

## Castle Rock's Start-Up

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How did the town of Castle Rock begin? Here's a timeline.

**1861.** Congress created the Colorado Territory, which the new legislature divided into 17 counties. Douglas County was named after Senator Stephen A. Douglas and stretched from the South Platte River in the West to the Kansas border on the East, with Frankstown (it later dropped its "s") as the county seat.

**1869.** Thanks to the Homestead Act of 1862, Jeremiah Gould, a Civil War veteran from Rhode Island, laid claim to 160 acres south of the rock outcropping known as Castle Rock. He built a cabin one-half mile west of what is now the Douglas Country Fair Grounds, lived there for five years, and in 1874 received a deed to the land. He also purchased outright 40 more acres.

**1871.** William Palmer built the narrow-gauge Denver & Rio Grande Railroad from Denver to Colorado Springs, with train depots in the new settlements of New Memphis, 2 miles north of Castle Rock, and Douglas, five miles to the south. With so few houses around Castle Rock, there was no reason to build a depot there.

**1874.** In **February**, the legislature divided Douglas Country by creating Elbert Country. Commissioners then scheduled an election for **late March** to designate a new county seat. Competition was fierce between Frankstown, Sedalia, New Memphis, Douglas, and Castle Rock, which *The Rocky Mountain News* enthusiastically supported. Of the 597 votes cast in the special election, Castle Rock received 315. Sedalia was a distant second with 164.

Despite the vote, no town yet existed around Castle Rock. Jeremiah Gold donated 120 acres for the town. In **April** he and surveyor J. D. McIntyre, John Craig, and Philip Wilcox submitted a plat for a new town that included about 100 lots, streets, alleys, and a courthouse square. When a public auction was held in **June**, 77 of the lots sold for an average of \$44. Total sales amounted to \$3,400, which was earmarked for county buildings.

In **July**, Craig and Gould filed an additional plat that contained lots east of the railroad tracks that became Castle Rock's first residential neighborhood. By the end of the year, the town had a new two-story wooden courthouse (at the corner of 4<sup>th</sup> and Wilcox, where B&B Café is now located), a post-office, and a growing list of new buildings. But it still had no train depot, without which its future looked bleak.

**1875.** At first William Palmer refused the town's request for a train depot, but finally relented. With the new depot, Castle Rock was "in business." Wilcox donated 80 acres that extended the

town's northern boundary to include Castle Rock itself. Soon the town had a new school house, a cemetery, and about sixty homes and businesses.

Castle Rock thus got off to a good start and quickly became the center of Douglas County's commercial, social, and educational life. From then on, the future of Douglas County and Castle Rock went hand in hand.