

HISTORY OF CHERAW, COLORADO

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Holbrook Valley is the land lying over the hill, 8 or 10 miles north of LaJunta. It is a stretch of land from 4 to 8 miles wide and around 20 miles long. It extends from where the ditch takes out of the river west of Rocky Ford to about 6 miles east of Cheraw to the county line. It receives its irrigation water from the Holbrook ditch.

In the beginning, Holbrook Valley was part of a vast acreage of dry prairie land belonging to the state of Colorado. Colorado is known as the Centennial State, having been admitted to the Union on August 1, 1876 - the 38th state. The Laguna Canal Company, with Henry R. Holbrook as President, acquired this land from the state and put the large irrigation ditch through some time before 1900. The small ditches and reservoir were added later, about 1906 or 1908. The Valley, one main ditch and one reservoir were named Holbrook, after the President of the company. Homesteaders took up this prairie land under the Laguna Canal Company.

This is a list of some of the families who came to this new country before 1900: the George Blands (1892), the Robert Harsens (1893), the Jenkins family (1894), the Houck family (1898), the Chris Rich family (1898), the Harris family, the Nick Rich family, the Sherman Balls family, the Charles Moores, the Osbournes, the Rickmans, the Henry Noncales, the Wadleighs, the Sheltons, the Carringtons, the Gregorys, the Groms family and the Reeders. The Casteels lived at Timberlake for a while. Timberlake was older than Holbrook and is a storage reservoir for the Fort Lyon Canal Company. It was named after a prominent man, Senator Timberlake.

This is a list of the families who came right after the turn of the century: the Esteps (1902), the Luginbills (1904), the Nunemakers (1903), the Will Snyders (1905), the Menno Zooks, the Tom Kauffmans, the Kings (1906), Isaac L Kulp and daughter Catherine (1906), the Timothy Thuts, the Isaac B. Kulps, Wilson Bergey (1907), Isaac Enns (1907) and wife (1908), the Leathermans (1910), the Emanuel Nice family (1907), and the Basingers (1914) the Bells, the Goffs, the Jens Hansens, the Evers, the Joe Kauffmans, the Amos Kauffmans, the Lances, the Lantzes, the Stjernholms, the Stantons, the Henards, the Randalls, the Averys, the Hersheys, the Millers, the Don Pauls, the Coles, the Shenks, and Jim Lewis- who was one of the first ditch Superintendents.

The people had taken up land and built houses. Some of these were sod houses with tarpaper and dirt roofs, some were frame, some adobe and some stone. They got their water supplies (drinking etc.) from the ditch, hauling it in barrels. They broke up the land with walking plows pulled by horses (no mechanical equipment here). They had to drive to Rocky Ford or LaJunta for most of their supplies. It was a long hard drive by horse drawn vehicle over prairie roads and took a full day to make the trip.

The first schoolhouse, the Bee Hive, was built in 1896 on the corner where Joe Wadleighs now live. Besides serving as a grade school it served as a community-gathering place. Church and Sunday school were held there, also social functions.

The first trading company or store in this new land was 2 miles west of the present Cheraw and was called Center. Charles Moore and Mr. Walters operated this store. There was also a small Church located here, called Mennonite Brethren in Christ and a little later a grade school was added. These are some of the teachers who taught there: Dalby, Yates and Claude King, who was teaching there at the time the school and the East End school consolidated with the Cheraw school.

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As the population grew and had to have better water for household use several artesian wells were put down, one at Center, one near the Cheraw town site and one northeast. Farmers would take their water tanks, which they had acquired by this time, to the wells and fill them. Some were making cisterns and others were keeping the water in the tanks.

In 1902, Mr. Henry Holbrook had acquired water rights from the Laguna Canal Co., of which he was President, and in 1906 he acquired land from the state of Colorado. In the same year he sold 40 acres of this land to Arthur S. Beymer of Rocky Ford, with some water rights. Mr. Beymer bought more water right from the Laguna Canal Co. and presented the land and the water rights to the public for a town sight. He also gave a plan for the town with specifications for streets and alleys. He had recorded in all abstracts that if at any future time liquor was sold on any of this land it would be forfeited and reverted to the original owner. This 40 acres was south of the railroad right of way and extended to the lake. It was marked off in lots, sold, and the town was started. –Jim Lewis, being surveyor, helped plot the land for the town site.

About this time, in 1905, a Mr. Wiley, for whom the town of Wiley was named and where he had settled, had come from Cheraw, South Carolina, and he named Cheraw after his hometown—a small town by a little lake. Cheraw is an Indian name and means “Sparkling Water.” At that time Cheraw Lake was just a small pond. Some old timers say there were 2 springs in the bottom of the lake that fed it water. –Mr. Wiley was also instrumental in getting the railroad put through in 1906.

By this time the farmers were finding out that they had fertile land, which would grow most any crop if they could get water on it. They had begun raising some sugar beets with the factory in Swink, the Holly Sugar Company, and the American Beet Sugar Company in Rocky Ford. The railroad had been put through to Swink with a branch

going straight across the river to Rocky Ford. The railroad through Cheraw is a branch road running parallel to the mail line from La Junta, through Swink to Holly.

The Rocky Ford line across the river was abandoned in 1912 when a flood washed out the river bridge; it was never replaced. Sugar beet dumps had been built every few miles along the railroad and the farmers hauled their beets in wagons and loaded them into the freight cars from the dumps, where they were taken to the factory. Men and horses did all this work. (No mechanical equipment yet.)

Between 1906 and 1908, the small ditch was added to the irrigation system and plans for storage reservoirs No. 1 and No. 2 were filled May 20, 1908 by W.P. Osbourne and signed by W.M. Randall. No. 1 was named Holbrook Lake and No. 2 Dye Lake. These storage reservoirs were made and later Holbrook was enlarged and a dyke built across the east end to keep from flooding the land below. Before this some of the water could come down as far as Cheraw Lake and had helped to form the small Harris Lake on the place where the Harris family lived at that time. (Ernest Stjernholm owns the place now.)

By this time the town of Cheraw was growing. A depot had been built and one of the first depot agents was Harry Lyles. R.B. Dunn was here for a short time as an agent. (He returned later to serve for several years.) Mr. Bullard was also agent for a time. A.F. Clase had bought one of the new city lots and erected a store building just south of the present filling station. He bought out Mr. Moore and Mr. Walters at the center location and moved the merchandise to Cheraw. Then he became the first town postmaster, putting the post office in the general store. Frank Gregory built a brick building and put in another general store. Mr. Briscoe had a third general store just east of the drug store building and Ed Deemer built a large department store building on the corner where the turkey processing plant is now located. They piped one of the artesian wells to this corner where people could fill their water tanks more conveniently. A hardware and implement store managed by J.R. Bell was just south of the Deemer store. Another hardware and lumberyard was built where the Holbrook Pump and Supply is now. C.R. Thomas managed this. Dr. Edwards came out from La Junta and put in a small drug store. He was the first doctor for the town. I.W. Strickler and family came from St. Joseph, Missouri (1910) and organized a bank. Mr. Moore was president and Strickler was cashier. (Sherman Ball was also associated with the bank.) The bank building was built on the corner where the filling station now stands and this is probably the only filling station in the world with a tile floor. The First State Bank of Cheraw served the public until its closing in 1925. The first newspaper in Cheraw, called the Cheraw Clarion and published by C.B. Steward, was started in 1910.

The Methodist Church was built in 1907 with Chaplain Edwards as first minister. East Holbrook Mennonite Church was also built in 1907. Mr. Nunemaker and A. M. Leatherman were among the first ministers there. Farther west, near Holbrook Lake, was another church called the Lake View Methodist Church. The Cheraw preacher also preached at this church.

Not far from the Lake View Church there was a two-room grade school. There was also a grade school at the east end of the valley. In the early days this building was used for Sunday school. This is a list of some of the early teachers at the east end school. This is a list of some of the early teachers at the east end school: Ruth Lytle, Roy Ebersole, Elban Lehman, John Thut, John King, Albert Nunemaker, Pauling Schultz Nielsen, Martha Martin, Lena Roberts Hansen and Mabel Smith Basinger.

Roy Bartholomew, who was a carpenter, came to Cheraw and built a house where the Holcombs now live. He put in the first telephone office and operated it for some time. In 1910 a new brick two-story school building for grade school and the first year of high school was built just north of the present building. Isaac Kulp donated the land for this new building. –Roy Bartholomew later taught at this school. –Mr. Preston had a livery stable and ran a dray business, hauling ice, freight etc. from La Junta. W.B. Painter built the hotel in 1913 and operated it for several years. –It has been Neva Snyder's private house for some time. –Mr. Ed Deemer built the Alfalfa Hay Mill in 1911. This is a list of some of the other businesses in town by this time: 2 blacksmith shops, a pool hall, a barbershop, a restaurant, and a picture show, which were operated in the town hall. The town hall was the former Bee Hive school building, which had been moved to Main St. and now served as a community building. The Grange also held their meetings there.

In 1912 a band was organized, a bandstand built and concerts were held. The Church ladies would have ice cream socials, etc. at the bandstand to help raise money. The Cheraw Band became much in demand as a real bandmaster named Armstrong came to town and organized it into a military band, with uniforms etc.

Until about 1915 most of the businesses were on Main St. running north and south past the bank. In 1915 Kehl and Young built a large business building facing north, just across the street from the railroad. They made places in this building for 3 businesses. Dr. Herson bought out Dr. Edwards and moved the drug stock and his office to the one on the east side. A pool hall and barbershop were put in the middle and K & Y Garage in the one on the west side. So part of the businesses began moving to the new location, facing the railroad.

In 1916 L.H. Houghton from Rocky Ford bought the Drug Store from Mr. Herson and the next year Dr. Pitney from Denver bought Dr. Herson's practice, leaving his office in the same building at the back of the Drug Store. L.H. Houghton operated the Drug Store until he passed away in 1965. Dr. Pitney practiced until 1945 when he retired and moved to California.

In 1917 the town was incorporated with Mr. Ed Deemer as first Mayor. An artesian well was put down and pipe laid for a water system for the town. The telephone system had been put in and Southern Co. Power Co. from Pueblo, through Rocky Ford, put in electricity and the town became quite modern. In 1918 the residents who went out to the ditches, dug small trees and transplanted them in town first observed Arbor Day. They kept this custom for several years, taking picnic lunches and spending the day working and visiting. This is how the town has trees. Also in 1917 Charles Lyons came

out from New York and found he could raise turkeys on the prairie farmland. Later several other farmers tried it and it has now become the largest business in Cheraw. In about 1922 Paul Hershey, Russel Stanton, Fred Wadleigh and several others organized the Holbrook Turkey Growers Association Co-op. A processing plant was built on the corner where the Deemer and Lipscomb store had been. Mr. M.R. Watters was instrumental in having a turkey hatchery built and later pole sheds and a turkey-breeding farm added.

In 1967 all this was sold to Farmland Industries Inc. They have enlarged the plan, adding a freezing plant and large storage facilities. They now process around 800,000 turkeys a year, employing around 40 regular workers and over a 100 seasonal workers. Farmland also owns the large feed mill, which makes more than 20 different kinds of feed and serves a large territory. We also have a Gooch feed mill, which serves a large territory, and a grain elevator that is used mostly for storage at this time.

Roy Lenocker had a small café in the building where the ditch office is now and after Mr. Glass sold his store the post office was moved into this café with Miss Ada Beman as a postmistress. The Wades came in 1919 and Mrs. Bert Wade succeeded Miss Beman in 1921. Later, the post office was moved to the lumberyard where it remained until the lumberyard burned down in 1941. It was then moved to the Meador grocery store, which the Wades purchased. After Mrs. Wade's death her son Howard became postmaster. A new post office building was built, and the post office moved to where it is today. The new building was dedicated in April of 1962. After Howard Wade's death his wife became acting postmistress, where she still serves in 1969. The lumberyard was rebuilt and is now owned by Guy Watters. It is the Holbrook Pump and Supply. These are some of the previous owners of the lumberyard: McCabe Lumber Company, Olson Lumber Company, Green & Babcock, and M.R. Watters.

In 1920 the Cheraw School, Center, and East End schools consolidated to form District 31. The new building was built in 1921 and 4 years of high school were added. The first graduating high school class was in 1923 and included Ada Thut, Cecil Wade and Claude Rickman. Timothy Thut, Bert Shelton and De. Pitney were members of the school board when the new school was built. The west wing of this building, which included the gym, classrooms, and library burned in 1959 and was rebuilt in 1960. There have been several classrooms, shop, garage etc. added since, making this a very up-to-date school system.

In the early 20's a group of members of the Brethren Church moved to the valley and erected a church building on the corner of Fourth St. and Grand Ave., across the street from Elmer Plank's. After several years it was torn down and rebuilt in a new location near the town of McClave. In 1955 the M.B. Church burned down and a larger, better one was built. A small Catholic church has been added to the town on south Main St. Another church, the Holbrook Baptist, has been added to the west end of the valley. The Mennonite church was struck by lightning in May of 1913 and burned. A new building on the same location was finished by Oct. 1, 1913. —The warehouse at the hay mill also burned (in 1926) and was rebuilt.

In the early 20's the land began to get seepy and the drainage system was put in, draining the water into Cheraw Lake and adding considerably to its size. In the early days the road to La Junta went through Cheraw on the east side of the town, going straight south past the mill. As the lake increased in size, however, the road was moved to its present location.

The land north of the tracks was added to the incorporated town and is called the "Kulp Addition" Many new houses have been, and are still being, built in and around the town. Evan Paterson purchased several acres north of the school, which have been developed and named "Cheraw Heights".

In the west part of the town and north of the tracks were a pickle factory, a cantaloupe shipping shed, and a good size stockyard. –They shipped quite a lot of stock in and out by freight before the day of the truck. –A shortage of irrigation water made it harder to grow cantaloupe and after the cantaloupe shipping shed burned down it was not replaced. The shortage of irrigation water also made it harder to grow cucumbers for the pickle factory, and so that was abandoned. Less water also caused farmers to stop raising sugar beets and begin raising more hay, maize, corn and some wheat, all of which takes less water.

In 1920 the garage, operated at the time by Philip Beman, burned and damaged the drug store building. Both buildings were rebuilt. Later, a grocery store was operated in the garage building. In 1968, while being operated by Marion Hyder, the grocery store burned down and the drug store was damaged again. Ernest Stjernholm, who owned the grocery store building, rebuilt it. The drug store building was also repaired. Then, in June of 1968, a public auction was held to sell the building and remaining merchandise, and Mrs. Houghton retired. Gene Brose restocked the grocery store and opened it for business. –Several different owners had operated the garage: Kehl & Young, Philip Beman, Ren Estep, and Alvin Kauffman. Clyde Coffman had operated a mechanics shop in the back end of the garage for some time.

There was a cheese factory operated by Henry Berger for several years. It was located on the corner north of the Vasquez home. There also had been a shoe shop. Several other owners of general merchandise had been: Willis Boyd, Frank Gregory, Briscoe, Deemer and Lipscomb, Hart & Watson, Butterbaugh, Thomas, Corbin, Floyd Bollacker, Eva May Young, Ed Hall, Francis Ratliff, Mel Baily and Kenneth Jenkins. Some of the different operators of the filling station before Farmland had been: M.R. Watters, Ray Amend and Ernest Stjernholm.

Hi-way 109 now goes through town, connecting with Hi-way 96 to the north and with Hi-way 50 to the south. Three or four additional artesian wells have been put down in the surrounding territory. Cheraw and community have good soft artesian well water. The town storage tank is plastic glass lined and the water is aerated and filtered before entering the city water mains. Some of the maintenance men have been: James

McGoutry, Walter Painter, Chester Howard, Frank Houck, Ed Rains and Dave Albrecht.
All Hi-ways and streets are oiled.

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*The only remaining businesses are the Co-op, the Post Office and Holbrook Pump and Supply. Some corrections and additions have been made by Margaret Kulp and Laura Egli. (1981), Carlyle Watters, Karen Wilson and Krystal Button. (2002).