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# *The Broomcorn Express*

The Journal of the Broomfield Historical Society

## *Broomfield's Open Space*

The Battle for  
"The Field"

The Story of Wottge  
Farm

The Dinosaurs of  
Broomfield County



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# President's Notes



**Roberta Depp**  
**President,**  
**Broomfield**  
**Historical Society**

It's a beautiful spring day as I write this. As the world is awakening from a winter sleep, I see a parallel in our own organization. The Broomfield Historical Society is also emerging from a quiet period. During the pandemic, many organizations abruptly halted most of their in-person public activities. We didn't stop doing history but our programs and meetings moved primarily online, or they were outside events like our Historic Broomfield Sites Tours. Collecting images from the pandemic period, recording oral histories from community members and creating this online journal, the *Broomcorn Express*, were some of our major activities during this period.

You may have noticed, however, that this is the first release of the *Broomcorn Express* this year. Our intention for 2025 is to publish just two issues—one in June and another in December—instead of the normal four issues as we put more time and effort into creating a more public-facing organization. What exactly does that mean, you ask? First off, you'll see more of us as we show up at community gatherings such as the summer concert series, the Metzger Farm open house and Broomfield Days. Secondly, we'll be presenting more public programs, such as the Wottge Open Space story held this past April at the library, that explore aspects of Broomfield's history. A version of that story by Fred Martin appears in this issue. Also included is an article by former Broomfield mayor, Pat Quinn, relating the history of how Broomfield obtained its first open space parcel. Next year, this journal will resume its regular publishing schedule of four issues.

But history enthusiasts, don't despair! You can still discover local history tidbits via a new blog that we're publishing on our website and emailing to our contact list.

We are also excited to be working with other Broomfield community organizations to plan activities commemorating the historic anniversaries coming in 2026: the 250th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence, the 150th anniversary of Colorado Statehood, the 65th anniversary of the City of Broomfield and the 25th anniversary of Broomfield County. It's even the 50th anniversary of our own organization! The Broomfield Historical Society was originally formed in 1976 as part of a community effort to save the historic Broomfield Depot Museum. Supporting the museum remains part of our mission today. If you'd like to join in these efforts, we welcome new board members! See the contact section in this issue.

So, keep an eye out for us, stop by our table at events to say hello and check our website to see what's coming next.

Happy new beginnings!

***Roberta Depp***

President,  
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# The Battle for “The Field”

By Patrick Quinn



The Field Open Space, May 11, 2025.

Broomfield’s admirable commitment to preserving open space started in a field. The property now affectionately referred to as “the Field” consists of 115 acres east of Main Street where the famed Brunner Farmhouse now sits. The land had originally been zoned for 2,120 housing units, but in 1980 the property was rezoned to allow a Western Electric Training Facility. Western Electric and stakeholders had envisioned a campus-like facility with a few buildings surrounded by a sea of open lands, but that was not meant to be.

In 1992 the Field was optioned to a real estate development company who presented the city with

plans for 433 single family homes. The response to the development, and the Field’s ultimate acquisition in 1997, changed Broomfield’s character forever and led to Broomfield’s ambitious 40 percent open lands goal.

Fast forward to 2018, *Money Magazine* named Broomfield the 18th best place to live in the U.S. saying the city boasts 10 parks, four trail systems and a variety of green spaces with ponds, fishing decks and outdoor art exhibits.

This article is the story of the Field.

## THE BATTLE FOR “THE FIELD”

### EARLY YEARS

The origins of modern Broomfield go back to the development of Broomfield Heights in 1956. It was a master-planned bedroom community in every sense of the word. As Carol Turner wrote in her book, *Legendary Locals of Broomfield*, “The postwar transition from farm community to city was relatively swift. A new generation of young families began arriving, purchasing brand-new homes, often via the GI Bill. There was no city government, no infrastructure, no community services, so the citizens created these things themselves.”

In 1951, Bal Swan was President of Empire Savings and Loan and was the brainchild and founder of the Turnpike Land Company which developed Broomfield Heights. In 1955, *Time Magazine* wrote about the Broomfield Heights plan “... to build a \$100 million model community of 6,000 brick houses, shopping centers, parks, schools and churches outside of town, along the turnpike running between Boulder and Denver.”

At the time, Bal Swan and his partner Aksel Nielsen were friends with President Dwight Eisenhower who became an investor in the project. Swan and Nielsen “... were joint owners of the ranch where Ike trout fishes.” reported *Time* in its article on Broomfield Heights. Broomfield’s library was named after Ike’s wife Mamie Doud.

The residents of Broomfield Heights started creating necessary infrastructures almost immediately, incorporating as a city in 1961. Mayors and City Councils were elected and the town grew in size and population.

### RAPID DEVELOPMENT

Prior to 1993, City Council tended to approve residential development after residential

development: Broomfield Heights filing numbers one and two, Lac Amora, Northmoor Estates, Greenway Park, Gate N Green, Westlake Village, among others.

So Broomfield grew, expanding from Boulder County into Adams, Jefferson and Weld counties over the years. The population grew to 7,281 in 1970; 20,730 in 1980 and 24,638 in 1990, an increase of 238% in some twenty years. Whereas Colorado’s population increased 49% during the same period and, Boulder County, which grew even faster, increased 71%. To be sure, the residents of Broomfield were feeling the pressure and consequences of rapid growth.

The undeveloped Field was surrounded by single family homes from Broomfield Heights to Northmoor and Highland Park South. Broomfield had become known as a “bedroom community” where citizens lived but did not work. According to George DiCiero, City Manager from 1968 to 2011, in the early years the city was delighted to get a McDonalds, as the city had virtually no sales tax base. And like elsewhere, sales taxes are the life blood of cities in Colorado.

Broomfield’s original town hall was located in the Garden Center, off Highway 287 and Midway Boulevard. By 1989 the city had outgrown its town hall and was actively searching for a new location.

Broomfield sought to acquire 27.736 acres from Betawest (owned by U.S. West, an entity spun off from ATT in the 1980s) for its new City Hall as Western Electric had announced they had abandoned plans to build a training center in Broomfield.

Not only was Betawest willing to sell the site for a new town hall, but it offered to sell the City of Broomfield the entire parcel, a total of 167 acres for \$2.9 million.

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However, the city didn't have the wherewithal to purchase the entire 167 acres, so they declined to purchase the rest of the site.

In a letter sent to Betawest's legal firm Otten Johnson, dated November 17, 1989, the City Attorney's office offered to purchase 27.736 acres for \$19,000 per acre and stated, “Council is not interested in purchasing the entire 167 acres, nor is it willing to discuss land uses on the remaining property ...”

### CHALLENGING THE TOWN AND COUNTRY VILLAGES DEVELOPMENT

Not surprisingly, Betawest put the balance of their property on the market. They optioned the property in 1992 to Johnson Development Company (“Johnson”).

In Colorado, quasi-judicial processes for land use decisions are legal proceedings in which city councils act in a capacity similar to a court. City councils apply existing laws, building codes and land use regulations to specific facts when a development is proposed. Broomfield requires the developer to first get the approval of Planning and Zoning Commission (“P and Z”) and then the City Council that has a prescribed public hearing process. Council's decision to approve or deny a development application has profound implications and the applicant, who can, if denied, appeal to the Courts. So the process is prescribed to ensure the council has been presented with the information it needs to make a decision in a balanced matter.

Often developers will test the waters first to see if a city is receptive to their proposed development and in particular if they are proposing variances from existing codes, rules and regulations. Broomfield process includes a “concept review” where a developer can have a joint study session with the P

and Z and city council at the same time. The development process is very expensive. The direct and indirect costs include environmental, traffic and other studies along with elaborate planning documents, summing to the hundreds of thousands of dollars.

Johnson tested the waters at a Concept Review in the fall of 1992 and made their initial, informal presentation to P and Z on October 5, 1992. According to the October 8, 1992, Broomfield Enterprise newspaper, “... the Denver firm's plans for 450 upscale homes on 140 acres in the center of Broomfield seemed to impress the commissioners.” Michael A. Beitzel of Downing, Thorpe & James Inc., representing Johnson at the P and Z meeting, presented the plans. In his summary of the project he presented the vision of “Midway as a meandering, scenic parkway-type arterial, with abundant landscaping, a desire expressed by commissioners and council members and Broomfield Mayor Bob Schulze at a recent joint session.” The article also states, “... the development includes a 20-acre park in the northeast ... with a greenbelt winding through the property ...” Beitzel went on to say, “We're excited about this, we're aware this is a key piece of property in Broomfield.”

After the October 1992 Planning and Zoning (P and Z) meeting, arguably, Johnson had a green light to fully prepare development plans to formally submit their plan to the city for approval. At the public hearing in 1993 Johnson Development Company said they had spent \$325,000 on the studies and planning documents for Town and Country.

At the close of October 1992 P and Z meeting, Beitzel said that “If the public hearing and approval process goes smoothly, construction will begin next spring.”



## THE BATTLE FOR “THE FIELD”

Johnson formally submitted their plans for the development later in the fall of 1992.

After rigorous staff reviews, formal development plans are then submitted to the P and Z for their approval.

On January 18, 1993, P and Z held a formal public hearing for the now 433-unit Town and Country Villages Development. Plans were moving along.

The January 21, 1993, *Broomfield Enterprise* article on the meeting began with this: “Neighborhood opposition to the planned Town and Country Villages subdivision was near complete Tuesday. Sixteen of 17 people addressing the P and Z voiced complaints about 433 upscale homes proposed for a 125-acre parcel east of Main Street. However, the five commissioners present, after devoting four and a half hours to the Johnson Development Co. application, unanimously recommended approval, suggesting the City Council might appease some who expressed their distaste for the development. If this week’s hearing was any indication, council members should brace for a long night Feb 9, when they are to consider the zoning request.”

Steve Waldman, the *Enterprise* reporter wrote a follow-up article for the *Enterprise* that was published on February 4. According to the article the “... sixteen Broomfield residents that spoke out against the plan for a wide spectrum of reasons – overcrowded schools, traffic and the need for open space ...”

According to the article, Councilmember Bob Sakaguchi seemed to support the development as he expressed legitimate concerns about the “... lack of housing quality in our community ... to continue attracting corporate citizens such as Hunter Douglas, a wide variety of adequate housing must be available.” Council member Bill Berens was quoted

as saying “I think the city budget is such that it’s going to be very hard, if not impossible, to purchase raw open space.”

The February 9th meeting of the City Council would be a public hearing, the final part of the quasi-judicial process. Public hearings start with staff presenting the applicant’s plans and opening a discussion of the variances requested. The applicant then has a chance to present, and then the public has a right to comment on the proposed application. Finally, the Council has a chance to ask questions of staff, the developer, and others before they deliberate and vote on the application. Public hearings for development applications can range in length from an hour to several hours, but the City had never experienced the interest and dissension the Town and Country Villages application would encounter.

So, on February 9, City Manager George DiCiero presented the Staff’s summary of the development. Planning Director Kirk Oglesby reviewed the history of the property and presented an overview of the proposed development plan. Community Development Director James Black discussed the Traffic Impact Analysis, noting that traffic on Main Street and Midway Boulevard will exceed the Master Plan estimated volumes. Don Orr, Director of Planning, Boulder Valley Schools District, discussed current school enrollment capacities and the anticipated impact of the project. He stated that the District expects a classroom shortage.

Mike Beitzel again represented Johnson at the public hearing emphasizing the quality of the development, including a framework of open space features, as he had to P and Z.

As expected during public comments, twenty-five residents spoke that night in opposition to the development. According to the Minutes of that evening, the opponents cited “concerns about the

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impacts of this development, including school overcrowding, increased traffic and air pollution ... Many of the speakers noted the wildlife currently inhabiting the property and urged that the City preserve this property as open space.” All of the opponents were residents of Broomfield. Paul Walover, Burns Errebo and Gordon McKellar would later help form Broomfield Citizens for Parks and Open Space.

Four citizens spoke in favor of “well-planned growth, and the need for residential growth to attract retail and business development and to expand the tax base.” Speakers in favor included Clif Harald, Executive Director Broomfield Economic Development Corporation, Jack Terhar, Jr. owner of the Ford Dealership in Broomfield, David Smith Executive Director of the Chamber of Commerce.

Not surprising, the desire to be heard was so great that the comment period went past midnight. The council continued the public hearing to February 19th at the larger Lakeshore Room in the Broomfield Senior Center.

The public hearing was reopened on Friday February 19 at the Lakeshore Room. According to the February 19th Minutes, over 50 residents spoke in opposition to the proposed development citing and expanding on the previous opposing comments that were made on February 9. According to the Minutes, people expressed “... objections to private development of this property versus acquisition ... for open space and/or parks ... impacts on the wetlands area and local wildlife... general concerns about the effect of continued growth on Broomfield’s “quality of life” and “unique community identity.” Many of the speakers—George Brandt, Marlene Erickson, Dena Brinkman, Carrie and Thelma Banschbach—were or would become active in the Broomfield open space community,

serving on ad-hoc and formal city-formed committees.

Only sixteen citizens spoke in favor of the project primarily representing the Broomfield business community including a banker, realtors and owners of construction companies.

Once again, the public comments continued past midnight, and the Public Hearing was continued to the February 23, 1993 regular city council meeting where several citizens opposed the plan, and other citizens spoke in favor.

Tyler Johnson strongly defended Johnson on February 23. They had spent 8 months with City Staff, the P and Z, and adjacent property owners. “Neighbors within 500 feet of the property were invited to a meeting which was well attended, and they also conducted follow-up meetings” with property owners adjacent to the project. He noted that the P and Z “... unanimously recommended approval of the Plan with six conditions which the Applicant has now met.” It was noted that Johnson had an investment of \$325,000 in developing and presenting the application.

The Public Hearing was closed at 11:30 p.m. The City Council then began their deliberations on this controversial project. And once again the consideration of the Town and Country Application was continued to March 2nd, 1993. City Council adjourned at 1:55 a.m.

With the Public Hearing closed, the purpose of the March 2 meeting was to answer any additional questions and proceed to Council’s findings and decisions made as a quasi-judicial body.

Prior to the Council business meeting on March 2nd, Council held an Executive Session which is allowed for seeking legal advice from the City Attorney, Roy Howard. At this point the Council knew there was a



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possibility that the application for Town and Country would be denied. Council can deny applications only under certain circumstances, which, as mentioned, can be challenged in court.

Indeed, the application was denied because it did not meet the City’s Planned Unit Development (PUD) plan review standards. The motion to deny listed 13 separate findings of fact to support the denial including failure to meet standards for traffic, lack of compatibility of adjacent land uses, overcrowding of the public schools serving Town and Country, lack of provision for recreational and educational facilities, and negative impacts on wildlife.

The motion to deny was approved 6 to 3. Councilmembers Sakaguchi and Berens had been persuaded; they voted to deny.

The *Broomfield Enterprise* March 4, 1993 edition summarized it this way: “After absorbing many arduous hours of testimony from the public, the vast majority of it in opposition—the Johnson Development Co and city staff, the council took only minutes to knock out Town and Country Villages, nixing the rezoning of the request and site plan.” Councilmember Larry Cooper was quoted as saying, “I think the Council really made a statement about quality of life in Broomfield.”

Charles Ozaki, the Deputy City manager in 1993, remembers the denial of the Town and Country development in an April 4, 2018 panel discussion: “It was quite the experience, a 20-hour meeting over 3 days ... We had to move the meeting to the Lakeshore Room at the Senior Center to accommodate all who wanted to participate.”

### NOT WITHOUT A FIGHT

As expected, almost immediately, on March 31, 1993, Betawest and Johnson filed a lawsuit against the City of Broomfield challenging the denial of the Town and Country development.

Many of the citizens that lobbied City Council now became activists. George Brandt, Marlene Erickson, Burns Errebo and Paul Walover formed the Broomfield Citizens for Parks and Open Space (BCPOS) in 1993 which was a campaign committee organized to pass two ballot initiatives placed on the ballot by City Council for the November 1993 election. The first issue was a sales tax of .25 of 1% or twenty five cents for a \$100 purchase. The second issue was to allow the City to issue bonds to purchase the Field, with the approved sales tax to repay principal and interest.

Marlene and Rick Erickson moved to Broomfield from Baltimore so Rick, a Kaiser Permanente doctor, could be close to his work. Marlene opposed Town and Country because “the mass of humanity in that location seemed overwhelming.” Burns Errebo recruited her to the BCPOS to be on the “t-shirt” committee.

At the April 4th panel discussion, Rick Erickson stated he had gotten involved in BCPOS after looking over Marlene’s shoulder and noticing that BCPOS was in the red. He told Marlene, “You need help.” All the campaign funds were in t-shirts, and not that many had been sold.

Rick also stated that the “Blue Book” which explains ballot initiatives to citizens had a critical error in calculating the cost of the tax per household.

The ballot to increase bonding capacity passed, but the sales tax increase did not. It failed by 28 votes out of 5,282 votes cast.

## THE BATTLE FOR “THE FIELD”

Erickson recruited residents Ellie McKinley, Jean Patterson, and Gordon McKellar to help in his effort to pass two new issues to be placed on the 1994 ballot.

McKinley and Patterson were longtime friends.

Patterson moved to Broomfield in 1969 when her husband was transferred to Western Electric on 120th Avenue. Patterson “... fell in love with the Field, as open space, didn’t want it cut up and covered. The Field could become our Central Park.” It was her opinion that the 1993 campaign efforts “... weren’t very organized.”

McKinley moved to Broomfield in 1967. Her dad was born in the same town where Patterson grew up. McKinley’s Dad was a “tremendous volunteer.” Volunteering became McKinley’s passion as well. McKinley, who is often referred to as the “Queen” of Broomfield open space, first got involved in open space because of the 1993 battle to save the Field.

McKinley was the “money tree shaker” of the three. According to campaign finance reports BCPOS raised \$4,191, with over \$2,000 going to ads in the *Broomfield Enterprise*.

### CAMPAIGNING FOR OPEN SPACE

But more importantly, as McKinley stated in a July 29, 2021 interview, “We were battling against some very influential people, including the Board of Realtors and Chamber of Commerce, so we did everything in the books. Nobody worked as hard as we did to get something passed. We divided the City into several sections and assigned volunteers to each section, which made it very, very personal. We didn’t leave a brochure without making personal contact first.” The admittedly clever slogan of the campaign became, “Keep the Field in Broomfield.”

Also, the four of them sent out several newsletters to educate the public and make sure they had the facts on the upcoming two ballot initiatives.

There had been opposition to the 1993 ballot initiative by members of the parks and recreational community, so in 1994 it was agreed to split the increase in sales tax: “80% of the proceeds of the increase to be spent for the acquisition of land for open space and 20% of the proceeds of the increase to be spent on acquisition of lands for parks and for park development.”

Council agreed to place two new issues on the 1994 ballot: issue 2B, which was the increase in sales tax, and issue 2C, which was for the issuance of \$5,740,000 in parks and open space bonds. The sales tax was to be sunset after 21 years.

In the meantime, according to the May 19, 1994 *Enterprise*, Johnson submitted plans for a revised, smaller Town and Country Development. And the lawsuit advanced in the Courts.

On June 14, 1994, the Courts ruled against Johnson and in favor of the City. The *Broomfield Enterprise* article on the ruling stated: “A yearlong Town and Country lawsuit against the city of Broomfield has been partially resolved in the city’s favor.” Boulder District Judge Morris Sandsted Jr. Ruled, “The City Council’s findings and subsequent decision to deny the Town and Country development were supported by the facts presented.” The article quotes City Attorney Roy Howard as saying, “The principal issue of the case has been resolved. The question is whether the attorneys want to proceed on the remaining issues.”

Also different in 1994 was that a citizens’ Open Space Committee prepared a list of top ten sites that would be acquired for open space/parks if funds were available.

## THE BATTLE FOR “THE FIELD”

Auto dealer Jack Terhar opposed the 1993 ballot initiatives and said in a Letter to the Editor the weekend before the 1994 election, “As a Broomfield businessman and citizen I hate tax increases. However, this current proposal for open space ... is one I can support based upon quality of life for all citizens of our community . . . . The current proposal identifies 10 locations throughout our community that would be easy for everyone who is interested in access.”

In a 2021 interview, McKinley stated, “There was no party on election night. Erickson and Patterson went over to City Hall to look at results. When Westlake went for it, we knew we had won. We did not celebrate because we were so tired.”

On November 8, 1994, Broomfield Ballot issues 2B and 2C pass decisively.

However, the battle for the Field was not over. There was still a court case pending and the City needed to “condemn” the property and establish a fair price before the acquisition could be completed.

In December 1994, Johnson asked the court to set a trial date and the City Council voted to condemn the north parcel allowing acquisition of the Field through using the City’s eminent domain powers. In April 1995, the City Council voted to condemn the south parcel.

The lawsuit was dismissed by the Courts on September 27, 1995 but it still took nearly two years to finalize the purchase. Finally, on April 4, 1997, the 115-acre Field was formally purchased by the City of Broomfield for \$4.6 million.

### LOOKING BACK AT HOW FAR WE’VE COME

It is interesting to note that a 167-acre property was offered to the city in 1989 for \$17,500 per acre, and after the city said no, 125 acres were optioned to a developer in 1992 whose proposed project was, in turn, denied in 1993. The city purchased 115 of those acres, known as the Field, for \$40,000 per acre 8 years after rejecting Betawest’s offer.

The difference was determined citizens taking the initiative to purchase the Field by showing up in force at City Hall and then deciding to pass a tax on themselves to make it happen.

This battle forever changed the character of Broomfield. The 1995 Master Plan update included the formidable goal of 40% open lands at build out for the city. It’s been a long, arduous and worthy battle. Here we are in 2025, and Broomfield is close to achieving that goal.



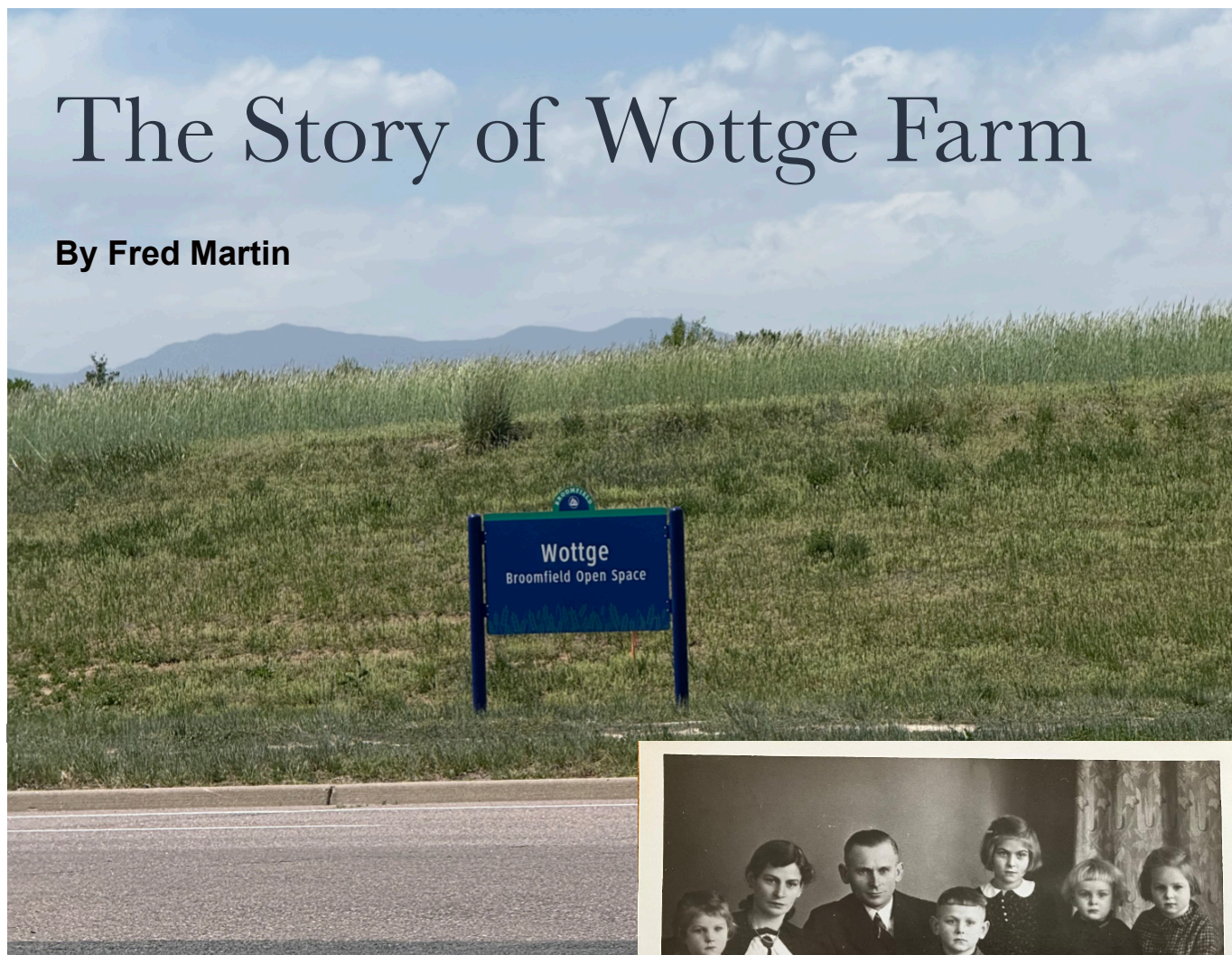
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# The Story of Wottge Farm

By Fred Martin



Wottge Open Space, May 11, 2025.

[A video of Fred Martin's presentation on Wottge Farm is on the Broomfield Historical Society's YouTube channel.](#)

The Broomfield Historical Society sponsored a special presentation on the 200-year history that led to the Wottge open space. Mayor Guyleen Castriotta said,

Broomfield, Colorado has been built by pioneers, historic visionaries, veterans, farmers, ranchers, and more recently, technologists. Among our important agrarian pioneers is the Wottge-Stonehocker family. Their story is an amazing journey from a 200-year family farm in Germany, the loss of that farm and family fortunes in World War II, forced migration



Wottge Family, 1943.

through the ruins of post-war Germany, and their courageous resettlement in America; in Broomfield. They made a new start in a strange land as farm laborers until they could again build a family farm that has become the Broomfield-Wottge open space at 144th and Sheridan. Now Broomfield enjoys this recreational resource, wildlife preserve, and open landscape. With much pride, we thank the Wottge family—Ben Wottge, and sister Rose Stonehocker, who lived this heroic history.

## WOTTGE FARM

At the end of World War II, after the horrific crimes of Nazi Germany, there was a mass expulsion of ethnic Germans from homelands annexed to Poland, which has been chronicled in documentaries by National Geographic, Britannica, and others investigating this period of forced migration of enormous scale and tremendous human cost. Future Broomfield family, Alfons and Klara Wottge and five children, including Ben and Rose, lived this history.

For over two hundred years, the Wottges lived a stable and reliable family life on their farm: about the same length of time Americans have enjoyed the freedoms and stability of democracy. Then, suddenly, it all changed. People with longstanding traditions and loyalty to their homeland were subsumed by radical political change they did not believe in or support. Despots and their followers sowed division and fear-of-the-other. Society was splintered. The Wottges then lived through the upheaval of World War II. The Normandy D-Day was about to occur, beginning the Allied sweep through Europe into Germany. Russian forces were pressing in from the east. After Nazi depredations in their invasion of Russia, Russian soldiers were brutal to German soldiers and civilians alike. The Wottges were surrounded by combat in the final months of the war as Russian troops pillaged the countryside. The family patriarch, Alfons Wottge, who later started the Broomfield farm, was drawn into the war. A neighbor in their small village of Rathmannsdorf reported to the authorities that Alfons was not flying the Nazi flag, nor was he participating in party activities. Alfons was subsequently drafted into the German Army in December, 1943, and sent to the brutal Russian front.

While Alfons was away, war closed in on the family. Ottmachau, a few miles to the northeast was bombed. Fires lit up the night sky. On February 13 came the Allied firebombing of Dresden, west of Rathmannsdorf, with 80,000 killed. The family was

threatened by patrolling fighter planes. In these last months of the war, with the Luftwaffe suppressed, American fighter bombers were roaming the countryside seeking targets of opportunity. At times they dropped leaflets warning people where bombs would be dropped. Yet, unleashing their firepower was just as common. Trucks, trains, barns, and farmhouses might be hiding retreating Nazi troops and were considered fair game for the Allied pilots.

Fearing the low-flying fighter planes, the family left the farm in March, 1945, on hay wagons to nearby towns. In the evenings they returned on bicycles to take care of the animals and gardens, but they had to leave again by morning, fearing the fighters. By the end of April, they returned home to the farm, but just as they started to get back into daily routines, the front again moved closer. Every day the “Stalin Organ” (what they called the Russian cannons and guns) came nearer. On May 9 they had to leave again, fearing the Russians. They headed into the hills and in the evening stopped, not knowing what to do. A farmer came and said “You can’t just stand there. If you are satisfied with the barn, come with me. The house is already full of other refugees.”

The next day, the Russians came. The farmer offered them a very small room saying, “Come, you can no longer stay in the barn.” In this room lay 15 people on the floor, packed like herrings. During that night the Russians molested and harassed the women in the house. They beat hard on the door with their rifle butts but did not break down the door. The family prayed. Klara cried, saying, “If they get in, they will trample the children.” They felt the guardian angels watched over them that night. The next day, propaganda fliers and Hitler pictures were floating in the river. Silver crosses were given by the Nazi government to a mother after the birth of her 6th child. The mothers threw them in the river so the Russians would not find them. They spent two nights in that small room. The next afternoon they began



## WOTTGE FARM

**“Klara cried, saying, ‘If they get in, they will trample the children.’ They felt the guardian angels watched over them that night.**

the trek back to Rathmannsdorf. Now it seemed it was over and there would be a new beginning. But that was not to be. The next day, Russian and Polish hoodlums came and took everything they

could use: food, clothing, sewing machines, farm machinery. The plundering lasted three weeks.

In late April, the Reichstag in Berlin was overrun by Russian troops, Hitler committed suicide and Germany surrendered May 8. War in Europe ended, but the Wottge's tribulations were just beginning. At war's end, Germany was cut up into occupation zones. Stalin along with the allies, with little consultation with Poland and likely almost none with the defeated Germans, made a deal to partition a 200-mile section of east Germany to Poland. The Wottge farm was now in Poland.

Then came a big group of Poles—every one picked a farm and took possession of the property. The Poles confined the Wottge family to two rooms in their own home. On August 18, 1945, Alfons Wottge arrived home and found a 17 person Polish family had taken over the house. It had taken Alfons many weeks to get home from the war. On May 4, he was taken prisoner by the Americans and not released until June 16. He was taken by truck to the Russian Army border, but he had walked the rest of the way home.

September 2, 1945, happened to be the day the Japanese signed their unconditional surrender on the USS Missouri in Tokyo Bay, finally ending World War II. It was on a late summer Sunday. The Wottges, still living as guests in their own home, were at church. When they came out, notices had been posted that all

Germans must be out of Rathmannsdorf that day by 4pm. The Poles had stolen their car, tractor, wagons, even carts. There was nothing left with wheels. They walked away only with what they could carry, without a destination in mind, part of a great migration of thousands of East German refugees.

During this time, they survived by begging. They were also expected to help clean up the burned rubble and bombed building debris with shovels and wheel barrows. Alfons was forced into service as a mechanic because the Poles did not know how to use the diesel farm machinery they had stolen from them.

After many months of this, Alfons learned of the last train scheduled to carry refugees to western Germany. In the general perception of World War II German history, loading people into cattle boxcars is a frightening icon of the Holocaust. Yet these were post-war refugees traveling west. Still, the travel conditions were no better. At the designated boarding area they were plundered and robbed again, then loaded into boxcars with 25 to 30 people and headed west. The train stopped often in open areas. In Marienborn they were deloused and given their first food to eat. Very hungry, some overstuffed themselves and many vomited, their bellies not used to food. They were on the train several days, arriving in West Germany June 2, 1946, and given shelter in a hunting lodge, sleeping on straw where many other refugees before them had lain. The next day wagons took the Wottges to a farm near Adenstedt. From 1946 to 1952, Alfons found work on the German railroad operating track gates while the family worked on a farm. Klara and the children worked in the fields.

The cursory history most hear about post-war Germany is that the Allies liberated everyone and then they lived happily ever after. But life was very difficult in post-war Germany. Forty percent of homes had been destroyed. The ruined European

## WOTTGE FARM

**“The cursory history most hear about post-war Germany is that the Allies liberated everyone and then they lived happily ever after. But life was very difficult in post-war Germany.**

economy could not absorb these huge, displaced populations, so humanitarian organizations looked to the United States as the site of new homes for the refugees.

It was in church that Alfons and Klara heard of the Catholic War Relief Services. US bishops played a role in this process of resettlement, working with the US government on a public relations campaign to persuade lay Catholics to open their communities to refugees. This is how Alfons and Klara Wottge were able to plan the family's migration to America. They had captured the dream of finding a new life in America. They began a laborious application process with other families. The process was so difficult that the other families gave up, but Alfons said, “We're not on a boat yet!” So Alfons and Klara persevered. At last, Catholic relief services provided passage to the port of Bremerhaven and they boarded the *USS General C.C. Ballou*. The *Ballou* was built and outfitted as a troop ship. After the war she served around the world in refugee relocations and made a number of trips between Bremerhaven and New York. The voyage lasted ten days.

They arrived in America June 10, 1952. Along with so many thousands of others, the Wottge family sailed past the lady, who is, as Emma Lazarus wrote, “A



German people displaced from their homes after the war ended in 1945.

mighty woman with a torch whose flame is the imprisoned lightning, and her name: Mother of Exiles.” Perhaps, in our modern contentious politics we should be re-inspired by her words that are a foundational principle of America and that for the Wottge family was lived experience:

Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to breathe free, the wretched refuse of your teeming shore, send the homeless, tempest-tost to me, I lift my lamp beside the golden door.

Before departure from Germany, they had to secure work in America, but it was not until processing in New York that they discovered they were headed to Colorado. There was no delay in New York; two days later they arrived by train in Denver, then by bus to Ft. Collins. They were met by rancher Floyd Combs who put them on his cattle truck and headed north past La Porte, past the first foothills near the Wyoming border, where there was a small house in the middle of nowhere. That was their first home in America. In those days, up the dirt roads into those dryland, hardscrabble foothills, it looked nothing like the green fields back home in Germany. The family

## WOTTGE FARM



Statue of Liberty, photo by nash78690 at Pixabay.

were not yet proficient in English. There was serious consideration given to finding a way back to New York. The *General Ballou* was likely still in port there. Could they get train tickets? Hitchhike? It was unimaginable disappointment bordering on despair that Alfons and Klara turned into determination to survive and succeed as strangers in this strange new land.

Alfons went to work as a farm laborer on this ranch that raised crops and had a dairy farm for a salary of \$125 per month. Klara and the children also worked on the farm. Rose tells of having to dig fence post holes with tuna cans. They had no idea where they

were, what schools might be available, or how to get to the nearest town, Ft. Collins, about 18 miles away. On a Sunday morning, Klara and Rose, 16 at the time, hitched a ride with a milk truck to Ft. Collins and found the Catholic church. They met some helpful people and were introduced to a farmer from south of Ft. Collins, Mr. Fatz, who spoke some German. He advised that they could not stay at the Combs place since there would be no way the children would get to school during the winter; they would be snowed in. So, he assisted the family in getting a new job on a farm about four miles south of Ft. Collins. Rose worked for a priest's family for a dollar per day.

Wealth and success are common in America, but what is most admirable, and more rare in history, are self-made people, especially those who have recovered from near-total loss. The Wottges lost that 200-year farm in Germany, then survived terrible years in post-war Germany, then migrated to Colorado as farm laborers, which isn't exactly a get-rich-quick scheme. Just four years after arriving in this new country, Alfons and Klara mustered the down payment for a Broomfield farm. All five children pitched in. Rose recalls the negotiations. There was no help from the government, no grants, and they couldn't afford feed. Banks turned them down and were telling them, "That's dry land, there's not enough water for livestock. And, you're not citizens." Rose tells the charming story that her father Alfons had dropped a nickel in the collection plate at church and then entered the expenditure in his financial ledger. A third banker was impressed with that level of accounting detail and decided Alfons knew how to manage money. The farm was 80 acres costing 23,000 dollars.

When they bought the farm, there was no Broomfield. There was a whistle-stop train depot called Zang's Spur, with grain elevators and the Grange Hall that is still here. 144th was a dirt road, as



## WOTTGE FARM

was Lowell. Sheridan came much later in the future. The farm had a couple of horses and a milk cow. To make a living on the farm, they had to start a dairy. So, in 1956, with a loan from the Farmers Home Administration, they bought 28 milk cows. By doing water-witching they located a stream about 80 feet deep and found sufficient water to run a dairy farm. They became quite successful, ending up with about 60 head of cattle, 40 milk cows, and 20 yearlings of cattle on average. It was not easy, but with the whole family working together, they overcame the obstacles.

The family has made two pilgrimages back to the old homeplace in Rathmannsdorf. What an evocative experience this must have been for them! They met and dined with the descendants of the Polish family that took their house and evicted them. An elderly woman was a young girl in World War II and remembered them. She cried with feelings of remorse when she met the Wottges.

Alfons and Klara achieved their dream of regaining self-sufficiency with the Broomfield Farm, raising the children in the three-bedroom farm house. They retired comfortably to a home they built in Thornton. Rose married Walt Stonehocker, known in Adams County farming history, and had seven children. She worked for CF&I, and with Walt, farmed in the Northglenn area until the city bought their farm, after which they purchased a farm in the Brighton area where Rose still lives. They also purchased a ranch near Granby where their kids and 17 grandchildren love to work and play.

Ben has four kids. He worked for Power Equipment Company for 44 years as a construction machinery mechanic and supervisor until retirement. Now he and Pam live on four acres of the original farm in Broomfield. Brother Konrad lived and worked on the farm, working part time for the railroad. He graduated from CU Boulder, has worked in oil and gas engineering throughout the world, and is

currently living in Ecuador. He has five children. Ursula and her sister Renate left together for California. They stopped in Las Vegas, where Ursula remained for 50 years. She raised two sons, worked in the hotel industry, and then became a stock investment wizard and a happy dog caretaker. Renate became a US citizen in 1960. She married Gary Burkett, an Air Force veteran, and worked for Xerox Corporation. They had two daughters and four grandchildren and live in southern California.

For twenty years, Ben and Pam fostered children with Boulder County. From 1992 to 2012 they had 147 placements from newborns to preteens. That's a lot of children to care for in your home. The farm was a wonderful place for these kids to be cared for. Josiah, their first foster child, they adopted.

So, consider how many lives this immigrant family, who were driven from their home in Germany, then came to America for a new life, have impacted and bettered in our city, county and nation. The Wottge name is now on this new land because of all these journeys of Klara and Alfons, Ben and Rose, and family. It's now a permanent part of Broomfield's heritage with this open space under development for everyone.

Fred Martin provides WWII aviation presentations to museums and civic groups at no cost. Visit his website: [FredTMartin.com](http://FredTMartin.com)

Read also "[A Short History Of the Open Space of Broomfield,](#)" by Annie Lessem in the *Broomcorn Express*.

# The Dinosaurs of Broomfield County

By Dave Feineman

*So you walk the path that once was trod  
By wise and ancient kings  
Searching in the mists of time  
For gifts of unknown things*

— From *Gifts of Unknown Things* by Jim Capaldi

## INTRODUCTION

It's not that I think we have completely covered all aspects of Broomfield's relatively recent history, but I thought it might be interesting for a change to set the wayback machine to an even earlier time and try to tell a part of the pre-human history story of our area. You may have seen the news reports in the past year of a group of high school students looking for and finding dinosaur remains on the north side of Broomfield.<sup>1</sup> What you may not be aware of is that Colorado has more fossil sites than any other state. It is important to understand why we need to dig into the history of the area by learning about its evolution through geological time that created the environments necessary for fossil preservation.<sup>2</sup> The who, what, when, where and why of the fossil record may not be generally known but they form an important piece of Broomfield history.



Triceratops reconstruction at Dinosaur Ridge  
(photo by author).

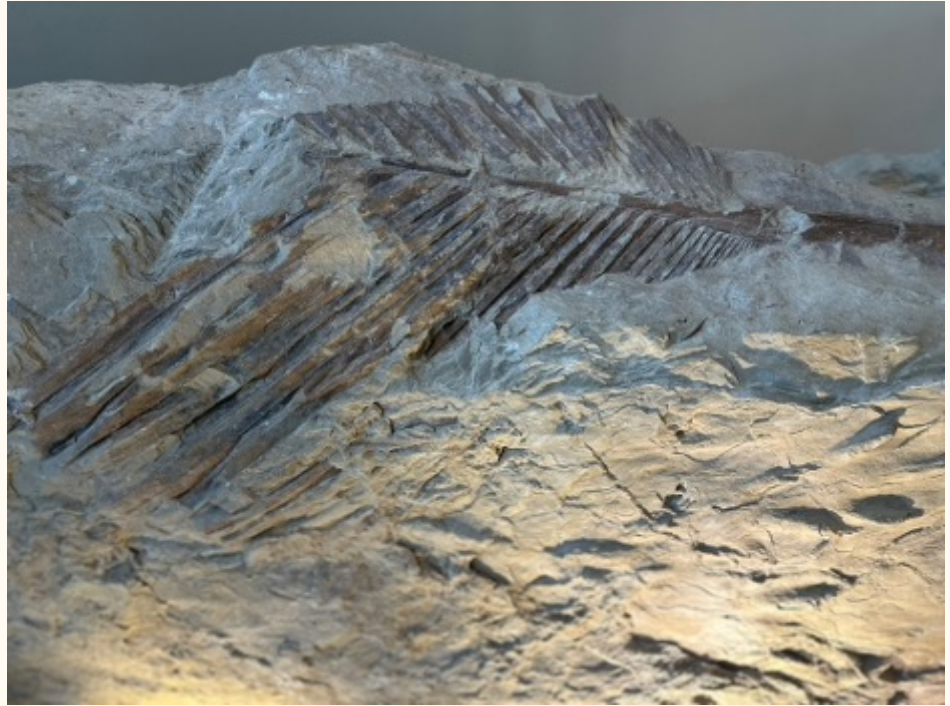
## THE GEOLOGY OF BROOMFIELD

Dinosaur fossils are intimately linked with the history of the rock layers they are associated with. [This online geological map of the Front Range](#) includes Denver and stretches north.<sup>3</sup> Although it lacks much cultural information, Standley Lake is labeled and easily identifiable. To the northeast, the next lake is the Great Western Reservoir—so we have a known point that is on the west side of Broomfield. If you draw a horizontal line due east from the top of the reservoir to the S curve in the South Platte River, you are generally following Highway 128 and 120th Avenue across Broomfield.

The colors on the map represent the different ages of rocks- tans and pinkish colors are very recent Pleistocene layers of loess and alluvium that

## THE DINOSAURS OF BROOMFIELD COUNTY

represent erosion of previous rock layers during ice age glaciation resulting in fine grain unconsolidated soils with numerous cobbles. Interspersed with those areas we see pockets of green: these are much older Cretaceous rocks (going from older to younger) of the Laramie, Arapahoe, and the Denver Formations. These rock outcrops are important here because most of the dinosaur tracks and fossils found in Broomfield and surrounding counties come specifically from these rock layers.<sup>4</sup> The Cretaceous rocks of interest here were deposited between 69 and 65.5 million years before the present.



Palm frond in the rock slab in the Broomfield Library (photo by author).

Rocks in the Laramie Formation are primarily made up of sandstone, mudstone, and clay<sup>5</sup>; the Arapahoe Formation consists of conglomerate, sandstone, and claystone; and the Denver Formation is made up of shale, claystone, and sandstone.<sup>6</sup> The point here is that while these rock layers were deposited in adjoining time slices, their composition is very different, which implies that they were deposited in different environments—which may be significant in terms of the types of fossils that they may contain.

### THE CRETACEOUS ENVIRONMENT: LAND, PLANTS, AND ANIMALS

As you may be aware, there is evidence that over geological time, continents can move creating new oceans and potentially colliding to form new

continents and drive-up mountain ranges. At the start of the Cretaceous, much of today's Colorado was under water: an ocean called the Western Interior Seaway ran from the North Pole to the Gulf of Mexico. Over time the water level in the seaway receded and “the sludgy sediment left behind was ideal for capturing the animals and plants that flourished in the subtropical climate.”<sup>7</sup> Consider the implications: if you lived in what will become the Anthem or Baseline communities during the Cretaceous, you might be under water from an inland ocean. If you head west to Skyestone, you are not just on land but heading towards rugged mountains. In between near Arista there is a pre-historic natural equivalent of I-25: a sandy beach running for hundreds of miles going north and south that creates a natural migration path for the animals of the time. Sometimes the beach is interrupted by rivers flowing out of the mountains that are surrounded by low-



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lying swampy areas, all basking in a climate more like today's Houston than Broomfield.

Why tell you about paleo environments when the idea was to talk about dinosaurs? A paper by Carpenter and Young makes the case that the assemblages of dinosaurs varied by the environments that they lived in.<sup>8</sup> They characterize the Laramie Formation as being associated more with swampy and near-river locations that had a varied faunal assemblage including *Tyrannosaurus* and *Triceratops*. Laramie flora includes myrtles, figs, and an extinct genus of palms.<sup>9</sup> The Arapahoe Formation is characterized as a conglomerate, with its composite materials derived from nearby mountains, making it of more terrestrial origin; it has yielded comparatively few fossils, mostly from ceratopsids. Plants associated with the Arapahoe are essentially the same fauna as in the Denver Formation and include maples, birches, oaks among others.<sup>10</sup> The Denver Formation differs from the other two yet again and may be an intermediate environment that has a varied dinosaur assemblage including *Tyrannosaurus*, *Triceratops*, and hadrosaurids. It's probably an appropriate time to mention that the rocks from the Cretaceous would lead you to believe that Broomfield was a dinosaur wonderland, but by the end of the Cretaceous, dinosaurs had become extinct. Moreover, although many of their fossils have been found, most represent scattered fragments as opposed to recognizable skeletons, which

"suggests a considerable passage of time between death and burial of the specimens."<sup>11</sup>

### THE FOSSIL RECORD

Having thought about the rocks beneath our feet, their age, the environments that they were deposited in, and the animals and plants that they are associated with, we need to understand the support for the idea that dinosaurs once lived here. Specifically, what could possibly remain of animals and plants that died millions of years ago? Fossils are anything that is preserved when time, heat, and pressure turn a layer of the earth from soft sediments into hardened rock layers. Along the way, bones and components of the skeleton of an animal can be replaced by minerals, thereby preserving their original shape. As it turns out, there are different mechanisms that may preserve other evidence of earlier life: footprints, trackways, exoskeletons, shells, the outline and internal structure of plants, and petrified wood are all examples of fossils.

If you need a deeper dive into the fossils of our area, consider a day trip to Dinosaur Ridge in Morrison. Dinosaur Ridge is considered the best site to accessibly see long tracks of multiple types of dinosaurs, while their small exhibit hall has a series of maps and dinosaur assemblage pictures that will let you get up close and personal with the world as it may have looked in the Late Cretaceous.<sup>12</sup> You can

Table 1: Late Cretaceous Dinosaurs of the Front Range

Name	Typical size	Characteristics
Ornithomimus	400 pounds	Feathered, 2 legs
Triceratops	15 tons	3 horns on a frill, 4 legs
Tyrannosaurus	8.5 tons	Massive bipedal carnivore
Edmontosaurus	9 tons	Duck billed, 4 legs
Dromaeosaurus	35 pounds	Small, carnivorous, bipedal
Pachycephalosaurus	2,200 pounds	Domed skull roof, bipedal

Table based on data in Carpenter and Young (2002) Late Cretaceous dinosaurs from the Denver Basin, Colorado.

## THE DINOSAURS OF BROOMFIELD COUNTY

also take in Triceratops Trail in Golden which is the #3 track site in the US,<sup>13</sup> where you can not only see Triceratops, Tyrannosaurus, and duck-billed dinosaur footprints, but also rain drops, palm frond impressions, and insect tracks captured in stone which gives some sense of the diversity of fossil evidence that remains.

Something you can do right now is take a trip to the Broomfield Library. In the entry atrium, just past the side door to the auditorium, is a slab of rock that was identified in 1999 in landscaping in the Interlocken Business Park close to the Rocky Mountain Metropolitan Airport. Based on the descriptive information in front of the rock slab, 23 tracks are visible, and they are attributed to both bird-footed ornithomimid and mammal-footed theropod dinosaurs.<sup>14</sup> The material near the tracks says the rock is from the Laramie Formation: given the identification of clear three-toed footprints from a bipedal ornithomimid dinosaur, it seems like the slab is more likely to be from the Denver Formation. (The type species of *Ornithomimus velox* was first discovered in 1890 in Colorado. It is believed to have been covered in feathers and had a toothless beak.<sup>15</sup>) This is probably a good place to point out that fossil identification can be challenging for several reasons, including incomplete primary preservation, incorrect geological formation attribution, broken or fragmented remains, erosional effects, and transportation of fossils to a different location. The Wright and Lockey (2001) article that was used to extract the information on display at the library about the trackways says that when they examined the slab it had already been moved and the outcrop from which it came was unknown and no longer exposed, which clearly adds some uncertainty about age determination.

Within the next year, there is a plan to move the library rock slab to CU Boulder, where I'm sure the paleontologists will work to establish the correct age and fossil identification; in the meanwhile, visit and do your own investigation.

### PEOPLE AND FOSSILS

The first indigenous people on the continent are thought to have arrived about 12,000 years ago, which means that a mere 64+ million years separated them from our late Cretaceous dinosaurs. The layers of rock with fossils will have been buried, uplifted, and eroded in the intervening time, which means that



Tracks of a small ornithomimid dinosaur in the Broomfield Library (photo by author).

## THE DINOSAURS OF BROOMFIELD COUNTY

just like today, it is entirely possible that the earliest residents of Colorado could have found fossils, and we can surmise that they would have easily recognized bones that were unlike those from animals they hunted. In one article, I found the following insights: “rock art and oral traditions centering on winged monsters and giant, primal beasts suggest that Native Americans across the West found remains and explained them, often via creation stories, over thousands of years. Navajo elders in the 1930s, Mayor writes, spoke of “places in the desert where one could see monstrous heads ‘sticking out from roots of trees and stones, from springs and swamps.’”<sup>16</sup> The start of scientific paleontology in Colorado dates back to the 1860s, and by the 1870s, excavations had started at locations like Dinosaur Ridge. Modern construction continues to unearth fossils around the Front Range, such as the Interlocken slab.

### FOSSIL-RELATED LAW

If you feel energized to go out and do your own fossil-related exploration and collection, it's probably worthwhile to mention that there are laws you should be aware of. If you are on Federal land, you can't collect fossils from vertebrates due to restrictions from the Paleontological Resources Preservation Act. You can collect invertebrate fossils for yourself but can't sell them. The rules for collecting fossils in National Forest System lands are governed by the same laws.

Collecting fossils on Colorado state-owned lands also has restrictions and permitting requirements, as well as associated special requirements on extraction of the fossils.<sup>17</sup> Vertebrate fossils are considered public property and are sent to museums and universities.

If you are on private land, obviously you should first have the landowner's permission to be there. If it is

your property or you have permission to be on someone else's property, you can collect and keep or sell any fossils you find.<sup>18</sup>

Perhaps the best general guidance is this: if you do happen to find a significant fossil anywhere, leave it undisturbed, take pictures, note the location, and forward the information on to one of our local museums to assess its relevance.

The county government of Broomfield itself would not normally be a repository for fossils. However, through an unusual chain of custody, it received a collection of fossils and casts collected in Broomfield in 1997, which currently resides in our archives. The CCoB received the necessary permit to retain those materials locally, which appear in the photo on the previous page.

### AFTERWORD

I wrote this article after seeing the news reports of fossils being found by high school students in Broomfield and wondering how they might be retained and displayed for the greater Broomfield population. In addition, I spent some time looking at the slab in the Broomfield library and wondered about how you could put something in plain sight and still have people walk by without noticing something so significant.

If you feel motivated to find out more, here are two books you can use as references. The first is *Walking With Dinosaurs* by Anthony Fredericks, which tells you about fossil sites throughout Colorado, with instructions on how to get there and what to look for.<sup>20</sup> The other is *Geology Underfoot Along Colorado's Front Range* by Lon Abbott and Terri Cook, which will fill in the details on local geology and has information on the best sites to visit.<sup>21</sup>



## THE DINOSAURS OF BROOMFIELD COUNTY

Finally, a few local (but out of county) field trips can give you a sense of what looking for fossil evidence in the field involves: Dinosaur Ridge in Morrison and

Triceratops Trail in Golden are both mostly accessible sites to view in situ dinosaur tracks and are an easy day trip from Broomfield.



Fossils and casts from the Denver Formation collected in Broomfield in 1997.<sup>19</sup>

## THE DINOSAURS OF BROOMFIELD COUNTY

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