behind the wreckage.



## TRAIN WRECKS

### 1958

On September 22, 1958, a Colorado & Southern Railroad freight train left Denver, heading for Cheyenne, Wyoming. A passenger train that had originated in Billings, Montana, was headed toward Denver on the same single-track line.<sup>4</sup> The plan was for the freight train to pull onto a siding and wait for the passenger train to



1958 train wreck, Broomfield History Collections.

pass—surviving crew members thought that the freight train would pull into the siding at Semper, five miles south of Broomfield (which to orient you would put it near the Guiry's in Westminster today). Engineer Fred Tingle was experienced and had been an engineer since 1922; he slowed down near the siding at Semper, but he did not stop. A crew member in the caboose radioed the engineer, asking where they were going to try and pass the passenger train since they had already past the Semper siding, and the reply was at Broomfield (five more miles past Semper).

Although the freight train was powered by diesel locomotives, the crew in the cab consisted of both an engineer and a fireman (who was generally an engineer in training but also responsible for fueling the locomotive). Based on testimony after the accident, the fireman continued to warn the engineer that there was not enough time for the two trains to pass. The train conductor radioed the engineer to stop the train at once

but was ignored. Approaching the siding at Broomfield the freight train continued on without stopping. Although the trains were quickly approaching each other, a curve in the track just south of the Broomfield depot meant that they didn't see each other until right before their collision. Shortly afterwards, the passenger train going 20 miles per hour crashed into the freight train going 50 miles per hour.<sup>5</sup>

As you can see from the photos of the wreck, there was significant damage to the front of both trains. Both crew members in the passenger train were killed, as was the engineer of the freight train, and twenty passengers were injured. Clearly a tragedy but also a mystery here is why it happened given that there were multiple people trying to alert the engineer: did the accident occur because of the politics of making decisions in the freight train, or was the engineer intending to cause a crash?<sup>6</sup> Harry Anderson, the fireman on the freight train, said that Tingle



## TRAIN WRECKS



1958 train wreck, Broomfield History Collections.

had stayed in the engineer's seat as the trains crashed, and although fatally wounded, he kept asking about how the crew on the passenger train had fared. Since he did not survive for very long after the crash, there is no direct testimony from him on what happened.

### 1985

On August 2, 1985, two Burlington Northern freight trains hit head-on, killing five crewmen along US 36, not far from the site of the 1958 train wreck. The northbound train, pulled by three engines, had left Denver while the southbound train had departed from Longmont.

The engineer of the northbound train made a scheduled stop just north of Denver and checked on when and where they would pass the southbound freight—but mistakenly reviewed information in a logbook for the preceding day. That act would lead him to believe the other train had already passed his location. As a result, he started on his way north, thinking the line would be clear. Approaching Broomfield, the tracks went underneath a US 36 overpass on a bend in the rail line, which obscured the line of sight of both trains. Given no warning, the two trains collided, going at moderate speed head-on. Although the trains were not carrying flammable cargo, the fuel in the

## TRAIN WRECKS

engines ignited and caused a fire that melted the 104th Street overpass over US 36, with smoke seen as far away as Fort Collins.<sup>7</sup>

### Today

It's all just history and from an earlier time in railroading technology. Certainly, rails, signals, communications, and similar technologies have improved in capability and come at reduced costs and could be expected to reduce the likelihood of train-to-train collisions in the segments of rail lines that run through Broomfield. But it should be obvious from the photos that the areas along the railroad track right of way in Broomfield, starting at 122th and Old Wadsworth and heading north, then turning to follow West 120th Avenue, and then turning northeast to pass under the Northwest Parkway, have seen extensive development since 1985—many more people in live and work in close

proximity to the tracks, and they would be impacted if there is another incident.

If you have passed through those areas at the wrong time of day, you know the existing track that is used by Burlington Northern Santa Fe (BNSF) freight trains today has many grade crossings (roads cross the tracks with cars driving right over the tracks) where you have to stop for passing trains. With renewed planning on the extension of the RTD B line to provide passenger service from Denver to Broomfield, Boulder, and Longmont, the old view of who and what is impacted by rail traffic should change because of development. If/when passenger rail service proceeds, it would put additional daily traffic on the existing BNSF tracks<sup>8,9</sup> which, like it or not, is the same right of way that was the scene of our historic train wrecks.



1985 train wreck, Broomfield History Collections.

## TRAIN WRECKS



1985 train wreck, Broomfield History Collections.

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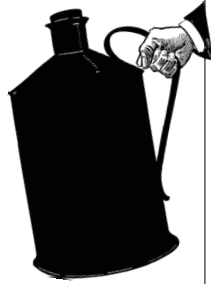
<https://broomfieldgensoc.org>

# Broomfield in the Bad Old Days

By Gail Elias,  
Broomfield Genealogy Society

The question, "What are you doing New Year's Eve?" took on a whole different meaning in 1915. People were stocking up on booze. In Colorado, January 1, 1916 was the day when booze was officially banned. The decades-old tension between the "saloon supporters" and the "temperance team" finally played out in legislation banning the sale of alcohol. Measure 2, a statewide prohibition referendum, passed on November 3, 1915 with 52% of the vote.<sup>1</sup>

Colorado was by no means the first state to attempt to regulate the sale of alcohol. Tennessee tried in 1837<sup>2</sup> and Maine in 1846 (it didn't last). By the time that the Volstead Act (aka the 18th Amendment) was passed nationally, 33 states had already passed their own version of prohibition.<sup>3</sup> The Act passed with all but two states (Connecticut and Rhode Island) ultimately agreeing.<sup>4</sup> Colorado was 30th to sign on.<sup>5</sup> While Kansas and



## HEAVY DEMAND FOR LIQUOR IN DENVER

Many reports (have been circulated about the saloons of Denver conducting sales so as to dispose of their stock before the first of the year when the state goes dry.

The facts in the case are that if there have been sales the purchaser paid full price for his liquor and the saloonkeeper made more than the usual profits.

Reports from distilleries are that more liquor has been shipped into Denver in the past 90 days than in any previous six months. The shipments have been made in carload lots to supply the heavy demand.

These signs point to what may be expected during the first few months of the dry campaign. Denver will probably have more drunks than ever before. Business men of Denver are complaining that the money is being withdrawn from regular channels of trade and invested in liquor. Supplies are being put in by those who have a habit of indulging and by hundreds who fear they may want a nip now and then.

Some saloonkeepers have gone the limit in pulling in the cash while the opportunity was at hand. The use of electricity has made it possible to tap the bottom of the bottles and remove the contents of bottled in bond and brands of liquor which were called high grade. Cheap mixtures were substituted and then the plug was replaced and the electricity sealed the glass bottom. Local men who purchased a bottle for "medicinal use" have discovered nice little circles in the bottoms of the bottles and they say the whiskey is of poor quality.

There are but two days left for the legitimate sale of liquor in the state but it is expected that the harvest will continue until the last minute and the stocks left on hand will be very small.

The *Weekly Courier*, December 31, 1915, Colorado Historic Newspapers Collection.

## BROOMFIELD IN THE BAD OLD DAYS

Nebraska were “dry” states, our neighbor to the north, Wyoming, was not. What happened next was predictable.

On June 23, 1916, Lafayette officials arrested two men heading south from Cheyenne with 239 pints of whiskey, a one-gallon jug of whiskey, and two dozen pints of beer.<sup>6</sup> They were not the first—and they definitely would not be the last.

Things did not improve for the forces of law and order in Broomfield. It appears that bootlegging may have been one of the first “equal opportunity enterprises,” as a Mrs. Smith of Louisville, along with four men and

two of her three children, made a trip to Cheyenne. She packed a trunk there, labeled it “necessities,” and had it shipped to a Denver hotel. Smart lady! She sent her



By Jazella@Pixabay.com

accomplices to the hotel to get the trunk, where they were promptly arrested. Unfortunately, they talked, so she was arrested too.

While Mrs. Smith attempted bootlegging by subterfuge, not all Front Range bootleggers were so subtle. In May 1919, two unsuspecting deputies arrested two men, Louis Leveau and Walter James, in Niwot for possession of 50 pints of whiskey. “Walter” was really “Red” Conley who had a significant bootlegging operation in Denver and Adams County. Earlier that year, in court, Red repented of his bootlegging sins and told a sad story of all the fine cars and fortunes he’d lost. His tale of repentance was well received, and the court released him. Two weeks later, Boulder deputies arrested him as he was trying to “run the blockade.”<sup>7</sup>

Broomfield has a long history of being located along major transportation routes, and clearly, this was attractive to the bootlegging community. In June 1919, authorities were holding a car found abandoned in Broomfield months earlier when the driver escaped police in a chase.<sup>8</sup> It appears he had good reason to run since he was also on the run from another bootlegging gang, the Lewis Gang. And he’d also escaped from jail in Boulder and was in considerable trouble with Sheriff Buster for that.<sup>9</sup>

### TEDROW TAKES A HAND IN THE FIGHT ON BOOTLEGGERS

Mrs. Anna Smith of Louisville and four men of that town—Hugh McLeod, John Harvey, John Simpson and an Austrian whose name is unknown—have been arrested on order of United States District Attorney Harry B. Tedrow for violation of the Federal liquor law,—the Reed amendment, which went into effect on July 1st, and section 204 of the penal code which prohibits the shipping of liquor unless plainly marked on the outside of the containers. The arrest of the men was made in Denver at a hotel where they called in Mrs. Smith's auto for a trunk full of liquor which she brot into Colorado with her from Cheyenne, Wyoming. This is the second arrest that has been made by Mr. Tedrow in Colorado since the Reed amendment went into effect, and the case is to be prosecuted to the full extent of his ability in order to put a stop to the practice of importing liquors. According to Mr. Tedrow Mrs. Smith and two of her three children made a trip to Cheyenne, there loaded a trunk with booze, and had it checked as baggage to Denver. Upon arriving in Denver she had it taken to a Denver hotel where she met Jack McLeod on whose ticket she returned to her home in Louisville. She then sent the other men mentioned to Denver in her auto after the cargo, but they were arrested before they could make a get-away and Mrs. Smith's arrest followed last night. Mrs. Smith in defense states that the trunk did not belong to her but to a Bulgarian coal miner whom she met in Cheyenne and who persuaded her to check the trunk to Denver. The trunk, however, contains articles belonging to Mrs. Smith. Mrs. Smith is a widow, her husband having been killed last February in an accident in one of the Rex mines. Altho she has an English name she is a Slav. She is securing \$32 a month as compensation for the death of her husband. Mr. Tedrow learned from Sheriff Euler that Mrs. Smith had been under suspicion of bootlegging.

*Boulder Daily Camera*, Vol. 27, No. 104, July 17, 1917, Colorado Historic Newspapers Collection.

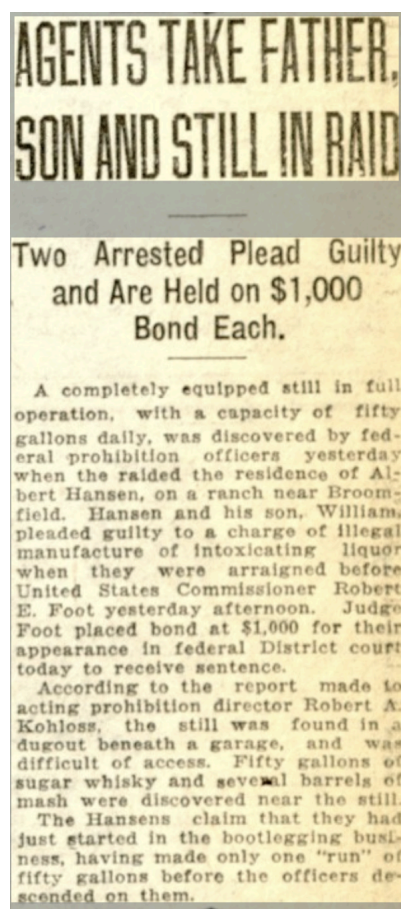




Boulder Daily Camera, No. 49, May 1, 1923, Colorado Historic Newspapers Collection.

Other folks took a different approach to this prolonged “dry spell.” In the spring of 1923, a Broomfield family enterprise was interrupted when Prohibition agents raided their still. Father and son both pled guilty on May 26 and were held on \$1,000 bond.<sup>10</sup>

“Small potatoes” (not a vodka reference since corn was the ingredient of choice) describes what had just happened a little further up the road in what is now Broomfield! For years, authorities had wondered where all that booze was coming from in the towns of Louisville, Lafayette, Superior, and Boulder— and, yes, what would become the City and County of Broomfield. Just a mile northwest of the Monarch Mine #2 (west of Highway 36 near the Flatirons Crossing Exit), authorities searched the house of a “suspected” bootlegger. There was nothing in the house or barns which he showed them. He even invited them in for dinner. However, when authorities asked to search the outhouse, they were met



by, “you can’t search that without a warrant,” and the hidden entry to the bootlegger’s operation and storehouse was found. The cave, 25’ underground, was large enough to hold a wealth of gallon barrels full of mash, 200 pounds of sugar, and a 50-gallon copper still. While deputies didn’t want to blast the hen house and pig pen

Rocky Mountain News, Vol. 64, No. 146, May 26, 1923, Colorado Historic Newspapers Collection.

## BROOMFIELD IN THE BAD OLD DAYS



By ALLes@Pixabay.com

immediately above the cave, they did “borrow” a stick of dynamite from the nearby Monarch coal mine and blew up the entry (well, the entry that they found); it appears that there may have been a back door!<sup>11</sup>

However well-intentioned the ideals of the Women’s Christian Temperance Union were, prohibition was difficult, at best, to enforce, and it had an economic impact of closing businesses that served alcohol. And, thanks to questionable law enforcement practices, many “soft drink” parlors (like one that still stands on Public Road in Lafayette) sold alcohol. And (surprise!) cases of confiscated liquor kept disappearing from police evidence rooms. There is some evidence that prohibition spurred the growth of organized crime families—both in Colorado and nationally.<sup>12</sup>

By the late 1920s, Colorado had had enough, and in 1926, it became the first state to hold a referendum calling for the repeal of the 18th Amendment. Colorado was quickly joined by Arizona, New Mexico, and California as well as most of New England. By 1928, more than 12,000 liquor-violation cases were stuck in the Denver courts.<sup>13</sup> Something clearly had to give.

### Prohibition Comes to End Tonight at Seven-Thirty

Scheduled Time For Utah Ballot Which Will Strike 18th Amendment From Constitution Is At That Hour

Washington, Dec. 5.—(AP)—Tried for almost fourteen years and adjudged wanting, constitutional prohibition ends tonight and the nation faces curiously a new period of experimentation on how to handle liquor. Formal ratification of repeal by Utah, scheduled for seven-thirty this evening will wipe the prohibition law off of the constitution.

**MARRIAGE LICENSE**  
A marriage license was issued yesterday to Kermit George Hase of La Veta and Helena Opol Gooder of Skidmore, Missouri.

✚ The huge wet vote throughout the nation, however, does not end the liquor problem. Congress faces an outbreak of controversy when it attempts to get a model control law. The legislative halls in various states will reverberate with argument over liquor codes.

*The World Independent*, Volume XLVI, No. 196, December 5, 1933.

By December 1933, 36 states had voted to ratify the 21st Amendment, repealing prohibition. On the first day that alcohol could be sold (April 7, 1933), the Rocky Mountain News estimated that breweries made \$200,000 on opening day. That’s about \$4,000,000 in today’s dollars. Breweries that we know today—the Tivoli and Coors—returned as if they’d never left.

This could not have been an easy transition for east Boulder County, which has a strong (and mixed) history on this topic. Lafayette, under the influence of Mary Miller—a historical figure who was deeply involved in the Women’s Christian Temperance Union—had a long history of supporting prohibition. And Louisville had an equally strong history of defying it. But Broomfield has inherited much from these jurisdictions, as well as its neighbors to the south, which generally sided

## BROOMFIELD IN THE BAD OLD DAYS

with Denver and opposed prohibition. Thank goodness there was at least some room for differing opinions.

Perhaps one of the more interesting changes to come from prohibition was the shift from producing beer in kegs (destined for saloons) to producing beer in cans or bottles. Coors had clearly positioned themselves to grab that part of the market. Post prohibition, the “saloon industry” faded as consumption in cans and bottles increased. Until the rise of today’s brewing industry, alcohol sales, particularly beer, focused on portability of their product. Today’s Colorado brewing industry traces its roots to both the “saloon era” and the changed technology which prohibition

brought. So, that being said, “Anyone up for a beer?”

Interested in learning more about the impact of prohibition in Colorado? Check out the work of Sam Bock, at History Colorado, <https://erstwhileblog.com/2019/02/27/colorado-prohibition-movement/>, and History Colorado’s article at <https://www.historycolorado.org/story/2022/08/12/final-round>.

This article was originally published by the Broomfield Genealogy Society in their February 2024 quarterly newsletter.

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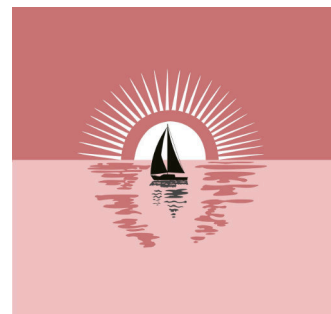
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7. “Famous Bootleg Artist in Boulder Prison, Incognito,” *Boulder Daily Camera*, Vol. 29, No. 61, May 24, 1919, Colorado Historic Newspaper Collection.
8. “Lewis Bootleg Gang had Rich Partners and Arrests of Some of Them are Made,” *Boulder Daily Camera*, Vol. 29, No. 89, June 26, 1919, Colorado Historic Newspaper Collection.
9. “Walter Woeber Escapes From Lewis Gang; Pleads Guilty to Bootlegging Fined by Ingram,” *Boulder Daily Camera*, Vol. 29, July 25, 1919, Colorado Historic Newspaper Collection.
10. “Agents Take Father, Son and Still in Raid,” the *Rocky Mountain News* (Daily), Volume 64, Number 146, May 26, 1923, Colorado Historic Newspaper Collection.
11. Ibid.
12. “Prohibition,” Colorado Encyclopedia, and Wikipedia, “Eighteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution.”
13. Ibid.



# Broomfield: Prepared for Anything

By Sandra Roberts, Editor



## CLEAR SAILING AHEAD!

It is the firm belief of many superstitious Broomfield residents, and the earnest hope of many more, that the bad luck and catastrophe that has dogged Broomfield for the last year is a thing of the past. I overheard an enumeration of the various incidents as follows "First there was the dam, publicity all over every paper in the country, then there was the fire at the shopping center, more publicity everywhere, and finally the train wreck, more publicity, and now we are a "suburb of Denver". It is unfortunate that the incidents that have made the name of Broomfield familiar to people all over the state and the nation have been a series of tragedies and near tragedy. However, it seems to us that the unfailing spirit, rugged determination to overcome disaster, and just plain courage displayed by the persons most closely affected by the happenings could well make us, and our town objects of admiration and inspiration.

Unfavorable publicity and sensational reporting of Broomfield's development is unfortunate. However, if the old superstition is true, our town's record of three disasters is now complete, and Broomfield's future lies clear and unhampered by a recurrence of anything but progress and growth.

Letter to the editor, *Broomfield News*, Vol. 1, No. 53, September 29, 1958, Colorado Historic Newspapers Collection.

It's fair to say that Broomfield has had its share of disasters. Some residents may have started counting after the 1958 train wreck, and certainly, once you've started keeping count, disasters may start to pop up everywhere. At one point, after the 1958 train wreck, people in the area began to say that Broomfield had a lot of bad luck.<sup>1</sup> However, Broomfield was not impacted by the June

1965 flood (aka "the Great Disaster") that destroyed so many homes and businesses in Denver, Littleton, Golden, Castle Rock, and more.<sup>2</sup> Certainly, however, Broomfield was impacted by the 1973 Rocky Flats Tritium leak, and eventually, we had to source our water from locations other than the Great Western Reservoir.

Saliboat illustration by Agzam@Pixabay

# City agencies gear up for myriad of tragedies

by Becky Nothnagel

It was not a typical day in Broomfield. Three inches of rain mixed with hail fell and caused an accident between a tanker truck and a school bus at the intersection of 120th Ave. and Sheridan Blvd. Minutes later a tornado flattened Emerald Elementary, 755 Elmhurst, and also touched down in Westlake Village where it damaged or destroyed

several homes.

The tanker truck involved in the traffic accident was hauling a hazardous chemical pesticide that spilled out onto the street. A police officer who responded to the traffic accident died at the scene after being exposed to the deadly and flammable pesticide.

A fire raged in Westlake Village and there was flooding at the corner of 6th Ave. and Dexter St. and at Big Dry Creek.

Telephone lines were down and looters swept through several homes in the area of 136th Ave. and Westlake Dr.

In desperation, the City passed an emergency ordinance prohibiting anyone except authorized emergency personnel from being out after sundown.

Anything that could go wrong did, exactly as it had been planned.

Disaster did not really strike Broomfield about 2 p.m. May 17, but for the participants in a tornado emergency preparedness exercise it might just as well have.

Representatives of the West Adams

County Fire Department, the Broomfield Emergency Ambulance Service, the Boulder County Health Department, the Tri-County Health Department, the Broomfield police and the City of Broomfield staff faced each other across tables in the Broomfield City Council Chambers as the tale of disaster unfolded.

Planned by Lt. William Brophy, of the Broomfield police, the representatives who participated in the exercise incorporated an emergency preparedness program devised by the Broomfield Department of Public

(Continued on Page 7)

The *Broomfield Enterprise*, Volume 9, Number 32, May 24, 1984, Colorado Historic Newspapers Collection.

Around 1978, while it was still a city divided into three counties, Broomfield started to consider the need for an emergency plan.<sup>3</sup> By 1982, Broomfield representatives were attending Colorado emergency preparedness conferences, and by 1984, Broomfield had crafted a basic plan and was holding its own mock disaster drill (the following events did *not* actually occur):

It was not a typical day in Broomfield. Three inches of rain mixed with hail fell and caused an accident between a tanker truck and a school bus at the intersection of 120<sup>th</sup> Ave. and Sheridan Blvd. Minutes later a tornado flattened Emerald Elementary school, 755 Elmhurst, and also touched down in Westlake Village where it damaged or destroyed several homes. The tanker truck involved in the traffic accident was hauling a hazardous chemical pesticide that spilled out onto the street. A police officer who responded to the traffic accident died at the scene after being exposed to the deadly and flammable pesticide. A fire raged in Westlake Village and there was flooding at the corner of 6<sup>th</sup> Ave. and Dexter St. and at Big Dry Creek. Telephone lines were down and looters swept through several homes in the area of 136<sup>th</sup> Ave. and Westlake Dr. In desperation the City passed an emergency ordinance prohibiting anyone except authorized emergency personnel from being out after sundown. Anything that could go wrong did, exactly as it had been planned.<sup>4</sup>

We've come a long way from hoping for the best to preparing for any type of disaster that could potentially be mitigated. The author of "Clear Sailing" likely meant well, but they were standing in a brief moment in time (1958), failing to recall accidents in years gone by and struggling to look ahead in a meaningful way.

In the words of the "Clear Sailing" author, "Broomfield's future lies clear and unhampered by a reoccurrence of anything but progress and growth," not simply because we are lucky or optimistic, but mostly because we are prepared.

In 2024, it's hard to find a U.S. city that hasn't been through something difficult. Today, Broomfield has a robust emergency plan. We've been practicing for decades. We've leveraged new technology and improved the system of community alerts.

You can find information about Broomfield's emergency preparedness plan(s) on the City and County of Broomfield website: <https://www.broomfield.org/4017/Emergency-Preparedness>.



# Broomfield should have its own emergency plan

In 1952 a facility for constructing atomic bomb triggers was built far enough from any population to be safe and close enough to attract top scientific talent.

That was Rocky Flats, Broomfield's neighbor. Most of the time it has been a good neighbor, providing thousands of jobs. Once in a while it has shown itself to be a dangerous neighbor, i.e., the industrial fire of 1969 and the tritium spill into Broomfield's water in 1973.

Since both Rocky Flats and the north metro area, including Broomfield, have grown together during the last 25 years the state of Colorado has wisely sought to provide a plan to meet those dangers. It is the Radiological Emergency Response Plan (ERP) developed by the Department of Military Affairs, Division of Disaster Emergency Services.

Like any bureaucratic effort, the plan tries to meet the needs of a number of public and private interests. We think it fails to meet the demands of Broomfield.

We believe the staffs of Rockwell and ERDA at the Flats have the best intentions. But good intentions are not a guarantee of good neighbors, as we were reminded this week by the accident at the Fort St. Vrain nuclear plant.

The ERD plan addresses itself only to radioactive incidents. Rocky Flats handles many dangerous but non-radioactive elements as well. Twenty-four of the 39 chemicals listed in the Flats Draft Environmental Impact statement are classified as a dangerous disaster hazard and 12 produce toxic fumes when heated. Two produce deadly phosgene gas. Any adequate plan should provide for all identifiable dangers. And it should recognize that on the frontiers of science many dangers are unknown.

As Dr. Carl Johnson of the Jefferson County Health Department points out, the plan does not consider radiation level increases below threshold doses. In the 1973 tritium incident, tritium levels in Great Western Reservoir increased 24 times but did not exceed concentration standards.

As the Broomfield Police and others have pointed out, the plan is not clear about who will do what, in what order, with what priority and what training. Anticipating actions for a period of chaos requires the utmost clarity.

## Broomfield is different

We think Broomfield should note the plan does not address some of the problems Broomfield would face in an emergency.

No mention is made of Broomfield's tri-county make-up, even though one of the traffic control points in an evacuation would be 120th and Sheridan where the three counties meet. Different communication systems and commands could mean local confusion.

Broomfield is one of the few communities which would have to move towards the contamination area to reach two of its county seats and some of the designated hospitals and rescue facilities.

We are not equipped to judge the technical problems of the plan. The scientists must fight that out. But the geographical and political realities are clear:

## Broomfield needs its own plan.

Many in Broomfield suggest ignoring the danger of Rocky Flats. They suggest it could lower real estate values or "be bad for business."

We think looking out for yourself and your family is good business.

Even a minor accident, or an evaluation of unpreparedness, could affect Broomfield's insurance ratings or property values. Walnut Creek learned that lesson from the Veterans Administration last year.

The health hazards and possible national publicity resulting from even "non-critical" incidents were documented by the tritium contamination.

Broomfield must actively pursue its own welfare. Plans prepared by the federal or state governments are not going to put Broomfield's interests first. Broomfield's plan should be devised by Broomfield for Broomfield.

## The Broomfield plan should be paid for by the Federal government.

Our reason for this is simple, and the same as our reasons for saying the feds should pay for an alternative water supply: Whatever benefits are gained from Rocky Flats, benefits the whole country. Whatever costs in contamination or danger come from Rocky Flats, are borne by Broomfield and its neighbors.

We think Broomfield should seek its own plan and plan its own future.

The *Broomfield Enterprise*, Vol. 3, No. 17, January 25, 1978, Colorado Historic Newspapers Collection.

### Endnotes

1. Letter to the editor, *Broomfield News*, Vol. 1, No. 53, September 29, 1958, Colorado Historic Newspapers Collection.
2. Pat Massengill and Wayne Graham, "The 1965 Flood of the South Platte River" *The Littleton Museum*, <https://www.museum.littletonco.gov/Research/Littleton-History/Other-Topics/The-1965-Flood-of-the-South-Platte-River#:~:text=In%20mid%2DJune%2C%201965%2C,the%20eastern%20border%2C%20including%20Littleton.>
3. "Broomfield should have its own emergency plan," *Broomfield Enterprise*, Vol. 3, No. 17, January 25, 1978, Colorado Historic Newspapers Collection.
4. The *Broomfield Enterprise*, Vol. 3, No. 17, January 25, 1978, Colorado Historic Newspapers Collection.

# Settlers and Homesteaders in Nineteenth Century Broomfield, Part II

By Roberta Depp, Broomfield Historical Society



Image by Ken1843@Pixabay.com

## **Railroads and the Homestead Act**

By 1869, the plains Indian tribes had been forcibly removed from their native lands, and the absence of conflict opened the way for a land rush by white settlers and town builders. The United States government purposely facilitated new settlement in the West by the Land Grant Act in 1850, which granted sections of public land on either side of rail lines to the railroads that could then be sold, and also by the Homestead Act of 1862 that gave free land to applicants who could "prove" their claim. The Civil War had delayed the building of railroads, but between 1870 and 1880, Colorado Eastern Slope railroad construction was in high gear.

The Colorado Central Railroad, built in 1873, was the first railroad in what is now Broomfield. Its plan was to run from Golden to Cheyenne, Wyoming, but it only got as far as

Lyons. It was located approximately along the current south US-36 frontage road route. A strong impetus for these early railroads was to get to the mining districts to bring out ore more efficiently than by wagon train and then connect to the transcontinental railroad terminus in Cheyenne. A significant source of revenue for the railroads, however, was the sale of land from their government-issued land grants, which consisted of a strip of land from two to ten miles wide on either side of the tracts in alternate sections. The remaining sections retained by the government (some were given first to the state) were required to be sold at double the established minimum price of \$1.25 per acre that had been in practice for government lands. That way, the government received the same revenue it would have if it had not made any grants to the railroads. Since they were priced as "double-minimum" lands, they were limited to



## SETTLERS AND HOMESTEADERS, PART II

80 acres. The Gay family, mentioned in Part I, is an example of local settlers who acquired 80-acre parcels. Susan Gay received hers under the conditions of the Homestead Act. Her son, Albert, purchased his land outright.

While there had been various versions of government land programs before, the Homestead Act, signed by President Lincoln on May 27, 1862, answered the call of western pioneers who felt that the heavy cost of clearing and improving land should not be further burdened by having to pay \$1.25 an acre. Proslavery southern states had resisted efforts to encourage Western growth in fear that new states would not support their interests. When the southern states withdrew from the Union, Congress could adopt a truly free land program. The Homestead Act allowed any citizen or intended citizen over 21 years of age to select any surveyed but unclaimed tract of public land up to 160 acres. The citizen then had five years to meet the required conditions before gaining title to the land. Proscribed improvements included living continuously on the property for five years, building a house, and cultivating the land. A small registration fee was also required. A homesteader could decide to purchase the land after six months for the minimum price of \$1.25 an acre.

### **1880s Broomfield Area Settlement**

William Brown, originally from England, came to Colorado in the late 1870s and worked in the Louisville, Colorado mines. Like many other miners, he decided that farming would be a better option. In 1881, he filed a "Certificate of Filing Declaration," and then in November of 1884, he filed the formal homesteading application on 160 acres in what was to become Broomfield. The filing

fee was \$22.00. His farm was located in quarter section 34 at the current intersection of Wadsworth and US 36 and parts of Industrial Lane along the railroad tracts. The eastern boundary paralleled the old Denver-Cheyenne wagon road, now Hwy 287. Along with his wife, Hattie, he cultivated various crops and planted an apple orchard. By 1890, he had completed his residency requirements, and in June 1891, he submitted final proof to the regional land office.

Several of William's neighbors acted as witnesses and provided references for his Homestead application. Frank Brown, who may have been a brother, was one. Thomas Burton (wife Sarah), also from England and a homesteader, was another. Franz Brechman (wife Anna) homesteaded the SW quarter of Section 34 immediately to the west of Brown's farm and acted as a witness for him. In turn, Brown and Burton vouched in 1885 for Peter Scheum (wife Anna), who homesteaded 160 acres on the NE quarter of Section 34 just north of Brown's near what is the present-day Broomfield Depot Museum. The Scheums grew oats, corn, wheat, alfalfa, clover, and garden vegetables. They also had eight horses, sixteen horned cattle, and about forty chickens. He received his title in 1891. Another neighbor who acted as a witness for Brown was August Nissen (wife Anna), who had purchased some of the land in Section 34 from the state and some in Section 25 from the railroad. His property included parts of what was to become Old Broomfield and Broomfield Heights. He raised livestock on his farm. An interesting legend about William Brown is that when the Denver, Utah & Pacific Railroad laid track through his farm in 1881, he was asked for a name for the station. Allegedly, Brown looked at the nearby fields

## SETTLERS AND HOMESTEADERS, PART II

and said, "Why not name it Broomfield?" Thus, Section 34 became Broomfield!

The mid-1880s was an active time period for land acquisition in the Broomfield area. As well as the farmer-settlers mentioned above, several others established local farms, including Patrick Keenan (wife Rose), another ex-Louisville coal miner originally from Ireland; Daniel Mitze (wife Margarethe), originally from Germany and then Kansas, who bought 160 acres from the railroad and farmed land located where Greenway Park is now; Watson Coleman (wife Julia) originally from Maine who established a dairy farm west of Coleman's; and most notably, Adolph J. Zang.

Adolph's father, Phillip Zang, had originally come to Colorado in 1870 to mine gold but quickly reverted to his original profession of brewer, working for the Rocky Mountain Brewery in Denver. After a few years, he bought out the owner and established the Zang Brewing Company. It became the largest beer producer west of the Missouri River. Adolph and his father invested in many other enterprises, such as mining, railroads, banking, and real estate. The latter included a 3,600-acre property north of Denver called the Elmwood Stock Farm. Adolph, along with some other investors, purchased most of the railroad land in Sections 25, 27, and 35 for reportedly \$7.00 an acre. This Broomfield ranch supplied grain for the Zang brewery in Denver, planted orchards and elm trees, and famously raised prized Percheron horses. Large barns for the horses were located on 6th Avenue. The property along the tracks by the silos and train depot became known as "Zang's Spur." The name was changed in 1887 to Broomfield. Produce from the ranch

and area farms would be loaded and shipped out by train from there. Some of the ranch-occupied area is now Industrial Lane, Rocky Mountain Airport and the Great Western Reservoir. The land was sold in 1947 to L.A. Biddle and then to the Turnpike Land Company for the development of Broomfield Heights.

### 1890s Broomfield Settlement

In 1891, Harry Crawford purchased a few acres from Adolph Zang near the current intersection of US 287 and CO 121. He was a long-time beekeeper, shipping honey out by rail from his "Honey House" located along the train tracks. This structure has been restored and can be visited at the Broomfield Depot Museum site. Harry Crawford also served as Broomfield's postmaster. At the time, approximately twenty-five families lived in the area. 1892 saw the addition of the Wright and Lonight families, who both purchased land from the Zang holdings. The Wrights operated a cheese and dairy business producing cheese, cream cheese, buttermilk, and butter. Edgar Jones, who also later became the Broomfield postmaster, arrived in 1885. Jesse and Anna Crooks, along with their children, moved into a house built for them on the Church ranch that year. Jesse worked as a foreman for the Church ranch but later moved to an 80-acre farm east of Sheridan Boulevard. He was the first to grow winter wheat. Before a grain mill was built in Broomfield, the grain was shipped to the Hungarian Mills in Denver for processing. In 1896, a farmer named Raggner homesteaded 180 acres west of US 287 and South Teller Street. It later became the Olsen place. Peter Olsen and Louise Malholm, originally from Denmark, arrived in 1899 to farm 80 acres on the corner of Main and Hwy 287. They raised

## SETTLERS AND HOMESTEADERS, PART II

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cattle and planted apple, plum, and cherry orchards.

The railroads played a large part in the development of this region, actively enticing settlers to come, both as purchasers of their land grants and as future shipping customers. They advertised heavily both in the states and Europe, promising fertile land and guaranteed access to markets and other amenities. The Homestead Act offered the security of one's own home and farm. The reality was that farming in this area was very challenging due to scarce water, extreme climate events, grasshopper swarms, and the cost of setting up a farm. It also became apparent that, unlike the East, 160 acres was not sufficient for agriculture or stock raising in this arid region. The homesteader had to purchase the materials and tools to build a house and plow the fields: a wagon, draft animals, seed, and fencing. If the first year's crop was unsuccessful, he could find himself in serious debt, or worse, losing everything. Then there were the often extremely high shipping costs charged by the railroads. It was much easier for those like the Zangs who already had wealth and could easily afford the costs involved, including hiring others to work for them. Many who started out as homesteaders sold out and moved on. Despite the difficulties and challenges of the early years, these hardy, persistent souls and their families laid the foundation of a community that was to go on to become the successful and attractive city that Broomfield is now.

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