



A Social and Cultural History of the Great Pueblo Flood of 1921, Its Aftermath, and Its Legacy

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A Social and Cultural History of the Great Pueblo Flood of 1921
Its Aftermath, and Its Legacy

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A Thesis in the Field of History
for the Degree of Master of Liberal Arts in Extension Studies

Harvard University

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Abstract

In June of 1921, a devastating flood hit the city of Pueblo, Colorado. Though the flood's physical devastation and story have been well documented, historians have never been able to accurately count the number of people who perished during the event, with low-end estimates of just under a hundred individuals while the highest estimates claim up to 1,500 deaths. This paper, while originally intending to indicate a more precise range of casualties, has concluded three important new findings regarding this event. First, archives of those who were reported missing in the local newspaper have been consolidated into a spreadsheet to form a list of over 600 individuals who were likely victims of the flood. To the author's knowledge, no such list has previously been compiled. Second, many of those listed as missing had their physical addresses included, and these have been cross-referenced with Google Maps™ mapping service to paint a larger path of devastation than has been previously reported. Third, two of the communities that were reported to have widespread devastation from the flood make up very few of those reported as missing, leading to an assertion that the numbers of victims are very likely underreported. While the reasons for this remain unclear, it does indicate a high likelihood that the Great Flood of 1921 in Pueblo was the most deadly in Colorado's history, and perhaps one of the most deadly in United States' history.

Frontispiece



Figure 1. Pre-flood Map of Pueblo, 1890

*Available from World Maps Online,
<https://www.worldmapsonline.com/historicalmaps/IW-CO-PU-1890.htm>.*

*Dark clouds hung low along the lofty range
When broke the storm, Hell's fury seemed unleashed
To wreck and ruin all the universe.
The lightning played among the giant peaks,
And crashing thunder smote the mountainside.
The awful din of elements at war
Was echoed from the canyon depths below,
Clouds burst asunder and a deluge came.
Twas thus that Nature in her maddest mood
Sent down the raging waters of the flood
To scourge the fertile valleys of the plain,
And fair Pueblo man had builded there,
Was crushed and maimed, now prostrate bleeding lies,
But not for long. The spirit that has made
This wonder city of the West survives;
And men will build with bigger, broader plans
To meet the wrath of Nature unafraid.*

-Walt Drummond, published by The Franklin Press and printed in the
Pueblo Chieftain on June 17th, 1921

Dedication

I could not have undertaken—let alone complete—such an ambitious study without the love and support of my family and friends. In particular, I would like to thank my wife Erica, whose staunch support and tough love kept me going. This specific journey, as well as our greater journey through life together, is made meaningful because of you. Thank you.

Acknowledgments

There are many individuals who assisted and mentored me in the completion of this project. Among them, I want to thank Sarah Gilmor and the staff of the History Colorado Stephen H. Hart Research Center as well as Aaron Ramirez and the staff of the Western Research Room of the Rawlins Public Library in Pueblo. These individuals assisted me in archival research, as well as the digitizing of various maps used in this paper. Additionally, I want to thank the staff and Marie Steinbach of the Pueblo Heritage Museum for sharing their archives of pictures of the flood and copies of *The Pueblo Lore*. Gary Micheli led me on a tour of the Hose Company No. 3 Fire Museum in Pueblo, patiently answering my questions and offering thoughtful suggestions, and he provided me with the book *Landmarks and Legacies: A History of Pueblo's Union Avenue Historic District*, which greatly aided my research. Victoria Miller of the Steelworks Center of the West provided me with publications from Colorado Fuel & Iron Company's industrial bulletin, which gave me more information on the less publicized events south of the city center in the aftermath of the flood. Dianna Litvak, Senior Historian at Mead & Hunt, patiently met with me and offered a wealth of ideas, resources, and knowledge, even as I struggled to keep up with grading her daughter's history papers in my capacity as a secondary teacher. Dr. Donald Ostrowski was my research advisor throughout this project and assisted me by offering numerous, suggestions, wisdom, and surgical editing. My thesis director, Dr. John R. Stilgoe, gave me suggestions and thoughtful improvements while encouraging me that my hunches were likely correct. Finally, to

both my family and my friend and confidant Scott Burke, I owe a debt of gratitude for the push that came in the form of a directive: “just sit down and finish it.” For all of you, I offer my deepest thanks.

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Chapter I.

Background: A Brief Geography and the Founding of Pueblo

The land that would become the city of Pueblo sits at the confluence of the Arkansas River and Fountain Creek. The Arkansas, originally named Rio Napestle by Spanish explorers, originates high in the Rocky Mountain range near the modern city of Leadville. It continues its flow eastward through Kansas, Oklahoma, and Arkansas before merging with the Mississippi River. The name “Arkansas” was only applied to the upper sections of the river in the 19th century, a name applied for the Native Americans that lived along its lower banks.¹ Fountain Creek derives its name from the mineral springs that bubble up just west of the city of Colorado Springs. Originally named Fontaine Qui Bouille, or “fountain that boils” by the French. The creek flows at first towards the southeast before taking a strict southern route towards its ultimate confluence with the greater Arkansas.

Pueblo finds itself at the base of the Sangre de Cristo Mountain Range in the High Plains east of the Rocky Mountains. It is uniquely situated in a valley that is south and east of Pikes Peak, the most dominant geographical feature visible. A long valley north and west of Pueblo provides access to the mountain range, and the many tributaries from the west, southwest, and south flow into the Arkansas prior to its arrival in the city (see Figure 1). Many more continue to merge with the river as it continues east.

¹ “Arkansas River,” Encyclopedia.com, Accessed 23 September 2019. <https://www.encyclopedia.com/history/dictionaries-thesauruses-pictures-and-press-releases/arkansas-river>.



Figure 2. Colorado—Large Map.

Map of Colorado's major mountain ranges, rivers, and cities. Accessed 23 September 2019.

<https://www.worldatlas.com/webimage/countrys/namerica/usstates/lgcolor/cocolor.htm>.

A benefit to Pueblo's unique geographical nature is its weather – the city typically warms much more quickly than its northern Colorado counterparts, and Pueblo's growing season begins earlier than that of Denver's and other front-range communities.² It is

² "Frost Dates for Pueblo, CO," The Old Farmer's Almanac, Accessed 23 September 2019. <https://www.almanac.com/gardening/frostdates/CO/Pueblo>.

considered part of a “banana belt,” a geographic area with warmer weather than the region as a whole, and this means less snow and fewer frost days.³ The city’s placement, however, has also made it susceptible to flash floods. Prior to 1921, the city had experienced floods in 1855, 1864, 1867, 1869, 1875, 1880, 1881, 1889, 1893, and – most significantly – 1894. The 1894 flood, brought on by a sustained and heavy rainfall in a manner similar to 1921, led to five deaths and an estimated \$2,000,000 in damage to the city. The city engineer had the river channel widened and the levees raised to prevent a future flood event, and no such event occurred until the one that is the subject of this paper.⁴

Recorded history of settlements in the area of the confluence of the Arkansas River and Fountain Creek begins with Spanish explorers, but various Native American tribes frequented the area long before this. Apache, Comanche, Ute, Kiowa, Arapaho, and Cheyenne are all known to have occupied the region from the 14th to the 19th centuries.⁵ A publication by the Daughters of the American Revolution from 1939 suggests that there may have been permanent settlements of Native Americans in the area due to rumored gravesites, but these reports have not been corroborated. Spanish explorers claimed the land that included the future city and were exploring as early as the 16th century, and French fur-trappers arrived in the mid-18th century. Conflict between Native Americans and Europeans were exacerbated when Juan Bautista de Anza, then the governor of Spanish New Mexico, led a campaign to rid the area of Comanche in 1779,

³ Reppenhagen, “Does Colorado Have a Banana Belt?”

⁴ Robert Follansbee and Edward E. Jones, “The Arkansas River Flood of June 3-5, 1921,” United States Department of the Interior, 1922. <https://pubs.usgs.gov/wsp/0487/report.pdf>.

⁵ Cassells, *The Archaeology of Colorado*.

ostensibly to promote trade. Using a force of Spaniards, Utes, and Apaches, Anza engaged with the Comanche in the area near modern Pueblo. The battle ended with the killing of Comanche Chief Cuerno Verde and, over the next decade, a series of peace treaties designed to bring Native Americans into compliance.⁶ Exchanges would continue, sometimes peaceful and sometimes violent, throughout the next century.

In 1803, the French and Americans negotiated the Louisiana Purchase, making the Arkansas River the new international border between the United States and Spain. With Mexican independence less than two decades later, there was an increased focus on trade between the two countries.⁷ While different explorers had been through the area, making camp and sometimes building small structures, it was not until 1842 that the first permanent European settlers set up shop with the founding of El Pueblo Trading Post. Just two years later, The Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo was signed, ending the Mexican-American War and granting the United States around half of all of Mexico's territory. The southern border between the two countries moved from the Arkansas River to the Rio Grande, and with it a profound confusion on those "Mexicans" for whom the international border had just displaced. For everyone except Native Americans, the choice had to be made either to move south to "remain" in Mexico or to stay and, after one year, inherit U.S. citizenship. It is important to note that hereafter, the terms "Mexicans" and "New Mexicans" were used interchangeably, as there was no reason to differentiate prior to 1858. Interestingly, many of the original settlers of Pueblo—

⁶ Simms, Tucker, DeHerrera, and the Pueblo City-County Library, *Images of America: Pueblo*, 9-11.

⁷ Ibid.

including wives of some American pioneers—were Mexican. Thus, from the very earliest days of settlement, Pueblo has been a multicultural community.

The El Pueblo Trading Post was abandoned following an attack by Utes and Jicarilla Apaches on Christmas Eve, 1854, killing twelve.⁸ But while settlement was temporarily halted in the area, the promise associated with its strategic location was too great to pass up for adventurous pioneers and wealthy investors. California beckoned to the west, and both Santa Fe and Taos boasted mining operations to the south. The setting for a trading post that served additionally as a rest-stop, close to the rapidly developing Santa Fe Trail, seemed like a promising opportunity.

In 1858, a gold rush brought the fortune-seeking directly to Colorado. Within a year, a new settlement had popped up just east of Fountain Creek near the confluence with the Arkansas (confusingly, they called the town Fountain City; the city of Fountain, Colorado lies north of Pueblo and was established the same year but closer to the city of Colorado Springs). Late in 1858, these settlers moved across the river to establish the city of Pueblo.⁹ Small operations in agriculture and cattle-raising slowly grew with the city. But it was with the forward-thinking of General William Jackson Palmer that the modernization of the city really started to take place.

Known best for his work in the development of Colorado Springs, Palmer had a vision to create a truly enterprising city of industry that would rival equivalent metropolitan centers in the east. He would bring a railroad to the new city, and—rather

⁸ Simms, Tucker, DeHerrera, and the Pueblo City-County Library, *Images of America: Pueblo*, 9-11.

⁹ White, *Landmarks and Legacies*, Foreword.

than making it a hub for trade—would invest in the creation of factories to smelt ore and produce steel. Noting that it would make him exempt from the town’s taxes, Palmer opted to create a town south of the river for his new railroad station. He named it the appropriate, though not exactly creative, “South Pueblo.”¹⁰ He co-created the Central Colorado Improvement Company, began the Denver & Rio Grande Railroad, and founded the Colorado Coal and Iron Company (CC&I). Palmer’s ambition spurred the growth of the once-tiny community as the railroad arrived, new neighborhoods were constructed to attract labor, and the first steel manufacturing factory was opened in 1881. As a dispute arose between Pueblo and South Pueblo, a group of opportunity-seeking individuals took advantage of the conflict and formed Central Pueblo in the space between the two towns, creating yet another tax dodge.¹¹ Following a contentious struggle that saw competing mayors of competing communities, an attempt at election fraud, and much handwringing, the three towns managed to overcome a lower-than-expected voter turnout to merge in 1886. A fourth town, Bessemer, established in 1886 to house workers for the steel mills, was eventually annexed as well in 1894.

The merging of the cities caused much confusion, particularly in the names of streets. I have found conflicting reports as to General Palmer’s reasoning, but many of the streets of South Pueblo were originally given Spanish names. While some were changed to avoid duplicates, the decision to change the Spanish street names give a hint toward attitudes between white and non-white citizens. In his publication regarding the Spanish Streets of South Pueblo, Heraldo A. Acosta offers an explanation that the citizens of

¹⁰ Broadhead, “History.”

¹¹ White, *Landmarks and Legacies*, 8.

Pueblo and Central Pueblo may have been trying to chastise General Palmer for building and running his railroad through South Pueblo. But, he continues, there may have been an additional reason: “The influence of U.S. newspapers publishing generalizations, negative stereotypes and name calling they had of Mexicans and Mexican Americans” (10). Indeed, attitudes towards Mexicans shifted in light of the war that the two countries fought against one another; a war that had made possible the procuring of the land south of the Arkansas on which the railroad was built. Even the name “Pueblo” itself came under fire from the President of the Board of Trades, who wrote incorrectly claimed that “the word ‘Pueblo’ which is derived from the Spanish indicates ‘people,’ and it has long possessed a peculiar signification in Mexican countries where it really means a town or camp of vanquished Indians living in a condition of semi-civilization” (Acosta, 11). By 1931 all Spanish street names were changed in a sweeping city council ordinance. Although signs with the former names now adorn street corners in South Pueblo, the official street names are almost wholly English now.

Pueblo quickly became Colorado’s second largest city and boasted of its title as the “Pittsburgh of the west.” In the decade between 1880 and 1890, the population grew from just over 7,500 individuals to more than 30,000.¹² The city became the leading steel manufacturer of the west, with four major steelworks and investment by such tycoons as John D. Rockefeller.¹³ The City Beautiful Movement arrived in tandem with the prosperity of the city’s industries, and large parks and Victorian-styled homes were built in earnest north and northwest of downtown. Parks were added around the city, as were

¹² White, *Landmarks and Legacies*, 11.

¹³ Simms et al., *Images of America: Pueblo*, 30.

resorts and hotels, monuments, and a lively business district. While the business district hosted the more unsavory elements of urban life—bars, gambling halls, brothels, and the occasional robbery or shootout—investment in fine arts and cultural centers began. “The Colorado Mineral Palace opened in 1891,” writes Charlene Simms, “to display minerals found in the state and to show the importance of mining and minerals in Colorado’s economy” (69). The five railroads operating in Pueblo by 1890 welcomed the newly built Union Depot, a resplendent red sandstone monolith that featured stained-glass windows, a clock tower, wrought iron chandeliers, a large dining room, ticket office, gift store, hotel, and office space.¹⁴ That same year, the 1,100-seat Grand Opera House opened in the downtown area as well. A new city hall, named Memorial Hall to commemorate fallen soldiers in World War I, was built in 1917. Modernization multiplied rapidly: electricity, telephone lines, and trolleys expanded from the downtown area to many of the surrounding neighborhoods. General Palmer’s vision, it seemed, was being realized.

With the booming economy came the need for labor, a call largely answered by new European immigrants. James Kedro noted the presence of Czechs and Slovaks in the city. “At the end of the first decade of this [the 20th] century,” he writes, “approximately seventeen hundred Czechs and nineteen hundred Slovaks resided in Colorado” (95). Following these came Italians in large numbers, eventually replacing the Czechs and Slovaks as the most numerous of Pueblo’s European immigrants. Census information confirms that in addition to these, Greek, Serbian, Croatian, German, Mexican, Irish, Polish, Hungarian, Filipino, Japanese, Chinese, and others joined.¹⁵ “At one point,”

¹⁴ White, *Landmarks and Legacies*, 170-179.

¹⁵ Simms et al, 31.

writes Charlene Simms, “40 languages were spoken in the steel mill, and more than two dozen foreign-language newspapers were published in the city. Pueblo became known as the ‘Melting Pot of the West’” (41). There was evidence of a small Jewish population from the outset that shared time with a newly developed church, and churches of various Christian denominations sprung up throughout town. Catholics, though largely made up of Mexican citizens and often ostracized by the rest of the community, made their presence known as well. Early in the twentieth century, as workers threatened to strike for better pay and work conditions in the plants, advertisements were taken out to bring Black Americans to replace them. Many answered the call and took the jobs, arriving before realizing that they had been recruited to break the strike.

With an increase in population came an increased need for food, and farmers’ and ranchers’ needs for labor brought still more immigrants. Especially important to the burgeoning Pueblo economy were the sugar beet farms, largely worked by German migrants.¹⁶ Most numerous of all, however, were the Mexicans who had either been displaced by the White settlers or had come to the city for work. Spanish-speakers from New Mexico joined those displaced in the Colorado region as Palmer had actively recruited more from south of the (fairly new) border. Having historically been a melting pot of languages and culture, Pueblo maintained this dynamic from the late 19th and into the early 20th centuries. Indeed, the Colorado Constitutional Convention held in 1876 when it first achieved statehood was conducted in three languages: English, German, and

¹⁶ James E. Fell, Jr., “Ever More Diversity: Race, Ethnicity & Immigration in Colorado,” Colorado Humanities, <http://www.coloradohumanities.org/blog/ever-more-diversity-race-ethnicity-immigration-colorado>.

Spanish.¹⁷ “By 1920,” writes Michael Botello, “immigrants accounted for seventeen percent of the city’s population, with an additional seventeen percent in the second-generation” (71).

Although the many ethnic groups lived and worked together in the city, one cannot say that it was harmonious. Linguistic, cultural, social, religious, and ethnic identities were often used to keep groups separated. Communities within the cities formed not only as places of refuge where one could live with those of similar backgrounds, but also due to the barriers that kept ethnic minorities out of the neighborhoods of the white, Protestant, affluent majority. These segregated communities developed their own names: Czechs and Slovaks settled in an area known as the Grove, Italians formed their own “Little Italy” near Goat Hill, and Spanish-speaking residents largely lived south of the Arkansas in the lowlands that locals called “Mexico.” One neighborhood lying in the lowlands between the river and the rail yard was rumored to be comprised of Japanese immigrants due to the name “Peppersauce Bottoms” or “Peppersauce Flats,” so called because of the hot peppers the residents grew there, though there is no reason to believe that this could not also have been a community of Spanish descent.¹⁸ “Along with diversity came racial and ethnic strife,” writes Charlene Simms. “...many of the new arrivals in Pueblo experienced discrimination. The Ku Klux Klan was very active starting in the 1920s” (41). Indeed, even the city’s largest cemetery—Roselawn—was segregated.

¹⁷ James E. Fell, Jr., “Ever More Diversity: Race, Ethnicity & Immigration in Colorado,” Colorado Humanities, <http://www.coloradohumanities.org/blog/ever-more-diversity-race-ethnicity-immigration-colorado>.

¹⁸ Jeremy P. Meyer, “Pueblo Storm Tide Leaves Scars,” *Denver Post*, <http://www.denverpost.com/2007/03/10/pueblo-storm-tide-leaves-scars/>.

Rising nationalism and nativist sentiment was already increasing tensions heading into the decade after 1910. After the start of the First World War, however, this tension gave rise to widespread oppression. As James Kedro notes, “Anti-southern and eastern European sentiment in Colorado connected with labor agitation, coal mining strikes, the First World War, and the ‘Red Scare’ that followed” to encourage large migrations of immigrants out of the city by 1920.¹⁹ Those that remained had to deal with slanderous editorials in *The Pueblo Chieftain* that asserted that “ninety percent of the bootleggers and gamblers are foreign born,” or the Commissioner of Public Safety asserting that “our greatest handicap . . . [in fighting crime] is our great foreign population, as most of the lawbreakers are aliens” (Botello, 71). These opinions made Pueblo—and the rest of the state of Colorado, for that matter—a recruiting ground for groups such as the Ku Klux Klan throughout the 1920s, who held a place of prominence in the state both politically and in private membership even as its influence in the Deep South was in decline. Witnessing the small numbers of Jews and African Americans in the state, the KKK focused their efforts on depicting the large immigrant population as lawless revolutionaries bent on creating a Catholic empire in America.²⁰ By 1921, the year of the flood, the population was greater than 40,000 individuals, and the city boasted 20% of all jobs in Colorado, as well as the manufacture of 55% of all of products made in the state.²¹ Yet there were reasons for concern as well: the population

¹⁹ James M. Kedro, “Czechs and Slovaks in Colorado, 1860-1920,” *Colorado Magazine* 54, no. 2 (1977): 92-125.

²⁰ Kedro, “Czechs and Slovaks,” 75.

²¹ Dr. J. David Rogers, “Overview of the 1921 Pueblo Flood,” accessed August 6, 2019, <https://slideplayer.com/slide/14130695/>.

had slightly decreased from a decade prior, and of the four smelters in operation in the 1890s, only two remained. Many of the city's young men were returning scarred from the Great War, and prohibition had only created a burgeoning underground industry and increased crime.

While its inequities and discriminatory practices should be viewed through a critical lens, it is also important to note that these problems were not unique to Pueblo. Indeed, the kinds of racism evident in Pueblo in 1921 pales in comparison to other urban centers at the time, especially those in the southeastern United States. Even when compared to the cities of Denver and Colorado Springs, Pueblo's U.S. Census Data in 1920 looks similar in its makeup of Black citizens, Asian citizens, and White citizens. One distinct difference is the city's percentage of foreign-born White citizens, where Pueblo reported this as 17.2% of its population in 1920, whereas Denver and Colorado Springs each reported 3.4% and 8.6%, respectively. And while these distinctions between Pueblo and other contemporaries may not make it unique, it is with this lens that I have examined the Great Flood of 1921.

Chapter II.

The History of Pueblo's Neighborhoods

As was typical with urban communities in the United States in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, people of common heritage built homes and businesses near each other, forming distinctive neighborhoods (See Figure 3). The identifying characteristics of these neighborhoods will aid in the understanding of later assertions regarding reporting and resource allocation in the aftermath of the flood.

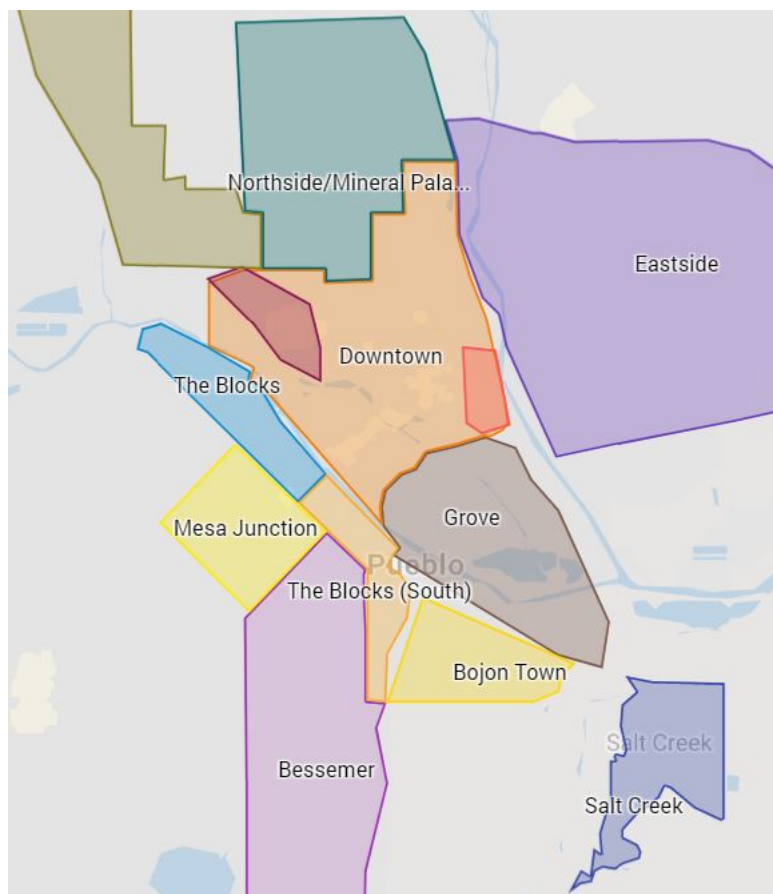


Figure 3. Neighborhood Map of 1920 Pueblo created using Google Map

Interactive Google Map available at

<https://drive.google.com/open?id=1rulIWplrBvZpV76S1rcE8L2ht8SILHkY&usp=sharing>.

Much of what I learned about the demographics of the neighborhoods was

gleaned from a redlining map of the city published in 1934. Although this was well after the flood of 1921, much of the history of each neighborhoods was described in this map.

Redlining was a common practice that prevented certain “unfavorable” individuals from purchasing property in neighborhoods whose residents would not want them there in

order to preserve property values. Usually, this meant affluent, White neighborhoods

keeping out people of color, though it was also used to segregate European immigrants.

Home loans—a new invention in the early 1930s descending President Franklin

Roosevelt’s plan to reinvigorate the housing market and give Americans more

opportunities to own their own homes—were simply denied to “unfavorable” applicants

in certain neighborhoods. These same individuals might qualify for a loan in a “less

favorable” neighborhood that would have the effect of segregating communities. Though

most communities in Pueblo in the early 20th century had chosen to segregate themselves

of their own volition—usually to live next to people of common language, ancestry, and

religious practices—redlining in America in much of the mid-to-late 20th century ensured

that communities would remain segregated, essentially restricting opportunities for those

shut out of the affluent neighborhoods and restricting revitalization of less affluent

neighborhoods. This was especially true when it came to public education, as children in

low-income neighborhoods fell behind their higher-income peers in a problem termed the

“achievement gap.” This gap still exists between White and Asian versus Black and Hispanic students to this day.²²

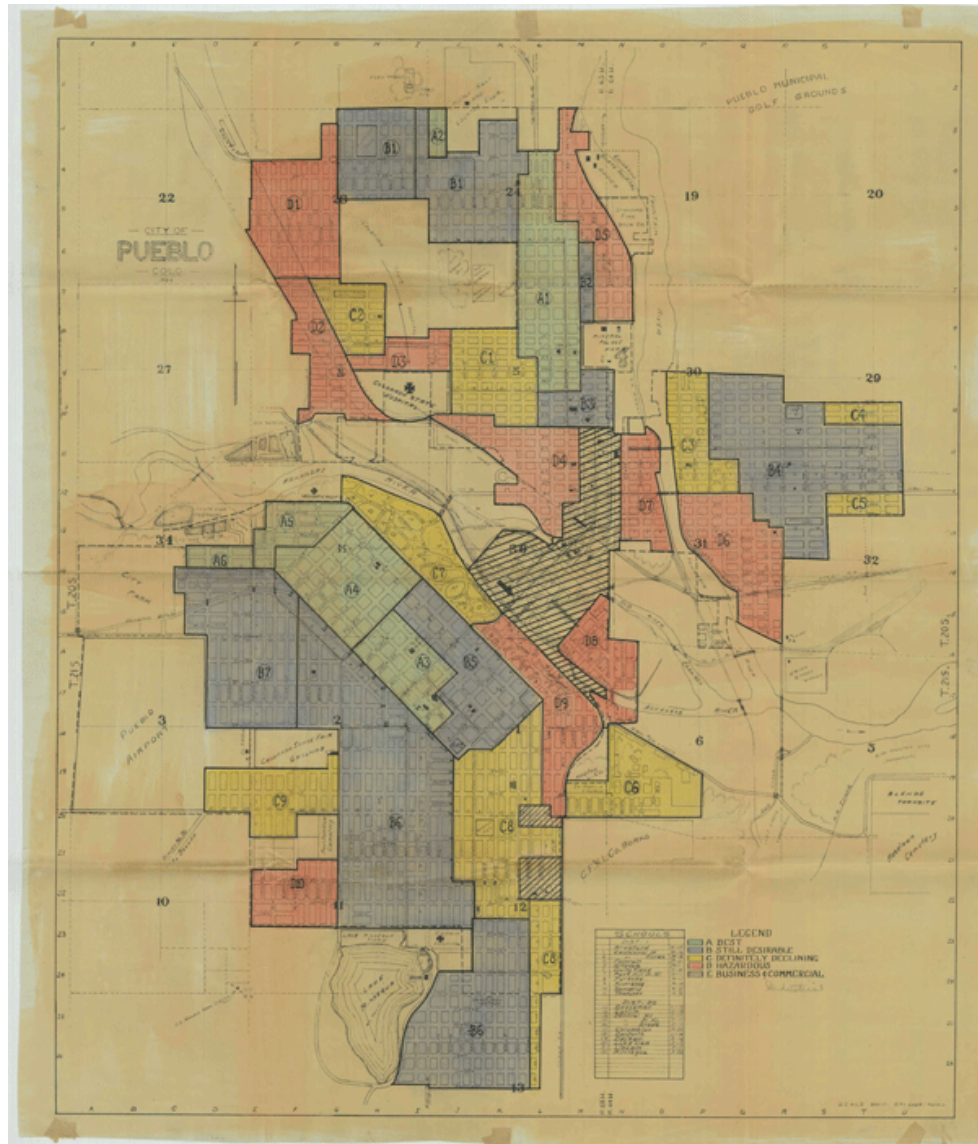


Figure 4. Redlining Map of Pueblo, CO, 1934

²² Laura Sullivan, Tatjana Meschede, Lars Dietrich, and Thomas Shapiro, “The Racial Wealth Gap: Why Policy Matters,” Institute for Assets & Social Policy, Brandeis University (2015), http://www.demos.org/sites/default/files/publications/RacialWealthGap_1.pdf.

Interactive map available from Mapping Inequality, at <https://dsl.richmond.edu/panorama/redlining/#loc=12/38.262/-104.637&city=pueblo-co>.

The redlining maps had an additional effect than the one originally intended: they marked neighborhoods in such a way that one has simply to look at their designation to ascertain the city-at-large's opinions of them. Additionally, the authors of the map provide descriptions of such despicable candor that it is shockingly easy to ascertain their opinions of specific neighborhoods and people groups. In Figure 4, the light blue shading represents the "Best" neighborhoods and dark blue portions indicate "Still Desirable," while yellow neighborhoods are "Definitely Declining" and red are marked as "Hazardous." Business and industrial or commercial areas are indicated by diagonal lines. Mapping Inequality also included percentages of each category: 12% of Pueblo was designated as "Best," with 41% "Still Desirable," 23% "Definitely Declining," and 24% "Hazardous." By 1940, one should note before reading the neighborhood descriptions that follow, Pueblo had a population of over 50,000 that was nearly 89% native-born white, with only 8.3% foreign-born white citizens and 2.6% African American (remembering that Hispanic citizens were still categorized under the racial designation of "white"). That said, the Home Owner's Loan Corporation (HOLC) described the neighborhoods in ways that provide evidence of opinions of their contemporaries. These descriptions will be used in the neighborhood profiles that follow.

Another valuable resource was the group Historitecture, LLC, which has published many brief histories of various Pueblo neighborhoods in recent years. Their descriptions and histories, as well as resident interviews, serve as the basis for the narratives for these communities.

Some of the neighborhoods detailed on the interactive Google Map have not been included in this section, as they were largely unaffected by the flood and did not merit a separate retelling. For each neighborhood that is included, a brief history and description will be used to portray the defining characteristics of each. These neighborhoods were not equally affected by the flood, yet each plays a part in the flood narrative as a whole. Each neighborhood below has been listed in alphabetical order.

Bessemer

Bessemer, one of the four towns incorporated into the city of Pueblo in the late 19th century, can truly boast of its diversity. African Americans, Filipinos, Croatians, Greeks, and Swedes, in addition to the other European immigrants and Mexicans previously mentioned, were reported to have lived here. Originally, large and stately homes were interspersed in the area for those wealthy investors of South Pueblo. But once the industrial plants in the southeastern part of the city began running, a community of workers filled in the area with homes of their own. By 1886, the population of Bessemer was growing exponentially, and between 1880 and 1900 over 900 buildings were constructed.²³ The HOLC describes the neighborhood this way: “Most of this area was the town of Bessemer, annexed to Pueblo 40 years ago and still characterized by that name. It is occupied chiefly by workers from the steel mills to the east of it, many of them foreign-born. It is another section which could best be classed as ‘C minus’ and borders on a hazardous area.”

²³ Historitecture, “Forged Together in the Bessemer Neighborhood.”

The various ethnicities that cohabited the neighborhood is evident in its many churches, each signifying a different original congregation and most representing a European Christian group.

The Blocks/Corona Park

Originally designed as the Middle Division of General William Jackson Palmer's "South Pueblo" neighborhood, this area made up the bluffs between Abriendo Avenue and the lowlands of downtown. The neighborhood comprised of curved avenues and handsome homes was known as Corona Park. Yet by the time of the redlining map in 1934, it had been designated as "definitely declining." According to the authors, "It was laid out by an eccentric woman about 50 years ago, who envisioned it as an ideal section for railroad and other workers. The winding streets and irregular blocks in this and adjoining D-9 were her ideas of an artistic planning ... The streets were re-named."

The southern and eastern parts of the neighborhood blend into the town of Bessemer, but was specifically identified by the redlining map of 1934, which designated it as "hazardous." "An Italian concentration, the northern part of this area is the southern part of what is known as "The Blocks" more adequately described above under above under C-7," they write. "The southern part of it is occupied by a conglomeration of foreign industrial workers. The houses are cheap, old, and run-down. Sales are almost impossible in this section and loans will not be made therein."

Bojon Town/Eiler's Neighborhood

"Bojon" is described as a slang term for Slovenians, though at times has amounted to little more than a slur. The resident of this neighborhood, springing up just south of the Arkansas River and south and east of the Eiler's smelter, were overwhelmingly of Slovenian descent at its onset. While not an official neighborhood, this community has a strong sense of identity in its Slovenian roots; in the 1910 U.S. Census, a total of 1,275 people from this neighborhood indicated that they spoke

Slovenian.²⁴ Also referred to as Eiler's neighborhood after the original Eiler's smelter, many men from this area worked in the smelting and steel industries. In addition to Slovenians, Historitecture cites that "Bojons shared space with Italians as well as immigrants from the Balkans and Austria-Hungary" (6).

"It is an injustice to this area to call it 'declining,'" wrote the HOLC in 1934. "... it it [*sic*] occupied almost entirely by Slavs, Germans, Italians, and foreigners who work in the nearby plant. The Slavs predominate. The section will always be occupied by these frugal people who have purchased homes, some new and very good."

Downtown

The "downtown" section of Pueblo can be quite confusing, with its multiple "main" thoroughfares and odd angles. This is representative of it having been started as multiple towns: South Pueblo's streets run at a diagonal compared to the original Main Street of Pueblo. This area also includes some of the other, smaller communities described in this section. Both Peppersauce Bottoms and Goat Hill are included as part of the downtown region. The HOLC did not describe the downtown area, instead designating it as a business section, though many citizens lived there. Downtown Pueblo, through which the Arkansas River ran in 1921, was completely devastated by the flood. Most of the descriptions and photographic evidence of the carnage the city withstood are of the business district of Downtown.

²⁴ Historitecture, "Forged Together in the Bessemer Neighborhood."

Eastside

The Eastside neighborhood sprung up to the east of Fountain Creek and thus is removed physically from the heart of downtown Pueblo. “Perhaps no other neighborhood in Pueblo so strikingly defied definition,” remarks Adam Thomas of Historitecture. “The neighborhood was historically home to a mix of classes and ethnicities that lived side by side.”²⁵ While there were more affluent citizens living on the bluffs overlooking downtown, the lower portions of the neighborhood often included crude housing, and a diverse group of citizens called this area home, including Jews, Italians, Mexicans, and Germans.

The Eastside neighborhood had grown considerably in the time after the flood, and it is represented on the redlining map by five different areas. Closest to the Fountain River, a “yellow” neighborhood designated as C3 is described by the HOLC in the following manner: “The houses in this area, occupied by some business and professional workers and also industrial workers, are fairly well preserved although some are as old as fifty years... There are some foreigners in this area.” Directly to the east of this is a dark blue neighborhood, B4: “This area is uniformly made up of the nice homes of business and professional men of the more modest class and salaried business employees. Although some of the houses are old, they are well preserved. The area has paved streets on all but three or four streets on the outer extremities and the property generally is good in appearance. Sales are readily made in this area because it is not far from the business district and has all modern conveniences and developments.” The two neighborhoods adjoining this one to the northeast and southeast are both yellow, and are described in a

²⁵Thomas, “Pueblo East Side Neighborhood Architectural and Historical Selective Inventory.”

brief, somewhat-optimistic manner. But the neighborhood directly to the south and west that is closest to the east side of Fountain Creek, as well as the closest to the railroads, steel mills, and old river channel of the Arkansas, is described less favorably: “Negroes and foreigners are also found in this area which is situated between the Fountain River and a shale hill. The area, quite scattered, is occupied by working people of the lower classes. A railroad traverses it and the stockyards are nearby.”

Goat Hill

On the border of downtown and the Eastside neighborhood, adjacent to Fountain Creek, lies Goat Hill (though it is also now referred to as Tenderfoot Hill). The name is derived from the animals that Italian and Sicilian immigrants raised there.²⁶ Following the Arkansas River from the port of New Orleans, many sought a better life both in escaping a war-torn country and in finding peace and prosperity. Pueblo, it was rumored, had fertile farmland and plenty of jobs. While both turned out to be true, the Italians who first started showing up in the city in the late 19th century found that work in the smelters would be punishing; one individual recalled that “if you wanted a job you came here because there were five smelters. You put in 11 hours a day and you get 10 cents an hour.”²⁷ The town’s first smelter, the Philadelphia Smelter, was constructed on the bluff that marked Goat Hill, and “created an imposing industrial visage shadowed only by the steel mill.”²⁸ The place where these new workers chose to make their home sits just

²⁶ Dean Frankmore, “Goat Hill by the River: A Confluence of Community,” accessed August 5, 2019, <http://bubbaburger.com/goathill.html>.

²⁷ Frankmore, “Goat Hill.”

²⁸ Broadhead, “History.”

upstream of the confluence of Fountain Creek and the Arkansas. Often, the new workers spoke no English and were not literate in their native language. Predictably, this led the small community to rely heavily upon each other to survive. Yet unlike some of the other communities, Italians and Sicilians very quickly assimilated in many ways to the culture of their new home, opening successful businesses and a foreign-language newspaper in the downtown district. A group of Italian Americans even commissioned a statue and plaque to Christopher Columbus on the prominent Abriendo Avenue, a statue that still stands there today. But the Italians and Sicilians who were rapidly climbing the social hierarchy did not stay in Goat Hill, leaving the neighborhood itself quite poor at the time of the flood.

The HOLC described the area this way in 1934: “This is an old part of the city, typical of areas adjoining the business district of any city. While there are some reasonably good old houses in the area, it has degenerated to a rooming house district. Much of the area is poorly located on a sand hill. The houses are between 25 and 60 years old. It is singularly striking that a few prominent business and professional men live in this section.” In addition to Italians and Sicilians, there were descriptions of Mexicans living in this area according to an account published by the Daughters of the American Revolution in 1939.²⁹

The Grove

The Grove neighborhood is tucked into the low-lying land next to the Arkansas River, and still exists today. Much of what is known about the origins of this

²⁹ Bullen, *Pueblo County History*, Section IV, 28-29.

neighborhood come as a result of the flood's aftermath and the decision of many of its citizens to move south across the river to higher ground. Its name, as reported by Pueblo Historitecture, was "for large groves of cottonwood trees that originally grew there."³⁰ Located southeast of downtown and strategically situated near the places of employment for most of its residents—the iron ore smelters and steel mill—the Grove came to house mostly Slovenian immigrants. Pueblo Historitecture continues: "With Slovenian homes, businesses, and institutions, the Grove became a 'city within a city' and allowed Pueblo's Slovenians to remain a tight-knit community. By 1894, there were about twenty bars or saloons in the Grove and 'in the evening you could hear the sounds of different accordions playing Slovenian songs.'"³¹ Other groups lived in this neighborhood, but the uniting factor was that of working-class individuals and their families. The Slovenian population centered in the Grove had exploded, from approximately 300 in 1891 to more than 3,500 by 1907. As was previously mentioned, immigrants faced both internal and external pressures that caused some to leave the city, as evidenced by a decline in the Slovenian population by 1910.

The HOLC description of this area after the flood says that it was "home to many poor immigrants from eastern and southern Europe." They continue: "This area is known as 'The Grove.' It is occupied by foreigners-chiefly Austrians, Italians, and some negroes, all industrial workers. The section is hemmed in by railroad tracks and on the northeast corner of it is a parking plant. The houses are old and poorly kept." Most of the pre-flood residents who had survived the tragedy moved to Bojon Town.

³⁰ Anstey, et al., *Potica, Pints, and Prayers in Old Bojon Town*.

³¹ *Ibid.*

Irving Place

Although there is a name to this neighborhood northwest of downtown and some homes were constructed in the area, little more is known. It is known that the Wildhorse Creek, also known as Dry Creek, flooded its banks on its way south towards the Arkansas River. These reports of flooding, however, include no details about what happened to the communities living alongside the creek. The 1934 HOLC map describes what remained there a decade after the flood in this way: “Most of this area is undeveloped but it has possibilities. There are a number of ‘shacks’ in the area, occupied by a variety of foreigners, Mexicans, etc.” Further south of this, they include “This area resembles D-1 except that it has more houses, all ‘shacks’, wherein are found a variety of the foreign elements of the poorest class. This has long been a blighted section wherein sales are virtually impossible and no loans are made.”

Peppersauce Bottoms/Peppersauce Flats

Little is known about this neighborhood other than what has already been stated. Even the location—in the lowlands, near the Union Depot—is imprecise. This area was not strictly designated and does not exist separately on any maps found. Yet it was referred to numerous times in flood reports as a neighborhood close to the train tracks that was devastated by the floodwaters, and modern reports have cited it as existing “near the present-day Midtown Shopping Center.” Furthermore, the existence of the neighborhood both before and after the flood suggest that there was a community of considerable size here, and the documentation of its destruction through pictures and descriptions merit an independent section.

For this neighborhood in particular, the HOLC description gives crucial information, both concerning the demographic makeup of the community as well as the attitudes that Pueblo residents had about them. Although this area is not represented on the map within its own designation in Figure 4, it is included in the area adjacent to the downtown section (downtown was classified as a business section and thus has no HOLC description). The area just north and west of downtown, including Peppersauce, is described as follows: “This area contains the heaviest concentration of negroes of any in the city. The ‘colored belt’ is chiefly that lying between Sixth Street and Ninth Street and Grand Avenue and West Street. It is a semi-industrial section wherein the houses are old and ill-kept. An inferior class of white people, many of them foreigners, chiefly Mexicans, also occupy this section.”

Salt Creek

The Salt Creek community has the puzzling title of a “census-designated place” within Pueblo County, with 600 residents verified as of 2010.³² The small community was initially inhabited by Mexicans and Native Americans according to some reports. In 2016, El Pueblo History Museum launched an exhibit celebrating the history of Salt Creek. “The proud community lies just outside of Pueblo’s city limits, stretching south of U.S. 50 East to the Bessemer Ditch and Taos Road, and roughly bordered to the west by the community’s namesake creek and to the east by South Aspen Road,” the *Pueblo Chieftain* reported. “It was once a dumping ground for slag from the steel mill, had water stained black by coal and was, for those who made their lives there, unequivocally

³² Wikipedia, “Salt Creek, Colorado.”

home.”³³ Few details remain about Salt Creek, but the area is mentioned in the coverage of the flood and one of the citizens who was reported missing lived there. Additionally, the body of water that is its namesake also overflowed its banks as part of the larger catastrophe that took place in 1921. As this is technically a separate town and not within the Pueblo city limits, it was not included on the HOLC redlining map.

³³ Foster, “El Pueblo History Museum Builds Exhibit on Memories of Salt Creek.”

Chapter III.

The Flood

The storm system that caused the flood of Pueblo was unusual in that it lasted for several days and caused flooding across the state.³⁴ A slow-moving, high-pressure system moved from Canada into the northern plains, extending from the Dakotas to the Great Lakes. At the same time, a low-pressure system had settled in southern Colorado and northern Arizona. The low-pressure system drew moist air from the Gulf of California in a common weather occurrence known to Coloradoans, referred to as the North American Monsoon (NAM).³⁵ The shifting winds, accelerating from the south and moving from lower pressure towards higher pressure, bring moisture that makes up a pattern of afternoon thunderstorms in the Rocky Mountain region from approximately July through August. However, the system in question differed from the normal NAM pattern in several important ways. First, the system developed much sooner than the typical NAM season, meaning that the air from the northern high-pressure system was cooler than a similar system found later in the summer. This caused the hot air to rise more dramatically, and to release more of its moisture in the form of rain. Secondly, the high-pressure system's slower pace meant that the rainfall moving into the region, rather than quickly dissipating as it moved towards the eastern plains, stayed in place much longer than average and dropped precipitation almost continuously over a relatively small area. The foothills

³⁴ Follansbee & Sawyer, "Floods in Colorado."

³⁵ Colorado Climate Center, https://climate.colostate.edu/co_nam.html.

themselves helped to increase the rising and cooling of this moist air, forcing it upwards and accelerating the precipitating effect. The result—what meteorologists term cloudbursts—describe sudden and violent showers that can cause flash flooding. The storms of June 2-7, 1921, in Colorado produced several such cloudbursts simultaneously.

Pikes Peak, near Colorado Springs, juts out from the Rocky Mountains surrounding it into the plains. It is so high that it can “deflect” weather systems away, and in so doing funnel them into a relatively wide, open pocket of land that makes up the upper Arkansas River Basin³⁶ (see Figure 2). Converging systems of moist air, steered around Pikes Peak and funneled into the area to the south and west of the mountain, repeatedly ran into the foothills and were unable to proceed further west. The system followed a pattern of intense rain on June 2nd, causing minimal flooding in the downtown section of Pueblo. Accounts of children playing in the overflowing gutters of the streets drew local interest, and some annoyance. Upstream, a report of two children drowning while playing near the swollen Fountain Creek was published in the *Pueblo Chieftain* on June 2nd. Another report found in the USGS summary cited that as a farm outside of the city took a direct hit from a cloudburst on the 3rd, a horse drowned in an open field.³⁷ While substantial, the city itself only reported about 2 inches of rain on the 2nd and an additional 1.64 and 1.12 on the 3rd and the 4th, respectively.³⁸ But it was the culmination of the rainfall and the city’s geography that would ultimately lead to the tragedy.

³⁶ Follansbee and Sawyer, “Floods in Colorado.”

³⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸ *Ibid.*

On June 3rd, the rainy weather continued. “A series of cloudbursts between Canon City and Pueblo” caused flooding throughout the area as saturated soil simply could not hold the additional rainfall. Making matters worse, “The progress of the storm down the valley caused the resulting floods on many of the tributary streams to reach Pueblo at nearly the same time.”³⁹ Bernard Kelly, recounting his recollection of the events in a 1981 interview, remembers that the storms that had been punishing the area to the west of the city arrived in Pueblo in the late afternoon. “Between 5 and 6:40 p.m.,” he recalls, “the river rose 8 feet in the narrow channel. At 6, the warning began to sound . . . Hundreds of Puebloans hurried from their homes to the river banks, thrilled at the angry high water.”⁴⁰

Two passenger trains, half-filled with people having just arrived or waiting to depart, sat in the Union Station depot. The train’s conductors, realizing they were in a disadvantageous position at the base of the bluffs and slightly downhill from the rising river, attempted to run them across the bridges and north of the Arkansas to high ground. Neither was able to cross, however, as the water had already reached the bottom of the bridge when they arrived. The storm clouds, threatening until this point, began to unleash the torrential downpour that had led to the swelling of the river. At 8:45 pm, Kelly recalls, the levees were breached, and water began to stream south into the downtown district (see Figure 5).

Among the terrifying details of that night are the derailment of the trains in the yard, entire houses being swept into the downtown area and colliding with existing structures, and the pitiful screams for help that firemen and good Samaritans alike were unable to

³⁹ Follansbee and Sawyer, “Floods in Colorado.”

⁴⁰ Kelly, “The Great Pueblo Flood of 1921.”

answer. The electricity to the city soon went out, leaving those scrambling to safety in the dark, save for the intermittent lightning strikes. Soon, the darkness was replaced by the dull glow of fire, rumored to have started in the log yard. Flaming logs wove throughout the city, setting fire to buildings that were now inundated several feet deep in the black, raging water.

Various measurements throughout the city disagree on the depth of the flood at its maximum height, but Bernard Kelly shared the following: “B. Milton Stearns, assistant chief dispatcher, got a level rod and kept a log of the rise and fall of the flood throughout the night . . . the water rose three and a half feet between 11:30 and 11:45. It reached a high of 9.75 feet above the floor at 11:55 p.m. Because the floor of the depot was known to be at the river gauge height of 17.61 feet, it was possible to determine from his records the true high reached by the swollen river, 27.36 feet....”⁴¹ Although some may dispute this claim, I remember upon my visit to Pueblo that there were rumors that the basement of the Union Depot had become filled with sediment as a result of the flood and was never dug out. Some claimed that there may have been buried remains here that the city never investigated. After inquiring at the Depot, I received confirmation that the basement had, in fact, been filled with mud and was never unearthed. I was not, however, permitted to verify this visually.

Elsewhere in the city, the flooded areas of downtown registered depths between 15 inches and 13 feet. The “width of the flood thru [*sic*] the center of the city’s business section, one mile,” reported *The Pueblo Chieftain* on June 15th. Pictures taken the following morning, as the water was receding, still show much of downtown inundated with water

⁴¹ White, *Landmarks and Legacies*, 176.

nearly to the height of the first floors of buildings. “When day dawned, June 4, 1921,” continues Bernard Kelly, “a scene of the greatest desolation was disclosed to Pueblo’s survivors. From the bluffs on the south to 6th Street on the north was a sea of water, mud, wreckage, waste ... Dead animals were everywhere in the flood area and, all too often, human bodies were to be seen in the muck.”⁴² The high-water marks on some of the buildings that withstood the flood can still be seen today.

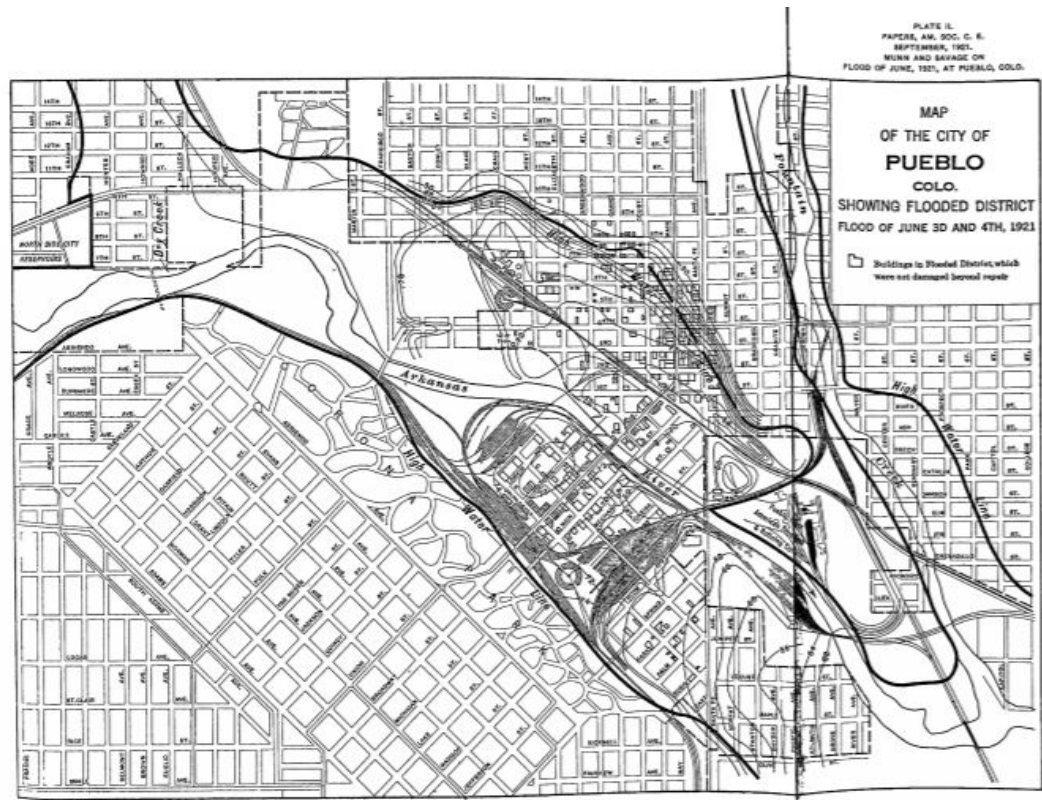


Figure 5. Map of the City of Pueblo, CO, Showing Flooded District.

Map of the flood prepared by the Robert Follansbee report from the United States' Geological Survey, 1922. The dark outlines indicate the boundaries of all of the areas that were flooded.

⁴² White, *Landmarks and Legacies*, 177.

Chapter IV.

The Victims: Methodology, Rationale, and the Missing List

The Pueblo Chieftain was the city's major newspaper at the time of the flood and is the main primary source used in this paper. In the first few days after the flood, the paper understandably published conflicting accounts that lacked organization. As time progressed, the publications expanded their coverage and compiled critical lists needed by the citizens. Yet the lists themselves contain many errors and confusion despite their intentions. *The Chieftain* began reporting on those whose bodies had been recovered, as well as individuals whose loved ones reported them as missing, the day after the flood. The Red Cross reported their own missing list as early as June 8th. The Colorado Rangers—brought to the city to maintain order in the flood's immediate aftermath—began publishing their own list of missing persons in the paper by June 10th. Several lists included the same or nearly same names on multiple lists, leading one to question whether these were separate individuals or the same person reported in multiple places. One way in which this could be remedied was to compare the names that were reported with home addresses, but this was done inconsistently. *The Chieftain's* list was at times merged with the Rangers' list, but at other times was separated again. The spellings of names were changed without explanation (and sometimes changed back). Persons who were reported as safe sometimes ended up back on missing lists; others were still reported missing long after their bodies had been recovered. Still others were reported missing without significant identifying information; for example, "colored woman," "Colored

family at 211 S. Union,” individuals named with a surname and initials only, and households being listed with one male name with the addition, “and family.” All of these mistakes and omissions, while understandable considering the circumstances of the flood, make compiling a single list of potential victims challenging. Further, the consolidation of such a list is not a guarantee that each individual named was, indeed, a casualty of the flood. Rather, the author believes that the list represents a collection of names that were highly likely to have been victims. In sum, this should serve as a tool to better estimate a range of victims of the event. What follows is an explanation of how this list was compiled and a rationale for its consolidation.

Methodology

The original list represented over 700 names, some of whom included “and family,” making it highly likely that more than 800 individuals were represented. Of these, some were eventually reported as “safe” or “found alive” by the paper and were subsequently removed from the author’s list. Similarly, those whose bodies were recovered, identified, and reported were placed on a separate list from those who continued to be reported as missing.

Following this initial consolidation, a number of decisions needed to be made for more unique circumstances. There was great inconsistency in the frequency with which names were reported. Not every list was included in the paper each day. Inexplicably, no lists whatsoever were reported on the thirteenth of June. Lists began to be printed again on the 14th, but June 17th was the final day on which any list was printed – a mere twelve days after the flood—with no explanation of their omission in subsequent publications.

Rationale

What follows is a bulleted list of rules that the author employed in order to further pair down the names and arrive at a conservative number, with explanations included for each.

- In the cases of multiple identical names, one was preserved and all others deleted. This was also done in the case of near-identical names as the author attributed this to misspellings. Using this method led to the elimination of 18 names from the original list.
- The tenth of June marks the day on which the most names were published on missing lists; the author has chosen to omit those names that were not reported on or after this date, as this seems to be a day that is paramount to coordinated search efforts. This represented the elimination of 68 individual names. There may have been many reasons why a person published as “missing” might disappear from the list without explanation. The people in question may have been found alive and reported to *The Chieftain*, who simply did not have enough time and room in the initial chaos to publish a separate list of those found safe and alive. Furthermore, as the newspaper was the catalyst for publishing names to spur reunification and search efforts, it seems unlikely that a family member who reported an individual as missing to the paper would fail to ensure that the name was reprinted in the days that followed.
- It does seem plausible that a family, once reunited, might fail to notify the paper that their loved one was safe. Because of this, an additional rule employed was that an individual must have been recorded at least twice on the missing list to be

included on the final list. This eliminated an additional 142 individuals. While the names eliminated from the last two bullet points can be added to estimates on the high end, this paper attempted to produce a conservative list of names, and so these have been omitted.

- For each individual whose name was accompanied by “and family,” the average household size of 4.34 in 1920, as referenced by the U.S. Census Bureau, was used.⁴³ The author found this for 43 entries. Additionally, if an entry included a more specific addition such as “and wife” or “and daughter,” these entries were multiplied times two. This was applied to an additional 12 entries. In sum, this raised the total number of individuals represented by the list from 454 to 610.
- There were three families reported missing and “Unnamed.” Addresses were given for each of these families, and none of these addresses were the same, so even without names the author chose to keep these entries.
- The author compiled a list of deceased and arrived at 115 entries; however, 32 of these entries were reported as “unidentified.” In order to remain conservative on the lower-end of estimates, and to avoid double-counting, these 32 were subtracted to arrive at 83 individuals.

Conclusions concerning the Missing List

After the thorough scrutiny of the compiled lists, it can be reasonably concluded that those names remaining on the missing list likely perished. This, coupled with the names of those bodies that were recovered, identified, and published brings the total

⁴³ Pear, “Average Size of Household.”

number of likely victims of the flood to 693. At worst, the high-end estimate for the event places the death toll at 935. Either number makes the Pueblo flood of 1921 the deadliest in Colorado's historical record, and nationally ranks it as one of the deadliest natural disasters in United States history. And yet these numbers represent an estimate made from a list of those whose bodies were recovered and those were reported as missing. There is reason to believe that this list is far from complete, as the next chapter will begin to make clear.

Chapter V.

The Path: Using the Missing List to Map the Flood

Many of those listed as missing in *The Pueblo Chieftain* included a home address of the person in question. While this does not confirm that the individual was home at the time of the flood—Bernard Kelly recalled crowds on the bridges near downtown, for example—these may have been outliers, as the worst flooding began after sundown, which in Pueblo in June would be at about 8:15 pm. As this was a weekend, there was a higher likelihood that more residents than normal would have been away from home. Yet in general, the home addresses of those reported as missing coincide with the maps that detailed the path of the flood, confirming its path rather than calling it into question.

The map reprinted below, Figures 5, shows an original map of the floodwater's path. Figure 6 is a map that was created by Google Maps using the data from the missing reports and pinging these onto a map of Pueblo neighborhoods. The following sections will compare the data of the two maps and detail the conclusions made by the generation of the new map.

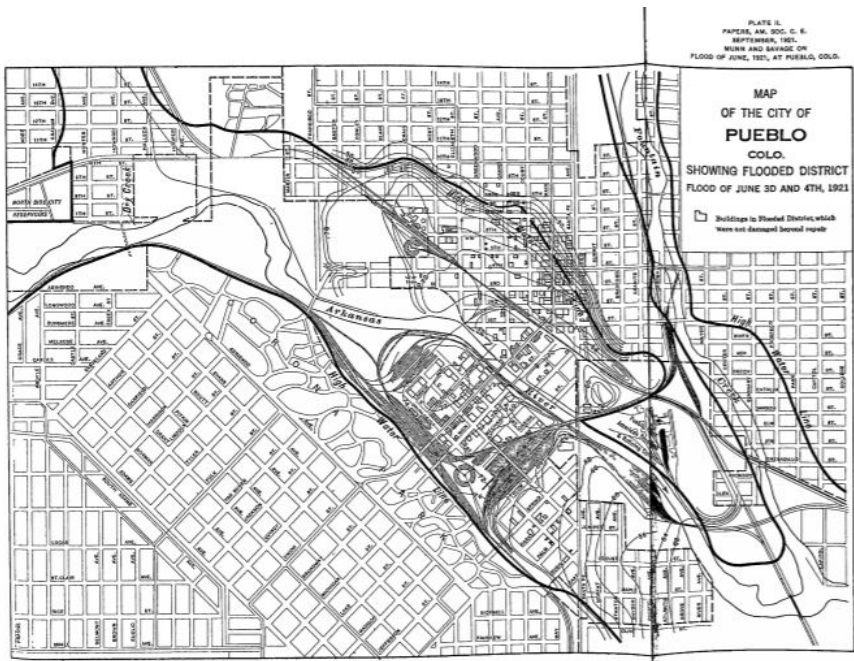


Figure 5. Map of the City of Pueblo, CO, Showing Flooded District.

Map of the flood prepared by the Robert Follansbee report from the United States' Geological Survey, 1922. The dark outlines indicate the boundaries of all of the areas that were flooded.

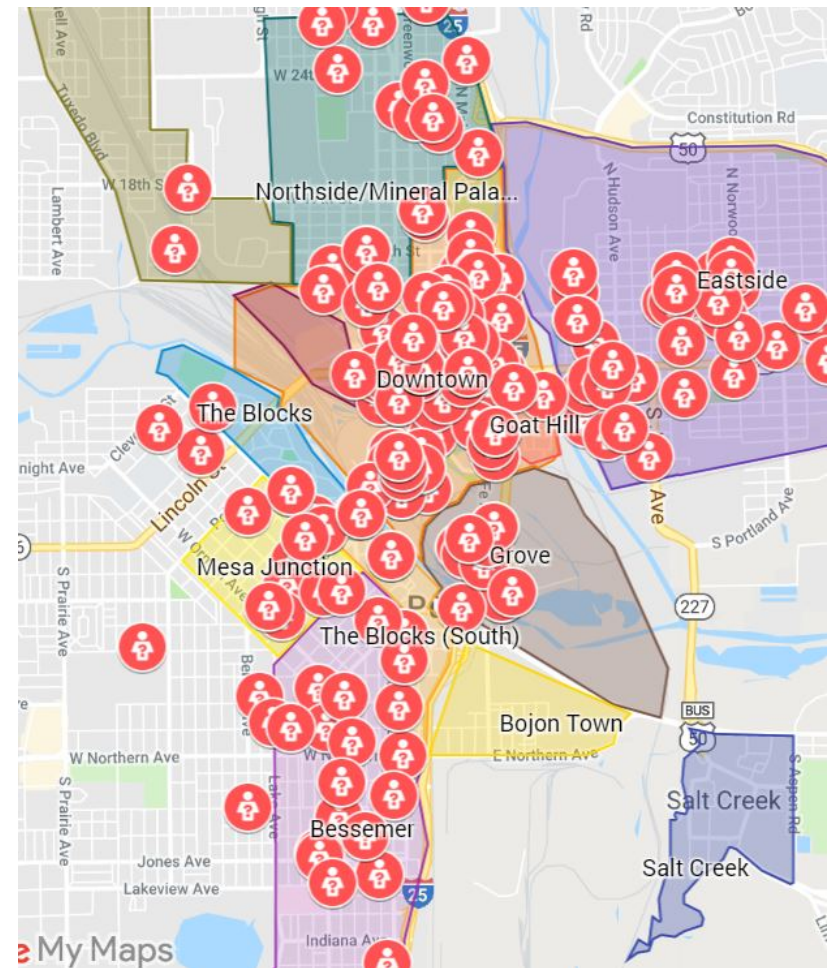


Figure 6. Neighborhood Map of Pueblo and Missing Individuals

Created Using Google Map

*Interactive Google Map available at:
<https://drive.google.com/open?id=1rullWplrBvZpV76S1rcE8L2ht8SILHkY&usp=sharing>.*

The Original Maps

Figure 5 shows more detail of the city itself than Figure 6, but its lines that indicate the extent of the floodwaters make it difficult to read. Yet the map clearly indicates that in addition to the Arkansas River itself flooding, both Wildhorse Creek and Fountain Creek overflowed their banks. It is important to note here that although much is made about the impact of the converging floodwaters of the Arkansas and Fountain Creek, these two waterways meet downriver from the heart of downtown Pueblo—the place of reportedly worst impact. Very little details emerged during research about the impact of communities that were flooded upstream of Fountain Creek, and little to no mention of those hit by the flooding of Wildhorse Creek.

Figure 6 shows a predictable concentration of missing individuals whose homes were in the downtown area but includes a much wider spread than this. One can see that in addition to downtown, there are many missing individuals whose homes were in the Eastside and Grove neighborhoods. Many more individuals are represented on the south side of the Arkansas River, which is uphill on the bluffs that contained the floodwaters. While one could attempt to explain this by explaining that all of these individuals must have been downtown at the time, this would mean that fully 10% of those reported missing—and all of those south of the river—were not at home when the flood hit. This explanation is possible; however, another possible reason would be that the floodwaters had a greater reach than was originally reported.

A New Map? The Case for Adding an Additional Path

The Bessemer neighborhood—south of the Arkansas River and uphill—does not factor into any of the reporting of initial flood accounts. Yet they make up a significant number of those reported missing. It is geographically illogical to suggest that the floodwaters made their way uphill over the bluff that separated it from the river below. Moreover, the homes directly above the river in the Mesa Junction neighborhood do not show up in any of the flood reports and represent none of the reported missing individuals, indicating that this area was not flooded. How, then, might the Bessemer neighborhood have flooded?

An explanation that has not previously been reported or hypothesized is that the Bessemer ditch may have overflowed its banks in addition to the previously reported river and creeks. The Bessemer ditch, initially dug to provide water to the smelters in the 19th century, winds its way through the high bluff of Pueblo's southernmost neighborhoods. The ditch crosses through Bessemer before meeting the ironworks, and then continues its way through Salt Creek before emptying into the St. Charles River (see Figure 7). While no reports were found that proffered a flooding of this ditch, when one compares its path through the communities of South Pueblo with the individuals mapped by the missing list in Figure 6, it seems a conceivable conclusion. Furthermore, as the ditch connects to the Arkansas River upstream, and the Arkansas itself experienced catastrophic flooding, it seems unlikely that the Bessemer Ditch would not have flooded. Yet while this explanation would account for the floodwaters and thus missing individuals in Bessemer, it would not explain a lack of reporting of flooding there.



Figure 7. Map of Bessemer Ditch.

The rowed homes underneath the word “Pueblo” make up Mesa Junction; the ditch flows from here through the Bessemer neighborhood in a southeasterly direction. Available online at <https://www.historicpueblo.org/images/platmaps/BessemerDitch.pdf>.

Though the consolidating of the names of the missing and the dead were done meticulously and mapped to show a fuller picture of the flood’s path and impact, there are questions that remain about the reliability of the data. Is there any reason to believe that some neighborhoods were simply left out of the reports of the flood’s destruction? It is an exploration into this question that the following chapter delves more deeply.

Chapter VI.

The Case for Skepticism

Although the missing list included more than 600 individuals with varying levels of detail, it is likely incomplete. In fact, Pueblo officials never claimed to have knowledge of a specific number of victims of the flood, even as *The Pueblo Chieftain* and other news outlets speculated wildly. The reasons for this seem straightforward: the flood struck at nighttime, many of those swept away were never found and were feared dead, and too many were swept away to account for all of them. In the immediate confusion of the flood's aftermath, reports were taken by several different authorities at differing locations; this is evident by the separate missing lists compiled by the Colorado Rangers, the Red Cross, and *The Chieftain's* own list. And this was a compilation of names of all of those actually reported; there is reason to believe that entire families were swept away with nobody to report them. Additionally, it is not clear that everybody in the city had equal access to information on where to report the missing, or even trust in the authorities that would encourage them to do so. Physical barriers, language barriers, and the chaos and disorganization in the days and weeks after the flood prevented authorities from being able to account for all of its residents. The *Pueblo Chieftain* reported on June 12, 1921, that "Jugo-Slavs" had set up their own foundation to aid their compatriots who were left destitute by collecting donations from similar migrants around the country. On June 14, the Italians organized their own. The Mexican government sent a consul to round up, account for, and care for Mexican nationals in the aftermath of the flood. These

examples point to a potential for much larger numbers of citizens whose disappearance may not have been reported to the various groups publishing the names of the missing. It also points to a certain amount of distrust between various immigrant groups and town authorities, a fact that may be made clearer given the organization or lack thereof that typified many of the efforts to recover after the flood.

Prospects for finding victims seemed to dissipate quickly. As with any flash flood, debris can make the search for bodies difficult even once the water has receded. Yet the force and nature of this particular flood—with its initial discharge of water, mud, trees, and structures—destroyed and overflowed earthen levies. One picture of the flood’s aftermath at Union Depot, claimed “Silt and mud 18 inches deep.” Rescue efforts detailed the difficulty of finding bodies buried in mud. One worker recalled finding only the head and neck of one victim, while the *Pueblo Chieftain* wrote several articles about a large collection of floodwater that remained at the base of Goat Hill after the rest had receded, nicknaming it “Death Lake.” While several bodies were eventually found in it, the paper feared that “many more might be forever buried beneath it.”⁴⁴ And this is only for those bodies that remained within the city limits. The force and depth of the water could have easily sent many victims downstream, where the Arkansas continued overflowing its banks—albeit more slowly—all the way into Kansas. Victims could be carried anywhere along this distance, and while a band of Rangers did perform a search and rescue mission downstream from Pueblo, they had only covered about 80 miles from the city by June 16th. Their journey had quickly turned into the collection of property, the burning of livestock to prevent disease, and—more infrequently—the collection and

⁴⁴ *The Pueblo Chieftain*, June 11, 1921, 1.

transportation of bodies. Meanwhile, La Junta, Colorado, reported to *The Pueblo Chieftain* on June 12th that they had recovered 5 bodies – 66 miles away from Pueblo. Clearly, the operating theory for those working in the days and weeks after the flood was that the retrieval of bodies outside of the city was not the highest priority and might ultimately be a worthless task.

Re-examining the Maps of Those Reported Missing

A report was made by John F. Cregan of all of the homes washed away, washed off of their foundation, or made uninhabitable by the flooding. Cregan made this report to the city commissioners a mere two weeks after the tragedy, and it was published in *The Pueblo Chieftain* on June 19th, 1921. Appointed by the Red Cross, Cregan used fire insurance maps to go block-by-block and inspect the homes there that were damaged or were now vacant lots. This survey was restricted only to households; businesses and boarding houses were not included. Cregan was also careful to mention that he was only able to complete the survey “as far as he was able to go on account of the still flooded conditions in many sections.” The list, therefore, is incomplete.

The report states the number and street name for each block Cregan surveyed, along with a count of the number of homes severely damaged or destroyed on it; for example, “Moffat street, 500 blvck [*sic*], 13.” There are 91 entries, including the last two that were not able to be mapped: “Mattice & Gibson's east side addition, 50 shanties,” and “East of Mineral Palace Park, 3 adobe houses.” While I was unable to ascertain the exact location of Mattice & Gibson’s to map these “shanties,” I was able to confirm that they were east of Fountain Creek in the Eastside neighborhood. Cregan totals 516 “dwellings gone,” 98 “wrecked,” and 61 “off their foundation,” for a total of 669 (though

his math here is dubious; if the numbers are added up, this should equal 675. After adding each number myself, along with the 50 “shanties” and 3 adobe house, I arrive at 664. I attribute this to a simple math error, though clearly the total is a significant number of homes and the author can forgive the confusion in Cregan’s total).

Upon mapping, one sees clearly that Cregan’s survey is confined to the downtown area (see Figure 8). The Grove makes up a substantial portion of the homes in the report, and this is corroborated by previous reporting in *The Chieftain* and photographic evidence. What is troubling is the lack of representation in the Peppersauce neighborhood—one home appears to be in or near that location—and only two homes from Goat Hill. This might be a deceiving revelation, as Cregan admitted to being limited in access to those neighborhoods still flooded. Yet this admission, coupled with evidence of known areas that were flooded and left off of the report, leaves room to doubt whether there may have been other neighborhoods that were similarly left out of the flood accounts. Notably, this would include blocks in the Eastside, Bessemer, Salt Creek, or any neighborhood south of the river.

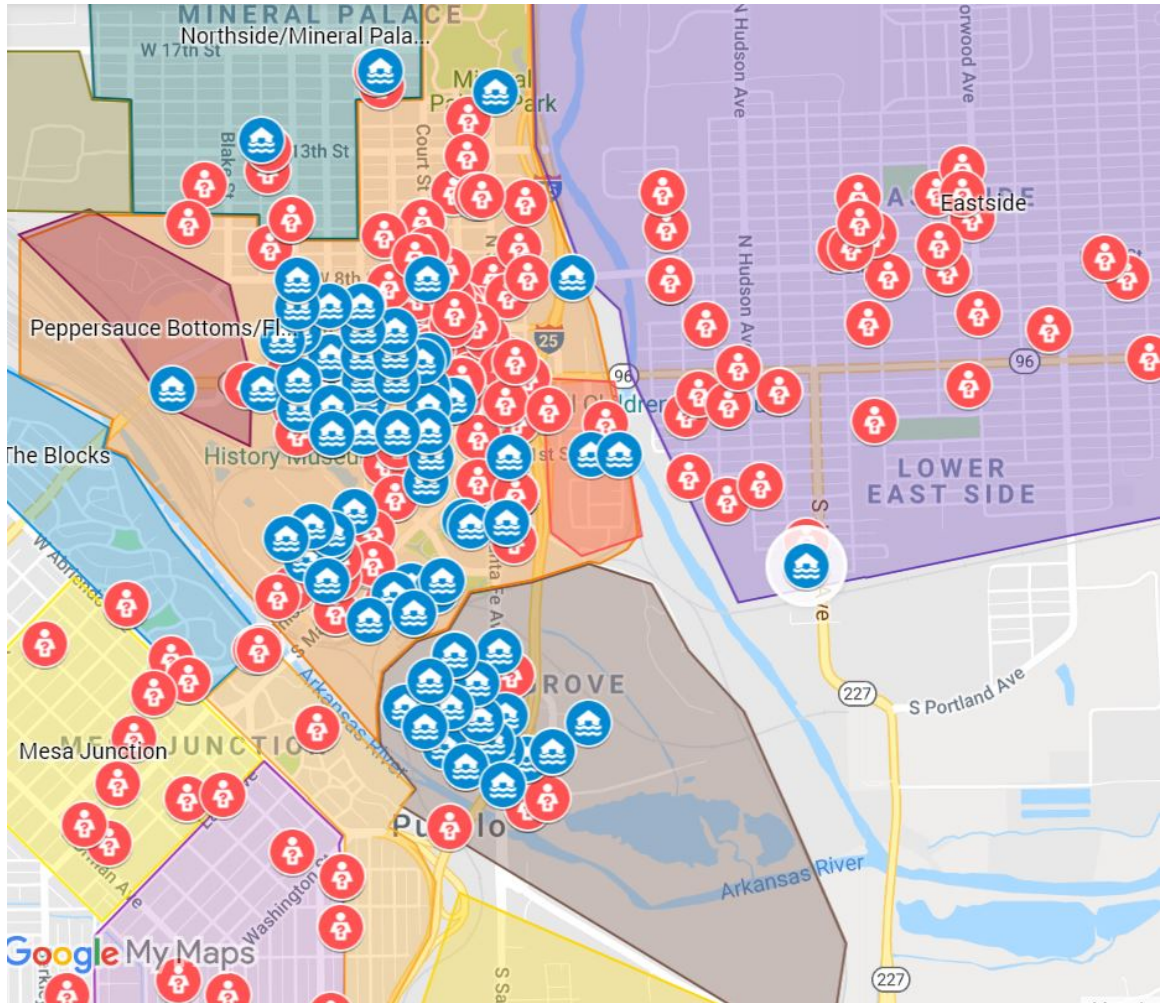


Figure 8. Neighborhood Map of Pueblo and Missing Individuals and Cregan Report
Created using Google Maps.

The blue markers indicate a city block where homes were either destroyed, washed off of their foundations, or made otherwise uninhabitable. Interactive Google Map available at: <https://drive.google.com/open?id=1ruliWplrBvZpV76S1rcE8L2ht8SILHkY&usp=sharing>.

A further detail fails to clear up the matter. One year after the flood, the official report from the United States' Geological Survey (USGS) was published. This document, the most complete investigation and publication of the flood's cause, measurable statistical information, and recommendations for prevention, still uses Cregan's original

survey numbers: “A report to the Pueblo city council stated that 510 dwellings were washed away, 98 buildings wrecked, and 61 buildings washed from their foundations” (7). Though it adds estimates for the value of lost livestock, the railroad yards, farms, public buildings, utility companies, and private property, it does not delve into the details of what other private properties were damaged or lost, leaving Cregan’s initial survey as the final word.

Considering the importance of this information—in assessing insurance claims and as a more accurate picture of the flood’s path when planning to prevent future occurrences, as well as the potential loss of lives—it seems damning not to have a completed survey. What reasons might there be for leaving this study incomplete?

Hypotheses Regarding Excluded Areas

While poring over the reports, newspaper articles, and eyewitness testimony of the flood’s aftermath, no single explanation has been found to explain the limited scope of Pueblo’s investigation into the flood. Yet several details emerged that hint at reasons why this may have occurred, and I will detail each of these here.

Hypothesis #1: Organizational Failures

Emergency preparedness and disaster relief were, in 1921, rather haphazard. Though there was a flood siren, and though it rang the night of June 3rd, many described how those in low-lying areas simply ignored it. A large crowd gathered in anticipation of viewing the rising waters from the bridges in downtown, confident that the new 18-foot levees would keep them safe. These details speak to the lack of participation by citizens in the limited safety measures in place at the time. And while convincing the public to

heed warnings when disasters loom on the horizon is nothing new—one thinks of homeowners who stubbornly refuse to evacuate during hurricane warnings—the modern response to natural disasters includes plans for rescues, procuring of emergency funds, and rehabilitation from groups such as FEMA (the Federal Emergency Management Agency). But FEMA did not exist until 1979, nearly 60 years after the Pueblo flood, and so the city’s response in the days after the tragedy were, at best, uneven.

The procuring of safety over private property seemed a high priority for many of Pueblo’s citizens, and the Colorado Rangers were brought in to help restore order. Rumors of bands of looters, hearing of the disaster and sensing their opportunity to plunder the wrecked town, abounded. As previously detailed, the bodies that were found throughout the city were brought to several different locations and were published in the newspaper. But with circulation routes disrupted, and with many of the dead found without identification, reports often included physical descriptions to help with identification. Families with missing loved ones would have to circulate among the several morgues housing the dead, and as the bodies being discovered increased day after day, and communication lines were knocked out for several weeks, they would likely have to make return trips.

Those that reported missing loved ones also had no clear protocol. Various groups were taking names to publish in the newspaper, and these names were often repeated, misspelled, and inexplicably left off a publication one day only to reappear the next. *The Pueblo Chieftain*, reporting to its readers that it would publish the missing lists daily, invariably left certain lists off of its pages without explanation. No list was published on the 13th of June—again, without explanation—and publications of the missing abruptly

ended altogether on the 16th. One might not be surprised to learn that the newspaper made no mention of its rationale in this decision, either.

Despite this lack of protocol, one group that made a large impact in the wake of the disaster was the American Red Cross. Volunteers—mostly women—quickly made their way to the various crowds of survivors who had fled to high ground and set up makeshift camps. Tent cities were constructed, the injured were tended to, and large vats were hauled in with supplies to cook soup for the newly homeless. Doctors joined the Red Cross volunteers to assist victims, and in short order published a plan to combat the inevitable diseases that were expected to befall the city.

Though there are many other stories of individuals acting bravely and charitably during and after the flood, it is clear that the city's leadership was at a loss as to how they should respond. Power and phone lines were out throughout the city. The railroad lines and roads—lifelines to the outside world—were washed out, making the delivery of emergency supplies to the saturated area incredibly difficult. All but one of the bridges connecting downtown to the southern part of the city were gone, and even the surviving bridge was limited to foot traffic.

There was some disorder as well. A prominent businessman was shot and killed while driving towards the devastated downtown with his son. Various reports on the event were inconclusive – some accused a looter of the fatal shot, while others reported it was an officer firing upon him by mistake. A man was found drowned in a department store whose owner had fled as the waters rose – apparently attempting to steal goods. While some volunteered, the police rounded up as many “able-bodied men” as they could and forced them to participate in the cleanup efforts downtown, shoveling mud onto

carts, sifting through rubble, and hauling debris, livestock, and bodies. Though the need for manpower is certainly understood, a motivating factor was also to keep “drunkards, lazy, and potential thieves” preoccupied.

All of this pre-scores a major organizational failure: the design flaw of the levees. The newly built earthen levees, finished shortly before the flood and made to withstand a crest of 18 feet, were authorized because of the great danger of flooding to the city. While the 1921 flood was of cataclysmic proportions, it was up to the engineers and city planners to prepare a system that would protect the city.

Funding for the recovery efforts was not guaranteed. In fact, the Pueblo officials relied upon aerial photography to give evidence of the extent of destruction. The level of destruction was even called into question at one point, with the Pueblo mayor having to defend his request against skeptical politicians. It is under these circumstances that the Pueblo authority was expected to conduct investigations into the flood’s devastation in the form of searching for missing people, surveying destroyed property, and repairing and rebuilding failed infrastructure. Perhaps the magnanimity of these tasks caused them to overlook the question of where, exactly, the floodwaters went, everywhere in the city, and all of the places where levees failed, ditches and tributaries flooded, and homes were damaged or destroyed. While this would certainly be another failure in leadership, it is reasonable to suggest, as the aforementioned failures seem likely to corroborate it as a possibility.

Hypothesis #2: Pragmatism

Cleanup, restoration of paramount city resources and utilities, and caring for survivors who were displaced took priority for the city’s leadership rather than strict

surveys and documenting the exact path of the floodwaters and finding victims. Within the city itself, finding victims was a necessary byproduct of the cleanup efforts; as rubble and debris were cleared, they would be found. This would also assist in the arresting the spread of disease. But the force and fury of the flood also had an effect on the collective psyche of the Pueblo community: the assumption was that those who were swept away were dead. Furthermore, there was little hope that those washed downstream and buried under debris and mud outside of the city limits would be found. While Pueblo was an important stop and an urban destination that was rapidly progressing, the communities downstream on the Arkansas were few and sparsely populated. Reconnaissance efforts only extended for a few miles outside of Pueblo's city limits, and outside of this, the few bodies that were discovered were found by happenstance.

It makes sense that city leaders would choose to focus their efforts on the more immediate needs of the community. Yet following their retreat from the initial dangers, it would be important to investigate how and why the systems meant to protect the city failed in order to prevent this from happening again. While there certainly seems to be more of an attitude during this time period that such "acts of God" might be unavoidable and inexplicable, especially in the wake of the First World War, there were those who sought to investigate more scientifically. Civil engineers undertook this task most enthusiastically, and their reports serve as the basis for much of the author's knowledge of technical details of the flood in the downtown area. Yet these reports also fail to acknowledge or explain the flooding's extent or impact in the neighborhoods cited previously. Perhaps this was not their primary goal.

Hypothesis #3: “Flood Fatigue”

“Flood fatigue” is the author’s term for the puzzling decisions and attitudes that are documented within a few weeks of the tragedy. Certainly, the desire to rebuild and recover against all odds is a respectable response in the face of tragedy. Many acts of heroism and selflessness make up pieces of the flood’s narrative. As previously mentioned, one shining example of this service came by way of the Red Cross. Another details telephone operators braving the rising waters by keeping phone lines open, all while moving to higher floors and even purportedly calling to warn residents in a precursor to the reverse-911. These and other stories became part of the fabric of the collective consciousness of the community, describing the ways in which residents thought of themselves. The truth of these stories, though, must be balanced by the truth of the entire narrative, including stories that are less flattering. The Red Cross built and managed the tent cities that housed many of the survivors of the flood. But within a few weeks even this charitable organization was shut down, as the city ordered the closure of the tent cities in the interest of public health and safety. This was done without a plan in place for those still destitute. The missing lists, published (nearly) daily by the *Pueblo Chieftain* after the flood, abruptly stopped without explanation. Advertisements were taken out in the paper publicizing sales of goods that were slightly damaged, and often included upbeat editorials to encourage weary citizens of the town’s impending revival. Consequently, talk of victims ceased, save for the occasional story about a body being found. Pueblo at large seemed ready to move on within two weeks, though thousands were still without homes, power, or jobs. After contradicting itself many times over, the *Chieftain* never arrived at an estimate of the number of victims of the flood. The USGS

report, far from asserting itself as the final authority, delivered this verdict on the question: “The exact extent of losses to life and property will never be known.... The loss of life in Pueblo was heavy, owing to the swift rise of the river and the unwillingness of many people to heed the flood warnings. The official list places the number of bodies recovered at 78, but many bodies that were washed downstream were not recovered.”

Hypothesis #4: Discrimination

Several articles highlight the attitudes and opinions of native White Puebloans to their non-native and/or non-White counterparts. Much time was spent earlier in this paper highlighting the makeup and attitudes around certain neighborhoods of European immigrants, Mexicans, Black Americans, and of poor individuals. The three neighborhoods in closest proximity to downtown that were flooded—The Grove, Goat Hill, and Peppersauce—were reported to have been flooded, but little more than this is documented. All three were made up of European immigrants and people of color, and all three represented a substantial level of poverty. The Eastside neighborhood certainly flooded but was left out of Cregan’s report almost entirely. It, too, was made up of these same demographics. Finally, if indeed Bessemer and Irving Place flooded, they would match these criteria as well. On the other hand, Mesa Junction and the North Side neighborhoods, who represent some of the missing, do not.

The evidence does not amount to proof that discrimination actively played a part in the underreporting of victims and damage after the flood. The Peppersauce neighborhood, for instance, was in the least desirable designation on the redlining map, and it was widely reported that this area was devastated by the flood. Perhaps the lack of documentation of blocks in this neighborhood was due to the immensity of the

destruction. Or perhaps it was still under water when they surveyor began his work. The floodwaters overwhelmed the entire downtown area in addition to Peppersauce and the Grove, and all three sat alongside the river. The buildings in the downtown area were built with stronger materials, and many of the businesses, while sustaining heavy damage, were still standing after the flood. The same cannot be said for homes in Peppersauce or the Grove. Additionally, it makes sense that the most attention and detailed documentation of the flood would occur in the richest, most iconic sections of the city. One could recognize the opera house or city hall, and the dramatic photos of drowned animals and overturned cars next to popular storefronts that had been bustling with activity just days prior had a more impressive effect than a barren stretch of mud that used to be a neighborhood, especially as the city reached out for emergency funds.

It does seem that certain in the aftermath of the flood, details about who was adversely affected and to what extent was not recognized as a useful venture. Everyone had suffered, and the city seemed collectively resolute to move on, rebuild, and reclaim a sense of normalcy as soon as possible. An op-ed published in *The Pueblo Chieftain* on June 16th read in part, “Much of this man’s wealth has been destroyed, but he still has the means of production, and his pathway to prosperity and success is unobstructed ... Pueblo should waste no time in debating the question whether Pueblo is to go forward to a greater prosperity. That question is beyond debate. The thing for us to decide is along what lines our growth and prosperity may best be forwarded.”

Those who have been left out of the coverage and historic narrative of the flood happened to be those who lived in poorer neighborhoods on the periphery of the city center, and in a city like Pueblo, most of those citizens happened to be people of color or

immigrants. A combination of organizational failures, pragmatism, “flood fatigue,” and discrimination prevented the complete story of the Great Flood of Pueblo from being accurately told. It still prevents an accurate retelling.

Chapter VII.

Conclusion

An oft-ignored tragedy in the canon of natural disasters in the United States, the Great Flood of Pueblo in 1921 is one of the deadliest events in the nation's history. This is agreed upon by Dr. J. David Rogers, Professor of Geological Engineering at the Missouri University of Science and Technology. Dr. Rogers, whose presentation on the flood and the engineering of new, preventative levees in its aftermath was delivered at the annual meeting of the Association of Environmental & Engineering Geologists in Colorado Springs in 2017, called it “one of the deadliest [floods] in American history.”⁴⁵ In the early twentieth century, organizational responses to natural disasters such as these were largely piecemeal, leading to uneven support and provisions of resources. In Pueblo, this had the effect of confusing the historical record—it seems unlikely that there will ever be more than an estimate of its toll in human lives. Upon completing the research for this paper, this author feels confident with a range of 600-900 deaths. On the low end of that estimate, this would make it the 16th-deadliest natural disaster in United States' history and the 10th-deadliest flood, including hurricanes⁴⁶ (the higher estimates would obviously push it even higher on the list). Yet it is still listed behind the Big Thompson

⁴⁵ Rogers, “Overview of the 1921 Pueblo Flood.”

⁴⁶ “List of Disasters in the United States by Death Toll,” Wikipedia, last modified July 24, 2019, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_disasters_in_the_United_States_by_death_toll.

Canyon flood, if it is listed at all, on many publications. Hopefully, this thesis will set the record straight.

Additionally, the lack of resources and organization, along with discrimination, has left a legacy of doubt over the entirety of the flood's reach and devastation. But in the modern era, this doubt continues; there were accounts of people stranded by Hurricane Katrina who died waiting for aid. Accusations of racism arose due to slow response times and organizational failures that disproportionately affected citizens living in poorer sections of the city of New Orleans—many of whom were people of color. More recently, a lack of organizational response and accurate record-keeping—as well as, perhaps, an urge to downplay the extent of its devastation—led to confusion over the number of victims in Puerto Rico following Hurricane Maria. Officially, the death toll remains 64, but according to Harvard FXB, the estimated total is between 800 and 8,500.⁴⁷ Many of those who are not included in the official count are individuals who died in the days and weeks following the hurricane due to lack of access to medical care, electricity, or basic needs such as clean water, food, and adequate shelter. Often, these individuals were poor.

Pueblo did rebuild. A decade after the flood, the 1930 U.S. Census shows that the city's population recovered and grew. The business district was restored and new levees were completed in 1925 that have prevented another flood the likes of the 1921 disaster (although there was a significant flood event in 1965).⁴⁸ But the boom days of the city of

⁴⁷ Harvard FXB, "Leading with Science: One Year after Hurricane Maria."

⁴⁸ "South Platte & Arkansas Basins: June 14-20, 1965," The Weather and Climate Impact Assessment Science Program, National Center for Atmospheric Research, accessed August 4, 2019, https://www.assessment.ucar.edu/flood/flood_summaries/06_14_1965.html.

industry were over; Pueblo never did realize its ambitious goal of becoming a major hub, as it fell behind both Denver and Colorado Springs to the north. The two remaining steel mills closed for good in 1921. The Peppersauce neighborhood was eventually rebuilt, albeit with fewer homes. In 2005, the Peppersauce residents brought a suit against the city of Pueblo, who in their design to make drainage for the northwest part of the city—where many historic homes lie—inadvertently created a funnel to Peppersauce. In tragic irony, the city planners had built a system in which the new Peppersauce neighborhood routinely floods.⁴⁹ The legacy of the Great Flood of Pueblo must include an acknowledgement that social inequities are a part of the way in which this country examines and responds to natural disasters.

Opportunities for Further Research

For an even more robust list of missing individuals, one could go line-by-line through the list of names and cross-reference them against the 1920 U.S. Census (by hand, as no digitized copy is currently available for this kind of search). The time and labor that this would require went beyond the scope of this paper, but could be used to document the flood and its victims in even greater detail. Many names are misspelled, though, and this census was handwritten, so this would be a particularly tedious process. Furthermore, the finalized list would still provide only a complete snapshot of those who were reported missing. It seems certain that there will only ever be estimates of the total number of those who lost their lives in the flood.

⁴⁹ Meyer, “Pueblo Storm Tide Leaves Scars.”

Additionally, interviews with surviving family members of those who perished and those who lived through the flood could provide greater context about the extent of the tragedy and its aftermath. This could help to paint a more complete picture of events, such as the question of flooding in the Bessemer neighborhood, and provide further details of the social history of the city before, during, and after the disaster.

Appendix.

Missing List

The final list of those missing can be found below. Misspelled names, duplicate entries, and addresses have been corrected to the best knowledge of the author, though some inaccuracies may remain as a result of the difficulties involved with the compiling of the list. All of the names, addresses, and descriptions included were found in the lists published by the *Pueblo Chieftain* in the days and weeks following the flood.

Table 1. List of Missing in the Great Pueblo Flood as Reported in The Pueblo Chieftain between June 3rd and June 19th, 1921

No.	LAST NAME	FIRST NAME	RESIDENCE (if listed)
1	Adams	Mrs. L.	113 1/2 W. B St.
2	Alarcon	Ahlano	
3	Alarcon	Juanita	
4	Alarcon	De Monts	
5	Alarcon	Charlotte	
6	Alarcon	Carman	
7	Alexander	Mr. Ernest	4th Ward Room House
8	Allen	Mrs. J.T.	visiting at 203 S. Victoria
9	Alston	E.O.	Vail Hotel
10	Anderson	R.G.	Denver
11	Anderson	Mrs. J.Q.	
12	Anderson	Mr. R.L.	308 West 5th
13	Andrews	Joe	
14	Anthony	Dr. T.J.	829 Brown ave
15	Aragon	Jesus	Trinidad
16	Archuleta	Dave	
17	Archuleta	Toby	
18	Arellano Velasquez*	Mrs. Pedro	
19	Velasquez		
20	Austin	R.B.	611 S. Union or 614

21	Babich	Frank	in Grove
22	Baca	Bicente	Sta. A, Bessemer
23	Baca	Dora	Congress hotel
24	Baca	P.G.	212 E. 3rd st.
25	Bailey	George	
26	Bailey	Ed	Avondale, CO
27	Baker	Mr. Luther	1009 Court
28	Baker	Mrs. Luther	1009 Court
29	Baker	Harry	311 W. ___ st.
30	Baker	W.D.	727 W. 12th st.
31	Balard	Mr. D.C.	Main Hotel
32	Ball	Mrs. D.C.	
33	Banks	Mrs. Freda	520 W. 5th
34	Banks		
35	Bates	Albert	210 Division
36	Beman / Beaman	Mrs. Chas.	1124 E. Ninth
37	Bench	Mrs. Arthur	
38	Bennett		625 West Seventh
39	Benning	George	
40	Billings	John	
41	Bird	Roy	
42	Birdsong	Jim	McCracken, Kansas
43	Bishop*		320 W. 6th
44	Blanchard	Mrs. C.E.	
45	Blivens*		
46	Bonato	Mary	1729 Routt
47	Boter	Amie	617 1/2 North Main
48	Bowman	Lulu	17 Block L.
49	Brazes	Harry	117 E. 1st
50	Brewer*	Glen	Living with Wm. Brewer
51	Brewington*	Mrs. Eva	309 W. 7th street
52	Brown*	Esther	52 Blk. U.
53	Brugh	F.M.	1819 E. 7th St.
54	Bruner	E.A.	
55	Buffington	Bell	1st at Fountain river
56	Burge	M.M.	St. Charles Rooms, B and Main Sts.
57	Burke*	William	1606 W. 18th
58	Burman		
59	Campbell	Frank	614 E. Tenth
60	Campbell	John	315 W. 5th
61	Carden	C.D.	1503 Routt St.
62	Cerrick	Miss Agnes	

63	Chamness	Mr. R.	1402 East Eleventh st.
64	Chance	Geo C.	924 W. 12th
65	Chapell	R.V.	26 Block O.
66	Chapman	Pete & Marjorie	W. 5th
67	Chappel	G.M.	
68	Charles	Albert	
69	Cheney	Ted	
70	Clark	Mr.	San Acacio
71	Clark	Lillian	1107 Fourth St.
72	Cline	B.	806 E. Third
73	Close	R.L.	
74	Coffey	Mrs. Annie	700 River street
75	Coglay	W.J.	Maine hotel
76	Cole	F.G.	Lodge B.P.O.E.
77	Comerford	Wm	
78	Connors	E.L.	
79	Contos	Mrs. Steve	309 1/2 W. Northern
80	Cook*	Cecil	Monte Vista
81	Cooper	T.E.	1310 E. 8th
82	Corey	Mrs. L.G.	110 Blk. P
83	Corn	B.J.	Congress hotel
84	Cornporth	W.B.	127 W. 4th
85	Coulan	Pat	Wells hotel
86	Coyle	E.F.	Wells hotel
87	Crain	K.N.	117 W. 14th st.
88	Crenchaw	Mrs. J.H.	718 E. 6th ave.
89	Croker	Kate	122 W. 13th st.
90	Crooks	Officer	1430 E. 12th st.
91	Cuein	Dallas	
92	Daniel	Sidney	Santa Fe Depot
93	Darling**	Jack	
94	Davie*	Mrs. Roger	
95	Davis	W.H.	Midland Hotel
96	Davis	Mrs. Mary A.	111 W. 11th st.
97	Davis	Frank	
98	De John*	Jospeh	2709 Spruce
99	Dempson	Mrs. J.B.	
100	Devereaux	Ray	
101	Devereaux	Mabel	
102	Dickson	Ed	
103	Dillon	Ella	412 W. First St.

104	Donnell	Ada	
105	Donnell	Helen	
106	Donnelly	Mrs. Marion	16 Franklin rooms
107	Draper	Roy E.	Star rooming house
108	Driscoll*	Mrs. Julia	223 1/2 N. Santa Fe
109	Dterick	Mrs. Amanda	213 Harrison avenue
110	Duckworth*	Mrs. Elizabeth	No. 3 Board of Trade
111	Dunn	S.V.	
112	Eddy	Mrs. J.W.	812 Ash
113	Eklin	Mr. T.B.	1314 Holleck
114	Eldridge	Mrs. Elton M.	Jordan apartments
115	Eldridge	Mr. Wm. I.	Pueblo Hotel
116	Eldridge	Mrs. Anna W.	Pueblo Hotel
117	Elkinton	Mr. Harry	
118	Elkinton	Mrs. Harry	
119	Engile	Blanche	722 W. 2nd st.
120	Enke	Albert	Yeder, Colo.
121	Epstine	N.	2206 Elizabeth
122	Erwin	Frank	
123	Espinosa / Espinoza	Mrs. Minnie	Mechanic street
124	Evans	J.D.	
125	Evans	Mandy	E. 4th street
126	Fabo	Frances	306 Spring
127	Fabont	N.	423 West First
128	Fabor	Francis	306 Spring
129	Fagan	Ethel E.	519 1/2 N. Santa Fe
130	Fair	Mrs. J.M.	103 E. 9th
131	Fanning	J.W.	1225 E. 9th
132	Felancy	Mike	
133	Felton	Mr. G.C.	Union sta. and Midland hotels
134	Fennister	Mrs. Nellie	218 Victoria
135	Ferguson	W.W.	216 N. Fountain
136	Fine	Mrs. Cynthia B.	
137	Fitsgibbon	Mrs. O.F.	20 Blk. 12 2nd
138	Fitzpatrick	Margaret	
139	Fletcher	Robt.	507 Greenwood
140	Flores*		
141	Franklin	Oscar	stockyards
142	Freeman	H.W.	1925 N. Santa Fe
143	Fry	Elizabeth	233 1/2 so. Union
144	Fugaros	George	825 E. Abriendo
145	Gay	Alta	

146	Ghorsgard**	Mrs. J.M.	
147	Gordon	Dick	43 Block M.
148	Gowin*	Ira	"7 miles east"
149	Grassman	F.E.	1515 Cedar St.
150	Grenfield	W.H.	Vail Hotel
151	Grey	Dr.	
152	Gross	Mrs. Jas T.	316 Summit street
153	Grund	R.A.	
154	Gunther	Minnie	321 South Main
155	Gunther	Emma	321 South Main
156	Gustin	Mrs. M.C.	312 Summit
157	Hadwiger	Hattie	Portland Ore.
158	Hagge	Lester	
159	Hall	Elmer	
160	Hall	H.H.	301 E. Eleventh St.
161	Hamilton	James Yaeger	111 W. 11th st.
162	Harmon*	Alta	Augusta, Kansas
163	Harris	Mrs. D.E.	224 S. Victoria
164	Harrison	Edwin	reported in hospital
165	Harrison	J.	227 1/2 N. Santa Fe
166	Haven	Coley	2623 West Street
167	Hawse*	J.H.; Joseph	413 W. 6th or 400 Blk. On Union
168	Hayes	John	Rear 112 W. 7th street
169	Hayes	James	1010 Cypress street
170	Hernandez	Donaciano	West 8th st.
171	Hill	Floyd V.	
172	Hilton	Elmer	103 E. Routt.
173	Hirsh	John	719 Grand ave.
174	Holmes	Levina	115 E. 7th
175	Holt	Frank	Labor Temple
176	Honcher*	C.W.	South Union Avenue
177	Howard	Mrs. Ella	1412 E. Eighth or 1430 East Eighth
178	Hudson	Sarah	114 W. Second
179	Hunt	Josephine	518 West Fifth
180	Hurd	H.C.	Monte Vista
181	Hurst	J.J.	
182	Inderlid	A.W.	
183	Isom	W.H.I.	
184	Jackson	Mrs. Nettie	523 W. Third
185	Jackson	John	2715 Grand
186	Jackson	Earl	2715 Grand
187	Jackson	Elmira	2715 Grand

188	Jacobs	Frank	105 Grand
189	Jacobs	W.L.	925 E. 3rd
190	Jacobs	Andrew	313 Park
191	Jaeger	Mrs. L	600 block W Fourth street
192	Jaeger	Charles	600 block W Fourth street
193	Jagger	James	1438 10th street
194	James	Frank	2424 North Main
195	Jandram	Mrs. Wheler	1201 W. Tenth
196	Johnson	E.M.	1632 Cypress
197	Johnson	Mrs. E.M.	1632 Cypress
198	Johnson	Marjorie (?)	Park ave. apartments
199	Johnson	May	1202 East Ninth st.
200	Johnson	W.L.	925 E. 3rd
201	Johnson	Mr. J.S.	"address not known"
202	Jones	Archibald	226 W. Third St.
203	Julian	Mrs. Mary	Boone, Colo.
204	Kaflar	John	683 Moffatt
205	Kahanic	Steve	825 E. Abriendo
206	Kantz		905 S Union
207	Kantz	Clarence	905 S Union
208	Katler	John	683 Moffat
209	Keefler	Leslie	West Fifth
210	Keener	Mrs. Ed	603 E. Evans ave
211	Keithley*	M.L.	13 Blk. L.
212	Keller, Jr.	Frank	
213	Kelley	Lloyd	
214	Kelly**	Mr. Frank	Main Hotel
215	Kelsorf	Orville	
216	Kennedy	Verdie	
217	Kerby	W.B.	713 E. 3rd st.
218	Kermnis	William E.	1214 E. 6th
219	Kerns	J.R.	Drug Dept. Colo. Supply Co.
220	Keysan (?)**	Henry	
221	Killian	A.F.	139 1/2 S. Main
222	Kiniry	Mary	414 1/2 Santa Fe
223	Kinnery	Mrs. E.H.	1011 Catalpa
224	Kinsinger	Mrs. Estella	117 E. Pitkin
225	Kiskadden	Eleanor	
226	Kissick*	Walter J.	Rialto Theatre
227	Kline	B.	806 E. 3rd or 803 E. 3rd
228	Knott	Mrs. Richard W.	W. Fifth St

229	Kohn *	Mr.	
230	Kohnman	Karl	1425 E. 3rd
231	Kortlang	W.H.	Opera House blk.
232	Kramer	Joseph	"no address given"
233	Krosthel	August	706 W. 4th street
234	Kucera		404 S. Santa Fe
235	Langley	Miss	300 Blk. West Fifth
236	Laroca	M.	
237	Lasher	Cathryn	
238	Laske	Davis	409 West Routt
239	Lawson*	Thad	410 West Fifth street
240	Levey**	Ben	303 W. 21st street
241	Levine	Mr. H.	404 1/2 West.
242	Levy	M.	500 W. 5th st.
243	Lewis	Mrs. Helen	618 E. 8th
244	Lewis	D.C.	Pope bldg.
245	Liner	Paul S.	508 Court St.
246	Link*	Charlie	618 N. Main, 726 E. First
247	Linnencamp (?)	Mrs. W.M.	Evans ave. in Minnequa block
248	Lloyd	Walter	
249	Longbrake*	Mrs. J.O.	217 Summit st.
250	Lowery	Irving	
251	Lugan	Ben	216 So. Union
252	Lumley	Geo	306 N. Santa Fe ave
253	Lundy	John	
254	Manbucca	Mrs. Angelino	184 So. Santa Fe
255	Manchak	Mike	230 S. Santa Fe
256	Marshall	Mr. Willard	
257	Marshall	Mrs. Willard	
258	Martin	Erma	518 W. Fifth
259	McCaffery	Dennis	Victor, Colo. at 100 blk. So. Union
260	McCollam	Chas.	Rosedale, Kansas
261	McConnell	Chas.	
262	McCourt	Mrs. H.A.	1640 Cypress
263	McCuilluogh	Cressa	
264	McElvain	Blake	2126 Greenwood ave.
265	McGinty / McGimpy	F.B.	
266	McIntyre	Raymond	2146 Routt
267	McIntyre	Thos. V.	202 E. Eighth St.
268	McMillan*		
269	McNaughton**	John	

270	Melvin	Mrs. A.D.	
271	Merridith	Mrs.	San Acacio
272	Milks*	A.E.	1412 E. 8th st.
273	Miller	Merrick	1035 Carteret
274	Miller	Jacob	717 W. 3rd
275	Mills	Mr. & child	
276	Milnes	Roger	Seville Hotel
277	Minter	Paul S.	508 Court
278	Mitchell	Mrs. Rosie B.	124 E. Fifth
279	Mitchell	Frank	1131 Orman st.
280	Mock	Mr. Joe	1009 Court
281	Mock	Jas. A.	R. P. 1, Box 250
282	Monroe	F.M.	2317 Grand ave.
283	Morales	Andres	Concrete, Colo.
284	Morgan	D.O.	1509 Farmer ave.
285	Morgan*	Dan	Boone, Colo.
286	Morris	Mr. H.E.	Block H, No. 2
287	Morris	Mrs. H.E.	Block H, No. 2
288	Morris (?)	Mrs. Sarah	316 Rumhill (?)
289	Morse	H.A.	1625 E. 5th st.
290	Mosier	Edna	Amarillo, Texas
291	Mosley	May	
292	Mount	Robert	208 Fourth avenue
293	Muench	Fred	
294	Murphy	Agnes	East Side
295	Murphy	J.A.	W. 2nd st.
296	Muzzio	G.W.	Box 184 So. Santa Fe
297	Neilson	Emil D.	703 W Fourth
298	Neis? Nels?		117 South Onedia
299	Nevatt	A.E.	1430 11th or 1420 Eleventh St.
300	Newton	J.W.	1531 Berkeley
301	Nichols	Albert J.	423 W. Fourth St.
302	Norton	R.E.	2266 E. 2nd st.
303	Olejar	Mike	Bennett st.
304	Olguin**	Teofila	706 W. 3rd
305	Orr	E.J. H.	Canon City
306	Otto*	Geo W.	411 E. Second
307	Parga	Wm. H.	1036 Cedar st.
308	Parker	Harry	from towards Baxter
309	Parsons	Frank	
310	Pendleton	Arthur	301 C. St.
311	Penn	Mr. E.B.	2515 (?) E. 7th

312	Perkins	Mrs. C.C.	262 Block I.
313	Perko	Helen	Grove
314	Perrine	Robert J.	227 1/2 So. Union
315	Perry	Joseph R.	
316	Pervis	Ruth	South of Depot
317	Petcock*	Mrs. J.H.	
318	Piefferie	Carl	218 1/2 E. Third St.
319	Pike*	Mrs. Geo	611 E. 11th
320	Potter	Harry J.	45 Block M.
321	Pratt	William	
322	Pratt	Ernest	
323	Previs	Ruth	South of Depot
324	Price	Butler	
325	Pritchard*	Geo	garage owner
326	Pross	Henry	207 Seventh or Ninth St.
327	Ralya	Mrs. J.C.	1221 Pine
328	Ramsey	Dave	Central block
329	Rankin	Mrs.	West Fifth Street
330	Ransler	John W.	3109 High
331	Reed	Sam F	E. Sixteenth
332	Rehak	Elizabeth	280 Bennett avenue
333	Reid	James	E. Eighth
334	Richardson	Peter	Howard Baker, Ammis Milmer Store, 1 Blk. Of Crews-Beggs
335	Riedy	Mrs. Chester	222 1/2 So. Union
336	Rincon	Anita	Back of smelter
337	Rincon	Luis	Back of smelter
338	Risco		404 S. Santa Fe
339	Risley	Jeanie A.	2410 4th ave.
340	Roglitz	Viola	
341	Rollin	E. Mate	821 E. 4th
342	Rosenbaum	Adolph	511 Broadway
343	Rowan	Lucy	
344	Rozboril	M.J.	268 Bennett ave
345	Rozboril	A.J.	220 Spring street
346	Rumby		Sixth
347	Rumgay*	Mrs.	704 W. 4th
348	Russell	Robt. A.	
349	Russell	Martha	1401 Cedar street
350	Russell	Agnes (A.G.?)	
351	Russell*		1427 E. Evans
352	Russell	E.S.	Union depot

353	Sajdel	Andy	314 Park
354	Salvi (?)	Frank	
355	Sanchez	R.S.	219 W. 8th street
356	Sathero*	F.A.	2628 5th ave.
357	Schmidt	J.W.	1212 E. Eleventh St.
358	Schrader	E.H.	1131 Lake pl.
359	Schultz	Gostav	Baxter, Colo.
360	Schyerman	Mr.	
361	Schyerman	Mrs.	
362	Scott*	Mrs. Ester	217 W. 6th st
363	Seaver	C.W.	
364	Seaver	Paul	
365	Seaver	Glen	
366	Sedgwick	Mrs. & boy	
367	Senter	W.E.	
368	Setter	H.A.	1806 Orman avenue
369	Shaw	Mr. Jefferson	129 1/2 S. Main St.
370	Sheeley	J.M.	
371	Sheffield	Silas (Si)	600 Block on West Fifth St.
372	Shepherd*	Jack	W. 4th or 426 W. 4th
373	Sherwin	B.E.	619 1/2 N. Main
374	Shine	Mrs.	620 W. 4th ave.
375	Shinn	Carl & family	
376	Shirhal (?)*	Mrs.	
377	Shockley	Ellwood	
378	Shuffty	J.A.	825 W. 2nd
379	Silvers*	B.C.	608 Bay State st.
380	Sinks	Motley	10 Block U.
381	Slead	Tom A. & wife	729 W Ninth st.
382	Smith	Carl	302 Michigan
383	Smith	Mrs. F.N.	213 Lake avenue
384	Snow	G.W.	Grand
385	Speakman	C.A.	425 West Fourth
386	Speakman	Elmer	425 W. 4th; 1402 E. 9th
387	Sperry	Miss Berdie	
388	Stablaj	Joseph	601 Stanton ave.
389	Stanko	Joe	314 Park
390	Stanley	Harry	
391	Stevenson	Wilbur	
392	Stewart	Fay	
393	Stewart	Dorothy	
394	Stewart	J.W.	

395	Stockel	Lawrence J.	925 Court St.
396	Stokes	Mr. W.A.	410 W. 10th street
397	Stone	Mrs. J.W.	902 River St.
398	Stonebraker	L.L.	
399	Stonton	There	605 S. Union
400	Storms		Sixth street
401	Stout	Belva	Amarillo, Texas
402	Strickland		Boone, Colo.
403	Swallows	George	Victoria hotel
404	Sweet	Miss Dorothy	
405	Swinherst		West Fourth
406	Tait	W.M.	4th and Court
407	Taylor	Mrs. Mary L.	
408	Taylor**	Jack	
409	Teter	George E.	east Evans
410	Thomas	Mr. Sam	
411	Thomas	Mrs. Sam	
412	Thomas	H.H.	226 1/2 South Union
413	Thomas	Harry	1402 E. 9th st.
414	Thomas	Mr. W.A.	425 W. 4th; 1402 E. 9th
415	Thomas	Mrs. M.E.	425 W. 4th; 1402 E. 9th
416	Thomas	A.H.	425 W. 4th; 1402 E. 9th
417	Thomas**	J.W.	Sales Mgr. Fitts-Smith D.G. Co.
418	Thosgard	Mrs.	Fourth & Greenwood
419	Thosgard		Fourth & Greenwood
420	Unnamed*		
421	Unnamed*		1212 E. 10th
422	Unnamed*		211 S. Union
423	Valdez	Ramona	
424	Van Dine	Mason	1st St. Bridge
425	Vickery	A.K.	
426	Walker	Joe	
427	Walker		
428	Wall	Ada	
429	Wall	Woody	
430	Waterman	Miles Rex	
431	Webber	J.H.	423 W. First St.
432	Weihe*	Mrs. Carl	Minnequa Park orchestra
433	Weisberg	Aaron	
434	Welder	Osteline	
435	Wellwood	Mrs. S.J.	
436	West	George	Victoria hotel

437	White	J.W.	"no address"
438	Whitehead*		621 W. Fifth
439	Whitlock**	A.J.	1117 Mesa ave.
440	Wilbur	Miles D.	
441	Wilcox	Mrs. M.A.	Pope block; 4th and Main
442	Wilcox	Dr.	Pope block; 4th and Main
443	William	Dr.	200 block Victoria
444	William	Mrs.	200 block Victoria
445	Williams	Mr. Sam	618 East Eighth
446	Williams	Mrs. Sam	618 East Eighth
447	Williams**	R.C.	1009 West st
448	Williams	Gertie	1009 West st
449	Wilshire	J.M.	621 Greenwood
450	Wilson	Mrs. Lola	215 Lampkin
451	Wood**	Victor	2126 Grand
452	Wright	Roland H.	113 W. Evans
453	Young*	Mr. J.W.	919 E. Abriendo
454	Young	J.B.	Arcadia Hotel

**indicates an entry where "and family" was included with individual's name.*

***indicates an entry where "and wife" or one additional individual was included with the missing individual's name.*

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