



Old News

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Roads Records as a Source of Local History

For many rural residents, the development of county roads was important and essential for them in order to move their goods to market. Accordingly, the development of roads closely corresponds to settlement patterns.

Road records can provide insights into local and regional transportation and local history. Road records may include personal letters, petitions, and maps. Mostly county commissioners received petitions describing proposed routes beneficial to the signers.

Most records are pretty straightforward. But now and then, one can find some interesting economic and social commentaries.

Supporters sought what they considered to be the most direct routes between two points. In most cases, what was actually sought was a direct and easier route to local market centers. In some cases, as settlement increased, some

residents found that the local trails which had sufficed for many years were now fenced off and unusable.

PLAT OF COUNTY ROAD

from the
N.E. cor. of Sec. 25. T. 14. N. R. 67 W.

*NORTH TO THE
TOWNSHIP CORNER TO Ts. 14 & 15 N.
RANGES 66 & 67 W.*

Scale 1 inch = 20 chains.

Occasionally county commissioners received counter-arguments. These people found proposed roads unnecessary, because they cut their property, would require the tearing down of old fences and the construction of new ones, or would be costly to maintain in terms of regular maintenance and bridges. If a controversial road was to be constructed, they wanted compensation for land and material lost. Then there were those people who did not want a road at all. In June 1889 numerous residents in the area of Lower Horse Creek in Laramie County protested against a zigzagged county road. They argued that it was not the direct route of travel and thus of no practical utility. "Should this road be opened up as laid out, we would not travel it unless compelled to do so."

Recent Accession

The Archives has received a collection of photographs dating from the early 1900s to the 1940s of the Thompson family of Boulder, Wyoming. The photographs document ranching activities, hunting and fishing trips, camping trips to Yellowstone National Park, horse-drawn and mechanized machinery. Farm life is well documented. The family raised cattle, sheep, beets, oats, and hay. A unique feature was the use of elk antlers to create fences and decorative archways.



Some personal sidelights are written on the back of photographs. Writing to a friend in Missouri before 1910, Floyd Alva Thompson sent a postcard picture showing a tractor in the field. "This is the way we Plow[.] we Plow 20 acres per day. you must come out and see us[.]" In a letter to his sister,

he stated that for Christmas "I got a sack of candy [and] Andrew got a saddle." Accompanying the photographs is a 1914 letter from W.A. Thompson to his brother in Missouri. After recounting his various agricultural pursuits, Thompson observed that it would not be long before a railroad appeared, as the survey out of Lander had already been done. Unfortunately, the proposed extension of the Chicago & Northwestern railroad line never materialized.

SOUTHEASTERN WYOMING

The Land that don't Drown Out or Dry Out—Has Just Rain Enough

*FORMERLY THE RANCHMAN'S PARADISE
NOW REDEEMED BY SCIENTIFIC FARMING*

WHAT CROPS CAN BE RAISED?

This is always the first and most important question asked about a new country, and it has been successfully answered in the past few seasons by practical farmers from the Middle States who have located here and used intelligence and good common sense. Wheat, Oats, Barley, Rye, Field Peas, Milo Maisie, Cane, Millet and all forage crops produce well, while Potatoes, Sugar Beets and all root crops grow to perfection. There are many farms in Southeastern Wyoming on which are raised from 30 to 60 bushels of Wheat, 40 to 70 bushels of Oats and from 100 to 250 bushels of Potatoes to the acre; and it is a well known fact that Wyoming small grain and potatoes are given first place for weight and quality by government experts. Alfalfa and Brome Grass are staple crops and yield abundantly.

THE SOIL AND WATER OF BEST QUALITY

Two great essentials for comfortable living and profitable farming are good soil and water. The soil is a deposit of vegetable mould and chocolate-colored sandy loam, marvelously rich and underlaid with a porous clay-loam subsoil containing silica to a degree that makes the retention of moisture a certainty during the dryest seasons. This peculiar feature of Wyoming soil makes the average rainfall of about 16 inches sufficient to assure good crops. The rainfall comes to the best advantage for the farmer, as it is very evenly distributed from April to August during the growing season. There is no alkali in Southeastern Wyoming, and water of the finest quality for all purposes is obtained anywhere from 10 to 150 feet depth.

THE CLIMATE IS PLEASANT AND HEALTHFUL

The climate is much more equable than that of similar latitudes in the East. The air is always pure and dry, with abundant sunshine. In the hottest summer it is cool in the shade, and the nights are always cool. At no time in the winter does one experience the rigors of climate known in the same latitude of the Eastern States. There is no climate more exhilarating or healthful than Wyoming affords. The heat is never intense nor winter severe.

CHEYENNE THE STATE CAPITOL

Nearly all the lands we offer for sale are six to thirty miles east of Cheyenne, the State Capitol, and known as Iowa Colony, close to the Union Pacific and Burlington railroads, which assures a splendid market and good shipping facilities. Cheyenne is a rapidly growing city of 18,000 population, and with the new farming settlements close by, the city will surely increase in size and become a most valuable factor in the making of a profitable home market.

TERMS AND PRICES OF LAND

Homestead land is now very scarce and deeded land is advancing rapidly; and it will be passing a good investment to wait any length of time before coming to make an investigation of Wyoming land and its possibilities. Choice lands are selling from \$10 to \$25 per acre, according to quality and improvements. The rougher lands, classed as grazing lands, and not so well located, sell at from \$5 to \$9. Liberal terms arranged to suit purchaser.

Homeseekers Excursion Rates can be obtained by applying to any railroad agent and are usually sold twice each month from all Eastern points. All questions pertaining to Southeastern Wyoming, Western Nebraska and Colorado will be cheerfully answered by writing or calling in person at this office.

HARTUNG LAND COMPANY

INTER-OCEAN HOTEL BUILDING

CHEYENNE, WYOMING

Microfilming Case Files

Most Wyoming district courts are now storing their district court civil case files in the Archives. Since there is little or infrequent reference activity into most of these records and in order to conserve and free up storage space, older and non-current civil case files are being microfilmed. K-Imaging of Denver has been contracted for this project.

Only those files with unfolded records (as is generally found in the territorial and early twentieth century files) are being filmed. Depending upon the county, the records may date back to the 1920s up to 1985.

The images are very readable. For researchers, this is a boon, in that files are now stored in the reference room and can be readily referenced instead of having to wait until their retrieval from the off-site location.

Currently district court civil case files from Albany, Carbon, Fremont and Park counties are on microfilm.

Water Districts and Organizations

Water has played an important part in the settlement of Wyoming. Corporations have been formed to oversee the development and usage of water. Among the records available in the Archives are: Wyoming Ditch and Water Company (1870-1871), Eden Valley Irrigation and Drainage District (financial records only, 1979-1985), Goshen County Irrigation District (financial records only, 1933-1935), Laramie-Overland Municipal District (1910-1915), Nowood Conservation and Irrigation District (1931-1976), Upper Hanover Water Association (1910-1931), and Wyoming Bell Municipal District (1910-1915). Organizational and financial records can be found in some district court series.

State government has played a variety of roles on this topic. Financial investments in local irrigation districts are documented in the bond records of the State Treasurer. The records of the Water Development Commission are an important source of information about water projects across the state. Various projects can be found documented in the records of the State Engineer, the Department of Public Lands, and the Natural Resources Board.

If you have questions, comments, suggestions, or complaints, please contact Carl Hallberg by phone at 307/777-6423 or by email at challb@state.wy.us.

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**ARTS. PARKS.
HISTORY.**

Wyoming Department of State Parks and Cultural Resources