

COLORADO

HISTORY

Colorado has been home to Native nations, Spanish explorers, fur trappers, gold miners and farmers. Each of them shaped the state on the map today.



The First Peoples

People have lived in Colorado for at least 13,000 years. The Ancestral Puebloans farmed corn in the southwest and built the stone villages at Mesa Verde. The Ute lived in the mountains and moved with the seasons to hunt. By the early 1800s, the Cheyenne and Arapaho hunted buffalo on the eastern plains.

Spain, Mexico and the Mountain Men

Spain claimed the land, and in 1776 two Spanish priests explored the western canyons. The United States bought land east of the mountains from France in 1803. Zebulon Pike explored it for the army in 1806. Mountain men came to trap beaver, and traders built forts such as Bent's Fort. Most of the rest of Colorado belonged to Mexico until 1848. It passed to the United States after a war.

Gold and a New Territory

Gold was found near today's Denver in 1858. The next year, thousands of people rushed in. They built mining camps, stores, sawmills and newspapers. Denver, Boulder and Golden began as supply towns. Congress made Colorado a **territory** in 1861.

War on the Plains

An 1851 **treaty** said much of the eastern plains belonged to the Cheyenne and Arapaho. Gold seekers and settlers then moved onto that land. In 1864, Cheyenne and Arapaho warriors raided

ranches, wagon trains and stage roads and killed settlers. That November, Colorado soldiers attacked a Cheyenne and Arapaho camp at Sand Creek and killed more than 150 people, many of them women and children. Warriors then burned the town of Julesburg. In an 1867 treaty, the Southern Cheyenne and Arapaho agreed to move to a **reservation** in what is now Oklahoma. The army won the last big battle on Colorado's plains, at Summit Springs, in 1869.

The 38th State

Colorado became the 38th state on August 1, 1876. Ute leaders, including Ouray, had signed treaties in 1868 and 1873 that gave up mountain land where miners were digging. In 1881, most Ute bands were moved to a reservation in Utah, and the southern bands stayed in southwestern Colorado. The Southern Ute and Ute Mountain Ute tribes have their governments there today.



Building Colorado

The first railroad reached Denver in 1870, and tracks soon climbed to the mining towns. Silver made Leadville a boomtown in the late 1870s. On the dry plains, farmers dug ditches to carry river water to their fields. This **irrigation** let them grow sugar beets, wheat and hay. In the 1900s, Coloradans built tunnels to bring water and cars through the mountains. Ski towns, military bases and science labs brought new work.

COLORADO THROUGH TIME

1776	1806	1848	1858	1861	1864	1876	1915	1973
Spanish priests explore the west	Pike explores Colorado	Mexico's land joins the U.S.	Gold is found near Denver	Colorado Territory is created	War on the plains	Colorado becomes the 38th state	Rocky Mountain National Park opens	The Eisenhower Tunnel opens

PEOPLE TO KNOW

Ouray	Ute leader who spoke for his people in treaty talks.
Zebulon Pike	Army explorer. Pikes Peak is named for him.
Margaret Brown	Denver woman who lived through the Titanic sinking.
Florence Sabin	Doctor and scientist born in Central City.
Scott Carpenter	Astronaut from Boulder. Orbited Earth in 1962.

WORDS TO KNOW

territory	land run by the United States that is not yet a state
treaty	a written agreement between nations
reservation	land set aside for a Native nation
irrigation	bringing water to crops through ditches