

Erie, Colorado Historic Buildings Survey 2009-10

Final Survey Report



**Front Range Research Associates, Inc.
Denver, Colorado**

**Erie, Colorado
Historic Buildings Survey, 2009-10**

***Final
Survey Report***

Prepared for:

Town of Erie
645 Holbrook Street
Erie, Colorado 80516
(303) 926-2700

Prepared by:

R. Laurie Simmons, M.A.
and Thomas H. Simmons, M.A.
Front Range Research Associates, Inc.
3635 West 46th Avenue
Denver, Colorado 80211
(303) 477-7597

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

1.	INTRODUCTION	1
	Purpose.....	1
	Project Results.....	1
	Funding	2
2.	PROJECT AREA.....	3
	Survey Area	3
	Physical Setting	3
3.	RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODS	7
	Objectives and Scope of Work	7
	Previous Surveys and Listed Resources	7
	Anticipated Results	8
	Kickoff Meetings	8
	Selective-Intensive Survey	8
	Public Meetings/Outreach	11
	Project Participants.....	11
	Acknowledgements	11
4.	HISTORICAL OVERVIEW	13
	Early Settlement in the Erie Area	13
	Railroad Construction and the Platting of the Town	15
	Labor Strife in the 1870s	17
	Renewed Growth in the 1880s	18
	Erie in the 1890s	23
	Growth and Labor Unrest in the Early Twentieth Century	26
	The Post World War II Era	29
5.	RESULTS	33
	Individually Eligible Resources	33
	Construction Dates	33
	Original Functions	33
	Materials	33
	Historic Architectural Styles and Building Types	41
6.	RECOMMENDATIONS	45
7.	BIBLIOGRAPHY	47

COVER: This undated (c. late 1910s) view north on Briggs Street from Wells Street shows 500 and 502 Briggs Street at the left (500, the IOOF building, is the two-story building and 502, Elzi Drugs, is to the right) and the City Garage and other false front buildings to the right. SOURCE: Erie Historical Society, photographic collection.

INTRODUCTION

In the late 1850s and early 1860s, settlers along what is now known as Coal Creek in southwestern Weld County discovered that the area contained great amounts of underground coal reserves. Large scale development of coal did not begin until the arrival of the Denver and Boulder Valley Railroad in 1871. Platted in 1871 and incorporated in 1874, the Erie townsite was situated near the center of the state's large Northern Coalfield. Most of the new town's residents relied on coal mining in some way for their livelihoods. The town's residential areas filled with miners' dwellings and some larger houses and a small business area developed to provide necessary supplies and services. Labor strife dominated much of the town's first sixty years, as miners struggled for higher wages, better working conditions, and union recognition. During the post World War II period, coal mining faded and Erie looked outward, annexing land containing potential commercial growth areas and new residential subdivisions. The town's proximity to Longmont, Boulder, and the northern Denver suburbs, resulted in more than a tenfold increase in population between 1990 and 2008. Erie's estimated population in 2008 was 14,958. It is within this context that Erie's architectural heritage developed.¹

Purpose

The project consisted of a scattered intensive survey of twenty-three buildings

selected by the Town of Erie (See Table 1). The survey embraced fieldwork, research, and documentation of the historic resources on Colorado Historical Society Architectural Inventory forms (Form 1403) including architectural descriptions, historical backgrounds, photographs, sketch and location maps, and evaluations of potential eligibility to the National Register of Historic Places and the State Register of Historic Properties.

Project Results

The survey produced twenty-three Colorado Historical Society Architectural Inventory forms and a Final Survey Report (this document). Of the properties included in the intensive survey, four individual resources are evaluated as potentially eligible to the National Register (as well as potentially eligible to the State Register) and seven are evaluated as potentially eligible to the State Register only.

The information resulting from this survey will assist the Town of Erie and interested residents with historic preservation planning. Assessments of eligibility for the National Register of Historic Places and State Register of Historic Properties, as well as the information contained in the survey forms and in the report, will provide direction for future preservation efforts. The survey expanded historical knowledge relating to buildings and structures in Erie; documented the resources' current appearance and previous alterations; evaluated the significance of the properties; and prepared a historical background discussing the town's growth and

¹ Colorado Department of Local Affairs, Municipal Population estimates, July 2008.

development. The information resulting from this survey will constitute one basis by which properties are nominated for designation and citizens are made aware of the town's architectural and historical heritage.

Funding

This project was paid for in part by a State Historical Fund grant to the Town of Erie (grant number 2009-M2-011). The guidelines of the Colorado Historical Society Office of Archaeology and Historic Preservation publication *Colorado Cultural Resource Survey Manual* (2007) were followed in conducting the survey. Architectural classifications of buildings are based on the Society's publication *A Guide to Colorado's Historic Architecture and Engineering* (Second Edition, March 2003 and updates) and the lexicon for architectural styles included in the *Survey Manual*.

Table 1
Town of Erie
Surveyed Resources, 2009-10

State ID Number	Street Address
5WL6186	370 Briggs Street
5WL6187	455 Briggs Street
5WL6188	500 Briggs Street
5WL6189	502 Briggs Street
5WL6190	545 Briggs Street
5WL6191	475 Cheesman Street
5WL6192	574 High Street
5WL6193	602-04 High Street
5WL6194	405 Holbrook Street
5WL6195	485 Holbrook Street
5WL6196	575 Holbrook Street
5WL6196	602 Holbrook Street
5WL6197	664 Holbrook Street
5WL6198	675 Holbrook Street
5WL6199	684 Holbrook Street
5WL6200	724 Holbrook Street
5WL6201	704 Main Street
5WL6202	405 Pierce Street
5WL6203	525 Pierce Street
5WL6204	555 Pierce Street
5WL6205	575 Pierce Street
5WL6206	235 Wells Street
5WL6207	575 Wells Street

PROJECT AREA

Survey Area

The Erie Historic Buildings Survey documented twenty-three properties located within the Weld County portion of the town's boundaries. The survey examined approximately 6.4 acres of urban land and included domestic, governmental, commercial, religious, and funerary resources. Figure 1 shows the location of the surveyed resources on a USGS base map, while Figure 2 displays the building footprints of the surveyed resources on a digital aerial photograph of the town. The surveyed properties are situated in Section 18, Township 1 North, Range 68 West, 6th Principal Meridian, Town of Erie, Weld County, Colorado.

Physical Setting

The Town of Erie, originally a small coal-mining community in the southwestern corner of Weld County, today embraces territory in both Boulder and Weld counties and had an estimated 14,958 residents in 2008. The survey area includes properties in the older, Weld County part of town. The physical layout of this section of town is a grid, with the curving course of Coal Creek limiting expansion to the east. Blocks within the original town are rectangular (320' X 400') with thirty-two lots per block. Alleys are present along the longer north-south axis of each block.

Briggs Street, oriented north-south in the eastern part of town is the principal commercial roadway. West of Briggs Street, north-south streets include Pierce,

Holbrook, High, and Main streets; Kattel Street lies to the east. East-west streets in the central part of town include Evans on the north, followed by Cheesman, Wells, Moffat, and Balcolm. For north-south streets, odd numbers are on the east side and even numbers are on the west side; for east-west streets, odd numbers are on the north side and even numbers are on the south side.

During the coal mining era, a large number of active mines lay west and southwest of the town, with smaller numbers found east of Coal Creek. Today, the town has grown outward to embrace new subdivision developments lying north and south of the town's historic core.

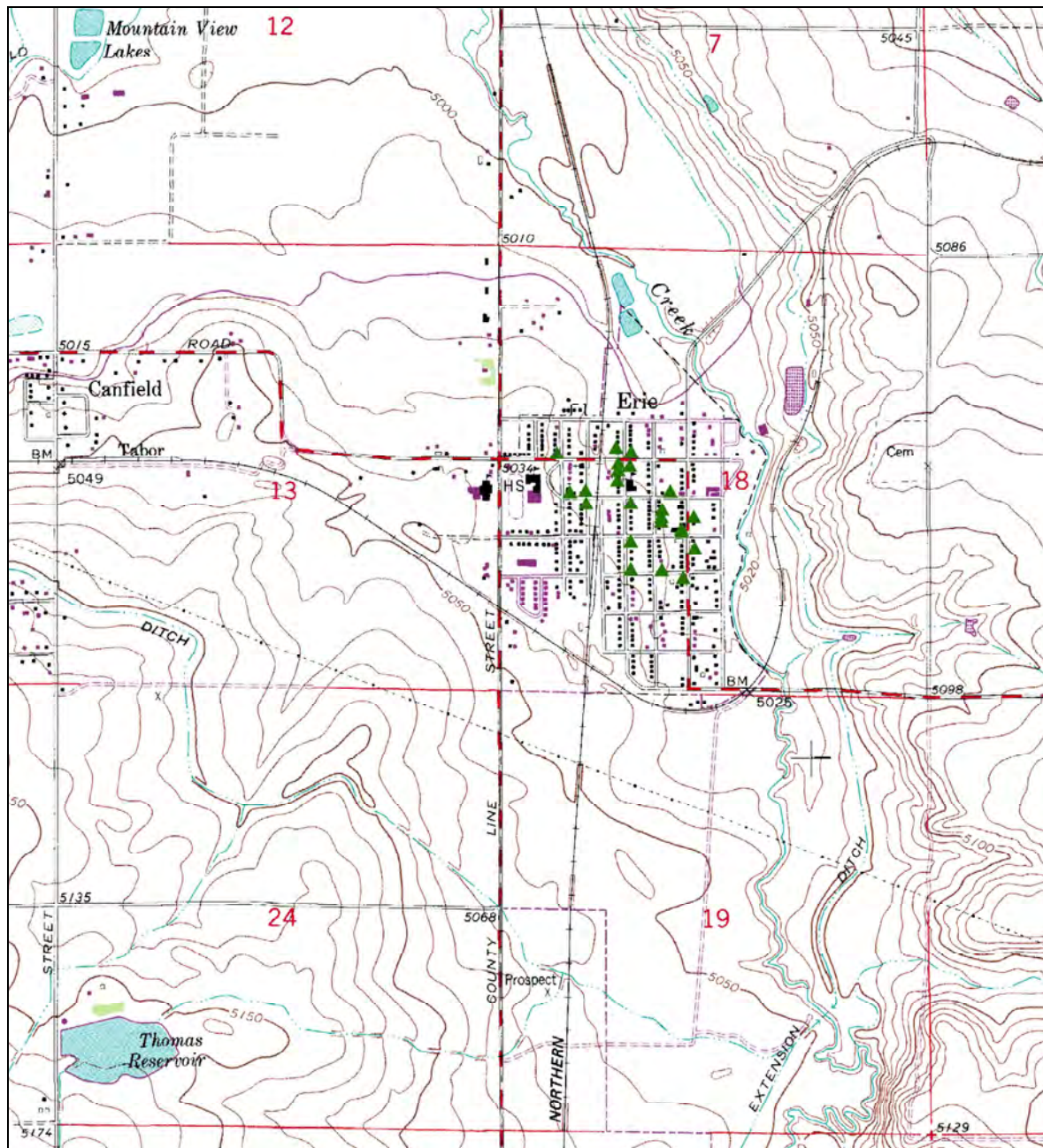
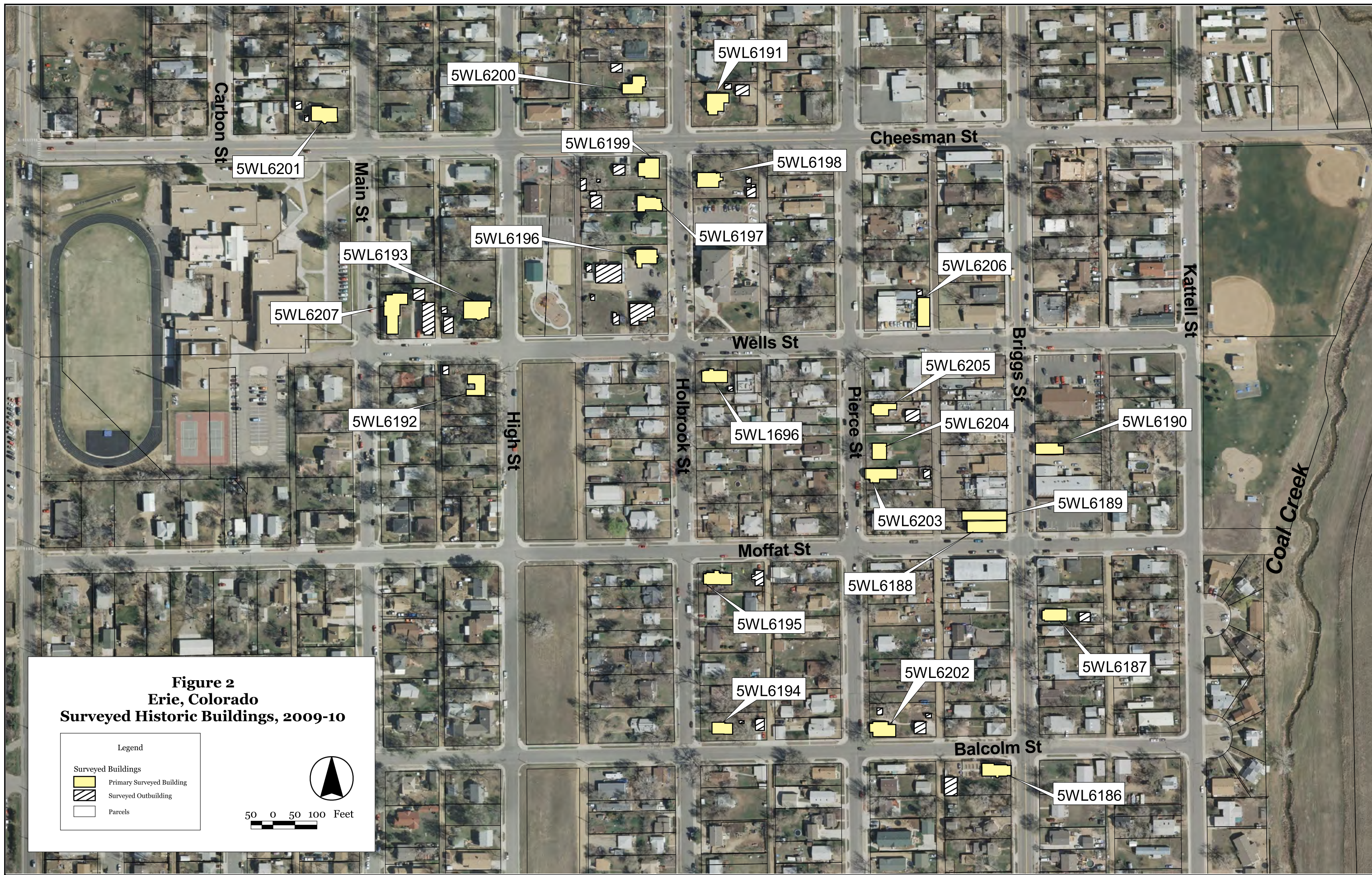


Figure 1. Location Map. Locations of resources included in the selective, intensive survey of Erie are indicated by triangles. The resources are located within the older part of Erie in Weld County. SOURCE: Base comprised of digital extract of a portion of the U.S. Geological Survey quadrangle map: Erie, Colo. (1967, PR1979).



3

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODS

Objectives and Scope of Work

The Erie Historic Building Survey began in April 2009. The project called for a selective intensive survey of twenty-three properties that were recommended by the Erie Historic Preservation Advisory Board (HPAB) and approved by the town council in July 2009. The buildings recorded in the intensive survey were described, photographed, researched, mapped, and evaluated, with Colorado Historical Society Architectural Inventory forms produced for each of the documented properties. The project also called for this Final Survey Report explaining the project findings, including evaluations of the surveyed properties, and providing an overview of the history of the town. The report includes a survey map identifying the project area and a location map showing the surveyed properties' locations.

Previous Surveys and Listed Resources

A file search of the Colorado Historical Society's COMPASS database performed in April 2009 showed only one architectural resource in the current survey area of Erie had been surveyed previously: 5WL.1696, a dwelling at 575 Holbrook Street. The survey form was an older version of the state form, which required less information than the current ones. This resource was resurveyed in the current project.

Several resources within the town were recorded in 1976 by Associate Professor

Stephen T. Powers of the University of Northern Colorado History Department on forms that included a black and white photograph of each property and limited historical information. These forms, copies of which are filed at the HPAB and at the Erie Historical Society, were not submitted to the Colorado Historical Society and are not included in the COMPASS database. They proved useful for the current project in enabling surveyors to assess post-1976 changes to buildings and providing names of building owners in 1976 and a few historical associations.²

In 2003, the Erie Historical Preservation Commission (the earlier name of the local group) undertook a survey of fifty-seven historic resources. One-page forms with color digital images were produced; the resources were not assigned state identification numbers and the forms were not submitted to the Colorado Historical Society. HPAB provided a copy of this survey for the current project.³

One resource within the survey area is currently listed in the National Register of Historic Places: Lincoln School (currently

² Although the photographic prints are dated March 1977, they were taken in August 1976 when the forms were prepared. Stephen T. Powers, Professor emeritus, University of Northern Colorado, email to Thomas H. Simmons, 30 March 2010.

³ Erie, Colorado, Historical Preservation Commission, Erie, Colorado, "Survey of Historical Sites," Erie, Colorado, Historical Preservation Commission, September 2003.

the Erie Town Hall), 645 Holbrook Street (5WL.216). The 1906 building was listed in the National Register in 1981. No properties within the Weld County portion of Erie are designated local landmarks.

Anticipated Results

Based on the nature of the resources selected for survey, it was anticipated the resources surveyed would be mostly residential in nature, with a handful of commercial, civic, and religious buildings also included. Important questions about the properties to be surveyed included their dates of construction, building materials used, architectural styles exhibited, association with prominent persons, and original functions. Examination of the ability of the buildings to convey their historic character was an important component of the project.

Kickoff Meetings

Elizabeth Blackwell of the State Historical Fund met with town representatives in July 2009, discussing project goals, methodology, timeline, and SHF reporting requirements. Tom Simmons of Front Range Research Associates, Inc., participated by telephone.

Tom and Laurie Simmons of Front Range attended a meeting of the Town Board of Trustees in July 2009, provided an overview of the scope and purpose of the project, and answered questions posed by Board members. After discussion, the Board approved the survey list as recommended by the HPAB, thus enabling the project to proceed.

Selective-Intensive Survey

Mapping and Database. The Town of Erie provided an extract from its geographic information system to the surveyors that included a digital aerial photograph, parcel polygons, street centerlines, and water

features. The footprints of surveyed primary buildings and outbuildings were digitized on-screen from the aerial photograph. Using the building outlines, sketch maps were created from the project GIS showing each resource in the context of its block.

Since the town parcel information did not contain attribute data, the surveyors consulted the Weld County Assessor website to obtain the name and mailing address of current owners, year built, and other information, which was then input into the project database.

The centroid of each primary building was computed and used as the UTM coordinate for each surveyed property. Location maps were produced by plotting the centroids over a digital extract of the USGS 7.5 minute quadrangle map covering the town: Erie, Colo. (1967, PR 1979).

Fieldwork. The selective-intensive level field survey was conducted in November 2009. Fieldwork included examination of each building for architectural features and design elements, style, building materials, building condition, plan, setting, and alterations. The location of each resource was verified on a base map. During the fieldwork property owners and other interested persons encountered or identified were interviewed for information about historic properties.

Photography. Digital images (JPGs) of each primary building and associated outbuildings visible from the public right of way were taken by Roger Whitacre in November 2009. Tom Simmons took additional images in January 2010. The selected digital images were printed in black and white at 4" X 6", on Fuji Crystal Archive paper. Photographs are identified using archival computer labels produced from the project database. The labels indicate Smithsonian identification number, address, photographer, date, image number,

camera direction, and location of negatives images. The Colorado Historical Society, Office of Archaeology and Historic Preservation, in Denver received one set of original photographic prints and the Town of Erie retained the other set.

Historical Research. Essential information about the resources surveyed was collected during visits to Erie, Greeley, and Denver area libraries and archival repositories. Residents, property owners, and other individuals also shared knowledge of the survey area's history and its historic buildings. General and site-specific research materials about Erie, including published and unpublished sources, were reviewed for historical background and individual property information.

The holdings of the Erie Historical Society, including previous survey forms and an 1885 Colorado State Census listing, were obtained at the Wise Homestead Museum. The project was discussed with museum director Sarah Wise, who also shared her recollections about some of the surveyed buildings and residents. Oral histories and historic photographs archived by the Boulder Carnegie Library were examined online.

The library in Erie does not maintain a local history collection. Local history books, genealogical newsletters, newspaper clippings, photographs, and county directories accessed at the Greeley Museum were important resources for the project. In the Denver area, the files of the Colorado Historical Society, Office of Archaeology and Historic Preservation provided copies of the previous survey form. Newspaper clippings, photographs, and other research materials in the Society's Stephen Hart Library were consulted. The historical materials housed at the Western History and Genealogy Department of the Denver Public Library were utilized, including fire insurance maps,

historic photographs, clippings files and brochures, newspaper indexes, and books relating to Weld County.

Manuscript U.S. Census returns for 1880, 1900, 1910, 1920, and 1930 and the 1885 Colorado State Census were accessed at Ancestry.com to discover occupations and demographic characteristics of residents and business owners. However, as the town lacked street address numbers, the returns only identified residents by street name rather than individual house numbers. State business directories, World War I draft registration cards, and other databases were consulted. Sanborn fire insurance map coverage for a good number of the surveyed resources was available for 1893, 1900, 1908, and 1948.

Historic Greeley and Boulder newspapers provided information on the history of the town, construction of buildings, biographies of local citizens, obituaries, and business descriptions. Some newspaper articles were accessed on the Colorado Historic Newspapers website. Unfortunately, Erie newspapers at the Stephen Hart Library of the Colorado Historical Society were unavailable due to the closure of that facility until the opening of the new Colorado Historical Society building in 2012.

Construction dates of historic buildings were determined from Weld County Assessor information, Sanborn fire insurance maps, historic photographs, newspaper accounts, published books, and interviews with owners and other residents, as well as the field survey. Estimated dates of construction (in some cases expressed as a span of years) were produced for some resources.

Some sources of information typically used in intensive survey research were not available for the Erie project. No city directory coverage existed; the jurisdiction

may have had insufficient population to justify the production of such listings. The town lacked building numbers until the mid-twentieth century, which made it difficult to match names of businesses and residents with buildings in some cases.

Unlike many other Colorado counties, Weld County does not maintain a town block or tract book that permits relatively easy research into past ownership changes for parcels. To identify past owners, Front Range paid to access the files of Heritage Title Company in Greeley. The information obtained helped to overcome the lack of building-specific information from other sources.

Published histories that include information on Erie are somewhat limited. Principal publications relating specifically to Erie are: Anne Quinby Dyni, *Erie, Colorado: A Coal Town Revisited* (2001) and *Pioneer Voices of the Boulder Valley* (1989); Erie High School, Sociology and History Classes, *Erie: Yesterday and Today*, 2nd edition (1974); and Phyllis Smith, *Once a Coal Miner* (1989). Most general histories of Colorado mention Erie's association with coal mining history.

Preparation and Distribution of Forms and Report. After completion of the field survey and historical research, Colorado Historical Society Architectural Inventory forms were prepared in an output form acceptable to the Colorado Historical Society and in a database format for analysis and mapping uses. The task required developing a report template that replicated the appearance of the state form produced from a database structure conforming to other project needs. The system was used for forms completion and printing and analytical sorts, listings, and queries. Sorted extracts from the database were imported into a word processing package for use as survey report tables.

The forms include information on each property's ownership, location, date of construction, building materials, architectural description, style, alterations, associated buildings, historical background, construction history, statement of significance, and sources of information. The Colorado Historical Society assigned a unique Smithsonian identification number for each property. The numbers are included on forms and photographs and are referenced in the report. New identification numbers spanned the range from 5WL.6186 through 5WL.6207.

The architectural styles assigned on the forms were based on those in the Colorado Historical Society's booklet, *A Guide to Colorado's Historic Architecture and Engineering*, and a lexicon of architectural styles included in the Society's *Survey Manual*. Included with each survey form are related photographs, a sketch map showing the building outline of the surveyed resource in the context of the block where it is located, and a location map consisting of an extract of the USGS quadrangle map. Both maps were produced from the GIS.

All of these survey products, together with the final report (this document), were submitted to the Town of Erie and the Colorado Historical Society for review and comment. The Colorado Historical Society Office of Archaeology and Historic Preservation transfers the information generated on the inventory forms into its statewide database and houses an original copy of the forms and survey report. PDF versions of the survey forms and survey report and the Access table containing the survey form data were also provided to the Town of Erie.

Public Meetings/Outreach

Tom and Laurie Simmons attended a public meeting with the Erie Board of Trustees in July 2009. The surveyors also discussed the project with local citizens during fieldwork and research, and interviewed a number of residents and owners to gain historical information. A public meeting was held at the end of the project to present the results and answer questions.

Project Participants

The Town of Erie contracted with Front Range Research Associates, Inc., to complete the historic buildings survey. Town Clerk Nancy Parker administered the survey project for the Town. Clovis Morrisson served as liaison for the HPAB.

R. Laurie Simmons and Thomas H. Simmons of Front Range completed research, fieldwork, and consultation regarding eligibility of resources, and prepared the forms, maps, and the final survey report. Roger Whitacre and Tom Simmons took color digital JPG images for the project.

Heather Peterson, National and State Register Historian for the Colorado Historical Society (CHS) consulted on evaluations of eligibility to the National and State Registers. Elizabeth Blackwell initially administered the project for the State Historical Fund and participated in the eligibility discussion. Anne M. McCleave, Historic Preservation Specialist at SHF, took over administrative duties near the conclusion of the project. Mary Therese

Anstey, Historical and Architectural Survey Coordinator for the Colorado Historical Society, reviewed the survey forms and report.

Acknowledgments

A number of individuals and organizations contributed to the successful outcome of the project. Nancy Parker, Erie Town Clerk, suggested sources of information, answered questions, and provided historic images of local buildings and a copy of *Erie: Yesterday and Today*. Clovis Morrisson of the Historic Preservation Advisory Board identified local residents with knowledge of historic resources, answered questions, and provided copies of previous locally-produced surveys. Sarah Wise of the Erie Historical Society discussed the project, shared her recollections of the town, and provided access to Erie Historical Society research materials. Peggy Ford Waldo and other staff at the Greeley Museum assisted the surveyors in accessing their collection for sources of information on Erie. The staffs of the Colorado Historical Society Stephen Hart Library and Denver Public Library also facilitated the use of research materials.

Local residents and former residents also assisted by providing information on an individual basis, many by answering questions about specific properties, including Nancy Morgan, Susan Pedrick, Isabel Pacheco, Hallie Sawyer, John Garcia, Charlotte Hollenbaugh, and Mrs. Melvin G. Larson. To everyone who assisted the project, we offer sincere thanks.

HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

Early Settlement in the Erie Area

Euro-Americans did not enter the area of present-day Erie in any significant numbers until after 1858. As local historian Phyllis Smith wrote:

... the Boulder Valley lay quiet, undisturbed, and undiscovered, except for the seasonal encampments of the Southern Arapaho Indians, who regarded the protected area as an ideal winter stop.⁴

Parties of Utes occasionally came to the area and clashed with the Arapaho, their traditional enemies.

With the discovery of gold in Colorado in the fall of 1858, thousands of Euro-Americans arrived to scour the Front Range of the Rocky Mountains for traces of the precious metal. Jim Baker (1818-1898), an experienced mountain man who had seen much of the Rocky Mountains with the American Fur Company and James Bridger, stayed in the Erie vicinity for a short time in 1859. He found an outcropping of coal on the west side of Coal Creek which he called “Baker’s Bank.” Baker sold coal to nearby settlers and sometimes took a wagonload into Denver.⁵

In August 1859, the *Rocky Mountain News* carried reports of coal in the general vicinity of today’s Erie. George Gilson, another early settler, discovered other sources of coal in the area. He held his lands for about a year and then traded them to “Capt. Austin for a flock of sheep” in the mid-1860s.⁶

Geologists later identified the Erie coal deposits as part of the Boulder-Weld Field of the Denver Basin. The area was also referred to as the Northern Coalfield of Colorado. More than a decade passed before development of the Erie coal fields began, since, as Professor Arthur Lakes remarked, “without a railroad a coal mine is helpless.”⁷

The square mile of land containing the original townsite of Erie left the public domain through four early land patents. Henry Briggs received a cash entry patent for 160 acres along the east edge of the section (the east half of the east half) in July 1868. Briggs lived in Erie at the time of the

“The Two James Bakers,” *Lowell (Indiana) Tribune*, 26 February 1992, in the Kankakee Valley Historical Society Archives, accessed at www.kankakeevalleyhistoricalsociety.org, 28 March 2010.

⁶ *Rocky Mountain News*, 13 August 1859 and 10 September 1859; *Greeley Tribune*, 26 November 1873.

⁷ Arthur Lakes, *Geology of Colorado Coal Deposits*, Report for the State School of Mines, Golden, Colorado, 31 October 1889, 29; Lee Scamehorn, *High Altitude Energy* (Boulder, Colorado: University Press of Colorado, 2002), 3.

⁴ Phyllis Smith, *Once a Coal Miner: The Story of Colorado’s Northern Coal Field* (Boulder, Colorado: Pruett Publishing Company, 1989), 9; J. Donald Hughes, *American Indians in Colorado* (Boulder, Colorado: Pruett Publishing Company, 1977), 35-36.

⁵ Smith, *Once a Coal Miner*, 10-11; Dick Schmal,

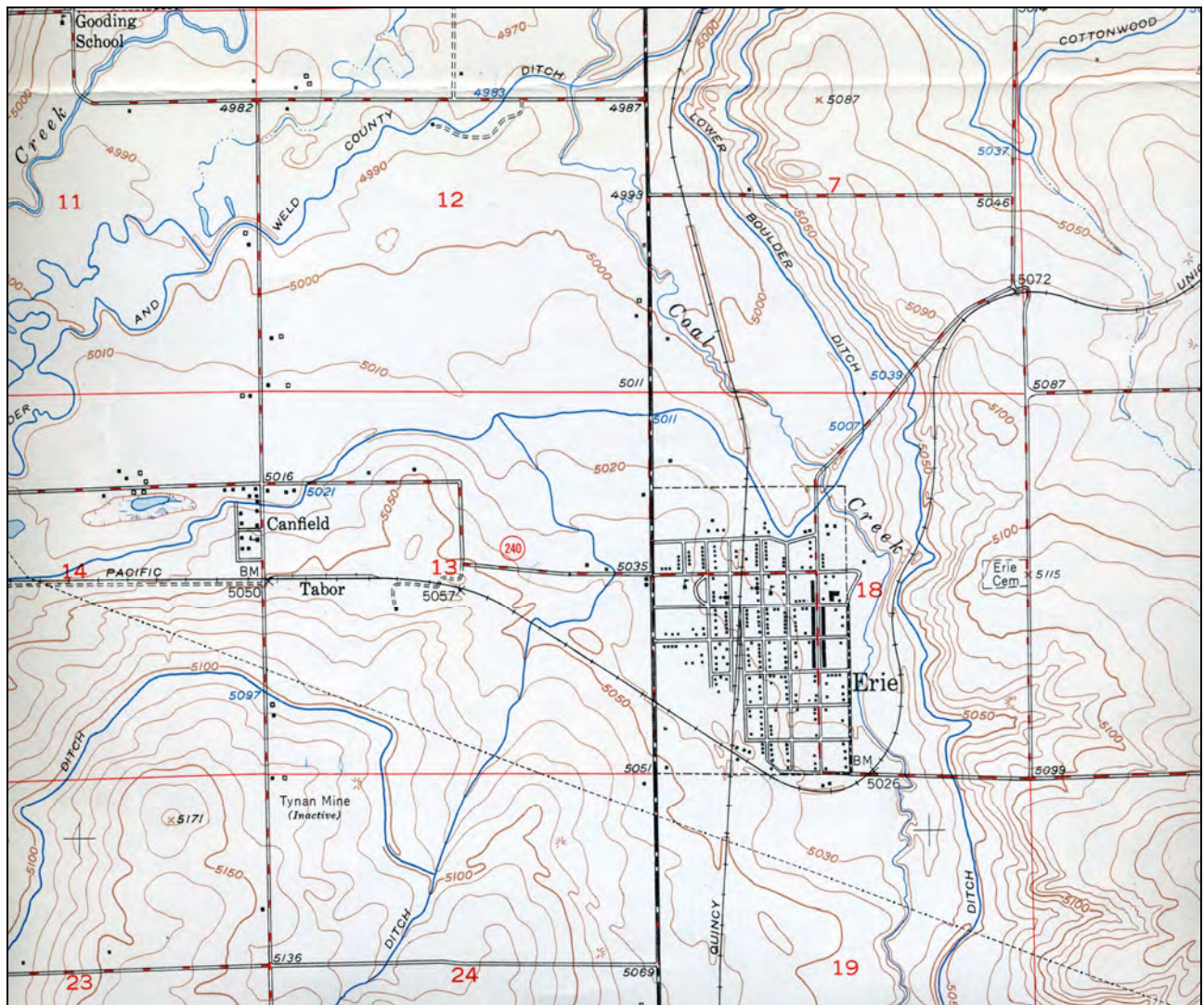


Figure 3. This extract of the 1951 Erie, Colorado, U.S.G.S. quadrangle map shows the original part of Erie, Coal Creek to the right, and the two railroad lines that served the town. Canfield is to the left in Boulder County. SOURCE: U.S. Geological Survey, Erie, Colorado, 7.5 minute quadrangle map, Reston, Virginia, 1951.

1880 Census, which identified him as a 52-year-old coal operator and native of New York.⁸

Scrip patents transferred the remainder of the section to three patentees under 1842 and 1855 Congressional acts that granted

land to persons who had engaged in the military service of the United States. In June 1868, Ira Austin received the north central 160 acres of the section, while Schuyler D. Austin acquired the same amount of land from the south central portion. Ira and Schuyler Austin were father and son, respectively, and New York natives. The 1870 U.S. Census found them in Central City, where both worked as miners. By 1880, they resided in Boulder, where Ira was a farmer and Schuyler a butcher. In

⁸ Henry Briggs, document number 642, 1 July 1868, in General Land Office Records, U.S. Bureau of Land Management, www.glorerecords.blm.gov, accessed 25 January 2010; U.S. Census, manuscript returns, Erie, Weld County, Colorado, 1880.

April 1871, the government transferred the western edge of the section to John S. McCool. McCool lived in Denver in 1870, where he was a boot and shoe merchant. The built-up sections of Erie originally were located in parts of the Schuyler and McCool tracts; the Briggs tract embraced land mostly east of Coal Creek.⁹

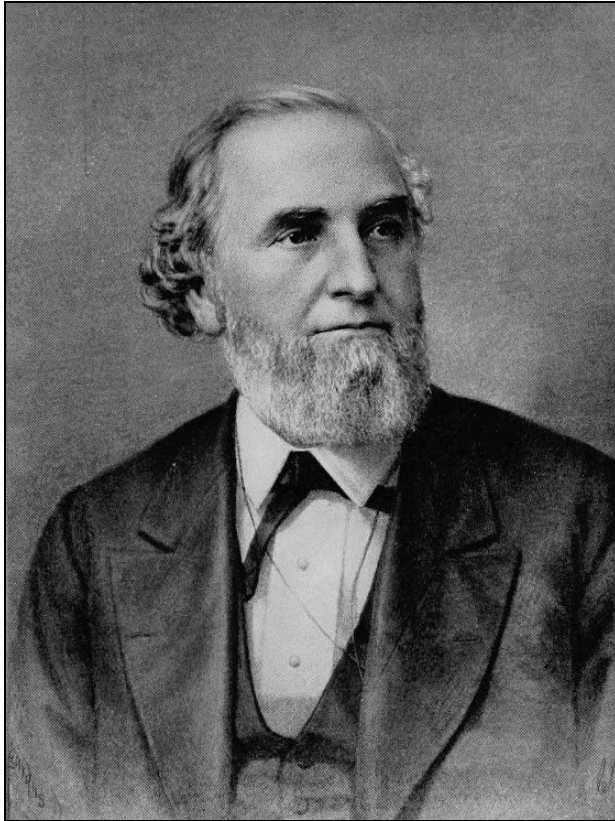


Figure 4. New York Judge Ransom Balcom played instrumental roles in organizing the Boulder Valley Coal Company and platting the Town of Erie.

⁹ For the scrip transactions, the patentees were assignees of the eligible recipients. Henry Briggs, document number 642, 1 July 1868, Ira Austin, document number 105697, 1 June 1868, Schuyler D. Austin, document number 89454, 1 June 1868, and John S. McCool, document number 209, 5 April 1871, in General Land Office Records, U.S. Bureau of Land Management, www.glorerecords.blm.gov, accessed 25 January 2010.

Railroad Construction and the Platting of the Town

The Erie coalfields constituted an attractive destination for railroads, both as a fuel for locomotives and as a source of haulage revenue. In October 1870, the Denver and Boulder Valley Railroad organized and began construction of a standard gauge line from Hughes Station (later renamed Brighton) westward into Boulder County. The line reached Erie in January 1871, where the company erected a stone depot, and ultimately connected to Boulder in September 1873. Until 1879 the Denver Pacific Railway leased and operated the line that became a Union Pacific Railroad subsidiary in 1880. The completion of a railroad connection between the mines and Denver substantially reduced the cost of hauling coal and made it an economically viable fuel for Denver homes and businesses and an industry with vast potential.¹⁰

The railroad presence stimulated increased production in the area and encouraged the opening of new coal mines, among them the Rob Roy and Star. Within a few years seven mines were operating in the vicinity. The largest operator was the Boulder Valley Coal Company, formed in anticipation of the arrival of the railroad by New Yorkers Ransom R. Balcom and

¹⁰ LeRoy R. Hafen, *Colorado and Its People* (New York: Lewis Historical Publishing Company, 1948), 326; Anne Dyni, *Pioneer Voices of the Boulder Valley: An Oral History* (Boulder, Colorado: Boulder County Parks and Open Space Department, 1989), 49; Rocky Mountain News, 4 July 1871, 1; S.S. Wallihan & Company, *The Rocky Mountain Directory and Colorado Gazetteer* (Denver: S.S. Wallihan & Company, 1871), 121-22; Scamehorn, *High Altitude Energy*, 6; David A. Wolff, *Industrializing the Rockies: Growth, Competition, and Turmoil in the Coalfields of Colorado and Wyoming, 1868-1914* (Boulder, Colorado: University Press of Colorado, 2003), 2.

Edward C. Kattell and Denver investors. Balcom (1818-79), a native of Oxford, New York, served as a state judge in the Binghamton, New York, area for more than twenty years. Kattell (1817-1882) was a Binghamton lawyer, county judge, and the president of the Binghamton Oil Refining Company.¹¹

Rather than starting a new mine, Boulder Valley Coal acquired the Briggs Mine, a proven property with four veins and 500 feet of sloping shaft, and renamed it the Boulder Valley Mine. Energy historian Lee Scamehorn described this mine as “the largest producer of coal in the state’s northern mining district for several years.” Labor historian David A. Wolff reported that Colorado coal production jumped from under 16,000 tons in 1871 to 68,500 tons in 1872, with 79 percent of the latter total coming from the Boulder Valley Mine.¹²

Erie received a post office in January 1871 and in May the Boulder Valley Coal Company formally platted the townsite. Ransom Balcom served as president of the company and John S. Wells secretary. The

town took its name from Erie, Pennsylvania. The original town plat formed a trapezoid, bounded on the west by Holbrook Street, on the east by Kattell Street, on the south by Perry Street, and on the north by Fisher Street. The site included twenty-one full or partial blocks, with full blocks measuring 320’ X 400’ and including thirty-two lots per block. Historian Frank Hall recounted that “lots were sold to the miners at low prices and on liberal terms to induce permanent settlement and thereby lessen the danger of strikes.”¹³

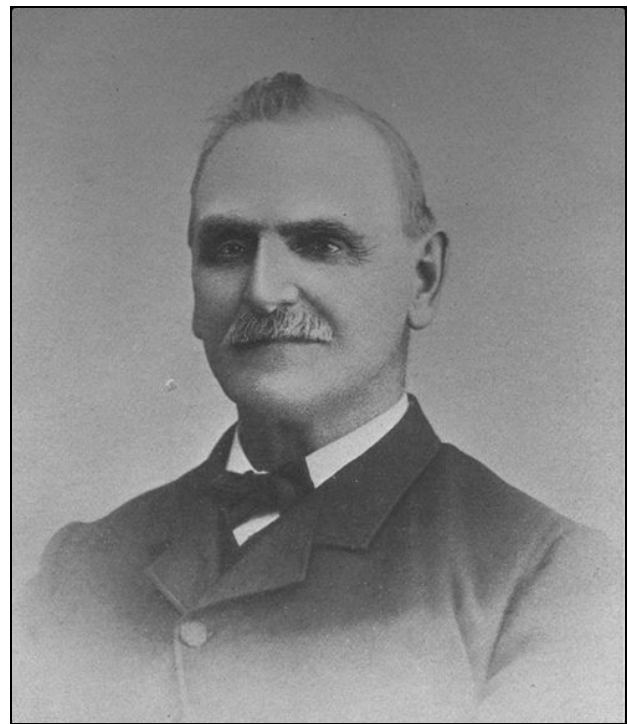


Figure 5. Rev. Richard J. Van Valkenburg was a religious, community, and commercial leader in Erie during its first three decades. SOURCE: *Portrait and Biographical Record of Denver and Vicinity, Colorado, 1898.*

¹¹ Wolff, *Industrializing the Rockies*, 11; Henry J. Galpin, *Annals of Oxford, New York* (Oxford, New York: Times Book and Job Printing House, 1906), 40; William S. Lawyer, *Binghamton: Its Settlement, Growth and Development, 1800-1900* (Binghamton, New York: Century Memorial Publishing Company, 1900), 326; U.S. Census, manuscript returns, Broome County, New York; Edward C. Kattell, individual record, Carter and Reuel family tree, www.ancestry.com, accessed 25 March 2010.

¹² LeRoy R. Hafen, *Colorado and Its People* (New York: Lewis Historical Publishing Company, 1948), 326; Anne Dyni, *Pioneer Voices of the Boulder Valley: An Oral History* (Boulder, Colorado: Boulder County Parks and Open Space Department, 1989), 49; S.S. Wallihan & Company, *The Rocky Mountain Directory and Colorado Gazetteer* (Denver: S.S. Wallihan & Company, 1871), 121-22; Scamehorn, *High Altitude Energy*, 6.

¹³ William H. Bauer, James L. Ozment, and John H. Willard, *Colorado Post Offices, 1859-1989* (Golden, Colorado: Colorado Railroad Museum, 1990), 51; Weld County, Clerk and Recorder, general records; Town of Erie, Map of the Town of Erie, Weld County, Colorado, 1 October 1928; Frank Hall, *History of the State of Colorado*, vol. 1 (Chicago: Blakely Printing Company, 1889), 497-98.

Reverend Richard J. Van Valkenburg came to the Erie area in about 1867, built one of the first houses, and became a community leader. Van Valkenburg (1823-1912), a native of Scholarie County, New York, studied the Bible at an early age and in 1841 joined the Methodist Episcopal Church, in which he soon became licensed to preach. He and Cordelia Briggs married in 1843 and he joined the Wyoming Conference of the church, serving congregations in New York and Pennsylvania until the mid-1860s. During the Civil War, he raised a company of soldiers in Pennsylvania and served as a chaplain with General Sherman's army in Georgia. Falling ill, he received a discharge in 1865 and returned home to New York. Van Valkenburg's illness persisted and he came to Colorado for his health in 1866.¹⁴



Figure 6. Early Erie commercial buildings employed false front construction popular in towns throughout the West. Thomas Richards opened a mercantile store in this building. SOURCE: Dyni, *Erie: A Coal Town Revisited*, DeWitt Brennan Collection, 3.

After riding as a circuit preacher in Colorado and Wyoming, the Van Valkenburgs settled at Erie in about 1867. There, he started the first Sunday School, founded the Methodist Episcopal Church, and served as an incorporator of the town in 1874. Van Valkenburg helped organize the local

chapters of the Masons and the Odd Fellows, operated the Erie House hotel, served as the town's undertaker, and owned and edited the *Erie-Canfield Independent* newspaper. Van Valkenburg held many governmental and civic positions, including mayor, president of the school board, and state legislator, as well as decades as justice of the peace and police magistrate. In 1894, the *Boulder Daily Camera* summed up his influence in the community: "Rev. Richard J. Van Valkenburg, monarch of all he surveys at Erie..."¹⁵

Given the seasonal demand for coal as a heating fuel, many of the coal mines in the Erie area closed or operated on a reduced schedule in summer. Some miners obtained small farms which they worked during summer months. According to historian David Wolff, "the farming influence gave Erie the ambiance of an agricultural prairie town."¹⁶

The first of many mining strikes in the Erie coalfield occurred in February 1871, when workers at the Boulder Valley Mine protested a management decision to screen coal before it was weighed, a move that effectively reduced miners' compensation. The mine owners used replacement workers and assistance from local law enforcement officers to break the strike, with most miners returning to work under the new work rule.¹⁷

Labor Strife in the 1870s

Erie incorporated as a town in 1874 and set up a municipal government. R. Van Valkenburg, J.T. Williams, George Mellar, Joseph Wharton, and John Rowe comprised

¹⁴ Chapman Publishing Company, *Portrait and Biographical Record of Denver and Vicinity, Colorado*, (Chicago: Chapman Publishing Company, 1898).

¹⁵ Chapman Publishing Company, *Portrait and Biographical Record of Denver and Vicinity, Colorado*; *Boulder Daily Camera*, 26 June 1894, 4; *Greeley Tribune*, 11 November 1891, 4.

¹⁶ Wolff, *Industrializing the Rockies*, 12.

¹⁷ Wolff, *Industrializing the Rockies*, 23.

the initial Board of Trustees. In January 1875, the *Boulder County News* reported that the town had experienced “a constant, steady growth.” In December 1875, the *Greeley Tribune* described Erie as containing twelve to fifteen business houses, an excellent hotel (the Erie House), three church organizations, and “a lively lyceum and fine cornet band.”¹⁸

The town experienced difficult times during the 1870s. The Panic of 1873 resulted in an economic downturn that lasted several years and produced labor strife. At Erie, as elsewhere, railroads pressured mine operators to lower coal prices, who in turn sought to reduce wages paid to miners. In November 1874, the Boulder Valley Mine attempted to reduce miners’ pay from \$1.25 to \$1.00 per ton. Miners organized a lodge of the Miners’ National Association (MNA) and the company backed away from the proposed reduction.

As the recession continued, however, the company succeeded in getting a 25¢ pay reduction in 1875. An 1877 effort to wrest a further 25¢ reduction in pay resulted in a strike, which the company attempted to break through the use of replacement workers. The dispute lasted a year and included intimidation, violence, and blasts that destroyed coal chutes, a mine boardinghouse, and other company property. As economic conditions improved in the late 1870s, company efforts to keep down wages lessened. In 1878, after the MNA ceased operating, many Erie miners affiliated with the Knights of Labor.¹⁹

Writing in 1879, Frank Fossett estimated Erie’s population at 200 and observed that “this town has been built up by the coal measures among which it is located.

Several mines are worked, and have usually been quite productive.”²⁰

Renewed Growth in the 1880s

The 1880 Census recorded a population of 358 for the town (See Table 2). An examination of the manuscript census returns by historian David Wolff revealed that nearly two-thirds of Erie miners were natives of Britain. Many were experienced hard rock miners initially drawn to Colorado’s gold and silver regions. Sixty percent of miners were married and children comprised nearly half of the town’s total population.

As the town grew, new civic facilities were needed. The community erected its first purpose-built school building in 1881 at the northeast corner of Holbrook and Wells streets. Miss Mabel Young conducted the first classes. In 1883 the community erected a frame, false front Town Hall on Wells Street (See Figure 8). It would serve the town until the erection of a new building on the same site in 1930.

Most of the 1870s and 1880s commercial buildings in Erie employed the false front form, which gave the sense of a larger and more substantial construction. In 1886, Rev. Van Valkenburg acquired a c. 1884 false front building at 525 Pierce Street (5WL.6203) to house his undertaking business. In November 1891, the *Greeley Tribune* wryly reported: “He marries, buries, sentences culprits, insures life, preaches sermons, is landlord of the Erie house and sole undertaker of the city, and then he is editor.” Van Valkenburg continued as an undertaker until at least 1900. John G. Trezise, an undertaker in the Boulder area, a founding member of the

¹⁸ *Boulder County News*, 1 January 1875 and *Greeley Tribune*, 15 December 1875.

¹⁹ Wolff, *Industrializing the Rockies*, 40-44 and 174.

²⁰ Frank Fossett, *Colorado: Its Gold and Silver Mines and Health and Pleasure Resorts* (New York: Arno Press, 1973; orig. pub. New York: C.G. Crawford, 1879), 93.

Table 2
Population Trends by Census Year
Town of Erie

Year	Population	Change	
		Number	Percent
1880	358	--	--
1890	662	304	84.9
1900	697	35	5.3
1910	596	-101	-14.5
1920	697	101	16.9
1930	930	233	33.4
1940	1,019	89	9.6
1950	937	-82	-8.0
1960	875	-62	-6.6
1970	1,090	215	24.6
1980	1,254	164	15.0
1990	1,258	4	0.3
2000	6,291	5,033	400.1
2008	14,958	8,667	137.8

SOURCE: U.S. Census, Census of Population, 1880-2000; Colorado Department of Local Affairs, 2008.

Colorado Funeral Directors Association, and Boulder County Coroner for many years, acquired the property in 1904. Local residents recall coffins were stored in the building and refer to it as “the Coffin House.”²¹

The 1880s saw a number of individuals open new businesses in Erie. John T. Williams, who operated a general store in Erie, owned houses at 475 Cheesman Street (5WL.6191) and 485 Holbrook Street (5WL.6195) in the 1880s. Williams received appointment as one of the first town trustees, serving in 1875, and became its second president during 1875-76. He was listed in the 1878 State Business Directory in Erie, operating a hardware and drug store. Williams was born about 1815 in Wales. He lived with his wife Julie, also

from Wales, and son John H., who was born in Colorado. In later years Williams partnered with John Probert, a licensed pharmacist, to continue in the drug and hardware business, and the Probert family became subsequent owners of the house on Cheesman Street.²²

Thomas Richards, was born in Ohio in October 1852; his parents were from Wales. A publication by Erie High School students indicates his father was a weaver and Thomas worked in the coal mines in Bonnersy, Ohio, rather than attending school. He moved to Colorado in 1876, arriving in Erie in the summer to begin

²¹ The building later housed school classrooms. It is now used as a dwelling and no longer has its false front. *Greeley Tribune*, 11 November 1891, 4; 525 Pierce Street, 5WL.6203, Architectural Inventory form, November 2009.

²² Heritage Title Company abstract records; Weld County Assessor records; *Colorado State Business Directories*; U.S. Census, 1880-1930; Colorado State Census, 1885; Weld County Genealogical Society, Master Index; Anne Quinby Dyni, *Erie, Colorado*, 7, 22, 23, , 26, 15; Sociology and History Classes of Erie High School, *Erie Yesterday & Today*; *Greeley Tribune*, 8 August 1895, 8, 29 July 1897, 5, 20 August 1930; *Boulder Daily Camera*, 3 January 1893, 1 and 21 February 1893, 4.

work in the coal mines. Historian Ann Dyni reports he had just \$70 in his pocket upon arrival. Richards married Elizabeth Thomas, who was from Illinois, on 15 December 1877. “Preferring to be his own boss, he [Richards] eventually opened a mercantile supplying lumber, groceries and farm machinery to the growing community.” The 1880 U.S. Census listed his occupation as “merchant,” indicating he was already in business; by 1891 he was operating a grocery. In 1898 the *Greeley Tribune* reported, “Thomas Richards has been appointed our [Erie’s] new postmaster. The post office will soon be removed from the Erie Mercantile company to Richard’s dry goods and grocery store.” Ann Dyni notes that the post office “existed behind a counter in the rear” of Richards’ store on Pierce Street for years. His first store occupied a frame false front building, but in the 1890s he erected a two-story brick building that also had a large hall above. Thomas Richards died in 1924 and was buried in Erie Cemetery.²³

An early Erie businesswoman, Martha “Mattie” E. Phennah, and her husband, Peter W. Phennah, appeared in Erie in the 1885 Colorado Census. Mattie Phennah was born in Wisconsin in 1860; her parents were from Wales. In 1884 she married Peter W. Phennah, an engineer born in Wales in 1855. The 1889 State Business Directory listed the Mrs. P.W. Phennah dry goods and millinery. The 1896 Directory



Figure 7. New Yorker James L. Wilson and Charlotte Richards of Ohio met and married in Erie in 1887. They lived at 724 Holbrook Street. SOURCE: Dyni, *Erie: A Coal Town Revisited*, Melvin Larson Collection, 24.

listed P.W. Phennah, state engineer, and Mrs. Phennah’s millinery and dry goods business. In the 1899 and 1900 Directories only Mr. Phennah was listed; he was cited as a stationary engineer. The U.S. Census found the couple living on Holbrook Street in 1900 with their four children. Mrs. Phennah was listed in the 1906 and 1909 *State Business Directories* as operating a millinery. In 1917 Michael James Brennan purchased the Phennah house at 684 Holbrook Street (5WL.6199). By the time of the 1920 U.S. Census the couple was living in Seattle, Washington.²⁴

²³ Heritage Title Company abstract records; Weld County Assessor records; *Colorado State Business Directories*; U.S. Census, 1880-1930; Colorado State Census, 1885; Weld County Genealogical Society, Master Index; Erie Cemetery Listing, accessed at <http://files.usgarchives.net/co/weld/cemeteries/erie.txt> on 16 December 2009; Dyni, *Erie, Colorado*, 3, 6, 24, 43; Sociology and History Classes of Erie High School, *Erie Yesterday & Today*, 7-8, 50, 55-56; *Greeley Daily Tribune*, 15 September 1898, 5.

²⁴ Heritage Title Company abstract records; Weld

James L. Wilson was born in Rochester, New York, in March 1858; his parents were from Scotland (See Figure 7). Wilson appeared in the 1885 Colorado State Census in Erie, when he worked as a brickmaker. He married Charlotte Richards in 1887 and built their home at 724 Holbrook Street (5WL.6200) in the same year. Mrs. Richards was born in Ohio and moved to Erie at age fourteen with an older sister to be near their brother, Thomas Richards. James Wilson was a carpenter who built many buildings in town. In 1888 he constructed the Methodist Episcopal Church. Historian Anne Dyni notes “Wilson was instrumental in forming the all-volunteer J.L. Wilson Fire Hose Company.” In 1888-89 he was mayor, a position he also filled in 1915-21. He also served as justice of the peace in the early 1920s. The Wilson family included sons Frederick R. (born in March 1888 in Erie), Francis H. (born in March 1892 in Erie), and daughters Jean E. (born 24 February 1894 in Erie) and Stella C. (born in November 1896 in Erie). In November 1938 the *Greeley Daily Tribune* reported Justice of the Peace James L. Wilson, 81, died of injuries resulting from being struck by a car in Erie.²⁵

County Assessor records; *Colorado State Business Directories*; U.S. Census, 1880-1930; Colorado State Census, 1885; Weld County Genealogical Society, Master Index; Anne Quinby Dyni, *Erie, Colorado*, 11; Sociology and History Classes of Erie High School, *Erie Yesterday & Today*.

²⁵ Heritage Title Company abstract records; Weld County Assessor records; *Colorado State Business Directories*; U.S. Census, 1880-1930; Colorado State Census, 1885; Weld County Genealogical Society, Master Index; Erie Cemetery Listing, accessed at <http://files.usgarchives.net/co/weld/cemeteries/erie.txt> on 16 December 2009; Anne Quinby Dyni, *Erie, Colorado*, 13, 24, 27; Sociology and History Classes of Erie High School, *Erie Yesterday & Today*; *Greeley Daily Tribune*, 9 November 1938; Stella Wilson Lee, Erie, Oral History Interview OH0680, 1984-85, Boulder

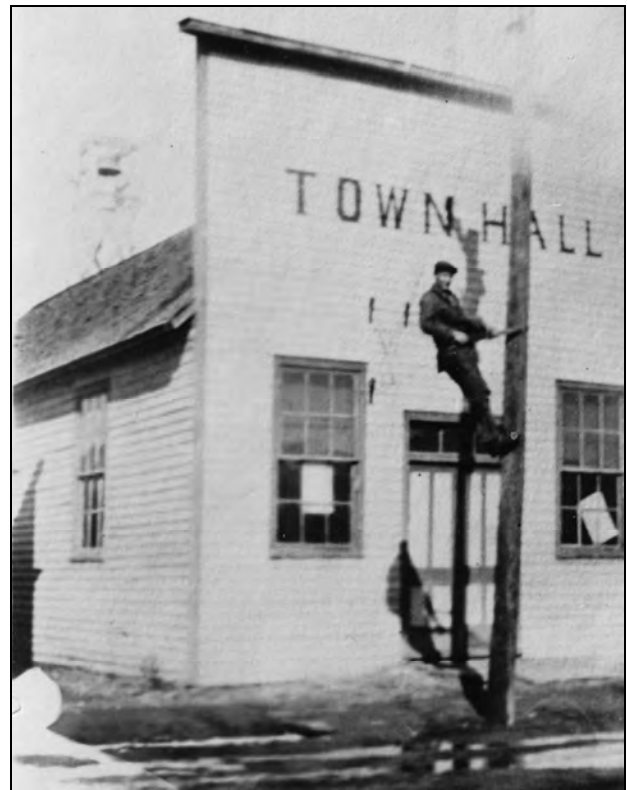


Figure 8. The 1883 Erie Town Hall displayed a false front design. The building was located on the same site as the 1930-31 Town Hall. SOURCE: Town of Erie, historic photograph collection.

Profiling Erie in late 1883, the *Rocky Mountain News* opined that nearly every resident of the town was “directly or indirectly connected with the coal trade,” and noted “a large scope of fine agricultural land and many fine farms” lay adjacent to the town.²⁶ George A. Crofutt described Erie in 1885:

Stock-raising, farming and coal mining occupy the people in this vicinity. There are a number of general stores, one hotel and two weekly newspapers, the *Era* and the *Independent*. Population about 800. Here are located very extensive

Carnegie Library for Local History, accessed at <http://nell.boulderlibrary.org> in 2010; Mrs. Melvin Larson, Boulder, Telephone Interview by Laurie Simmons, 2 April 2010.

²⁶ *Rocky Mountain News*, 25 December 1883, 12.

bituminous coal mines, large quantities of which are used by the railroad company, and the citizens of Denver.²⁷

Continuing growth in the 1880s saw the platting of a number of additions to Erie. The West Addition to Erie (1883) adjoined the original townsite on the west and was bounded by Holbrook Street on the east, the alley west of Holbrook, Perry Street on the south, and Mugatt Street on the north. Lots in the addition were 25' X 190'. The East Addition to Erie (1885) lay east of the original townsite between Kattell Street and Coal Creek and stretched from Perry Street on the south to Evans Street on the north. Lots and blocks varied in length and shape. Adjoining the West Addition was Erie Heights (1889), which consisted of twenty-one blocks or half blocks with 25' X 125' lots.²⁸



Figure 9. Erie carpenter James L. Wilson built the Methodist Episcopal Church (right) in 1888 at 604 Holbrook Street. The former Presbyterian Church (left) was moved to the site to serve church activities. SOURCE: Dyni, *Erie: A Coal Town Revisited*, Lois Regnier Waneka Collection, 12.

Although founded in the 1870s, Erie's

Methodist Episcopal Church did not erect a church until 1888, when the congregation completed a frame Gothic Revival style building at 604 Holbrook Street (5WL.6196) (Figure 9). Erie carpenter James L. Wilson was the contractor for the \$1,475 church. Stella Lee, his daughter, "recalled how he had to begin all over again after strong winds blew down the framing."²⁹

Erie received service from a second railroad in 1889, when the Denver, Utah and Pacific Railroad (DU&P) constructed a standard gauge line from Burns Junction (west of present-day Broomfield) to Longmont. Within Erie, the tracks of the DU&P cut through the half-blocks along the eastern edge of the Erie Heights addition. The line was completed in August 1889 and immediately leased to the Burlington & Missouri Railroad Company, a subsidiary of the Chicago, Burlington & Quincy Railroad.³⁰

The Independent Order of Odd Fellows (IOOF) added a pivotal commercial building to the town in 1889 when it erected the two-story brick building at the northwest corner of Briggs and Moffat streets (500 Briggs Street, 5WL.6188) (Figure 8). The second story held the group's lodge hall, while the first story housed the Lockwood Trading Company. Over the years the first story housed various general stores, mercantiles, and grocery stores.

²⁷ George A. Crofutt, *Crofutt's Grip-Sack Guide to Colorado* (Boulder: Johnson Books, 1966; orig. pub. Omaha, Nebraska: Overland Publishing Company, 1885), 90-91.

²⁸ Weld County, Clerk and Recorder, general records and Town of Erie, Map of the Town of Erie, Weld County, Colorado, 1 October 1928.

²⁹ Dyni, *Erie, Colorado*, 13; 602-04 Holbrook Street, 5WL.6196, Architectural Inventory form, November 2009.

³⁰ Title to the line was conveyed to the CB&Q in 1908. Tivis Wilkins, comp., *Colorado Railroads: Chronological Development* (Boulder, Colorado: Pruett Publishing Company, 1974), 75.



Figure 10. Built in 1889, the two-story Odd Fellows Hall at 500 Briggs housed the State Mercantile Company on its first story in the 1900s. SOURCE: Dyni, *Erie: A Coal Town Revisited*, DeWitt Brennan Collection, cover.

Erie in the 1890s

The 1890 Census confirmed Erie's growth during the preceding ten years; the 697 residents counted then represented an 84.9 percent increase since 1880. The early 1890s saw further additions to the town's built environment. Alice B. Powell, the daughter of Reverend Richard J. Van Valkenburg, and her husband erected the Powell House at 370 Briggs Street (5WL.6186) in about 1891. The hostel, later known as the Egnew Hotel, provided lodgings for bachelor miners. Erie historian Anne Dyni explained: "Rent was paid by the month for room and board, which included packing a dinner bucket to take into the mine... In its heyday [the Egnew] had nine sleeping rooms upstairs and a dining room below."

Further north on Briggs Street, farm implement dealers Winslow and Smith erected a one-story brick business block adjoining the IOOF Hall to the south (502 Briggs Street, 5WL.6189). The building was completed by late 1892, but Winslow and Smith only briefly occupied it. In January 1893 Dr. W.W. Smith moved his drugstore into the new building. Walter W. Smith, born in Ohio in 1853, had practiced in Erie as early as 1891 and remained in the town until the early 1900s. Charles Elzi later

operated his drugstore at the location.³¹

In terms of 1890s residential construction, miners continued to build dwellings in the town. Erie also drew a number of entrepreneurs (some of them former miners), who started service and supply businesses and built residences in the town.

John S. Morgan, prominent Erie merchant and civic leader, erected a large Queen Anne style residence at 704 Main Street (5WL.6201) in 1892 (See Figure 11). On 26 August 1892 the *Boulder Daily Camera* reported, "J.S. Morgan, Erie's popular postmaster, has broken ground for a fine brick dwelling." An Erie pioneer, Morgan served as a town trustee in 1879. Morgan was born in Pennsylvania in June 1853; his parents were from Wales. The 1883 *State Business Directory* listed Morgan Brothers, a general merchandise store that he operated with his brother, J.J. Morgan. In 1889 the firm advertised "clothing, dry goods, and groceries." In June 1892 the *Boulder Daily Camera* noted, "John Morgan of the Morgan Brothers of Erie has purchased the interest of his brother J.J. Morgan and will conduct the business alone." The 1896-1903 *State Business*

³¹ 502 Briggs Street, 5WL.6198, Architectural Inventory form, November 2009.

Directories listed the J.S. Morgan store offering general merchandise. In 1897 the *Greeley Daily Tribune* reported John Morgan moved his store goods to the space below the IOOF hall. In 1909 Morgan sold the house to Henry Carter and the family moved to Denver.³²



Figure 11. The 1892 John S. Morgan family (including twin daughters Lura and Edna) stands proudly in front of their home at 704 Main Street. SOURCE: Town of Erie, historic photograph collection.

In September 1892 the *Boulder Daily Camera* observed, “Enoch Vaughn [sic] has commenced building a fine brick house.” Enoch T. Vaughn erected a one-story brick house with Italianate style details at 405 Holbrook Street (5WL.6194). Vaughn, who was born in England, worked as a coal miner. His wife, Mary, died in 1898, and he soon moved to Como, in Park County, where he lived with his daughter, Minnie. Erie businessman Thomas Hunter later owned the Vaughn house.³³

³² Nancy Morgan, Telephone Interviews by R. Laurie Simmons, 18 February 2010 and 2 April 2010; Heritage Title Company abstract records; Weld County Assessor records; *Colorado State Business Directories*; U.S. Census, 1880-1930; Colorado State Census, 1885; Weld County Genealogical Society, Master Index; Anne Quinby Dyni, *Erie, Colorado*; Sociology and History Classes of Erie High School, *Erie Yesterday & Today*; *Greeley Tribune*, 15 June 1892, 1, 26 August 1892, 1, 7 October 1897, 5, 12 May 1898, 2, 30 July 1903, 4.

³³ Heritage Title Company abstract records; Weld



Figure 12. The 1895 William Nicholson House, shown in a 1976 photograph, was considered “the finest residence in Erie” when completed. SOURCE: S.T. Powers, historic buildings survey, 1976.

In October 1895 the *Greeley Tribune* reported, “Nicholson's new home is nearing completion. When done it will be the finest residence in Erie.” Located at 604 High Street (5WL.6193), the Queen Anne style house befitted one of Erie’s most prominent early citizens (See Figure 12). William Nicholson served five terms as mayor of Erie and was “prominently and actively identified with mining development and banking” in town. Nicholson was born in England in 1850. His father worked as a coal miner and his educational opportunities were limited. At the age of eight he entered the mines, leaving for America in 1881. In 1882 he married Philadelphian Alice Pallatt. Nicholson worked in mines in Steubenville, Ohio, until 1883 and then moved to Erie, where he became a superintendent of coal mines. He invested in coal properties in the area, and in 1892 founded the Long’s Peak

County Assessor records; U.S. Census, 1880-1930; Colorado State Census, 1885; *Boulder Daily Camera*, 23 September 1892, 1; Weld County Genealogical Society, Master Index; Erie Cemetery Listing, accessed at <http://files.usgarchives.net/co/weld/cemeteries/erie.txt> on 16 December 2009.

Coal Company, which developed the Long's Peak Coal Mine. Nicholson sold the enterprise to the Rocky Mountain Coal Company, and in 1903 became a founder of the Erie Bank. After retiring from the bank, he continued to serve on the board of directors.³⁴

Scottish immigrant George Morrison, who rose from blue collar work to owning and operating a large coal mining company, was associated with the house at 675 Holbrook Street (5WL.6198) built in the 1890s. In September 1897 the *Greeley Tribune* reported, "Geo. Morrison has a new picket fence around his residence." His parents, Alexander and Mary R. Morrison, also moved to Erie.



Figure 13. Little changed since this 1976 photograph, the Morrison/Charlesworth/Wood House, 675 Holbrook Street, displays decorative shingles and gable ornaments. SOURCE: S.T. Powers, historic buildings survey, 1976.

³⁴ Heritage Title Company abstract records; Weld County Assessor records; *Colorado State Business Directories*; U.S. Census, 1880-1930; Weld County Genealogical Society, Master Index; Sociology and History Classes of Erie High School, *Erie Yesterday & Today*, 50, 55; Wilbur F. Stone, *History of Colorado*, vol. 3, 426-427; *Greeley Daily Tribune*, 24 October 1895, 5, 5 April 1930, 10, 16 July 1931, 13; *Boulder Daily Camera*, 16 September 1891, 2, 3 December 1892, 1.

George Morrison rose quickly through the ranks of coal mine employees. By 1900 he was superintendent of a mine in Superior, and during the 1910s and 1920s he held a similar position in Routt County. A September 1930 article in the *Greeley Daily Tribune* indicated George Morrison was president of the Clayton Coal Company, which owned and was constructing the new Morrison Mine



Figure 14. St. Scholastica Catholic Church was dedicated in 1899. SOURCE: Town of Erie, historic photograph collection.

northeast of Erie. The *Tribune* judged, "The mine will be one of the best equipped coal mines in the west." The Morrison Mine was expected to employ between 200 and 500 men and be one of the seven large producers in Erie coal fields.³⁵

The 1890s closed with the dedication of St. Scholastica Catholic Church at 575 Wells Street (5WL.6207) (Figure 14). Rev. Cornelius Enders, a German-born priest, used his own team and wagon to transport

³⁵ George H. Morrison Family Tree accessed at Ancestry.com on 29 March 2010; Chris Morrison, Town of Erie, Interview by Tom and Laurie Simmons, 18 February 2010; Heritage Title Company abstract records; U.S. Census, 1880-1930; Colorado State Census, 1885; *Greeley Tribune*, 2 September 1897, 4, 17 September 1930, 10.

lumber from sawmills in the mountains to Erie, where local parishioners assisted him in constructing the church. Mary Miller recalled that her husband, “was only a little boy then but he helped put in the stone foundation. Not only Lithuanians, but French, Slavic and Italian coal miners built St. Scholastica’s.” The building was dedicated in 1899 in honor of St. Scholastica, sister of St. Benedict, founder of the Benedictine Order.³⁶



Figure 15. Lincoln School, completed in 1906 at 645 Holbrook Street, housed elementary and high school students until Erie High School was erected in 1929. The building now serves as Town Hall. SOURCE: Dyni, *Erie: A Coal Town Revisited*, DeWitt Brennan Collection, 30.

Growth and Labor Unrest in the Early Twentieth Century

The 1900 Census recorded 697 inhabitants within the Town of Erie, up only slightly from the 1890 figure, perhaps reflecting the impact of the economic downturn following the Panic of 1893. In the early 1900s, the town gained a number of new institutions. The Kuner Empson Company

built a pickle station at the south end of town about 1900 that operated until the early 1950s. The Bank of Erie began operations in 1903, under the leadership of William Nicholson. Expanded educational facilities were needed and, in 1906, the school district erected Lincoln School at 645 Holbrook Street (5WL.216). The two-story building featured brick walls, a red sandstone foundation, and a bell tower. It housed both elementary and high school students (See Figure 15).

The early twentieth century witnessed a number of strikes and disturbances at area coal mines. Daisy Bracegirdle Swallow recalled the working conditions: “When I was a little girl, my father went to work in the dark and came home in the dark. That was back at the turn of the century before the miners fought for the eight-hour work day.” A 1900-01 strike by United Mine Workers of America (UMWA) miners in Erie, Lafayette, and Louisville idled the mines of the Northern Coal and Coke Company for five months. The strike ended when workers accepted a 10 percent increase in wages and a reduction in the cost of blasting powder charged in company stores. However, the company refused to recognize the UMWA as the bargaining agent for the miners.³⁷

Northern Coal and Coke (NC&C) was the largest operator in the Denver Basin when the UMWA voted to strike in November 1903. NC&C, faced with growing competition in the field from Rocky Mountain Fuel, was more amenable to settling with striking miners. Miners voted to go back to work after only three weeks, having gained an eight-hour-day and better wages, but failing to win collective

³⁶ Jane Kozma, Jane Marshall, Mary Montano, Dave Stone, “Saint Scholastica Church, Erie, Colorado, 1899-1999: A Journey of Faith” (Erie, Colo.: St. Scholastica Church, 1999); Thomas J. Noel, *Colorado Catholicism: The Archdiocese of Denver, 1857-1989* (Niwot: University Press of Colorado, 1988), 373; 575 Wells Street, 5WL.6207, Architectural Inventory form, November 2009.

³⁷ Mrs. Swallow was 83 years old when she was interviewed in 1979. *Greeley Tribune*, Vantage Point, 8 September 1979, T-11; Scamehorn, *High Altitude Energy*, 14-15.

recognition for the UMWA.³⁸

The town's population dropped to 596 at the time of the 1910 Census, a 14.5 percent decrease from 1900. By contrast, the population of Weld County as a whole more than doubled during the same period.



Figure 16. The Consolidated Commercial Club of Erie used this seal to urge residents to be “live fish” and support economic development. SOURCE: Weld County Commercial Club, *Weld County, Colorado*, c. 1913, 22.

Erie was hard hit when a four-year coal mining strike in the Northern Coalfield began in April 1910. Longtime Lincoln School teacher Stella Charlotte Wilson Lee recalled the strike “lasted and lasted” and “the town went down to nothing.” As the strike continued, Northern Coal and Coke went out of business, with Rocky Mountain Fuel acquiring its properties and becoming the largest operator in the Northern Coalfield. Determined not to recognize the UMWA, Rocky Mountain Fuel brought in strikebreakers and remained intransigent. Following the Ludlow Massacre in April 1914 in the Southern Coalfield, President

Woodrow Wilson sent federal troops to Colorado. Having failed to gain union recognition, the UMWA finally called off the strike in December 1914.³⁹

In 1911, the Erie Commercial Club sought to broaden the economic base of the town by launching “an aggressive campaign” to develop unoccupied farmlands around the town into “a substantial farming district.” In about 1913 the Consolidated Commercial Association of Erie joined other Weld County groups in boosting the area. The seal of the club proclaimed “I’m a live fish from Erie” and observed “It takes a live fish to swim upstream. Any dead one can float down” (See Figure 16). A booster publication of the period extolled the virtues of Weld County and noted Erie possessed a \$100,000 water system, “a finely equipped, well instructed public school,” and low-priced coal at its doorstep.⁴⁰

Druggist Charles J. Elzi came to Erie in 1912 and operated Elzi Drugs at 502 Briggs Street (5WL.6189) until shortly before his death in 1972. Elzi served as mayor of Erie in 1941-42 and 1946-47, was president of the Erie Bank, and became a charter member of the Lions Club. Stella Charlotte Wilson Lee recalled people in Erie “depended a good deal on our druggist” and noted “people thought a lot” of Charles Elzi.⁴¹

During the 1920s, the International

³⁹ Stella Charlotte Wilson Lee, oral history interview by Marilyn Brand, 1980, in the Carnegie Branch Library for Local History, Boulder Public Library, Boulder, Colorado; Wolff, *Industrializing the Rockies*, 224-38.

⁴⁰ Weld County Commercial Club, *Weld County, Colorado: Where Mother Earth Yields Her Gold* (Greeley, Colorado: Weld County Commercial Club, c. 1913), 22.

⁴¹ Lee, oral history interview, 1980; 502 Briggs Street, 5WL.6198, Architectural Inventory form, November 2009.

³⁸ Wolff, *Industrializing the Rockies*, 213-14.

Workers of the World (IWW or Wobblies) gained adherents among coal miners in Colorado, who had become disappointed in UMWA efforts to improve wages and working conditions. In October 1927, the IWW called a statewide coal strike that idled most facilities. The Rocky Mountain Fuel Company's Columbine Mine south of Erie reopened using strikebreakers and IWW members began picketing the site. On 21 November 1927 a confrontation between striking miners, members of the state law enforcement unit, and mine guards resulted in the deaths of six strikers and the wounding of sixty others. Many of the wounded were brought to Erie, where Dr. Clarence Bixler provided treatment and was credited with saving many lives. The strike ended in February 1928. In August 1928, the Rocky Mountain Fuel Company, under new owner Josephine Roche, signed a collective bargaining agreement with the UMWA.⁴²

Erie experienced strong population growth during the 1920s and posted a 1930 population of 930 (a 33.4 percent increase from 1920). Writing in 1931, local resident Grace L. Hunt prepared a brief history of the town. She noted the community included residents from England, Wales, Ireland, Scotland, Canada, Denmark, Sweden, Germany, Italy, Austria, Bulgaria, France, and Mexico, as well as many inhabitants “properly classed as Americans” and observed:

Being a typical western mining town, it has attracted to its confines people from the above mentioned countries speaking many languages and accustomed to many grades of civilization. Truly, it is one of the melting pots of the west.⁴³

⁴² Smith, *Once a Coal Miner*, 166-91.

⁴³ Grace L. Hunt contribution, Weld County News,

Cecilia M. “Sallee” Gorce, whose father operated a grocery in Erie, recalled the town had “quite a mixture of people,” many of whom came directly from the old country to mines in the United States.⁴⁴



Figure 17. Workers at the Boulder Valley Mine posed for this photograph in February 1927. SOURCE: Dyni, *Erie: A Coal Town Revisited*, Gus Nies Collection, 18.

The growth of the town necessitated expansion of its public facilities. In 1929, the school district opened a new high school in the western part of Erie (See Figure 18). A \$70,000 bond issue funded the facility which was designed by Denver architect Eugene G. Groves. High school students previously had been housed in Lincoln School.⁴⁵

In 1930-31, a combined City Hall, fire department, and jail building was constructed at 235 Wells Street (5WL.6206), replacing the 1883 Town Hall at that location. The town erected the building on a pay-as-you-go basis to avoid issuing bonds. The front office and fire equipment area were built first and then

12 March 1931.

⁴⁴ Cecilia M. “Sallee” Gorce, oral history interview by Joan Plyley, 1992, in the Carnegie Branch Library for Local History, Boulder Public Library, Boulder, Colorado.

⁴⁵ *Weld County News*, 12 March 1931; St. Vrain Valley School District, Maintenance and Support Department, 25 March 2010.

the rear section. The new facility featured cinderblock walls faced with brick, a belfry, and a terra cotta panel on the façade reading “CITY HALL 1930.”



Figure 18. The school district completed a new Erie High School, designed by Denver architect Eugene Groves, in 1929. SOURCE: Sanborn Company, historic postcard, N-848.

Weld County reached its peak year of coal production in 1929. The seasonal nature of coal mining persisted into the twentieth century, as Max McAfee, who worked in area mines from 1924 to 1948, observed:

You would hope to work enough in winter to get out of debt with the grocery store, then spend the summer getting back into debt with the grocery store.... If it was a mild winter we didn't work.⁴⁶

Erie prospered during the 1920s and 1930s, and the Erie Bank weathered the Great Depression. Daisy Bracegirdle Swallow recalled that “we had two full business blocks on both sides,” including dry goods stores, grocery stores, butcher shops, two drugstores, and a doctor. After the end of national prohibition in 1933, Boulder County remained “dry,” but Weld County became “wet.” Erie, just across the county line from Boulder County, drew thirsty patrons from that jurisdiction.

⁴⁶ *Greeley Tribune*, 10 December 1989, A3; Alma Lee Conroe, oral history interview by Karen Adelfang, 1996, in the Carnegie Branch Library for Local History, Boulder Public Library, Boulder, Colorado.

According to Alma Lee Conroe, who came to Erie in about 1938, the town then had about five bars and on Saturday nights things “got pretty wild.” One observer noted the town had more bars than churches through the 1970s.⁴⁷

Erie's population topped one thousand residents for the first time at the time of the 1940 Census. The 1,019 residents enumerated represented a roughly 10 percent increase from 1930.

The Post World War II Era

Following a surge in production during World War II, Weld County's coal output dropped to less than one million tons annually by 1950. Erie's coal mining industry dwindled in the postwar era. In 1946, the Columbine Mine, operated by the Rocky Mountain Fuel Company, closed. By 1964 only six mines were still active in the county.⁴⁸

During the early decades of the postwar period, Erie remained a small town. Between 1950 and 1990 its population averaged fewer than 1,100 residents, ranging from a low of 875 in 1960 to 1,258 in 1990. In the 1960s, Erie began to annex territory in Boulder County, including the Canfield area, although the bulk of its population continued to reside in Weld County.⁴⁹

In 1966 elementary students moved to a new facility and the school district gave Lincoln School to Erie for community uses. The town offices moved into the building in 1967.⁵⁰

⁴⁷ *Denver Post*, 6 August 1978, 6E-7E.

⁴⁸ Scamehorn, *High Altitude Energy*, 90; *Greeley Tribune*, 10 December 1989, A3.

⁴⁹ The number of Erie residents in Boulder County totaled just 7 in 1970, 23 in 1980, and 14 in 1990.

⁵⁰ Alima Silverman, Lincoln School, National Register of Historic Places nomination, 13 November 1980; *Rocky Mountain News*, 22 August

In the late 1970s, the town annexed the Erie Air Park subdivision adjacent to Tri-County Airport south of Erie. The 960-acre development was a “fly-in, live-in, work-in community,” where most buyers were anticipated to have their own private airplanes.⁵¹



Figure 19. The former Egnew Hotel, shown here in 1976, became an apartment house in the 1970-92 period. SOURCE: S.T. Powers, historic buildings survey, 1976.

At the time of a 1978 profile of Erie in the *Denver Post*, only one coal mine in the general vicinity was still operating: the Lincoln on the east side of I-25, which produced about 500 tons daily. The article noted the town’s dwindling commercial outlets and quoted Daisy Bracegirdle Swallow, 83: “So far as I can see our main street is our ghost street.” The *Post* was nevertheless bullish on Erie’s prospects:

But because of its handy commuting location 12 miles south-southeast of Longmont and easy access to Boulder across the valley to the west as well as the entire northern metropolitan Denver area, Erie seems destined to become a populous residential community with its own balanced business center again.⁵²

1996, 34A.

⁵¹ *Denver Post*, 6 August 1978, 6E-7E.

⁵² *Denver Post*, 6 August 1978, 6E-7E.

Residents continued to bemoan the loss of businesses and professional services. Retired miner Max McAfee, 85, succinctly provided his point of view: “Things have gone to hell here since the mines closed down.” An important part of local railroad history disappeared in about 1990, when the CB&Q tracks through the west part of town were removed.⁵³

In 1984 the Erie Historical Society formed to preserve the history of the town. Erie also has a Historic Preservation Advisory Board that meets monthly to “discuss issues related to the preservation of historic structures, documents, and artifacts in Erie” and reports to the Board of Trustees in an advisory capacity.

The older part of town finally gained paved streets in 1999, ending a community debate that dated to at least 1976, when a community meeting voted against creation of a paving district. The remains of Town Manager Leon Wurl, who died in 1998, were incorporated into the paving mixture with the blessing of his widow, leading the *Denver Post* to remark that “it’s not every municipality where a town manager can become Main Street.”⁵⁴

In 2000 Erie rehabilitated the old town hall on Wells Street with the aid of a grant from the Colorado Historical Society. State Historical Fund director Mark Wolfe lauded the effort as “a keystone project that would inspire others to renovate their buildings.” The building has since housed the Erie Chamber of Commerce.⁵⁵

Erie embraced a more activist growth and development posture in the 1990s and 2000s that included significant

⁵³ *Denver Post*, 6 August 1978, 6E-7E; *Greeley Tribune*, 10 April 1994.

⁵⁴ *Longmont Daily Times-Call*, 12 November 1976, 3; *Denver Post*, 17 August 1999, 1A.

⁵⁵ *Greeley Tribune*, 5 February 2000.

annexations. Writing in 1999, historians Thomas J. Noel and Dan Corson observed: “By the 1990s, Erie had become a bedroom community for Boulder County. Erie also began commercial development along Interstate-25... and announced plans to become a city of some 50,000 in the new millennium.” The newly annexed areas, which included a landfill, were anticipated to generate additional revenues.⁵⁶

Erie posted a five-fold increase in its

population during the 1990s, growing from 1,258 in 1990 to 6,291 in 2000. By 2003, annexations gave Erie a mile-long commercial strip along Interstate 25. Between 2000 and 2008, a further doubling of the town’s population occurred, resulting in an estimated population of 14,958. Erie presently covers eighteen square miles in Weld and Boulder counties.⁵⁷

⁵⁶ Thomas J. Noel and Dan Corson, *Boulder County: An Illustrated History* (Carlsbad, California: Heritage Media Corporation, 1999), 101; *Greeley Tribune*, 10 April 1994.

⁵⁷ *Greeley Tribune*, 5 November 2003.



Figure 20. View south-southwest of the 500 block of Briggs Street from Cheesman Street. SOURCE: Dyni, *Erie: A Coal Town Revisited*, Erie Historical Society Collection, 32.

5

RESULTS

Individually Eligible Resources

The Erie Survey of Historic Buildings documented twenty-three properties. Four of the resources are evaluated as potentially eligible to the National and State Registers. Seven of the resourced are evaluated as potentially eligible to the State Register only. Table 3 presents a summary of eligibility assessments for all resources included in the intensive survey in street address order, while Table 4 displays the results in state identification number order. Because the survey recorded individual resources scattered throughout Erie, no evaluations for historic district potential were made.

Elizabeth Blackwell, State Historical Fund Historic Preservation Specialist, and Heather Peterson, National and State Register Historian, Colorado Office of Archaeology and Historic Preservation, were consulted in March 2010 concerning National and State Register eligibility of properties surveyed during the project. They concurred with the evaluations presented in the tables.

Evaluations of eligibility are based upon the status of the building during fieldwork, and any subsequent alterations made to a resource may have a positive or negative impact on a building's historic physical integrity and significance. The relatively high proportion of eligible resources among those surveyed is attributable to the fact the effort documented resources selected by the HPAB for their known historical

associations and/or architectural significance.

The following sections summarize the dates of construction, original functions, materials, and architectural styles represented by the twenty-three historic properties recorded in the intensive survey.

Construction Dates

Of the twenty-three buildings surveyed, the largest number, ten, date to the 1880s. The second largest group, with eight examples, contains buildings erected in the 1890s. Three buildings were constructed in the 1900s. One building was completed in the 1930s, and one building can only be dated as "pre-1940."

Original Functions

Buildings with domestic functions comprise the largest number of surveyed resources, with sixteen examples. Of those, fifteen are classified as "single dwelling" and one as a hotel. The next largest group by function consists of three buildings associated with commerce and trade, including one department store, one bar, and one specialty store. Two churches were documented, as were one funerary/mortuary building and one government/city hall resource.

Materials

The primary wall material for each of the buildings surveyed also was documented. Brick buildings represent the largest group, with nine examples. The next largest category is buildings clad with nonhistoric

Table 3

**EVALUATION OF RESOURCES FOR INDIVIDUAL ELIGIBILITY
FOR NATIONAL OR STATE REGISTER DESIGNATION
SORTED BY STREET ADDRESS**

Street Address	State ID Number	Historic Name and Year Built	National Register		State Register	
			Status	Criteria	Status	Criteria
370 Briggs Street	5WL6186	Powell House/Egnew Hotel (1890-91)	Not Eligible	--	Eligible	A
455 Briggs Street	5WL6187	Angove/Wood House (1900s)	Not Eligible	--	Not Eligible	--
500 Briggs Street	5WL6188	IOOF Hall/Lockwood Trading Co/State Mercantile Co./Hunter Mercantile Co./Wilson-Larson Store (1889)	Not Eligible	--	Eligible	A
502 Briggs Street	5WL6189	Winslow & Smith/W.W. Smith Drugstore/Elzi Drugstore (1892)	Not Eligible	--	Not Eligible	--
545 Briggs Street	5WL6190	Morgan's Bar (1908-48)	Not Eligible	--	Not Eligible	--
475 Cheesman Street	5WL6191	Williams/Probert House (1884)	Not Eligible	--	Not Eligible	--
574 High Street	5WL6192	Walker House (1894)	Not Eligible	--	Not Eligible	--
604 High Street	5WL6193	Nicholson House (1895)	Not Eligible	--	Eligible	B, C
405 Holbrook Street	5WL6194	Vaughn/Hunter House (1892)	Not Eligible	--	Eligible	C
485 Holbrook Street	5WL6195	Williams/Bixler/McDonald House (1884)	Not Eligible	--	Eligible	B
575 Holbrook Street	5WL6196	Lawley/Milanovich/Johnson House (1880s)	Not Eligible	--	Eligible	C
602-04 Holbrook Street	5WL6196	Erie Methodist Episcopal Church (1888)	Eligible	B, C (A)	Eligible	B, C
664 Holbrook Street	5WL6197	Richards/Wilson House (1888)	Not Eligible	--	Not Eligible	--
675 Holbrook Street	5WL6198	Morrison/Charlesworth/Woods House (c. 1897)	Eligible	B, C	Eligible	B, C
684 Holbrook Street	5WL6199	Phennah/Brennan House (1889)	Not Eligible	--	Not Eligible	--
724 Holbrook Street	5WL6200	Wilson House (1887)	Not Eligible	--	Eligible	B, C
704 Main Street	5WL6201	Morgan/Carter House (1892)	Eligible	B, C	Eligible	B, C

Street Address	State ID Number	Historic Name and Year Built	National Register		State Register	
			Status	Criteria	Status	Criteria
405 Pierce Street	5WL6202	Harris/Brennan/Oakley House (1885)	Not Eligible	--	Not Eligible	--
525 Pierce Street	5WL6203	Van Valkenburg Undertaking/Bracegirdle House/Leinweber House (1884)	Not Eligible	--	Not Eligible	--
555 Pierce Street	5WL6204	Stevens/Taylor House (1902-08)	Not Eligible	--	Not Eligible	--
575 Pierce Street	5WL6205	Taylor House (Pre-1940)	Not Eligible	--	Not Eligible	--
235 Wells Street	5WL6206	Erie Town Hall (1930-31)	Eligible	A, C	Eligible	A, C
575 Wells Street	5WL6207	St. Scholastica Catholic Church (1898-99)	Not Eligible	--	Not Eligible	--

NOTE: Letters in Criteria columns indicate the applicable National or State Register criteria. A letter in parentheses indicates a criteria consideration.

Table 4
EVALUATION OF RESOURCES FOR INDIVIDUAL ELIGIBILITY
FOR NATIONAL OR STATE REGISTER DESIGNATION
SORTED BY STATE IDENTIFICATION NUMBER

State ID Number	Street Address	Historic Name and Year Built	National Register		State Register	
			Status	Criteria	Status	Criteria
5WL1696	575 Holbrook Street	Lawley/Milanovich/Johnson House (1880s)	Not Eligible	--	Eligible	C
5WL6186	370 Briggs Street	Powell House/Egnew Hotel (1890-91)	Not Eligible	--	Eligible	A
5WL6187	455 Briggs Street	Angove/Wood House (1900s)	Not Eligible	--	Not Eligible	--
5WL6188	500 Briggs Street	IOOF Hall/Lockwood Trading Co./State Mercantile Co./Hunter Mercantile Co./Wilson-Larson Store (1889)	Not Eligible	--	Eligible	A
5WL6189	502 Briggs Street	Winslow & Smith/W.W. Smith Drugstore/Elzi Drugstore (1892)	Not Eligible	--	Not Eligible	--
5WL6190	545 Briggs Street	Morgan's Bar (1908-48)	Not Eligible	--	Not Eligible	--
5WL6191	475 Cheesman Street	Williams/Probert House (1884)	Not Eligible	--	Not Eligible	--
5WL6192	574 High Street	Walker House (1894)	Not Eligible	--	Not Eligible	--
5WL6193	604 High Street	Nicholson House (1895)	Not Eligible	--	Eligible	B, C
5WL6194	405 Holbrook Street	Vaughn/Hunter House (1892)	Not Eligible	--	Eligible	C
5WL6195	485 Holbrook Street	Williams/Bixler/McDonald House (1884)	Not Eligible	--	Eligible	B
5WL6196	602-04 Holbrook Street	Erie Methodist Episcopal Church (1888)	Eligible	B, C (A)	Eligible	B, C
5WL6197	664 Holbrook Street	Richards/Wilson House (1888)	Not Eligible	--	Not Eligible	--
5WL6198	675 Holbrook Street	Morrison/Charlesworth/Woods House (c. 1897)	Eligible	B, C	Eligible	B, C
5WL6199	684 Holbrook Street	Phennah/Brennan House (1889)	Not Eligible	--	Not Eligible	--
5WL6200	724 Holbrook Street	Wilson House (1887)	Not Eligible	--	Eligible	B, C
5WL6201	704 Main Street	Morgan/Carter House (1892)	Eligible	B, C	Eligible	B, C

State ID Number	Street Address	Historic Name and Year Built	National Register		State Register	
			Status	Criteria	Status	Criteria
5WL6202	405 Pierce Street	Harris/Brennan/Oakley House (1885)	Not Eligible	--	Not Eligible	--
5WL6203	525 Pierce Street	Van Valkenburg Undertaking/Bracegirdle House/Leinweber House (1884)	Not Eligible	--	Not Eligible	--
5WL6204	555 Pierce Street	Stevens/Taylor House (1902-08)	Not Eligible	--	Not Eligible	--
5WL6205	575 Pierce Street	Taylor House (Pre-1940)	Not Eligible	--	Not Eligible	--
5WL6206	235 Wells Street	Erie Town Hall (1930-31)	Eligible	A, C	Eligible	A, C
5WL6207	575 Wells Street	St. Scholastica Catholic Church (1898-99)	Not Eligible	--	Not Eligible	--

NOTE: Letters in Criteria columns indicate the applicable National or State Register criteria. A letter in parentheses indicates a criteria consideration.

Potentially Eligible to the National and State Registers



602-04 Holbrook Street, 5WL.6196, Erie
Methodist Episcopal Church (1888)



675 Holbrook Street, 5WL.6198,
Morrison/Charlesworth/ Woods House (c. 1897)



704 Main Street, 5WL.6201, Morgan/Carter
House (1892)



235 Wells Street, 5WL.6206, Erie Town Hall
(1930-31)

Potentially Eligible to the State Register Only



370 Briggs Street, 5WL.6186, Powell House/Egnew Hotel (1890-91)



500 Briggs Street, 5WL.6188, IOOF Hall/Lockwood Trading Co/State Mercantile Co./Hunter Mercantile Co./Wilson-Larson Store (1889)



604 High Street, 5WL.6193, Nicholson House (1895)



405 Holbrook Street, 5WL.6194, Vaughn/Hunter House (1892)



485 Holbrook Street, 5WL.6195, Williams/Bixler/McDonald House (1884)

Potentially Eligible to the State Register Only



575 Holbrook Street, 5WL.1696,
Lawley/Milanovich/ Johnson House (1880s)



724 Holbrook Street, 5WL.6200, Wilson House
(1887)

siding, including seven resources. Two houses have wood weatherboard siding. One building has simulated log siding. One house has stucco walls, and one dwelling has plywood wall cladding.

Historic Architectural Styles and Building Types

Buildings documented during the survey display a variety of architectural styles and building types popular during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. One of the largest groups of buildings surveyed represents a broad category reflecting Late Victorian design, with five examples. Seven resources surveyed are categorized as having no particular architectural style due to alterations that obscure or modify their original design. Three houses reflect Queen Anne style details, and one represents Italianate style elements. Two churches display Gothic Revival style architecture. Two buildings represent Nineteenth Century Commercial design, one building displays the False Front Commercial form, and one building is an example of Early Twentieth Century design. One house was labeled as an example of the Hipped Roof Box type.

The following discussion uses the terminology developed by the Colorado Historical Society Office of Archaeology and Historic Preservation (see *A Guide to Colorado's Historic Architecture and Engineering*, 2nd edition and updates) for architectural styles and building types. Some buildings surveyed reflected a specific architectural style at the time of construction, but later were modified so that a style is no longer apparent.

Domestic Architecture

Late Victorian

Five houses surveyed are classified as "Late Victorian" because they reflect forms and retain features that broadly represent Vic-

torian era domestic construction, but do not embody enough of the elements that distinguish a particular style of the period, such as Queen Anne, Italianate, or Gothic Revival. Late Victorian features found in this group include such things as picturesque compositions; a variety of construction materials; projecting porches; tall, narrow, double-hung sash windows; and steeply-pitched roofs.



724 Holbrook Street (1887)

Examples of Late Victorian architecture in Erie include:

- 370 Briggs Street, 5WL.6186, Powell House/Egnew Hotel
- 475 Cheesman Street, 5WL.6191, Williams/Probert House
- 485 Holbrook Street, 5WL.6195, Williams/Bixler/McDonald
- 575 Holbrook Street, 5WL.6196, Lawley/Milanovich/Johnson House
- 724 Holbrook Street, 5WL.6200, Wilson House

Queen Anne

The Colorado Historical Society describes the Queen Anne style as "perhaps the most ornate style of the Victorian period evident in Colorado." The Queen Anne style was used for everything from small one-story cottages to large two-story residences. Queen Anne style houses in Erie display such features as an asymmetrical composi-



675 Holbrook Street (c. 1897)

tion; a prominent one-story porch (sometimes wrapping around a second wall) with turned spindle supports, brackets, and a decorative frieze; a complex roof, often with multiple gables and dormers; a variety of window designs and decorative glazing; and the use of multiple exterior materials, often including stone, brick, and wood. Exuberant ornamentation is a primary characteristic of the style seen in features such as decorative vergeboards and gable aprons, brackets, pendants, sunbursts, fans, turned spindles, decorative wall courses, and shaped shingles.⁵⁸

Examples of Queen Anne style houses in Erie include:

- 704 Main Street, 5WL.6201, Morgan/Carter House
- 604 High Street, 5WL.6193, Nicholson House
- 675 Holbrook Street, 5WL.6198, Morrison/Charlesworth/Woods House

Hipped Roof Box

The Hipped Roof Box is a house type

⁵⁸ Office of Archaeology and Historic Preservation, Colorado Historical Society, *A Guide to Colorado's Historic Architecture and Engineering*, 2nd edition (Denver: State Historical Society of Colorado, 2003), 18-19.

distinguished by its one-story height and boxy shape with hipped roof. One example of this type of simple design was surveyed in Erie:

- 455 Briggs Street, 5WL.6187, Angove/Wood House

Italianate

Although none of the buildings surveyed represent an elaborately detailed large scale version of the Italianate style, a small miner's cottage displays features popular in Italianate design. A Victorian-era style popular in Colorado from about 1870 to the turn of the century, the Italianate influence is seen in a simple form on this house displaying bracketed eaves; tall, narrow, double-hung segmental arch windows with U-shaped window crowns; a segmental arch transom above a narrow entrance; and a band of decorative brickwork at lintel level. The Italianate-influenced miner's cottage is:

- 405 Holbrook Street, 5WL.6194, Vaughn/Hunter House



405 Holbrook Street (1892)

No Style

Seven properties surveyed fell into the "No Style" category due to alterations that adversely impacted their representation of a particular architectural style.

Civic Architecture

Commercial/Early Twentieth Century

The Erie Town Hall (1930) at 235 Wells Street represents the Commercial/Early Twentieth Century type of design as applied to a governmental building. The Colorado Historical Society defines “Early Twentieth Century Commercial” buildings as those from one to five stories, often of brick construction, with little ornamentation other than decorative brickwork along a cornice or parapet.⁵⁹ Such buildings often feature brick piers rather than columns on the first story and the use of contrasting brick as an ornamental element.

- 235 Wells Street, 5WL.6206, Erie Town Hall

Commercial Architecture

Commercial /Nineteenth Century



502 Holbrook Street (1892)

As Erie developed in the late nineteenth century, buildings of brick were constructed to reflect the stability, prosperity, and progress of the community. Brick also had the advantage of being more fireproof than frame construction. Some buildings also included stone trim and metal or decorative brick cornices. Large display windows, continuous transom

⁵⁹ Office of Archaeology and Historic Preservation, *A Guide*, 74-75.

bands, wood doors with large rectangular lights and transoms, decorative brickwork, parapets, and corbelled cornices were typical of the construction.⁶⁰

Examples of Nineteenth Century Commercial buildings in Erie are:

- 500 Briggs Street, 5WL.6188, IOOF Hall/Lockwood Trading Co./State Mercantile
- 502 Briggs Street, 5WL.6189, Winslow & Smith/W.W. Smith Drugstore/Elzi Drugstore

False Front Commercial

Early photographs of Erie show several false front buildings on both sides of the 500 block of Briggs Street (see cover). This type of commercial building was erected in large numbers during California’s gold rush and appeared throughout frontier Colorado as soon as milled lumber became available. In most cases, the false front represented an early construction type replaced by more substantial buildings as funds and materials became available. False front buildings are becoming increasingly rare in Colorado.



545 Holbrook Street (1908-48)

Such buildings are generally a simple rectangular form with a front gabled roof faced with a wood façade extending beyond

⁶⁰ Office of Archaeology and Historic Preservation, *A Guide*, 72-73.

the peak of the gable. The tall false front provided a small building with the appearance of being larger, as well as affording a sizable space for the company's name. More elaborate examples featured decorative cornices or pediments. In some communities, including Erie, false fronts continued to be built for several decades. An existing, although altered, example of a False Front Commercial building in Erie is:

- 545 Briggs Street, 5WL.6190, Morgan's Bar

Religious Architecture

Gothic Revival



575 Wells Street (1899)

The Colorado Historical Society indicates that “Gothic Revival is best characterized by the pointed-arched window, steeply pitched roof, and picturesque composition.” Other common features of the style include towers, buttresses, and decorative glass.⁶¹ Erie is fortunate in having two early churches that are representative of the Gothic Revival style:

- 602 Holbrook Street, 5WL.6196, Erie Methodist Episcopal Church
- 575 Wells Street, 5WL.6207, St. Scholastica Catholic Church

⁶¹ Office of Archaeology and Historic Preservation, *A Guide*, 10-11.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. National and State Register Properties

The survey identified four properties potentially eligible to the National Register and State Register and seven properties potentially eligible to the State Register only. If the owners of the buildings are willing, the properties should be nominated for listing in these registers. Such designation places no restrictions on what owners may do with their properties and will increase public awareness of the importance of preservation of Erie's historic buildings and structures. Listing also may qualify properties for federal and state tax credits and, in some cases, State Historical Fund grants to assist with stabilization and restoration.

2. Designation of Erie Landmarks

Many of the properties surveyed might qualify for listing as local landmarks. A number of communities in Colorado maintain programs for local designation of local landmarks, which is a way to acknowledge the significance of properties that may not qualify for listing in the State and National Registers. Erie should consider developing significance criteria under which such landmarks could be designated and recognized within the community.

3. Future Surveys

With only a small percentage of its historic architecture documented, Erie will benefit from conducting additional surveys to record and research its historic buildings in the future. One approach would be to conduct a reconnaissance survey of all

historic resources in Erie that have not been surveyed, prioritizing those buildings and areas with the most significance for subsequent intensive survey efforts.

4. Walking Tours and Website Information

Photographs and historical information contained on the survey forms produced by this project can be utilized to produce walking tour brochures of interest to local residents and visitors. Information from the survey also could be made available from a link on the town's website.

5. Educational Activities

The Town of Erie should continue to support educational activities and programs providing historical and preservation-related information to local residents. Owners of buildings included in the survey should receive a copy of the form related to their property. An informational panel placed at the town hall, the Chamber of Commerce, or in the Briggs Street commercial area could provide information about the town's history for visitors.

6. Collection of Historical Materials

Much historical information about Erie may be privately held by local citizens. It is important that this information be copied whenever possible and placed in a public repository so that future generations will have access to it. Historical materials could be donated to the Erie Historical Society for storage in the Wise Homestead Museum. The Boulder Carnegie Branch Library includes several oral history

interviews with Erie residents. Such oral histories of longtime residents should continue to be conducted to ensure that their recollections are preserved. Official records of the Town and institutions such as local churches also should be preserved in a secure location for future generations.

7. Retention of Survey Products

Copies of the forms and report resulting from this survey should be placed in publicly accessible locations and archival repositories such as the Town Hall, the Wise Homestead Museum, the Greeley Museum, and the Carnegie Library for Local History in Boulder, and other locations where citizens are likely to use them.

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