

**HISTORY OF THE GERMAN  
ELEMENT IN THE  
STATE OF COLORADO**

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History of the German Element in the State of Colorado by Mildred Sherwood MacArthur

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**MILDRED SHERWOOD MACARTHUR**

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HISTORY OF THE GERMAN ELEMENT  
IN THE STATE OF COLORADO

A THESIS

PRESENTED TO THE FACULTY OF THE GRADUATE SCHOOL  
OF CORNELL UNIVERSITY FOR THE DEGREE OF  
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

BY

MILDRED SHERWOOD MacARTHUR

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THE GERMAN ELEMENT IN THE STATE OF  
COLORADO.

ITS INFLUENCE ON THE ECONOMICAL, INTELLECTUAL  
AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE STATE.

BY MILDRED SHERWOOD MACARTHUR, PH.D.

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INTRODUCTION.

The plan of the present investigation, carried on during three years' residence in Colorado, and by a subsequent correspondence of fifteen months duration, embraces a brief historical sketch of the Germans in the State, an exposition of their services in representative pursuits and their share in developing the resources of the State, and a summary, with specific examples, of the influence of the German element on the religious, educational, political and social growth of Colorado.

The printed book was the least source of material. The Morgan Collection of Colorado books, begun in 1885, by Edward W. Morgan, consists of over 1,800 volumes, but it requires only a glance at the titles some of which are included in the bibliography given in this study, to be convinced that there is little of scientific value among them. Practically no attempt has been made to study the various national elements in the State. The 37th Anniversary edition (Jubiläums-Ausgabe) of the Colorado Herald published in 1907, contains an account of the Germans in Colorado and of various pioneer settlements, and a review of Colorado's industries.

The advantages and disadvantages attending research work in this vast field are readily apparent. An area of 100,000 square miles, crossed by the main range of the Rocky Mountains, and having within its boundaries wide stretches inaccessible by any of the accustomed means of travel, present unusual geographical difficulties. However these are largely neutralized by the genial cordiality of the people of Colorado.

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The student in the cause of research is aided by a keen spirit of progress, a desire to encourage and spread knowledge. This was the welcome met on every hand, in all classes of society and in all callings, from the Governor of the State to the worker in the mine whose accent told his German birth. Several pastors of German churches manifested a deep interest in this work and supplied valuable information. To many more people of Colorado I owe the facts made use of in this study, and incidents and examples from which I draw conclusions.

Information concerning the most distant sections came often from my immediate circle. From distant mining camps and from isolated ranches came interesting data through the courtesy of students attending the State University at Boulder. Records of the University show a large German-American element among the students from its earliest days. Not only was information derived from them directly, but interest in certain localities was aroused by them, compelling a visit. Thus I have visited Denver, Pueblo, Boulder, Colorado Springs, Colorado City, Manitou, Cripple Creek, Victor and many smaller towns. I have had several hundred personal interviews with German residents and others,—pioneers, statesmen, politicians, professional men, students, bankers, farmers, industrial workers and tradesmen; I have visited Germans in their homes, in their churches, and in their social activities. In this way I gained much valuable information and an insight into the atmosphere and setting of the German population, which alone makes possible an estimate of the subject of the influence of the German element in Colorado.

An extensive correspondence was another prolific source of information. In reply to my questionnaire addressed to the school superintendents of the sixty counties, I received answers from all but three. Of these one, Moffat county, was newly created and had, doubtless, no information to give; the other two were almost entirely Mexican in origin and interests. Whenever possible, I verified through direct communication all information derived from published sources.



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The oldest file that has been preserved in the Denver Public Library of the first daily newspaper in Colorado, the "Rocky Mountain News" for 1864, furnished items concerning the Germans in Colorado twelve years before the Territory became a state. The daily issues of the German newspaper, "Der Colorado Herold", for the years 1910 and 1911 show the interest and activities of the Germans in the State at the present time. It is from all of these sources that the material for the following pages was derived.

Colorado is no exception to the rule that the far Western frontier has always been characterized by a predominance of the native American element in its population.<sup>1</sup> We are presented with the fact in the United States Census Report of 1910, that the Germans constitute 43% of the foreign population of the State. The geographical distribution is shown to be well balanced. The two largest cities, Denver and Pueblo, have respectively the largest and second largest German population in the State.

These statistics show that the German stock could not become as conspicuous in Colorado as, for example, in Wisconsin or Missouri, where the German element numbers in some localities one-third to one-half of the population, nor could their influence become as strong. But surpassing the proportion of their numbers the Germans in Colorado have become an important element in the development of the resources of the State, material as well as social and educational.

<sup>1</sup>The 13th Census Report (that for 1910) shows that but 16% of the total population of Colorado was of foreign birth. Other figures in this Census are:

MOUNTAIN DIVISION.	
Total Population .....	2,633,517
German born .....	42,898
German parentage (one or both native).....	92,070
Total Germans .....	134,968
Total foreign born .....	955,809
COLORADO.	
Total Population .....	799,024
German born .....	17,071
German parentage (one or both native).....	38,811
Total Germans .....	55,882
Total foreign born .....	129,587

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### CHAPTER I.

#### THE HISTORY OF COLORADO FROM THE EARLIEST TIMES.

##### INFLUENCE OF THE GERMANS ON EXPLORATION AND COLONIZATION.

It might seem a very simple matter to trace the history of a commonwealth that has not yet seen six decades pass since the period of its earliest settlement. But Colorado presents exceptional difficulties because of the loss of valuable records. The great fire of 1863 wiped out the whole business section of Denver, and the flooding of Cherry Creek during the spring of the same year, destroyed not only buildings, but valuable maps, papers, and court records. Thus the materials for the early history of the Commonwealth became very scant.

It was only a little more than one hundred years before Colorado became a state, that interest was first manifested in that section of the country. In July, 1776, two friars, Padre Silvestre Velez Escalante and Padre Atanacio Dominguez, undertook to explore a route from Santa Fe to California. To their efforts we owe much of our reliable information concerning the country at that time. In their descriptions they gave a glowing account of the grandeur of the forests and the beauty of the mountains and valleys, passing lightly over the roughness and impassibility of the country. Recent scholars deny the validity of all claims of exploration in Colorado previous to these of the latter half of the eighteenth century. They have also dispelled the once prevalent belief in the antiquity of the cliff dwellers, the ruins of whose civilization are still to be seen. To no distinct primitive race, but to the ancestors of the modern Pueblo Indians, are assigned the curiously inaccessible stone dwellings in canons and mesas.

The earliest authentic exploration in the Colorado territory took place in the period of the Spanish control. France had lost in 1762 the sovereignty over the tract west of the Mississippi known as Louisiana. In 1800 France regained and three years later sold this country to the United States. The

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Louisiana purchase stimulated interest in the West. As a result, the expedition of Lieutenant Zebulon M. Pike was organized. Zealous explorers had other difficulties to overcome than those resulting from natural causes. A striking example of the discouraging effect of a single unfavorable report was the following. Major Stephen H. Long represented the region extending for a distance of five hundred miles east of the Rocky Mountains as unfit for cultivation and habitation. To this report Bancroft attributes the delay in securing it for the United States. Although such circumstances had a retarding effect on colonization, private expeditions of traders, fore-runners of the great fur companies, advanced from time to time into Colorado. The first important forts within the present limits of the State were erected by the Bent brothers in 1832. During the years immediately following, numerous trading posts were established, among them were Vasquez's, Sarpy's, Fort Lancaster, Fort St. Vrain and El Pueblo.

Authorities assert that nothing of importance took place in Colorado between the year of Long's expedition (1819) and 1858. In the year 1842 government expeditions were sent out under John C. Fremont, but no important discoveries were made thereby.<sup>1</sup> Hard times following the panic of 1857, and discoveries of gold in California aroused interest in the far west. Tales of successful prospecting along the Platte river reached the ears of westward bound adventurers, not a few of whom paused for personal investigation. Some, on returning to the east, organized expeditions for prospecting in Colorado. Green Russell, a Georgian, was a member of one of these pioneer expeditions. Of the original company of 42 persons that set out in the spring of 1858, Russell with a half dozen men were the only ones with sufficient persistence to remain until a moderate degree of success met their efforts.

The political development of Colorado began at the time of these earliest settlements. In the autumn of 1858 a mass meeting was held in the settlement called Auraria, on which

<sup>1</sup> Charles Preuss, topographer, Fremont's assistant and companion, and Henry Brant, both of direct German descent, accompanied this expedition. Cf. Eugene Parsons, *The Making of Colorado*, pp. 88-116.