

Mount Galbraith Park Historical Background

Mount Galbraith Park lies in the transition zone between the eastern edge of the Rocky Mountains and the western edge of the Great Plains. Clear Creek Canyon, on Mount Galbraith's south side, and Golden Gate Canyon, on its north, created vital gateways into the central Rockies for Native Americans and Euro-American settlers.

Paleo-Indians lived in Colorado from approximately 12,000 to 7,000 years ago. Living in groups of 20-25, they were a dispersed, highly mobile people. Paleo-Indians made tools from chipped stone, used stone-tipped spears to hunt large grazing animals, gathered small game, waterfowl, and shellfish, and collected many plant foods. Their annual migration followed the seasonal ripening of vegetation. Foraging parties sought food by making loops outward from temporary base camps, creating a daisy pattern. When the daisy was complete, the base camp was moved. They moved to progressively higher elevations following the ripening vegetation to South, Middle and North Parks, before returning to winter each year in this transitional zone. Unrelated groups met to celebrate marriages, exchange family members, and share practical knowledge, stories, and sacred wisdom.

During the Archaic Stage, from 7,000 to about 2,000 years ago, semi-nomadic people settled in camps along the foothills. Prime locations provided a combination of water, shelter, plant and animal diversity, and good views. They used the Mount Galbraith area for a long time, demonstrated by numerous cultural resource sites. There is evidence that a cave on the property was used anywhere from 4,000 to 1,000 years ago. Archaic people developed grinding tools for processing wild plants, chipped stone tools for cutting, chopping and scraping, and large projectile points for hunting, and began to construct shelters.

The Plains Ceramic Stage began nearly 2,000 years ago and lasted until approximately 200 years ago. The introduction of the bow and arrow and the use of pottery mark the onset of this stage, while the later years include the earliest contacts of the native population with people from Europe.

The California gold rush of 1849 brought tens of thousands of men west. Many prospected on their way through Colorado, and some decided to stay. Prospectors were generally limited to "placer mining," washing the heavier gold from the gravel in a sluice box. Colorado's first placer gold was found in 1850 on Ralston Creek. Miners crossed Mount Galbraith, as travel west was easier along the ridgelines than through the drainages.

Finding "mining the miners" more lucrative than prospecting, entrepreneurs began building toll roads up Golden Gate Canyon and Clear Creek. The Golden Gate and Gregory Road operated from 1860-1871 as a toll road up the Canyon to the Central City Mining District and the Gregory Diggings. A railroad was completed in 1877 along Clear Creek to Georgetown and Central City.

These entrepreneurs founded rough supply towns along their toll roads, including Arapahoe City, Boulder City, Golden City, Mount Vernon, Bradford City, Piedmont, Apex and Golden Gate City. Vying for business, they flooded the market with goods, drove down prices, and caused rampant failures. In June, 1859, Rocky Mountain City was laid out astraddle the road to the Gregory Diggings, just north of Golden Gate City. Starting with a grocery in a tent and two or three covered wagons, plans were made for a large trading post, but by 1860 Rocky Mountain City was a ghost town.

Golden Gate City was founded in 1859 at the mouth of Golden Gate Canyon, a bustling town with two rows of log houses, several stores, liquor shops, and a pottery kiln. Two tall rock formations that stood nearby gave it the name "Gate City." By 1860 it boasted several firms, hotels, stores and shops. It was a very social community, but never had a mayor or any form of

local government. A gala inauguration ball for the new Territorial government marked the opening of the Golden Gate City Hotel. Alfalfa fields and haystacks abounded, providing both fodder and income. Golden Gate City was also known as “Baled Hay City,” because every house advertised baled hay for sale!

For a year or two Golden Gate City and Golden City (now Golden) were archrivals for the County seat, population and influence. Both were named for Tom Golden, a farmer, rancher, sometime-miner, politician, and town promoter. Tom Golden bought disillusioned miners’ used mining gear and then re-sold it to newcomers.

Golden Gate City stalled out because of a local land feud. In 1859-60, the Golden Gate Town Company offered lots of land for sale or donation. Alfred Tucker claimed these lots were inside his farming and ranching claim. He also claimed ownership of the road into Golden Gate Canyon built and paid for by a man named McCleery. The feud escalated to include charges of assault and intent to kill. Eventually Tucker won in court, but his only legacy today is Tucker Gulch, where disastrous floods often rage into Golden.

Jone Heivner found and claimed a bed of the best quality coal five miles north of Golden City. He sold the claim in 1865 to Murphy, Loveland, and Armor. The coal mining towns of Murphyville, Tindale, Glencoe, Ralston, and Leyden sprouted like mushrooms, supplying good and cheap fuel to the mountains and plains.

The Mount Galbraith land dates back to the original Homestead Land Grant to Edward Geary, signed by Woodrow Wilson in 1921. Gorman Ranch was just east of what is now Mount Galbraith Park. The Gorman ranch house stood at the entrance to Indian Gulch, named for the Arapahoes’ travois trail along it.

The quarry on the Clear Creek side of the park was first mined in the 1930s and 40s, and again in the 1960s by Asphalt Paving Company. Brannan Sand and Gravel had drafted plans to mine a large area now within the park, but, instead, sold the original 875.2 acres of Mount Galbraith to Open Space on October 20, 1995. On November 24, 1997, Open Space traded 80 acres on the western boundary of the park for 80 acres owned by O.R. Goltra located west of the park in Clear Creek Canyon. Open Space received a donation from Golden Properties LTD for 75.839 acres on November 2, 1999.